

Sometimes, I Wonder if I, Will Ever Grow to Love, Someone Like That

Luke 6:27-36

27 “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies,

do good to those who hate you,

28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

29 If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them.

30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.

31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

32 “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.

33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you?

Even sinners do that.

34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full.



35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.

36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Introduction:

The title of the message is from a song. It is about a person's heart struggle toward someone whose actions have left deep hurts and emotional scars. Bitter thoughts persist. The person wonders if they will ever grow to love someone like that. Sometimes we wonder too about certain people, will you ever grow to love someone

like that? Do we even care to try?

Couldn't we just quietly ignore our enemies and move on with life? Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for those who persecute you. Could anything be harder than that! It just goes against every inclination of our heart. To return evil for good is cruelty. To return good for good is common courtesy; it is expected normal behavior. But to return good for evil is extraordinary.

Where does this kind of love come from? Where does the motivation, the power and the freedom to love and serve others regardless of their words or actions towards us come from? How can the extraordinary be possible?

Why Should I care?

Life might seem like it is complicated enough without trying to love our enemies. It might seem simpler to just try and bury your feelings and move on. But like a plant, the fruit that grows from such 'buried seeds' tastes bitter and poisonous.

Having a begrudging spirit may hurt our neighbor, but it will do much more damage to our own soul. There may be times when we want to hold onto our thoughts of revenge, our hate and anger, but there is foolishness and great danger when we do.

Two shopkeepers were bitter rivals. Their stores were directly across the street from each other. They would spend each day keeping track of each other's business. If one got a customer, he would smile in triumph at his rival. One night, one of the shopkeepers had a dream. In the dream, a person appeared and said, "I will give you anything you ask, but whatever you receive, your competitor will receive twice as much. Would you be rich? You can be very rich, but he will be twice as wealthy. Do you wish to live a long and healthy life? You can, but his life will be longer and healthier. What is your desire? But remember, whatever you receive, your competitor will receive twice as

much." The man frowned, thought for a moment, and then said, "Here is my request: Strike me blind in one eye!"

He would rather lose an eye than to see his neighbor blessed.



The power and destruction of holding onto hate and anger does not simplify our lives. Rather, it robs us of whatever blessings could be ours!

What Should I Do?

Jesus asks in verses 32-34, *"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full."*

There is nothing surprising or unusual about loving those that treat you well and opposing those who don't. It is

not a sign of anything extraordinary. We can do this without help. Jesus points out that even those who do not know or trust in God can manage this much.

Christ tells us to love our

enemies. In the context of this passage, love is not just an emotion. Biblical love is also an attitude that seeks the good of others in the name of Christ and therefore treats them respectfully and

compassionately....regardless of how we may feel. In time, an emotion or feeling of affection toward our enemies may follow our actions. But even love as an action may not always have the emotion.

Biblical love also never means that we ignore reality or pretend that evil people are good or that we forsake justice and discipline. Jesus' teaching regarding loving one's enemy is not inconsistent with telling people the truth about their actions. Love means speaking the truth even when others involved may be upset or even terrified by what is said.

Love means we are seeking the 'good' of another through our words, actions and prayers, even those who are our enemies. *"The 'enemy' might*

be a rebellious child. He might be an uncaring, non-listening, ill-tempered spouse. He might be a 'hard-to-get-along-with' neighbor that complains about everything you do. Jesus says, "Love them. Love your enemies. Love them." Don't stop loving because the person does things that offend you, or dishonor you, or hurt your feelings, or anger you, or disappoint you, or frustrate you, or threaten you, or kill you. "Love your enemies," means keep-on loving them... keep-on loving them. Now how can we do this? Where does power to love like this come from? Just think how astonishing this is when it appears in the real world! Could anything show the truth and power and reality of Christ more than this?" (PIPER)

What Jesus Did

At times we all find it hard—if not impossible—to love and forgive those who've hurt us most. It is clear that Jesus command intends for us to go beyond what we could do on our own.

Jesus does not leave us empty-handed or with a command to fulfill on our own power. To approach today's scripture as merely a step-by-step instruction guide on how to love your enemy would miss the point. It is not just a matter of knowing what to do. The message is not just 'be-better, try-harder'. Most of us know what we should do.

What we lack is the will and the enabling to do it.

"This is how the Christian life starts. It doesn't start by measuring up. It starts by realizing that we don't measure up. We are poverty-stricken, helpless as a child, and sin-sick in need of a Great Physician. Then we hear the gospel news that Jesus "came not to be



served but to serve and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45); and we hear the free offer that by trusting him our sins we will be forgiven, God will be our Father, and the power of His Spirit will come into our lives, and we will have the help we need to live as Jesus commanded" (PIPER)

"To suppose that whatever God requires of us - that we have power of ourselves to do, is to make the cross and grace of Jesus Christ of none effect." (John Owen)

The gospel is the story of God wooing and loving us even when we were His enemies. He cared for us before we even knew or cared that He existed. Jesus loved us, He died for us - while we were poor and helpless and enemies. He gave himself for us and made us members of His family.

Secure in God's acceptance of us because of Jesus' performance on our behalf, we can honestly admit and confess what is displeasing to God. We are continually in need of looking to Christ and abiding in His love and acceptance of us. It is in recognizing our real inability to love those we see as

enemies, that we are able to receive the Father's deep love for us. And that's the love we have to pass on to others. Our love for others grows out of our relationship to Christ and His love for us. Our faith union with Jesus the Savior in His life, death and resurrection is where we get the power to love. Loving our enemies is behavior that can only flow

from our union with Christ and what He has done for us. The person who is secure in God's acceptance and God's overflowing love can move towards their enemy in loving service.

Instead of meditating on how we would like to get revenge against such people, we are to think of ways that God can help our enemies. We are to bring these requests to God in prayer. Jesus knows that the only thing that will displace bitterness and hate in our hearts is a greater affection for Him and His will. It is impossible to hold onto bitterness and resentment when we pray for a person's good. Praying like this takes our mind off our own egos and ourselves. Prayer helps us focus on the needs of others. Our prayers in this way are reflecting the heart of God – *Our prayers in this way can transform our own hearts as well.*

Perhaps no one understood both the difficulty and the absolute necessity of loving and forgiving our enemies better than Corrie Ten Boom.

There was a woman who had spent time in Nazi concentration camps for hiding Jews in her home during the Holocaust. 52 and unmarried, she had lived at home with her elderly father and older sister Betsie. All three of them had been sent to concentration camps when the Nazis discovered they had been hiding the Jewish refugees. The woman's name was Corrie Ten Boom.

Corrie lost her freedom, her dignity, and her beloved sister

and father in the span of a few months in those concentration camps. In God's providence, Corrie was released due to a clerical error, just one week before the other women her age in Ravensbruck (the name of the concentration camp) were executed.

After the war Corrie was invited to speak all over the world, and she tirelessly traveled the globe, thankful for every opportunity she was given to tell people about Christ. She always marveled at God's infinite mercy toward sinners like us.

*She also knew that everyone who had received God's mercy had no choice but to show mercy to others; and she knew from her own experience that wasn't always easy. In her book *The Hiding Place* she tells the following story:*

"It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former S.S. man who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time. And suddenly it was all there – the roomful of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie's pain-blanching face.

He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. "How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein." he said. "To think that, as you say, Jesus has washed my sins away!"

His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to other people about the need to

forgive, kept my hand at my side.

Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.

I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness.

As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.

And so I discovered that it is not on our forgiveness any more than on our goodness that the world's healing hinges, but on Jesus'. When Jesus tells us to love our enemies, He gives, along with the command, the love itself."

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Corrie experienced both the deep questions and heartfelt answer. In her inability and brokenness, her heart was directed to Jesus.

God is gracious and faithful to call people to Himself. Please obey His call. Come to Jesus in faith. Trust in what Jesus has done. These words have genuine comfort and strength

for all those who belong to God. Learn what it means to be able to move towards others like He does...out of grace, love, and hope, even in messy relationships. God's desire for us is to be free from hate, anger, and bitterness. He is able to lead His children in experiencing and living in His true love - a freely 'giving love' and 'receiving love' that truly blesses.

Lets pray,

Dear Heavenly Father,

Perhaps no other command is so amazing and so difficult.

We may wonder as well, "Will I ever grow to love someone like that."

Thank you that your love in Christ doesn't fail...even when we fail.

Please lead us to yourself.

Enable us to learn how to treat others, not according to how they treat us, but as You God, in Your mercy and kindness, treat us.

Thank you that You can bring healing and love in the midst of our broken and confusing relationships.

*In Jesus name,
Amen*

