

Loving the Unloving

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Date: 12 May 2013

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[0 : 00] Let's take our Bibles and turn them to our text for this morning.

! Luke chapter 6, verses 27 through 36. ! Luke chapter 6, starting with verse 27.

If your Bible has the words of Jesus in red, then you know right off, it's Jesus who's speaking. But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who spitefully use you.

To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

Give to everyone who asks of you, and from him who takes away your goods, do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

[1 : 28] But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?

For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.

But love your enemies, do good and lend, hoping for nothing in return. And your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

Therefore, be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. All right? Now, the place to begin is, at least I'm compelled to begin this way, is to remind you of the context of this passage.

That's always what we need to keep in focus, keep in mind when we are studying God's Word. And for me, it is extremely important, of course, in the preparation of, and the delivering of, a portion of Scripture through preaching.

[2 : 47] Context, very, very important. That is, what I'm talking about when I say the context, I'm talking about, what is going on in the larger text, okay? Not just what we've just read, but the larger portion of Scripture.

We need to keep the context in our minds. And so, for those of you who were not here last Sunday, and really, also for those of you who were here last Sunday, let's consider the context.

The larger portion of Scripture, of which this text is a part, began, or begins, with a key event, very key event, and that is, Jesus calls a select number of disciples, and He calls and selects, out of these disciples, a select number of apostles, 12 of them.

All right? Remember, that's how this portion of the chapter begins. That's the context. Jesus prays all night, on the mountain, remember?

Then, when He finishes, He selects His disciples, and His apostles, and together they come down from the mountain, and a large crowd is gathered there, to hear what Jesus has to say, and also to be healed, and Jesus accommodates them, He heals them.

[4 : 13] After which, Jesus has found a kind of level place, there on the side of the mountain, and He, the Bible says, fixed His eyes, or His gaze, upon His disciples, and taught them.

Taught them. Now, what we have here, of course, is Luke's record, of the Sermon on the Mount, much shorter version, than you'll find in Matthew's Gospel, and I think also, slightly different emphasis, here in Luke, than in Matthew's account, and so we have the Sermon on the Mount, and so Jesus is doing what?

He's teaching. He's teaching His disciples, the disciples He has just selected, the disciples He has just called, and His apostles, and so He's teaching His disciples, and since we too are His disciples, He's teaching us.

What He has to say here, is for us as well. All right now, what is the first thing, out of His mouth? Essentially, it is, you're blessed.

That's the first thing, He says to them. He sets His gaze, upon His disciples, and He says this, you are blessed. Now, you know, they certainly, would have enjoyed that, right?

[5 : 31] And we also, think that sounds pretty good. You're blessed. And so, that's what Jesus says. He says to them, says to us, you're blessed, my poor, hungry, weeping, hated disciples.

That's what I've signed you up for. Now, that doesn't sound so good, does it? And yet, as we considered last week, Jesus is saying this, really, He's saying that my definition of blessed is completely different from yours.

It's radically different from that of the world. You are blessed because my favor, God's favor, is on you. And so, rejoice, even when you are poor, hungry, weeping, and hated because of me.

Why? Because great is your reward in heaven. Remember, we talked about all this last week.

That's the context. Because Jesus has not finished preaching. He has more to His sermon, and we're going to continue with that here this morning.

So, we can go forward now. We have the context. And so, Jesus is continuing to preach, to teach, to prepare His chosen, beloved, favored disciples, which again, includes us.

[6 : 50] And what does He say next? Well, He's preaching a sermon. It's a sermon on the mount. And so, what or how does He introduce His second point to the sermon?

Well, I want to tell you right now that if you didn't like His first point, you're certainly not going to like His second one. Jesus said, but I say to you who hear, love your enemies.

Love your enemies. Now, how do you like that one? Huh? Make you feel good inside? Get you all excited? Love your enemies. We would say, Jesus, you have gone from preaching to meddling.

Okay? I've got news for you. Very serious news for every one of you. Myself included, of course.

Every one of us here today must not only hear what Jesus has to say, but we must act upon it. Not a single one of us can wiggle out of this, though we would like to.

[7 : 57] And I would say that in a sense you can sort of wiggle out or wiggle your way out of what Jesus said in His first point. I mean, you can kind of opt out of that in a sense because you might say, well, I'll be sure and remember that if these things happen to me.

Or, I'll take action, the kind of action that I think is suggested in your first point, Jesus, if, if, and I say if, and when for the cause of Christ I have to become poor and hungry and weeping and hated, but right now I don't see that happening.

It's certainly not happening now and I don't really think it will happen. But, if it does. And so you see, you can kind of wiggle your way out of that one. but, you know what that's a sure sign of?

That you're taking what Jesus is teaching us and you're taking it as theory rather than truth. You ever done that with scripture? Just take it as kind of theory?

A theory and not necessarily a real truth, a fact. And I would say to you that you cannot, you cannot, I repeat, cannot wiggle out of what Jesus is saying and commanding us here in verses 27 and following.

[9 : 22] You can't wiggle out of it. There's no way to avoid it. And if you will listen with open hearts I guarantee you that no one will leave here today without being challenged to the depth of your soul.

And when I'm finished here this morning each of you, every one of you will have to decide just what you're going to do with what Jesus says. here. Every single one of us. Because what Jesus is talking about is a real life experience for us right now.

And so you're going to have to decide what you're going to do here. Now what's the theme? Well the theme is love. I mean just basically, very generally, the theme is love.

The Greek word that Jesus chose to use here is agapao in the Greek. That's agape, agape love.

And you know something about that. You've heard preachers preach on agape love since you first became a Christian.

And so we're talking here about divine love. The theme is love. Very clearly. But the larger subject is, I would define it this way, loving the unloving.

[10 : 31] I'm not talking about loving the unlovable. That's a different issue. I'm talking about the loving, the unloving. Those who do not love you back. In fact, those who not only do not love you back, but they hate you.

Or they're against you. Or they are your enemies. Or however it might manifest itself. And it manifests itself in a number of ways. We're talking about loving the unloving.

And Jesus is saying, if we could boil it down to one kind of command, he's saying, all my disciples, my disciples, are those who love the unloving.

That's what we are. That's the kind of disciples we're to be. All right, now, let's see then what Jesus says about this kind of love. What kind of love is it?

Loving the unloving. Let's see what he has to say about it. In the first place, loving the unloving is, I'm sorry, but it is a required love for all of Jesus' disciples.

[11 : 34] This kind of love is not just some higher level of love that maybe you'll reach, maybe you won't, or maybe you'd aspire to, maybe you just won't make it. It is a love that is required of you right now.

Every one of Jesus' disciples are required to love the unloving. And it's very obvious from the text, there's no way to avoid it, no way to explain it away.

Verses 27 through 31 contain, I'll just tell you, these verses contain no fewer than nine imperative verbs. Nine imperative verbs, which means what?

It means that each phrase in these verses is in the form of a command. It's a command. Love your enemies. That's a command. Now, you didn't need me to tell you about the Greek grammar to know that.

You can read it for yourself. It's just very clear. Love your enemies. That's clearly a command. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who spitefully use you.

[12 : 41] To him who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other also. From him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic also, or either. Give to everyone who asks you.

From him who takes away your goods, do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. These are all commands.

Every single one of them. Commands. Nine of them. Nine imperatives. Nine commands for his disciples to obey. Loving the unloving is required of all true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That's just it. love. I want you to notice though, and this kind of helps us with these commands, there are, we could call them steps that are required before this kind of teaching will not only take root, but also bear fruit.

And I would say that there are four steps here. Four steps. Four kind of required expressions of this type of love.

[13 : 51] The first one is that Jesus requires that we be attentive. This is where we have to start.

You have to be attentive to this. See, we're not speaking in theories here, not just some sacred platitude that we have found here in Scripture that's nice that we might, well, probably would not put on any plaque on our walls, but we're not talking about theories, we're talking about facts.

This is truth. And Jesus requires that we be attentive to it. He said in verse 27, but I say to you who, what? Hear. You who hear.

And we're not just, of course, talking about, you know, the eardrums and the kind of the physical process of hearing something like you would hear any other kind of sound.

It's more than that, of course. He's talking about hearing with the intent to obey. Now, he's speaking to his disciples, the ones he personally chose to favor with his redeeming love, and that includes all of us, but he knows their hearts.

He knows that some of them, maybe many of them, maybe to some degree all of them, are going to have a hard time hearing what he has to say here. They're going to have a hard time with that.

[15 : 08] And he also knows that some of them, anyway, will absolutely not hear what he has to say. just as he knows these things about us here today. He knows that many of us have a hard time hearing this.

And he also knows that some of us are going to leave here this morning with no intention whatsoever of obeying these commands. Now, I don't know who you are, but I know that there are some here.

You hear this, and then that's all. No intention of obeying. But Jesus says, you who hear with the intent to obey, that's what he's talking about.

And brother, that applies to all of Scripture, doesn't it? Not just to these hard to receive, hard to obey commands, but all of Scripture. We're to hear it in that way. Hearing it with the intent to obey, that's something that goes much deeper than just the faculty of hearing things, the intent to obey. You who are, he's saying, you who are attentive to my word, love the unloving. That's what he's saying.

[16 : 25] And that's where we must start. It has to start there. With ears, the ears of your heart, let's put it that way, the ears of your heart open. And really more than that, with your mind made up.

Willing to hear and obey God's word. Attentive. Are you attentive? Second, Jesus requires that we be active.

This is not a passive love. It would be easy for us to be passive in this and say, well, I do love my enemies and then do nothing to show that.

This is an active love. In terms of grammar, all Greek verbs have a certain form, the way they're spelled, what comes at the front of it, what comes at the end, prefix, suffix, they have different forms.

And every Greek verb, you can just jot this down, person. They have what is called voice, tense, mood, and person. All right, big deal.

[17:45] Well, let me explain. I've already mentioned the mood of each of these verbs. They're imperative. That's a mood of a verb.

They're imperative. That means these are all commands to be obeyed. All right, we've already covered that. also the verb has person. And the person of each of these verbs, these nine here that I read a moment ago, the person is plural as opposed to singular.

That have any meaning for us? Well, it means that these commands are for all disciples collectively. None are exempt from this. The tense, the tense of the verb, is present.

Present tense. Meaning? What? Now. Very good, thank you. Now. And not just simply now, because if it's a present tense, every time you read it, it's always now.

And so the idea is now and always. Love your enemies. Love the unloving. But what I want to highlight here is what grammarians call the voice of the verb.

[19:04] The voice. The voice of each verb is active. I'm serious. It's spelled a certain way to tell us. That the author who wrote, who spoke and then later wrote, is meaning that these verbs be acted out.

Well, verbs are action words, aren't they? actions. But here's the idea. To be active. And what does that mean? Well, you know what it means. You don't have to be a Greek grammarian or scholar to figure this out.

Loving your enemies, doing good to those who hate you, blessing those who curse you, praying for those who mistreat you, and so forth and so forth. These are all action.

Actions to take. They're active. They're substantive. Which, by the way, is the nature of agape love. And if it's not this, then it's not agape love.

That means it's not only, not only says so. This kind of love not only says so. It also does so. That's very important to note.

[20:15] Now, these are just kind of building the foundation. Be attentive. Be attentive. That is, listen with the intent to obey. This kind of love, loving the unloving, is an active thing.

It's active. And that leads to a second thing. A third, rather. And that is that Jesus requires that we be reactive. Reactive in this kind of love.

Now, it's certainly not reactive in the way that you're thinking. Okay. Look at verse 29. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also.

That's a reaction. It's reactive. And from him who takes away your cloak or coat, do not withhold your tunic or shirt either.

Give to everyone who asks of you, and from him who takes away your goods, do not ask them back. These are all specifically directed toward a kind of activity that is reactive.

[21:19] That is, the act has already been done and you are reacting to the act. Okay. And really, when you read these verses, you know, this is pretty tough. Tough stuff.

I mean, it's tough enough just to do it. It's really tough to understand what he's talking about. I mean, are we to take this literally? Absolutely literally. I mean, every jot and tittle, literally, no less, no more.

I read a story about a certain Irish boxer who had become a Christian, later became an evangelist. And one day he was setting up his tent for a revival meeting in a certain city and some of the locals came out to heckle him, you know, give him a hard time.

In fact, one of them even took a swing at him, hit him on the jaw and knocked him down to the ground. So the preacher got up and he pointed to the other jaw. And so the guy clobbered the other jaw too and knocked him down to the ground.

And so the preacher got up and this time he took off his coat and rolled up his sleeves and clenched his fists and he said, the Lord gave me no further instructions. And pow, he led into it. That's funny,

isn't it?

[22 : 28] But that's taking the text very literally, isn't it? And I think the preacher has missed the point and we missed the point by taking it, maybe trying to take it too literally.

is that the way that God wants us to take this? Should we take verse 30 literally as well?

Give to everyone who asks of you and from him who takes away your goods, do not ask them in back. We need to take that very literally. Leon Morris wrote of this verse, he said, if Christians took this one absolutely literally, there would soon be only two classes of people in the world, a class of saintly paupers owning nothing and another class of prosperous idlers and thieves.

The Lord, and I want to be very careful here, the Lord is not requiring a strict literalism here. I can show you a number of other passages in the Bible that teach what seems to be a contrary law or instruction.

So be careful, don't take this very literally, but also we're just as likely to miss the point by focusing too much on what we think Jesus does not mean. I mean, you can go both ways, both extremes, and have problems.

[23 : 56] I mean, if you just simply focus on what he said here in these verses and then try to come up with what he's not talking about or certain scenarios that do not apply, and he certainly doesn't mean this, he certainly doesn't mean that or this, if you totally focus upon that, then you're going to miss the point.

You risk really explaining the whole principle away, because then it doesn't apply to any scenario. You need to be careful about strict literalism, and also careful about kind of a strict figurativism. That's not a word, but you understand what I mean, where we just kind of make it figurative or symbolic, and it just really doesn't mean anything. See, what we need to understand is this is a principle.

There's a principle to be taught here, and he's using some scenarios that are quite shocking, and he does so not because he's trying to list all the possible scenarios, he couldn't do that.

He's doing kind of the shock treatment to have us really understand what the overarching principle is and what it is. It's really quite simple. Loving the unloving in a reactive way requires that we never retaliate, though we really want to, not even in our own hearts and minds.

[25 : 18] We don't retaliate. And also, we don't exact any personal vengeance when someone does us wrong. I heard about a young soldier who was experiencing the joys of boot camp.

I don't know how the word joy fits in there. But this young man was a strong believer, a Christian, very strong Christian, which of course didn't set very well with many of his fellow soldiers.

I mean, they were pretty cruel most of the time. And they did so because he was different. He didn't cuss.

He didn't drink. He didn't tell dirty jokes. Didn't look at pornography. And worse, in their eyes, every night he would sit on his bunk and read his Bible before he went to bed.

And he would kneel by his bed and pray before he went to sleep. And many of his fellow soldiers just hated that. Really gave him a hard time about it.

[26 : 28] And one evening, after a long march in the rain, one of his antagonists took both of his muddy boots and threw them across the barracks and hit that young soldier in the face, first on one side, then on the other.

And in response, the young man just picked up the boots and set them on the floor by his bed and went to bed. To the surprise of the other soldier, he found his boots the next morning cleaned and polished and sitting by his bunk.

You see the difference? You see the principle? Reactive love. And not only did this soldier, I think, exhibit the proper reaction to loving the unloving, but he also acted as well.

Something else. Fourth, Jesus requires that we be proactive. Proactive. Verse 31 contains what we commonly call the golden rule.

people. And in this version, it reads like this, and just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them also. Exactly how we've memorized it.

[27 : 46] In fact, I prefer the NIV translation. As a matter of fact, because of the word order, here is how it's rendered in the NIV. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

That gives a little different connotation, doesn't it? Really brings out the sense of the words that are used, the grammar. Do to others what you would want them to do to you.

You always do to the unloving what you would want them to do to you. That is, not only does that highlight the kind of act, the action there, but it also highlights the fact that you take the initiative. You take the initiative. The word do is an interesting word, and it carries the idea of being the author of a thing.

It's poeo. It means to be the author of it, to be the initiator. Now, that really adds another level to this, doesn't it?

[28 : 59] To be the initiator, to cause, to bring about something. It's a proactive love. See, as yet I haven't said anything that's, that you would say, you know, that's not that hard to do.

I can do that. Well, this is all very hard to do. In our minds, we're thinking. First, we've got to be attentive, and this kind of love is active, it is also reactive, and it is proactive.

That's the first thing we must see. Loving the unloving is a required love. There's no way around it. No way to opt out.

No way to explain it away. Just right there on the face of it, no denying it. Required love. Second, loving the unloving, and you can certainly, will certainly agree with me on this, it is a radical love. It's radical. I mean, it's radical. What Jesus commands his disciples to do, and not just those on that mountainside that day, but every one of us, what Jesus commands us to do is radically different from the world.

[30 : 10] Radically different. It's probably radically different from the way we're thinking, actually, most of the time. Because we're a product of our world, in a sense. We're immersed in it, and we can't help but be kind of swayed by it, and our thought process is governed by it, but what Jesus is commanding us to do is radically, radically, radically different.

Verse 32 is the general principle, but if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? You can't get all excited about that, and all, you know, puffed up with pride, feeling good about yourself. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. You see, put in contrast to one another, the kind of love that we are to have, that loves the unloving, put in contrast, that is radically different from the world.

And so, if we just simply love those who love us, then big deal. Even sinners do that. Even pagans love that way.

And then we have kind of more detail, or maybe more specific expressions of this kind of love. He says in verse 33, and if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?

[31 : 38] For even sinners do the same. And then verse 34, and if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? Now, folks, I don't have time to really delve into this, but the idea here really is to lend something to someone with a kind of self-centered motive to make them always obligated to you, is the idea here.

What credit is that to you? You see, let's reason with one another here.

Let's just admit it. We have little trouble loving the loving. You have any trouble with that? I mean loving those who love us back.

Now, we don't always do it. I'm not suggesting that we are perfect on this score. We don't always love those who love us. We don't always love the people we're supposed to love, the most obvious people to love.

We don't always love them and express that love. But it's not a lot of trouble to love those who love us back or love those who are easy to get along with or to love those, let's think of this scenario, to love those who have something to offer us and are willing to give it to us.

[33 : 02] It's not all that hard to love those who have something we need or something we want from them. Unbelievers do that. It may be a little harder, but we can do this too.

You know, if we want to, we can love the unlovable. But even sinners do that. The fact is, most of us think that we are loving people.

Don't we? We think basically that we're loving people, pretty comfortable with that. And yet, most of the time we're loving people who love us back.

I mean, just admit it. Anybody want to admit it? We're basically just loving people who love us back. Most of the time we're loving people who are easy to love.

Most of the time we're loving people who have something we want. Most of the time we're loving people who are, for various reasons, just lovable people.

[34 : 20] They're kind of the pretty people. You know, the good people, the wonderful people, the people you'd like to be friends with. And we don't have any trouble loving those.

But most of the time that's all we're doing. But Jesus is talking about something radically different. He's talking about loving those who do not love us back. And more. He's talking about loving those who have nothing to offer us. Nothing whatsoever to offer us in return, so why bother? He's talking about loving those who actively dislike us. And those who are against us and hate us and who desire our hurt maybe even. Or maybe even our ruin. Or maybe even our death. You may not have an enemy like that right now. But that's what he's talking about. Loving the unloving. To love all those kinds of people and other scenarios that I could come up with. Now, I want to ask you something and think real hard about this.

[35 : 18] Who do you know loves that way? Huh? Well, let me see if I can help you. I said loving the unloving is a required love.

Loving the unloving is a radical love. And then third and finally, you should know that loving the unloving is a redemptive love. Redemptive love.

Verse 35 is key to it all. Look at it. Love your enemies. Do good and lend. Hoping for nothing in return. And your reward will be great.

And you will be sons of the Most High. That is, you'll be just like your Heavenly Father. For He is kind. To the unthankful and evil.

The word kind, by the way, is a form of the word charis.

[36 : 26] Grace. That's that word for grace. Loving kindness. And so, who do you know always loves the unloving?

God does. Of course. God does. Therefore, therefore, verse 36, be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

Do you see? Now listen very carefully. What Jesus commands you to do for your enemies, He has already done for you.

Does that not change everything? He's already done it for you. Romans 5, 6, Paul said Christ died for the ungodly.

That includes sinners, rebels, lovers of self, rather than lovers of God, disobedient, ungodly, sinners.

[37 : 38] That includes all of us. Christ died for the who? The ungodly. The loving? No, He died for the unloving. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die.

It means, it may be on record, but pretty hard to find. Yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. Might find some examples of that. But God loves in a different way.

God demonstrates His own love toward us. Us. His unloving, ungrateful, sinning creatures.

In that while we were still sinners, that is still rebels, still enemies, Christ died for us. Redemptive love.

That's what Christ gave to us. You see, you might be thinking that what Jesus commanded us to do might be in some scenarios a little bit unreasonable.

[38 : 48] We might catch ourselves thinking that maybe it's even impossible to do. But we need to change our way of thinking. If we will realize that God has already done for us what He is asking us to do for the unloving, then it will change everything.

Change the way we think about this. Because He loved you when you were, I mean not, I mean you could not care, excuse me, you could not have cared less for Him.

He loved you. He loved you when you were in open rebellion to Him. You didn't think of yourself in that way.

Maybe it would be a good time for us to think of ourselves in that way before Christ saved us. Open rebellion against Him and against His Word.

He loved you even then. He loved you when you were loving yourself and loving your sin. He loved you when you hated Him.

[40 : 01] You certainly had no desire for Him. And so Jesus is saying, I want you to be just like me. Love those who hate me. Let me close with this thought.

God loved you and forgave you when you did not deserve it. That's true of all of us. That's redemptive love. Wouldn't you like to love others and love others the way God loves you?

Wouldn't you like to? Huh? Wouldn't you like to love to love others the way the Heavenly Father loves you?

Wouldn't you like to be as loving and forgiving to others as the Lord Jesus Christ was and is to you?
To express the highest love.

that's what we're talking about. Would you like to do that? Wouldn't you like to express the highest love, to express redemptive love?

[41 : 18] Wouldn't you like to express the gospel in the highest way? Would you? There's only one way and it's not by loving those who love you.

The only way is to love your enemies. The only way is to be good, do good to those who hate you. To bless those who curse you. The only way to express the highest love, redemptive love, to express the love of the gospel in its highest form.

The only way is to pray for those who mistreat you, abuse you, despitefully use you. That's the only way. So here's what it all comes down to.

there is no higher expression of the gospel than when you actively love someone who does not deserve it.

[42 : 33] Thank you.