

Love Like Jesus

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[0 : 00] Matthew chapter 5, verses 43 through 48, as we continue to go through the portion of Jesus! Jesus said, You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His Son rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. I got to add a blessing to the reading of His Word. Would you please be seated?

In a 1958 issue of Christian Century, Dr. Normal Pittenger published an article titled, A Critique of C.S. Lewis. In that article, Dr. Pittenger criticized Lewis for a comment or a statement that Lewis had made about not caring much for the Sermon on the Mount. About a month later, Lewis responded with an article of his own, which was both a rebuttal of Pittenger's criticism and an opportunity for him to explain what he meant. This is a portion of what Lewis wrote.

As to caring for the Sermon on the Mount, if caring for here means liking or enjoying, no one cares for it. Who can like being knocked flat on his face by a sledgehammer? I can hardly imagine a more deadly spiritual condition than of a man who can read that passage with tranquil pleasure.

[2 : 29] That's one of the most accurate and honest statements that I've read about the Sermon on the Mount. From the very beginning of the sermon in verses 2 through 11, Jesus hammers us with a series of of ten beatitudes or blessed statements that humble our hearts. Then in verses 13 through 16, we are struck with the metaphors that instruct us to be salt and light of the world, a high calling.

In verses 17 through 20, Jesus informs us that he is the fulfillment of Scripture and that our righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and the Pharisees if we are to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Then comes six antithesis statements where Jesus raises the bar that the scribes and Pharisees had lowered in regard to the standard that God expects from us. A standard that seems impossible. A standard that if taken to heart, if truly understood, leaves us flat on our face understanding that we cannot measure up. A recognition and humility that in our own strength, in our own power, we can't do it. That can be really discouraging. And yet, these verses, this sermon, is extremely encouraging. On the one hand, Jesus' words lead us to a humble realization that, yes, we can't do this on our own. But that realization leads us to an encouraging one, that though we don't measure up,

Jesus does. And he wouldn't give us these commands if it weren't in some way possible for us to meet these great expectations that he has for us. This sermon, like all sermons, should reveal our sin, reveal our need for a Savior, point to Jesus as that Savior, and proclaim the grace and the help he provides to make us more and more like him. The goal, I think, of every sermon should be to persuade people to see their need for Jesus and stir up within them a desire to be more like Jesus. The commands that Jesus gives in this sermon are commands that we see throughout the Bible, commands that he expects us to obey. But they're commands that we understand we cannot obey in our own power, but they are commands that we can obey in his power. Look with me at what Jesus said about this in John 14, verses 15 through 17. Jesus is meeting with his disciples, his crucifixion is moments away, and he says to them, if you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another helper to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. Jesus promised his disciples

that his death would secure greater things for them, both salvation for sinners and a helper who would guide them, instruct them, and empower them to obey

Jesus as he makes them more like Jesus through the internal transformation that he brings in the new birth, in salvation, and in the sanctification process as he continually works within those he's saved, causing them to reflect Jesus more and more and more. Later in that same discourse, Jesus said in John 15, 12 through 17, this is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing, but I have called you friends. For all that I have heard from my Father, I have made known to you.

[7 : 13] You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide. So whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. These things I command you so that you will love one another. The things Jesus commands us to do are things that he's empowered us to obey, things he's empowered us to do, things that we can do because we've been empowered through the Holy Spirit who indwells us the moment we're saved. And I bring this truth to your attention this morning because in our text today, Jesus confronts us with a command that requires his supernatural power for us to be able to obey, which is to love like him. So the main idea for this morning's sermon is that being a Christian means loving like Jesus. Being a Christian means loving like Jesus. This is the last of six antithesis statements Jesus makes in, again, the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest man who ever lived. Jesus is once again raising the standard of God's words that the scribes and the

Pharisees lowered through their external legalistic actions, which they believe made them righteous in God's eyes. But God sees through our actions. He sees into our hearts and what motivates those actions.

Jesus again shows us that the matter of a person's righteousness is a matter of the heart. A Christian can love like Jesus because they have experienced the love of Jesus in salvation. They can love even their enemies because they know that they were once an enemy of God, who through the love of God, have been reconciled to Him through His life, His death, and the resurrection of His Son, Jesus Christ.

John 3.16 tells us that it is the love of God that motivated Him to send His Son to die in the place of sinners that by faith in Him they receive eternal life. It is the supernatural love of God.

God that saves us. It is the supernatural love of God which Jesus, His Son, embodied and which motivated His mission to die as a sacrifice on the cross to atone for sinners, to bring us into the love of God, a love which we are empowered by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to reflect to those who, like us, don't deserve it. In our text this morning, Jesus provides the most expansive and concentrated expression, I think, of what it means to be a Christian.

[10 : 32] It means loving like Him. In these verses, Jesus provides us with two aspects of what it means for us to love like Him.

Christian, Jesus commands you. He expects you to love like Him because He's empowered you to be able to do that.

If you're an unbeliever this morning, I'm glad you're here. And what I hope that you'll hear and understand right now is that apart from Christ's saving someone, you are an enemy of God.

Your sin, all of your sin, ultimately is committed against God. You are an enemy of God. But hear this. God's desire for you is not that you will remain His enemy, but that you will become His child. His desire for you is to be reconciled to Him. His desire for you is that you be a recipient of His love through faith in Jesus, His Son, who makes sinners righteous in God's sight.

[11 : 59] And so my hope and my prayer for you is that the Lord today opens your eyes and your heart this morning to see your need for Jesus and to turn to Him so that you will experience the supernatural love of God.

So again, two aspects of what it means for us to love like Jesus because being a Christian means loving like Jesus. The first aspect we see from our text this morning is simply this, that Jesus commands us to love our enemies like Him.

At the beginning of verse 43, Jesus again says, You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. Here is yet another example of a principle taught in Scripture that the scribes and the Pharisees misinterpreted, misapplied, and in this case, manipulated.

Look at what God said about loving your neighbor in the Old Testament in Leviticus chapter 19, verse 18. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.

I am the Lord. The first way the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees manipulated God's command about their love for others in Scripture was by omission.

[13 : 28] They omitted the command from God that they were not to just love their neighbors, but they were to love their neighbors as themselves.

They further manipulated the command by adding the phrase, And hate your enemies. Why would they do that?

Well, they believed, I think, on the one hand, that they were justified by adding that statement, given their history as the people of God.

God commanded their ancestors to take the promised land by force from the Canaanite peoples who had occupied it. Also, they were familiar with the imprecatory Psalms, Psalms which called for God's judgment against enemies.

And imprecation is a curse that invokes misfortune on someone. Imprecatory Psalms are those whose author imprecates or calls down calamity and destruction through God's anger and judgment against enemies.

[14 : 42] For example, Psalm 139, verses 19 through 22, David says, Oh, that you would slay the wicked, O God.

O men of blood, depart from me. They speak against you with malicious intent. Your enemies take your name in vain. Do I not hate those who hate you, O Lord?

And do I not loathe those who rise up against you? I hate them with complete hatred. I count them my enemies.

You can hear David's indignation. You can hear his outrage. He says, I hate them with complete hatred.

Those are strong words, aren't they? Could you imagine someone saying that to you? You know what? I hate you with complete hatred.

[15 : 46] In the Hebrew, complete to cleath can be translated as perfect or end. This signals to us that David's hatred was righteously motivated and limited.

It was motivated by a righteous love for God and limited to God's righteous justice and judgment.

Because look at how David ends that same psalm. After he says those imprecating things, he says this, Search me, O God, and know my heart.

Try me and know my thoughts. And see if there be any grievous way in me and lead me in the way everlasting. David pleaded with God to search his heart to ensure that his attitude towards his enemies was unstained by a sinful desire to avenge himself in a way that sought revenge instead of justice.

In Psalm 3, there's another imprecation of David's. In verse 7, he says, Arise, O Lord, save me, O my God, for you strike all my enemies on the cheek, you break the teeth of the wicked.

[17 : 14] The enemies in this case are David's son Absalom and the army he raised up in rebellion against David. David loved Absalom.

And he wept bitterly, the Bible tells us, in 2 Samuel 18. He wept bitterly when Absalom died. But he knew that his son was ungodly and the enemy of God and of God's people.

So David prayed for Absalom's defeat, which he deserved, even though he loved him.

And because he loved him, he took no delight in his demise. There needs to be a balance like that and our desire as Christians to defend the honor and glory of God by desiring the defeat of those who reject him, oppose him, mock him, and encourage others to do the same.

With a desire, a greater desire, that those same people will turn to God and be saved before they face his judgment and his wrath.

[18 : 43] Sometimes we experience something so miserable that to articulate the depths of our misery will say this, I wouldn't wish it on my worst enemy.

Earlier this month, I was cutting down a bunch of brush behind our fence in the backyard. And unbeknownst to me, in the midst of all of this shrubbery was poison ivy, which I'm allergic to.

And even though I was pretty well covered, I got poison ivy rash not on my feet, so it wasn't head to toe, but it was head to thighs.

And worse of all, I had it around my left eye. Some of you guys saw that. It looked like I had been punched by somebody in the face. And I remember sitting on our couch and covered in poison ivy and itchy and realizing it's going to be like this for at least one more week.

I wouldn't wish this on my worst enemy. In the Bible, hell is described as a far more wretched, terrible, and misery without end.

[20 : 19] hell is a place Jesus describes, a place of unquenchable fire. He describes it as a place where there's endless weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Those who reject God's love, reject His deliverance from that place through Jesus Christ, His Son, and they will spend their eternity there.

It's an eternal misery that all of us should desire even the worst of our enemies to be saved from.

So we must balance our desire for God's justice with God's love.

The scribes and the Pharisees had no such balance. They had no love for justice, only vengeance. They had no love for their enemies, only for themselves.

They had no conception of righteous indignation and righteous love. They hated everyone who was not like them. They hated everyone who did not love them and they felt justified in doing that.

[21 : 45] And so Jesus continues in verse 44 with another statement that would have shocked their sinful hearts. He says, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

John MacArthur said, here is the most powerful teaching in Scripture about the meaning of love, the love of God that commands of His people to love so great that it even embraces enemies.

People tend to base their love on the desirability of the object of their love.

Most people often choose to love things that fulfill a personal need that they have. We love people who are like us.

We love people who make us feel good about ourselves. We love people who agree with us on just about everything. We love objects that make us feel good about ourselves too.

[22 : 51] But true love, God's love, is not need-oriented. Jesus perfectly illustrated that truth in the parable of the Good Samaritan.

Jesus told this parable in response to a question asked by a lawyer or a scribe who sought to trap Him. The lawyer's question was, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

So the lawyer's question provides insight into the condition of his heart, doesn't it? He assumed that people must do something to obtain eternal life. And Jesus answered his question with some questions of his own.

Luke 10, 26 through 29. Jesus said to him, What is written in the law? How do you read it? And the scribe, the lawyer, 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?

He didn't omit that part. And Jesus said to him, You have answered correctly. Do this and you will live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, And who is my neighbor?

[24 : 14] The parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus tells after that question is the story about a man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho who was robbed, beaten, and who was left for dead.

A priest came by, later a Levite came by, they came across the beaten man and they did nothing to help him. These are men who knew the Old Testament scriptures, men who would have known God's command to love by showing compassion to those who were in need, but they did nothing. And the third person who comes by in that parable is a Samaritan. Jews hated Samaritans. They saw them as a defiled race, they saw them as a lower class of people, and we don't know what race the injured man in Jesus' parable was because it doesn't matter.

That's part of the point. The Samaritan didn't consider whether he should help the man based on his religion or based on his race. He saw a man in desperate need of assistance and that's what he did.

He assisted him going above and going beyond what was expected. The Samaritan saw his neighbor as anyone who was in need.

[25 : 43] And at the conclusion of Jesus' parable, he asked the lawyer another question, verses 36 through 37. Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?

The lawyer said, the one who showed him mercy, and Jesus said to him, you go and do likewise. Notice the lawyer's answer.

He says the one who showed mercy. He can't even bring himself to say the word Samaritan because he is of his hate for Samaritans.

His hate for them was so strong. He didn't want to acknowledge Jesus' definition of neighbor which encompassed anyone in need, even a despised enemy.

Jesus commanded a love like God's, a love that extends to those in need. What an outsider, what an unbeliever needs most is to believe the gospel and be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus Christ.

[26 : 57] And you know what? You and I will not be very effective in reaching the lost through hate. If the good news is shared with a hateful attitude, the person hearing it won't believe that what you're saying has done really any good for you.

They won't believe you. Jesus continues in verse 45 with a reason why Christians must obey his command to love enemies. He says in verse 45, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Jesus makes the point to his Jewish audience that, hey, you know those Samaritans, those Gentiles that you despise?

God causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall on their lands just as much as he does yours. God extends a measure of grace to all.

His love motivates him to do that, so why should you be any different? In fact, if you truly belong to him, if you've truly received his supernatural love and salvation, you prove it by how you extend that same love to those who don't deserve it.

[28 : 30] love and love being a Christian means loving like Jesus and Jesus commands us to love our enemies like him. From the cross, remember, Jesus prayed that God the Father would forgive his enemies, those who orchestrated his brutal death.

faith. When people mock our faith, when they mock you for following Christ, is your first thought, Father, forgive them for they do not know what they do, or is it God, smite them, destroy them? Is your indignation balanced? With love. We come now to the second aspect of what it means for us to love like Jesus, and that second aspect comes through a challenge that Jesus presents to us. And so, the second aspect, Jesus challenges our commitment to love like him. In these verses, Jesus asks four questions that challenge us to see just how committed we are to love our enemies like him.

In verse 46, he says, for if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? The Jewish audience listening to this sermon would have not missed Jesus' point.

[30 : 10] The thought for us of the IRS or of paying taxes in our day, it doesn't bring cheerful thoughts to our minds, does it?

It doesn't give us butterflies in our stomachs. When you see your pay stub and you see how much the government took from you, you're not like, oh, that makes me feel warm and happy inside. If it does, I'll be praying for you. The Roman Empire, though, used a tax system in which the government would designate how much money was to be collected in a specific area, and then they would hire someone from that area to collect that tax.

Each tax collector had to collect and turn in that amount to Rome, but they were allowed to collect even more, and whatever more they collected, they kept for themselves.

So tax collectors were very rich people. And the Jewish people saw these Jewish tax collectors as double-crossing, backstabbing, two-faced swindlers.

[31 : 24] They hated them. They hated them. In their mind, they're thinking, you have no love for us, you have no love for your people, you have no allegiance to us, your allegiance is to Rome, we hate you.

And Jesus says, even those hated, despised, sinful people, and they're sinful. Even they have love for those who are like them.

So if a person only loves their friends, only loves people who are like them, they aren't demonstrating a love any different than crooked, corrupt tax collectors. Jesus underscores this point with what He says next in verse 47.

And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? In other words, being a Christian means demonstrating a love in ways that exceed

what is common amongst unbelievers.

Martin Lloyd-Jones said, this is kind of a lengthy quote, but it's good, the Christian is the person who is above and goes beyond the natural man at the very best and highest.

[32 : 41] There are many people in the world who are not Christian, but who are very moral and highly ethical, men whose word is their bond and who are scrupulous and honest and just and upright.

You never find them doing a shady thing to anybody, but they are not Christian and they say so. They do not believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and may have rejected the whole of the New Testament teaching with scorn, but they are absolutely straightforward, honest, and true.

Now, the Christian by definition here is a person who is capable of doing something that the best natural person cannot do. They go beyond and they do more than that.

They exceed. They are separate from all others and not only from the worst among others, but from the very best and highest among them. This is the challenge.

The challenge of being Christian. The challenge of bearing the cross that Jesus told us that we must bear to follow Him. The challenge of loving others like Jesus. There must be more to our love.

[33 : 54] Ask yourself, is there something about my love that cannot be explained in natural terms? Is there something special and unique about my love for others that is different and that isn't present in the life of someone who does not know or follow Jesus?

In 1546, George Wishart, a Scottish reformer, was sentenced to die for preaching the gospel and upholding the truths proclaimed in Scripture.

Wishart was to be hanged from a gibbet. You know what a gibbet is? It's kind of like a gallows, but it doesn't strangle the person that just holds them there. And he was to be held there while a fire was lit underneath him and he burned to death.

The executioner assigned to carry out Wishart's sentence was familiar with Wishart's ministry. He witnessed the selfless ways that he had ministered to hundreds of people who were dying of the plague.

The executioner was hesitant to bring about such a vicious death to such a loving man. When Wishart saw the expression of remorse on his executioner's face, he went over to him and he kissed him on the cheek and he said, Sir, may that be a token that I forgive you.

[35 : 38] only the supernatural love of Christ can compel someone to do that. More recently, I heard a story about a woman who recently returned with her family from the mission field.

They moved into a nice home, which she had fun decorating, and they were quickly getting settled in. But there was a problem, they soon discovered, and that problem was their next door neighbors, whose yard looked like a desert.

Many of their windows were cracked and broken. Their parents shouted obscenities when they were outside at one another. Their children urinated in the front yard, and they wreaked all kinds of havoc in their neighborhood.

The final straw was when one of those neighbor kids climbed over her fence and threw a can of orange paint, splattering it all across the back of her house.

Needless to say, this Christian lady was pretty upset. She did not like her neighbors. She was not happy with the Lord for putting her family where he did.

[36 : 55] Realizing, though, that her heart wasn't right, she got on her knees, and she prayed. And this is what she prayed. Lord, you know that I don't like these people at all.

God, help me to love them. Though she didn't feel any different, she said, after she prayed, she did act different. She baked her neighbors a pie, and she took it over to them.

She began establishing a relationship with them as she prayed for them. Though her neighbors, as far as she could tell, hadn't changed she did. And when the neighbors moved away, you know what she did?

She didn't shout for joy. She didn't say, Lord, you finally answered my prayer. You know what she did? She says she wept. She wept. She wept. Why did she weep?

Because she realized that she would no longer be able to have the opportunity to continue to share and to show the love of Christ with her neighbors who she knew needed it.

[38 : 06] God had changed her heart. How about you? Has God changed your heart? That difficult neighbor? That annoying co-worker?

That classmate? That student teachers? That bully? That relative? Or how about this?

That church member? Would you be upset if you learned today that they are moving away because you realized that you would no longer have the regular, consistent opportunity to show them and to tell them about Jesus?

those are examples of people who knew the supernatural love of Christ in salvation and by the inner transforming work of the Holy Spirit sought to be like Jesus and desired to fulfill his command and answer his challenge that he lays out in this passage which is summarized by what he says in verse 48.

He says, you therefore must be perfect, perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. God's expectation is clear even if in our efforts it seems impossible.

[39 : 29] We aren't perfect, but Jesus is. And his righteousness, his sinlessness, his perfect life is what we receive, it's what we're clothed with when he saves us.

we are totally forgiven, completely redeemed, indwelt by his Spirit who empowers us with a desire to pursue Christ likeness, to pursue righteousness.

Being a Christian means we are in the process of being made more like Jesus every day, little by little, day by day. We are headed towards the completion of our salvation which is glorification.

Who and what we will be then in eternity should impact how we live and how we love and how we conduct ourselves today.

That's John's encouragement in 1 John 3, 2-3. Beloved, we are God's children now and what we will be has not yet appeared, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him because we shall see him as he is and everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself right now as he is pure.

[40 : 53] Because we have experienced the supernatural love of Jesus, because we have a certain hope that we are becoming and being made more like him and will one day fully be like him, we pursue purity right now as he is pure.

we pursue his righteousness and we choose to love others even those who are really hard to love, even those we would rather not love.

Because that's what Jesus did. Jesus didn't love you because you were righteous. In love he died to make you righteous.

He gave his life to give you life. He sacrificed himself to make you, me, an enemy of God, become a child of God.

Romans 5, 7 through 8 says, for one will scarcely die for a righteous person, though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die.

[42 : 03] But God shows his love for us, and that while we were still sinners, while we were still enemies, of his, Christ died for us.

So how should we adjust our lives according to what we've heard in God's word today? Well, I think it's simply the change your attitude towards your enemies. Change your attitude towards your enemies.

Does your indignation towards the ways unbelievers mock Jesus lead you to pray for them first or to despise them? It's not wrong to be indignant, but understand that Satan can use that, and I think he does use this world to provoke our anger in order to lead us into sin.

So speak the truth, yes, but speak the truth in love. doesn't mean you accept what they're saying, doesn't mean that you like what they're saying, but use those opportunities to point them to the hope that you have in Jesus.

And you know, we should have pity on those who make themselves enemies of God, because we know what that hopeless end will be for them.

[43 : 35] They will experience, they will endure the wrath of God forever and ever if they refuse his love and forgiveness through faith in Jesus Christ.

And it's our task. Jesus has commanded us to go and make disciples of all nations, of all people, of our enemies.

and you won't share the gospel well. We won't share the gospel well if we have more hate than love in our heart. And in a way, loving your enemies can bring out the best in you because it reveals that you follow Jesus.

So think about it right now. Who is your enemy? Think about them right now. Who is your enemy? Now think about this.

How much have you prayed for them this past week? Have you prayed for them at all? How often have you tried to show the love of Christ to them?

[44 : 55] how many times have you gone out of your way to say, I'm just going to do something to try to show this person that even though they may hate me and I don't really like them, that I follow Jesus.

And then I encourage you, ask for God's help to change your attitude towards your enemies. But understand this, there must be a balance. balance. There must be a balance.

We know as the church, we know as Christians, our commissioning from our Lord is to go and to make disciples. So yes, we've seen Scripture, we've seen the imprecatory Psalms, we know that there should be indignation whenever we see people mock and malign the name of Jesus Christ who has saved us, who is our Lord, who is our King, who is our Master.

But yes, we should love them and we should hope that despite what they're saying, despite what they're doing, that they would be saved by the supernatural love of Jesus Christ.

Too much indignation and we will not share the gospel. We'll say, forget you, your end is coming, we know what it is, you're just going to burn and you deserve it. And we won't fulfill our commissioning.

[46 : 12] But if there's too much love without the indignation, it's not really love. It's not really love because you know what, in that case we're going to say, why share the gospel with them? In many ways because Jesus, God just loves everybody and everybody is saved.

We know that's not true. So there must be a balance. Pray that God would change your heart towards your enemies. Pray that there would be that balance.

And if you're here this morning and you've heard the gospel, understand that apart from Christ there is no hope for you. None. Your end is eternity in hell.

That's it. That's what the Bible says. That's what Jesus said. But today through his word, he's reaching out to you and he's saying, turn to me and you'll be forgiven.

Turn to me and you will receive my love. Turn to me and you will be transformed. You will have new and abundant life. Turn to him. I plead with you today.

[47 : 11] And if you do so, I'll be down here. You can come find me, Pastor Tyler. Father, we want to know, we want to encourage you. Right now, let's go to the Lord in prayer. Lord, these are hard things for us to hear.

Because, Lord, so often we feel like we are justified to hate our enemies. because so often our enemies are people who hate us without us having done anything to them.

They just choose to hate us. But, Lord, you told us that it wouldn't be any different for us than it was for you. They hated you too. And you were sinless and you were perfect.

And you never did anything to harm anyone. And yet, God, you tell us to follow in your example, to love our enemies. And you've shown us that example by the love that you've given to us and by what we've read in your word and what we know what is true about your life.

And, God, though these are hard commands, you haven't left us without the ability to obey them. You've given us your spirit. God, I pray that we would be guided by him.

[48 : 30] That, Lord, when he prompts us to love in supernatural ways, that we would be obedient to that prompting instead of feeling justified to hold on to a grudge or seek revenge or just choose to hate.

But, God, we also know that there must be a balance. That, Lord, as we've heard already in your word, we're not to be passive pushovers. We're to speak the truth, but we're to do so in a loving way. We're right to be indignant when your name is malign.

But, Lord, we should seek to have those conversations in the hope that those people who we converse with would see the love of Christ in us and would see something different, something supernatural that only you are able to do.

And that, God, in hopes of that, they will be saved and that they will know the love that you have caused us to know. God, help us identify who is our enemies.

And, Lord, help us to identify the opportunities that you give us to love them and to pray for them, to speak the truth to them in the hopes, Lord, that you will save them.

[49 : 40] We ask for your help to do this. And we know, Lord, that you give us the ability to follow through with what you command. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Thank you.