

## The Gospel of the Kingdom Pt 12c

Jesus rounds up His, "You have heard that it was said" section by tying it in with what has gone before by telling us to love our enemies.

### 1. Love Your Enemies 43-48

***43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,***

Jesus leaves the hardest for last.

Now there is no corresponding verse in the Old Testament that talks about hating your enemy. In fact, there are multiple verses in the Psalms, Proverbs, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy that say the exact opposite. However, this had come to be a common saying among the people, just as "*Don't get mad, get even*" has become popular in our day. In Leviticus it said that they were to love their neighbor. The Jews took this to mean the people of Israel, the fellow Jews. By inference, if you love your neighbor then you hate your enemy, or all those who stood against Israel.

Jesus is narrowing it down to literally mean your next-door neighbor or anyone within your sphere of influence.

A few years ago, there was a football player that claimed that he was a football player and not a role model. Tim Tebow corrected him by saying that by virtue of being in the public eye, all football players are role models. The difference is whether you are a good or a bad role model.

In the previous verses, Jesus talked to us about being salt and light.

To be salt and light we must be different than those around us.

It's easy to like people who are likeable. You don't need any special grace for that.

It's when people are mean and nasty toward us, when they seem to go out of their way to hurt us time and time again, that it is hard to love those people.

"Those people" were us before we came to Christ.

We were the unlovable people. It was our actions that put Jesus on the Cross.

***Rom 5:8***

***God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.***

We were God's enemies and He loved us. He is calling us to follow His example and love our enemies so that maybe, they in turn will be reconciled with Christ.

### 2. Become His Sons and Daughters

***45a so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.***

Love your enemies, "so that"... The children of the Heavenly Father are those who respond to His will as modeled in the ministry of Jesus. It is not enough to tolerate and

forgive our enemies, He expects us to love them. He regards us as sons and daughters when our actions match up with His commands. We are His sons and daughters when our ties to Him are stronger than our blood lines in this world.

**Matt 12:46-50**

**While he was still speaking to the people, behold, his mother and his brothers stood outside, asking to speak to him. 48 But he replied to the man who told him, "Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?" 49 And stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother."**

It is not enough to say that we are His sons and daughters; we must act like His sons and daughters. In other words, where do our allegiances really lie?

I love my wife more than anyone in this world, but she knows that God comes first in my life and my affections.

**45b For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?**

In Palestine, Tax Collectors were representatives of the hated occupying Roman Empire. Their tendencies to get rich by resorting to extortion and overcharging taxes made them hated and despised by their own people. But, even the Tax Collectors had people that they loved and favored and as a result went easy on them at tax time. It's easy to treat the people that we like with love and affection, not so easy to love those who make us miserable.

God hates evil, but He still brings many blessings to His enemies through "common grace" (The grace that He gives to all people and not just to believers.) This grace is intended to lead unbelievers to repentance. In other words, "*Hate the sin and not the sinner.*"

Hating and judging never won anyone to Christ. Loving the unlovable has won over countless sinners.

There is an old saying that says, "A rising tide lifts all boats".

**Rom 2:2-4**

**We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who do such things. 3 Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?**

Just because those who are your enemies aren't feeling the full impact of God's wrath in the here and now doesn't mean that God is letting them off the hook. It just means that God's mercy and grace are in operation to draw them to repentance, and He is wanting to use you as an instrument of the that mercy and grace by having you love them.

### **3. Become His Mirror Image.**

***48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.***

The Bible is a reflection of God Himself, as He makes His character and will known to His children. As Christians endeavor to live in conformity with His Word, they are, in essence pursuing the very perfection of God.

You have probably heard me say this axiom before:

**“Perfection is a destination. Excellence is a journey, and the joy is in the journey.”**

The Law and the Prophets are but a reflection of God’s perfection and can only be rightly interpreted with the help of the Holy Spirit. They found their fulfillment in Jesus. We have spent the preceding 3 weeks on the “you have heard it said” statements of Jesus where He rightly interprets the Law for us. Therefore, His words are what we are, as His disciples, to pursue and emulate to the best of our ability. If we do this, then we are a reflection of the Father’s will.

### **Conclusion**

How are we expected to love our enemies when our fallen nature tells us to do the opposite? Don’t they deserve to be hated?

Well, the Apostle Paul does a great job of explaining the words of Jesus and helping us to understand how we can love our enemies.

***Gal 5:18-23***

***But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.***

Like Jesus, he is telling us that if we want to be a part of the Kingdom of God, our actions need to match our faith. We are not under the Law, so we don’t have to follow rules. We get to, and should want to, be a mirror image of Jesus and his life here on earth.

Finally, Paul knows that we don’t have it in us to love our enemies. He doesn’t expect us to manufacture or force ourselves to love our enemies. What he does expect is for us to allow the Holy Spirit to work in us and through us. The outcome of that is that we will see our enemies through His eyes, as hurting, fallen people who need Jesus.

Our children may do things that embarrass us, or that we know are contrary to the Word of God, but they are our children, and we love them and pray for them to have an encounter with God, that they may turn from their sin. We see them differently than everyone else.

It is the same with our Heavenly Father. He sees all sinners as His creation and His children, and He has provided a way for them to turn to Him before it is too late.