

Sermon on the Mount
Lesson #12
“Kingdom Righteousness”
Has Love with no boundaries Part VI
Matthew 5:43-48

Scripture: Matthew 5:20 *“For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*

Introduction:

There was one job, at that old power plant that I worked for, that I just dreaded and if I knew it was coming up I would schedule vacation to avoid it. Have you ever felt that way about something?

That job for me was fixing any leaks on the sulfuric acid system. We used sulfuric acid in our water treatment system. You know acid is very corrosive. It was always eating up the inside of our acid tanks, ruining piping and valves.

And one time we cut this line out to repair it and it had a little more acid in it than we thought and a small amount poured out on the floor and I can still see the smoke vapors that it produced as it hit the oily cement floor.

My dad used to work for McDonald Douglas building fighter planes and he told me this story about a guy who fell into a tank of (I think) hydrochloric acid and how all that was found was a big ball of hair.

Ann Landers, has a great quote that I would like to share with you today about hate. She says that hate is like acid. It can damage the vessel in which it is stored as well as destroy the object on which it is poured.*Bits & Pieces*, September 17, 1992, p. 3.

Transitional Statement:

In finishing this section on what God expects in kingdom righteousness, Jesus is going to pull the whole thing together with one single tie that binds them all together....Love!

I. Pharisaical righteousness sets boundaries on love

Jesus begins in Matthew 5:43 by saying:

43 " You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR...'"

A. Now as we look back to the Old Covenant to see what Jesus is talking about we find perhaps the very deepest of threads throughout all of scripture: and that is *“You shall love your neighbor”*

1. Leviticus 19:18 says:

18 ' You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.

2. Think about God speaking to His people through Moses, they are at Mount Sinai and they have just watched God descend on the mountain in fire. They have seen His mighty hand work against the Egyptians and now He is making them into His very own possession and one of the first commands that He gives to them is to love one another.

a. It's not given as a suggestion / or even an option

- 1) But an imperative command
- 2) That we love each other

b. You know there are different kinds of love.

- 1) I might say that I love my car.
- 2) You might say they love friends.
- 3) Someone might say they love short sermons.

c. Here, the love that God is demanding of His people is the deepest kind of love.....it is the love that we have for ourselves.

- 1) It's a love of great interest and concern
- 2) It's a love of protection
- 3) A love that desires forgiveness
- 4) And a love of hope

* This is what God wants His people to share with each other

B. Jesus puts "*loving your neighbor*" as second only to the greatest commandment of loving God first.

Matthew 22:36-39

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?" 37 And He said to him, " YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND." 38 "This is the great and foremost commandment. 39 "The second is like it, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF.'

1. When you read these words of Jesus it's hard to miss the idea that you can't have one without the other.

C. James gives us another dimension of thought about loving each other when he says that it is a "*royal law*"

James 2:8

8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF," you are doing well.

1. Royal, perhaps because God is love 1 John 4:8 and He expects us to share Him with those around us.

- D. And the apostle Paul makes it very clear that loving our neighbor is the fulfillment of the Law.

Romans 13:9-10

9 For this, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, YOU SHALL NOT MURDER, YOU SHALL NOT STEAL, YOU SHALL NOT COVET," and if there is any other commandment, it is summed up in this saying, "YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 10 Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.

Jesus continues by saying: 43 " You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR...' "...and hate your enemy.'

- A. First of all let's define the word "hate"

1. Hate is one of those words throughout scripture that has varied meaning.
 - a. In-other-words it's very hard to pull a stock definition off the shelf and run with it.
 - b. So we must look at the context to clearly define the word.
2. The context here simply defines "hate" as the opposite of love.
3. So hate isTaking the opposite of Love from 1 Cor 13:4-7

Hate is:

- a. Not patient with others
- b. Not kind
- c. Is jealous for what others have
- d. It exalts itself
- e. It thinks of itself as better than others
- g. It acts unbecomingly toward others
- h. It's selfish
- i. Easily provoked
- j. Keeps a list of wrongs against others
- k. And hate does not bear, believe, hope or endure anything for others
- * NASTY Right?

- B. With that in mind, I searched the whole of Old Testament Scripture looking for this idea.

1. I looked up the word enemy and went to each verse
2. I looked up the word hate also
 - a. Can you guess how many times God tells us to hate our enemies?

-None !

- C. So where do the Scribes and Pharisees come up with the idea that it is ok to hate your enemies?

1. The only possible thing I can conjure up here is this:
 - a. That God did reveal Himself to one group of peopleIsraelites
 - b. He made them into His own possession
 - c. In taking the promise land God had them kill other groups of people
 - d. He commanded His people not to marry outside of Israel, so as not to be corrupted by idolatry.

2. I guess through all of these things a person might be inclined to think that God loves only Israelite people and no one else.
 - a. But this is certainly not the case....For He loved Adam and Eve and even Abraham who were not Israelites.

3. But with this misunderstanding of God's love the Scribes and Pharisees sought to shift God's word to an unintended purpose.
 - a. Let's look at Leviticus 19:18 again through jaded thinking

18 ' You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.
 - b. The Scribes and Pharisees viewed this as a permission to hate
 - 1) i.e. hate was ok as long as the person was not their neighbor.
 - a) We can see this in Luke 10:27-29

27 And he answered, "YOU SHALL LOVE THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL, AND WITH ALL YOUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL YOUR MIND; AND YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF." 28 And He said to him, "You have answered correctly; DO THIS AND YOU WILL LIVE." 29 But wishing to justify himself, he said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?"

D. Church, God did make an exclusive group to be His very own people.

1. So, what was the key component that determined their membership in His group?
 - a. Their nationality?
 - 1) I'm and Israelite
 - 2) Or Abraham is our father...John 8
 - 3) No !

2. The key that determined their membership in God's group was their obedience

a. God makes it plain in Exodus 19:5

5 "... if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine;

b. And with Israel's rejection of Christ (John 1:11), God's full intention of salvation, for all of mankind, swung into motion.

1) The Jews were only God's chosen vessel to reveal Himself to the world.

2) But God's love is not proprietary

a) Can you imagine God creating the people of this earth and then choosing not to love some of them because they are Asian, Indian, Tall, Skinny.....or not a Jew?

b) It's totally ridiculous right?

II. But Jesus instructs us to love our enemies

Jesus continues in Matthew 5:44-45a by saying:

44 "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven;

A. Instead of hating your enemies Jesus says to love them

1. And even pray for them

B. If you have ever tried this you know for sure that it is hard to remain angry with someone that your praying for.

1 And if your praying for them....love is growing in your heart for them

2 And if love is growing....Satan is losing his foothold.

C. So it's no surprise at all that the Old Law confirms this thinking.....

Leviticus 19:17

17 'You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him.

Proverbs 25:21

21 If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink;

Proverbs 24:17

7 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles;

D. Love is at the heart of how God describes Himself

Exodus 34:6-7

6 Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving-kindness and truth; 7 who keeps loving-kindness for thousands, who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin.."

E. And Love is the very focus of Jesus our Lord.

Jesus says in Luke 6:27

27 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

1. And Love is exemplified greatly by the very words of Jesus from the cross.
"Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

F. And let's surely remember the last few words of this verse...*So that you may be sons of the Father*

1. In short God expects this type of love from His sons and daughters.

III. Then Jesus reminds us that God loves all people

Matthew 5:45b

for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

A. It's an awesome thing to see God Almighty extending His gracious care even to those who hate Him.

1. Perhaps the depth of true love is found in this very thing.

B. You see, God doesn't even withhold his loving blessings from the unrighteous

1. Perhaps with a hope that they might come to an understanding of where the blessing comes from

a. And bow in humble adoration of their maker.

B. God's desire is for all men to repent and come to the knowledge of the truth. 1 Tim 2:4

1. And He calls them through His love

IV. There is no reward for pharisaical righteousness

Matthew 5:46-47

46 "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 "If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?"

A. Easy lovin....anybody can do that

1. If you love me...it's easy to love you back.
 - a. In-other-words I will be as good to you as you are to me.
2. Jesus says: what reward is there in that.

B. But the love that changes hearts, and has eternal reward, is a love that:

1. That gives without provocation
2. A love without boundaries
3. A love that will not be stopped
4. A love that will sacrifice everything
5. i.e it is a love that has the very intention to draw people near to God.
6. It is a love that wants to grow His kingdom
7. A love modeled after the very heart of God

V. And finally Jesus calls us to be perfect like God

Matthew 5:48

48 *"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

A. Now the mere mention of perfection tends to put us on guard.

1. Many times in view of perfection we move immediately to excuses and even justifications about why we can't be perfect.

B. But the perfection under discussion here is the completeness in a persons life that can only come when we learn to love, as God so loved the world.

C. John tells us in 1 John 4:20

20 If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.

Conclusion:

**Is hate eating away at your vessel?
Is your hate corroding those around you?**

RECAPING THIS SECTION:

Godly righteousness means:

1. **Letting God be the authority in your life.**
2. **Being serious about sin**
3. **Caring about your affect on others**
4. **Being people of truth**
5. **Seeking God's balance**
6. **Loving like God**