

## **Willow River Parish: Clear Lake, Deer Park, and Faith Family**

### **Title: Loving Your Enemies**

### **Lesson: Luke 6:27-38**

*27 "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. 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? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.<sup>[a]</sup> Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

*37 "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."*

In the Old Testament, there are so many rules like how to build a sanctuary, how to worship God, how to make atonement, and what food we can and shouldn't eat. One of them is the Ten Commandments.

By the way, Jesus condensed all these laws into two main rules. What is that? 'Love God and love others.' Therefore, when we do these things we fulfill all of the law. But, is it easy to put this into practice? This is probably one of the most challenging passages of scripture we have. Consider loving others as secondary, how about loving God? Is it easy for you?

Let's think about people in love. They always want to see their partners, they always want to meet them, they want to call, they write letters, they always think about their partners when they eat delicious food, they want to watch interesting movies with them, and they want to share any news, right? And, now, let's think about sports fans. Last Sunday was Super Bowl Sunday. Football fans always think about football. And, their most conversations begin and end with football.

Likewise, people who are in love with something keep thinking about it, and the topics of most of their conversations are the things they love.

Beloved: Do you love God? We confess with our lips that we love God, but do you truly think of God every moment, miss him, love God's Word, and keep meditating God's word like cows chewing the cud and try to follow it in your lives? At any moment, in any situation, are you holding on to only the Lord? It is not easy to even love God in our own strength, so we should read the Bible and pray, and seek God's wisdom and peace every day.

So, how do you think about loving others? The Bible tells specifically who we should love in Luke 6:27-30. Let's read it: <sup>27</sup> "But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup> If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again." At this point, the meaning of others is enemies because even sinners love those who love them. (32) Therefore, what Jesus commands Christians to do is to expand the range of others to enemies beyond family and friends.

Loving our enemies is an important message that shows the essence of Jesus' love. Loving our enemies is the word of a new dimension that is completely different from the previous laws. The passage from Psalm 1 we read last Sunday says the righteous don't walk the way of the wicked. The wicked not only refer to those who commit serious crimes, but also to those who deny God and live according to their own will. Imagine if you are suddenly slapped on the cheek by someone you do not know while walking down the street; you will be very embarrassed. In particular, if the person is smaller than you and seems weaker than you, it is a general mindset that we want to give back double or triple what was hit by them. However, in such a situation, Christians do not follow our will, not our thoughts, but God's will, not to take revenge, but to love and forgive enemies. One example is the bishop and Jean Valjean in the novel *Les Misérables*. The bishop not only invited Jean Valjean, who had no home, to his home, but also provided food and a guest room. But that evening, Jean Valjean took the bishop's silver and disappeared. However, he was soon arrested by the police and returned to Bishop's house. But the priest said instead: "Back so soon? Why didn't you also take the candlesticks I gave you?" and sends him on his way with forgiveness, blessings, and a changed

heart. As a result, Jean Valjean experienced God's love through the bishop for the first time and was born again.

Beloved: God's will, God's love, and God's blessing transform people and give them new life. However, it should not be misunderstood, that loving our enemies does not mean accepting them and compromising with injustice, rather it means resisting with love. As I read today's scripture passages, Mahatma Gandhi came to mind. His ideas of nonviolent resistance are famous. When Britain ruled India, the British distinguished and discriminated between the British and the Indians. British police arrested and even punished Indians for no apparent reason. In response, Gandhi led a movement for Indian independence, in a nonviolent resistance manner. Although many Indians were beaten and arrested by British police during the protests, they resisted nonviolently to the end. They refused to buy British goods, and they were self-sufficient on spinning a wheel. In the end, Britain could not break India's will for independence, and India became an independent country.

In this way, loving our enemies is God's message to forgive them with love and resist them with love, going beyond the common sense of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

The Apostle Paul clearly explains the code of practice for loving enemies in Romans 12. Let's read together: "Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good;" (Romans 12:9) "Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all." (Romans 12:17) "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:21) The Bible tells us to hate evil, but not to hate sinners. It is to resist the worst with the best.

To summarize Jesus' words: It is "Bless those who curse you," "Pray for those who abuse you," "Give to everyone who begs from you," "Do not ask for them again." To summarize these in one sentence again: it is "Do to others as you would have them do to you."(31) This is called the golden rule. At this point, some questions may arise. Why should we love our enemies? Why should we do good to those who hate us, bless those who curse us, and pray for those who insult us? Why should we turn the other cheek to the one who strikes us, and give underwear to those who take our clothes, why should we give to those who ask us, and not think of taking them back from those we have?

This is because Jesus Christ died for us while we were sinners. Because we were enemies of God and God has been gracious with us. In Christ, the Lord has surprised us with mercy, grace, and forgiveness. Therefore, we are called to do the

same for others. We forgive and love them not because they deserve our forgiveness and love, but because God forgave and loved us and created us in His image. Just as He forgave and loves us, He also forgives and loves them, and created them in His image. Loving our enemies means loving the image of God within them.

Jesus' command to love your enemies is so famous, and as Christians, it is right to try to follow his word, but for those who have been deeply hurt or abused, I think it is very difficult or impossible to do, or too painful or uncomfortable. However, what we should remember is loving someone does not mean staying with them. Forgiving someone does not mean accepting their behavior. Self-love and care are also part of our two big rules from Jesus.

Beloved: love is compelling and transformative. Love breaks down barriers and walls. Jesus loved even until the end. Jesus, even as he was dying on the cross, offered forgiveness and love to the thief next to him. He has provided us his infinite love and forgiveness. This is the man we follow and we believe in.

I've talked about loving God and loving others and many other things like Jean Valjean and Gandhi. If you don't know what to remember, I'll give you one last look.

Our denomination: The United Methodist Church made three simple rules: 1) Do no harm. 2) Do good. 3) Stay in love with God. Let's act and do these in our lives. Then, not only will you receive a reward, but you will be transformed in the process. Amen.