

Talk It Over

**They oppose you...
LOVE THEM ANYWAY**

SMALL TALK

1. Why do people often call revenge "sweet"?

VIEWPOINT

2. **READ Luke 6:27-31.** What positive responses to mistreatment did Jesus command?
3. What different kinds of mistreatment did Jesus refer to in His commands?
4. **READ Luke 6:32-36.** About what three positive actions did Jesus ask, "What credit is that to you?" Is Jesus critical of conditional love?

GETTING PERSONAL

5. Why does Jesus ask us to love our enemies, and bless those who curse us, and to do good to those who do us harm?
6. What does it take for someone to live as Jesus described?
7. When is forgiveness most difficult? How can Romans 5:8 help us when forgiveness is difficult?

MAKING PROGRESS

8. WCC's core statements are:
 1. Love God Whole-Heartedly
 2. Do First Things First
 3. Don't Do Life Alone
 4. Saved People Serve People
 5. Followers Say, "Follow Me"

Can you connect the commands of Jesus we studied today to any or all of our core statements? Which core statement do you intend to make progress on this week? How?

July 26, 2020

**They oppose you...
LOVE THEM ANYWAY**

Last week was...

They disagree with you... LOVE THEM ANYWAY

Next week is...

They hurt you... LOVE THEM ANYWAY

Today...

They oppose you... LOVE THEM ANYWAY

Jesus told us to love our enemies. This is a radical teaching. Disagreements, division, opposition, hate, and hurt are nothing new. So much of what we see on our news screens has been played out throughout history.

For example, about 500 years ago, the church was deeply, and violently divided over what was the truth about baptism.:

Dirk Willems was born in the Netherlands and was [baptized](#) as a young man. But this was very controversial in his day because it represented his rejection of his baptism as an infant that was firmly practiced at this time in history by most churches in the Netherlands at this time. The movement that believed baptism was for those who themselves believed the Gospel, was first labeled “the anabaptists”. Dirk Willem identified with this movement. Dirk Willems continued devotion to his new faith and the baptism of several other people in his home, led to his condemnation by the established church of his day. Now, this was before the separation of church and state. He was arrested and imprisoned in an old castle like palace that had been turned into a prison. Dirk Willems somehow escaped using a rope made out of knotted rags. Using

this, he was able to climb out of the prison onto the frozen moat. A guard noticed his escape and gave chase. Willems was able to cross some the thin ice of the moat like pond. Perhaps it was because of his lighter weight after subsisting on prison rations that he was able to do this. However, the pursuing guard broke through the ice and yelled for help as he struggled in the icy water.https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dirk_Willems_-_cite_note-Kreider-1 Dirk Willems, rather than continue his escape to freedom, turned back to save the life of his pursuer. Because of his actions he did not get away. He was recaptured, imprisoned again, then burned at the stake on 16 May 1569.

But what I want us to understand about Jesus command to love our enemies is this.

Why does Jesus command us to love our enemies?

- Jesus came to establish his kingdom in a dark and rebel world. He calls us to repent of own attempts to rule our own dark kingdoms, and to trust him and follow him in his kingdom using his **divinely powerful weapons in a radical and supernaturally empowered revolution.**
- The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of this world, but divinely powerful to transform an enemy into a friend.
- Loving our enemy can reduce the ranks of the Kingdom of Darkness and add them to the ranks of the Kingdom of God by one.
- Loving our enemy is for our benefit, so that we do not become like the enemy of God and good.
- By loving those who oppose us we become light in a dark world; we shine hope for our divided, diseased, dark world of hurt and hate.

Enemies are not always out there. Sometimes two confessing followers of Jesus act like enemies. How do you explain this?

As we watch the news these days, the messages are dark, discouraging, filled with fear and confusion. People in the church are feeling like sheep left on an outcropping on a cliff's edge, with no escape and nowhere to go. They don't know how to go up from this dangerous perch, and they don't know how to get down from this cliff. In their frightened condition, even as a shepherd reaches out to rescue them, frightened sheep, feeling cornered and afraid of everything that has happened to them, do something we don't expect. They bite the shepherd.

That's what happened to Jesus. That is what has happened frequently in history. And it happens today.

And yet, as we feel trapped on the outcropping of a cliff not knowing how to get off this perch leading nowhere, not knowing how to go up, or go down, we are reminded of two things. 1) Jesus loved us anyway, even when we his sheep turned on him and rejected, and 2) he is such a kind and mercifully good shepherd he leads us to safety even though we first bit him, and rejected his kind and caring reach.

John 1:9-11 (NIV2011) {9} The true light that gives light to everyone was coming into the world. {10} He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him. {11} He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.

Psalm 23:3 (NIV2011) He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.

Jesus says to us this morning, as we feel bewildered and stuck on an outcropping on a cliff's edge, come this way, follow me. And so, we are asked to love the way he loves, follow in the way he loved them anyway.

***Luke 6:27-36 (NIV2011)** {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.*

This is quite the teaching for a radical revolutionary kind of love.

- Love your enemies (27)
- Do good to those who hate you (27)
- Bless those who curse you (28)
- Pray for those who mistreat you (28)
- If someone slaps your cheek, turn to them the other also (29)
- If they take your coat, give them your shirt too...(29)
- ...
- Be kind to the ungrateful and wicked (35)
- Be merciful because your Father is merciful. (36)

I. How in the world do we do this?

I want you to discover something, so I'm not just giving you a quick answer here. Let's look at an important prayer of Jesus.

*John 17:1 (NIV2011) After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed: "Father, the hour has come. **Glorify** your Son, that your Son may **glorify** you.*

How was Jesus going to be glorified? Jesus anticipated being **glorified** because the hour had come. What hour? The time had come for him to be crucified. How is this glorifying Jesus? The cross, from Jesus' perspective becomes a sacrifice of love. In this sacrifice of love, he will be glorified, and he will glorify his father. This will be the light that displaces darkness like the light of all lights. This will be a glory that is so bright, darkness will be displaced.

Jesus was about to love people far from God with the brightest possible love.

He was about to love each of us who are lost in darkness at the cost of his own life, this was sacrificial love in all its shining glory. Before you think how beautiful. Let's look at this.

QUESTION

Does what Jesus believed would "**glorify**" him "**horrify**" us?

We are glad he did this for us, but do you see how it doesn't stop there? He is asking us to do as he did, love the way he loved, and follow him in this way. He is asking us to glorify God, and see that this is our glory too, when we are able to love our enemies the way he loved us.

When people disagree with us, oppose us, or want to hurt us, he is asking us to bring glory to his father with this supernatural kind of love, a glory that shines with such inexplicable love that it brings God glory and honor, and us glory and honor too. This sounds so unheard of in our world, so grandly wild, we just have to ask ourselves is this really possible to see this as our glory? And if so, how? Let's continue in this prayer of Jesus to find out how is this even possible?

The rest of the prayer answers this question, how is this possible. We only have time to read portions of it. Read and ponder John 17.

John 17:11 (NIV2011) ... Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name, the name you gave me, so that they may be one as we are one.

II. **Become One with Jesus**

Jesus prayed for the answer to disagreement, division, polarization, and opposition. He prayed for this as the answer to hurt and hate and harm. He didn't just pray for it, he made it possible.

This can happen because of what Jesus was about to do. He died on the cross for our sins. He took our sins away in his burial. He was resurrected by the power of the Spirit, to release that same resurrection power into our lives to make us one with Him and the Father, by the same power that made his human body one with the Father throughout his earthly ministry.

How do we love those who disagree with us? Or those who oppose us?

III. **The Holy Spirit empowers us to FOLLOW Jesus**

You may want to read starting at John 14 through 17 for this, but you can see what he has taught about the Holy Spirit come through even here in this prayer.

***John 17:20-23 (NIV2011)** {20} “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, {21} that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. {22} I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— {23} I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

This UNITY does not mean that we will all think exactly the same. This does not mean that we will agree on everything. This is a deeper kind of oneness. We love each other the way he does, we love them anyway!

The Spirit unites us.

The Spirit empowers us.

The Spirit reigns and rules through us. Jesus reigns through his Spirit in us, producing Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Are you loving one another the way Jesus loved you? Even when you disagree? Even when you are on opposite sides of a position?

Are you loving your neighbor the way Jesus loved you, and the way he loved the hated race of Samaritans?

Are you loving your enemy, the way Jesus loved you?

For God so loved the world he sent Jesus (John 3:16). But Now that Jesus has come, God sends His Son into the world in a greater way through us to do greater things than he was doing, (John 14:12). Now God sends the Body of Christ, the church, through you and me, the Temple of God’s very presence, his Spirit

dwelling within you. As Jesus was sent, now we are sent, to love the way he loved.

John 17:18 (NIV2011) As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

We Love from this supernatural unity, this supernatural ability by being one with Jesus. Love them anyway.

Love them anyway.

This is not **impossible**. This is **imperative**.

If we claim to be in the Kingdom, in allegiance to our King, we have been commanded to “love them anyway” the same way he loved us anyway.