



SERIES: Walking with Jesus
SPEAKER: NAT CRAWFORD
Saturday, November 18, 2023
Scripture: Matthew 5:43-48, Leviticus 19:18
TITLE: How to Treat Our Enemies

Do you ever get mad reading the Bible? I'll be honest. I do. There are certain passages that I don't like. I don't get them. I wish I wouldn't have read them. But then I remember it's not about me or my preferences. It's about God and becoming like His Son.

Well, today, as we walk with Jesus, we are going to hear very hard and troubling teaching. What did Jesus say? Jesus said this is Matthew 5:43-48 (CSB).

“You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don't even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

I told you this was a hard teaching. But if it's hard, it is likely right for us.

Jesus says, “You have heard it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” Now, you may have noticed that something is missing and something is added to this teaching. Leviticus 19:18 says,

“Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community, but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the LORD.”

You see, the self-righteous scribes and Pharisees conveniently left out the words “as yourself.” Love others as yourself. And then they added, “and hate your enemy.” The words of Scripture were fully known but only partially taught and practiced. Unfortunately, the rabbinic tradition superseded the word of God. Well, Jesus is going back to the Bible to set the record straight.

Jesus Christ was love incarnate. As His people, we are to display God's love around us. This is probably the most clear and transformative passage about real love. We are called to love our enemies. We are to pray for those who persecute us.

Love that is exclusive to the people who you like or are like you is the love the world offers. The love that Christ offers is scandalous and unmerited. That's why and how we can love the people who hate us, mock us, persecute us, and make our lives miserable.

One practical way is to pray for them. Pray for salvation. Pray for blessing. Pray for healing. And then there are everyday practical ways to display that love.

So here's my challenge for you today: love one person who drives you nuts. Who is that person who has made your life miserable? Whether it's that troll on social media or that neighbor who harasses you, pray for them and then love them through your actions and words.

True Christianity is transformative. Real salvation is counter-cultural. So let's put Christ on display. There's no greater way than loving our enemies.