

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Bible Background – LUKE 6:27-36

Printed Text – LUKE 6:27-36

²⁷ “But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.

²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.

²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also.

³⁰ Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back.

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

³² “If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them!

³³ And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much!

³⁴ And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.

³⁵ “Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked.

³⁶ You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.

-----New Living Translation

Lesson Introduction

Consider all the ways that God has called us to love. He has commanded us to love Him completely; love one another as we love ourselves; love unconditionally. But perhaps the most difficult of all is to love those who hate us, misuse us, and abuse us. In this lesson we explore Jesus’ teachings on the subject—to love our enemies. Let us take this opportunity to reflect on how we feel about those that we have felt hatred toward and how we can show love for these very same persons.

Background: After spending all night in prayer and choosing the twelve apostles, Jesus descended to a plain where a group of disciples and a great multitude from all over the surrounding country were waiting for Him. They had traveled to hear this great teacher and be healed of their diseases and evil spirits. As Jesus came down the mountain and delivered this sermon, He symbolically created a new Israel. Just like Israel at Sinai had a set of laws that governed their behavior as a people, Jesus gave His disciples a set of “laws” that would govern their behavior. This set of laws is called the Sermon of the Plain. The Sermon on the Plain is one of the most powerful passages in the entire Bible.

In it, Jesus gives an agenda for God's kingdom, a set of rules and instructions for His people to live by. The first Part of these instructions consists of four blessings and four woes. These are followed by more explicit instructions that do not cover every situation but can all be summed up under the Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would like them to do to you" (6:31, NLT)

-----*Precepts for Living*, the UMI Annual Commentary 2020-2021, p. 71

God's People are Called to Live a Distinctive Lifestyle

Luke 6:27-30: In teaching His followers and disciples, Jesus gives instructions on how to live and operate in His kingdom. Verse 27 says that we are to "love our enemies." The Greek word translated "love" (*agapao*) means to love dearly, sincerely and unconditionally. This type of love expresses the essential nature of God and this type of love should be found in every disciple of Christ. This is not a matter of emotions or feelings, but a matter of deliberate choice in obedience and service to God. We are expected to act, not from a natural response but as an exercise of the divine will. "Do good" (Gr. *agathopoieo* means to "do well, to be of benefit) to those who hate you. Praise and speak well of (Gr. *eulogeo*) those who curse you.

Next Jesus teaches that if we are hit on one cheek, then offer the other; if our coat is taken, offer the shirt as well. Are we being instructed to stand still for abuse and robbery? No. This can be better described as concrete examples of a principle that Jesus is illustrating. The principle here is that we are never to take a position of retaliation when faced with maltreatment. Even repeated "blows" should not provoke us to respond outside of the command to love, bless, do good, and pray for the offenders. An example of godly response to violence and injustice is what was seen in Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and other civil rights advocates in the 50s and 60s.

The best example of this is seen in our Lord and Savior, Himself, who was beaten unmercifully, humiliated and crucified viciously. His response was to pray for those responsible. Even though we will never be called to sacrifice for the sins of others, our actions when mistreated should reflect our relationship with Jesus Christ. Verse 30 reminds us that the spirit of love should make us generous without discrimination. As Jesus gave His all for us, we should give freely to those who ask, without asking for anything in return.

◆ *Does failing to love the unlovable indicate a lack of love for God? Why or why not?*

Jesus' Strategy

Luke 6:31: This verse is considered the Golden Rule: What we wish for ourselves, we should wish the same for others. What is it that we want? Generally, we wish to be treated kindly, through words and deeds. We like encouragement, to be spoken well of; we enjoy gifts. Jesus teaches that those things that we love to receive, we should also love to bestow on other people. Remember that we are His representative on this earth and we may very well be the only example of Christ's love that others may see. With that in mind, we can represent the Lord well if we endeavor, with the help of Holy Spirit, to live by this Golden Rule.

◆ *What makes our understanding of this commandment difficult?*

The Total Unselfishness of Love

Luke 6:32-36: Jesus teaches that we are to love unconditionally. In verses 32-34, He illustrates that unbelievers will love those who love them in return; or do good for those who do good things for them; or give to those who can repay what is given. Giving to those that we know can reciprocate is not anything that a sinner wouldn't do. The unsaved will give to others as an investment as one who surely expects to be repaid in kind. This does not define grace or generosity of spirit. So, to do these things, "what thanks have ye?" The word translated as "thanks" is the Greek word, *charis*, which in other passages is also rendered "grace." We have been given so much grace and favor from Christ's gift of salvation that we certainly have much to share with others. Our standard, then, is to give to others without the thought of receiving from them in return.

Love your enemies! What a seemingly impossible task. The natural inclination is to believe that those who hurt us don't deserve our love, kindness and generosity. But we can easily see how this attitude only perpetuates the animus in our relationships. But Jesus commands that His followers move from this mentality of hostility, toward the realm of unconditional and selfless love. To love, expecting nothing in return, leads to the highest reward. Those, who can do the impossible, by grace, and love those who hate them, will receive God's reward and will be in good standing with God as His children. After all, God is good to us when we are at our worst: unkind, ungrateful, and selfish. So, as God is kind to us, we should be kind to others.

◆ *How can we keep the principle of God's mercy in the forefront of our minds?*

Conclusion

Sometimes we can be too quick to call someone an enemy. By God's grace, let us resist the tendency to label others as such. Our command is to love others without looking for it in return. As we encounter those who would do things to upset us, belittle or mistreat us, we should remember that *agape love* is not an emotion or fuzzy feeling, but an intentional decision to walk in obedience to Jesus' command to love those who misuse you. Also remember that love is action. So let your actions toward others reflect the grace and mercy that are characteristics of the God we serve.

Sources:

Banks, M. (Ed.). (2020). Love For One Another. *Precepts for Living*, 23(Fall Quarter), 67-77. The Urban Ministries, Inc. Annual Commentary 2020-2021.

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Lesson for Next Week – October 18, 2020 – Study Guide 7

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

Bible Background ♦ LEVITICUS 19:18, 34; LUKE 10:25-37

Printed Text ♦ LUKE 10:25-37

Devotional Reading ♦ JOHN 5:1-15