

Rediscover Jesus, 12: "Love Your Enemies"

Luke 6:27-36

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Sermon Series & Scripture Introduction

Today, we are continuing in the sermon series called Rediscover Jesus as we study the Gospel of Luke. Today we are covering one of the most distinctive teachings of Jesus Christ. So this will not be a new teaching for almost everyone here. But because God's Word is rich and deep, and true and powerful, we must all the more read and listen carefully as we rediscover Jesus. Please follow along as I read scripture from...

Scripture Reading

Luke 6:27-36 (ESV)

²⁷ "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹ To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. ³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

³² "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.

³⁵ But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

This is the Word of God. Amen.

Sermon Introduction

Again, this is one of the most distinctive teachings of Jesus Christ. To love your enemies. And he is essentially teaching his disciples what it means to follow Jesus. And one of the marks of a Christian is to love your enemies.

What are the marks (the sign, characteristics) of a new car? The new car smell, the smooth engine sound, the shiny/glowing exterior. What about the marks of a new house? The smell of fresh paint, the sound of echoes ringing through before the furniture arrives, every sink and door working as it should be.

Well, what are the marks of a disciple of Jesus Christ? A sinner who is forgiven by God? A new creation of God? Jesus says, his disciples are to be marked by a love for their enemies and a life of doing good to everyone.

The One Thing

Therefore, the One Thing for us today is this:

*Love your enemies genuinely and do good generously
for our Father has given us his great mercy.*

Overview

Loving our enemies genuinely? This sounds like an impossible task. And many of us have even experienced/felt like it is truly impossible. Well, Jesus will teach us today that loving our enemies is truly impossible when we try to love with our own efforts. So let's look at how Jesus addresses his disciples in this difficult teaching in Luke 6:27-36. Three ways how he helps us to love our enemies:

1. Jesus resets our natural behavior and beliefs (vv.27-31)
2. Jesus reveals our sinful “self-serving love” (vv.32-34)
3. Jesus reminds us of our Father’s mercy (vv.35-36)

Just a final comment as we get started: Today’s sermon won’t be complicated. It will just be extremely difficult to do, but not complicated because Jesus is crystal clear in these verses.

And to be honest, just because I am the one preaching this sermon, does not mean I do this perfectly. Things have happened to our family this past week that have made me so frustrated and angry at others and I myself need this Word of God preached into my heart as well. So let’s pray for the preaching of the Word.

Prayer for the Preaching of the Word

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Let’s look at the first. Jesus teaches us that in order to love our enemies

Sermon Outline

I. Jesus resets our natural behavior and beliefs (vv.27-31)

Luke 6:27-28 (ESV)

²⁷“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.

- We naturally hate our enemies because we believe they do not deserve our love.
- Jesus is starting a new section of his teaching in Luke chapter 6, when he says, “But I say to you who hear.” It is a strange way to start but what he is referring to is what he said before. If you take a quick look at verse 26; Jesus was just talking about false prophets who misrepresented God by telling people only what they wanted to hear. They didn’t tell people the hard truths about God. They only talked about how God is a God of love who forgives. They left out the truth that God is also a God of justice who will punish those who do not repent and turn to God.
 - So, by doing this, the false prophets were well spoken of by all people, but they were dangerously deceived and had disaster from God’s wrath coming for them. But unlike such false prophets, Jesus is our ultimate, true prophet. Jesus is telling us the truth of what God desires for his people. But it is different from what we really want to hear. Jesus’ teaching is so different from what is so natural for us. To our natural ways, Jesus says, “But I say to you.”
- Jesus says we should love our enemies. He’s looking his disciples in the eye (v.20), instructing them, “Love your enemies.” And just so that his disciples are clear about what “loving enemies means,” he first describes who their enemies are. Simply, our enemies are those who hate us, curse us, abuse us; anyone who mistreats us, cheats us, takes us for granted. These are our enemies. Now that it’s clear who our enemies are, Jesus continues describing the behaviors of someone who loves his/her enemies: doing good to enemies, blessing enemies, and praying for enemies.
 - There’s no easy way to go about this. We don’t even need to look into the original language to get a better idea of what Jesus means by, “Do good.” There are no specific ways of how to bless or what to pray for. And there are no hidden meanings about who exactly are our enemies. What Jesus is saying here is straight to the point, crystal clear. Love your enemies. To anyone who hates you, curses you, and abuses you. Do good to them, bless them, and pray for them.
 - And these behaviors are so strange and backward from the behaviors of the world, because the values of God’s Kingdom are completely different from the values of the world.

- I see Jesus pointing out these behaviors because we cannot ignore the connection that our behavior has with our beliefs. “Our behavior is always linked to an underlying belief.”¹ Which means that everything that we do, we do because we believe a particular value or feel strongly about a certain perspective. And especially for behaviors that we have internalized, that are ingrained in us that we can do them without even thinking, shows how we can strongly believe in something without thinking twice about it.
- In other words, why do people think this teaching to “love your enemies” is so strange and difficult to accept? It’s because we naturally hate our enemies. And why do we naturally hate our enemies? Because we naturally believe that our enemies should be hated. We believe that our enemies should be cursed. And we believe that our enemies should be abused and mistreated because they have abused and mistreated us.
 - So we much rather hear things like, “Love the people who deserve your love.” And even from experience, we naturally come to the conclusion that we should only love those who love us, and hate those who hate us. This is a natural rule of mutual benefit and the natural rule of mutual hatred.

Luke 6:29-30 (ESV)

²⁹ To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.

- 1) In order to love our enemies, we do not take or seek revenge.
- So in order to help his disciples along in resetting what is so natural and normal for our behavior and beliefs, Jesus takes the principle of loving enemies and the general behaviors of loving enemies, and applies them in different sample situations: To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.”
 - What I see Jesus doing is highlight two specific things we should not do in order to love our enemies. First, do not take revenge. Jesus doesn’t say, “To one who strikes you on the cheek, strike them back.” But revenge is such a natural way for us to look at the world. If someone strikes another on the cheek, we feel, “Oh, they deserve to get slapped in the face right back.”
 - Also, the entire Marvel cinematic universe is making billions of dollars because they have created a fantasy where revenge is fully taken and revenge is fully satisfying. I mean I enjoy all the Marvel movies but we need to think about what the Avengers are all about. These are superheroes who are avenging something. The dictionary defines avenging as: “to inflict harm in return for an injury or wrong done to oneself or another.” Avenging means to take revenge. And we are quick to celebrate when those who have done wrong get punished for what they did.
 - But if there is one insight we can actually take away from the Avengers movies is that our suffering is often the basis of our desire for revenge. When we are hurting, it does feel like the only way our hurt can be satisfied is through the suffering of our enemies. And there is something all the more satisfying than a Marvel movie when we get a personal taste of revenge. Some of us may have even attempted to cause direct harm to our enemies, whether that’s in the form of hate, excluding them, or ruining their reputation through gossip and slander. But I know that all of us, myself included, we do desire for revenge. And it is still sinfully satisfying when we see that our personal enemies are suffering, maybe even suffering more than the suffering they have caused us. The hurt that we feel from our enemies is the basis of our objection to Jesus’ radical instruction to not seek revenge.
 - For those of you here who have suffered intensely as a result of the sinful actions, I am not dismissing your hurt and pain. And I know that our enemies are often those who are the closest to us. Those whom we have expected so much more from, especially our family members. They might not say that they are our enemies, but they often do act like an enemy in the ways that Jesus describes: they hate us for the mistakes we have made, or have

¹ From AccessTruth, Module 4.6, “Understanding Culture”

cursed us to our face in the middle of a hostile conflict. They may have verbally abused us in that way or even have physically abused us.

- And there are some extremely painful suffering I have also endured in my past, especially from those closest to me, people who should have known how to love me and care for me. And because of my intense hurt and pain, I wanted to do everything in my power to get revenge. And to be honest, my desire for revenge was not just for justice. I wanted revenge because I wanted to see my enemies suffer.
- But even this past week, I've been wrestling with loving others who act like they hate us, don't care about us, and just want financial gain from us. But, Jesus says, "From the one who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either." I was challenged to surrender my objection and submit to Jesus' radical teaching. I'm still dealing with the lingering sting of being wronged against as I stand before you now. But ultimately, revenge is not mine to take or even to seek out.

2) In order to love our enemies, we offer them a second chance to become our friends.

- So, loving enemies clearly means we do not take or seek revenge. Second, loving our enemies means we offer them a second chance to become our friends. When someone strikes our cheek, which could be referring to a physical punch to the jaw or symbolically could be an insult and direct attack to your reputation. When someone strikes our cheek, Jesus says to offer the other cheek. The pain they have caused us, we recognize. We acknowledge their evil. We accept their wrongdoing.
 - But we don't just keep our cheek in the same exact position to simply receive more of the same exact hatred, or cursing or abuse. We turn our face over. And we look past what they have done and we offer a new future for our enemies. We offer a new opportunity for them to become our friends. This is how we do good generously. In this sense, it is almost easier to be generous with our money. It is easier to be generous with our time, than to be generous with second chances. This is a complete reset of our behavior and beliefs. But through Jesus Christ, let's be generous with second chances for our enemies. Let our enemies feel our generosity as we give them second chances. This is what I see Jesus teaching us here.
- Now the question is: Who can actually do this? This is starting to sound more and more impossible. But only those who have been offered such a generous second chance when they were once enemies, are able to generously, lovingly, wisely offer second chances to their enemies. Only those who have tasted the joy of receiving undeserved forgiveness and those who know that forgiveness is much sweeter than revenge could ever be. This true, genuine love, this sweet joy of forgiveness, our second chance is only found in Jesus Christ.
 - So, what sounds so impossible to do, I say to you, it is possible in Jesus Christ. We'll come back to this thought more fully toward the end of the sermon, where I will explain how Jesus makes the impossible become possible for us. But for now, let's look at verse 31, where Jesus proves how his teaching, though it sounds so radical, it is actually not that ridiculous.

Luke 6:31 (ESV)

³¹ And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

- Jesus' teaching is indeed radical, but what he is saying is not ridiculous when we think about what we want others to do to us.
- He simply says, "Whatever you want people to do to you, just do that for others." Radical but not ridiculous. We've been talking about our enemies a lot. But just for a moment, let's think about the people whom we love so dearly. When we make a mistake against someone, what do we wish for? We wish for their understanding and forgiveness. We wish for their patience. We wish for a second chance to be better and for a restored relationship. And if these are the things we wish for from others, Jesus simply says, "Just go do that to others, including your enemies."
- To think about it another way: Jesus knows that we desire to be loved unconditionally, to be loved even in our worst moments. To be accepted even when we fail and mess up. So he teaches us, take those desires and think about how your enemies desire the very same things. And not only think about it, go love your enemies how you would want to be loved. And do good to your

enemies without hating them. Bless your enemies without cursing them. And pray for your enemies without abusing them. Regardless of what others have done and done against you, love them.

Life Application #1: Consider who your current enemies are.

- This might be the easiest Life Application ever. You might finish this Life Application before I finish talking about this. And I don't think I need to explain this further but in order for Jesus to reset our natural behavior and beliefs, we do first need to know who we consider to be our enemies. These are people in your life who outright say they are your enemies. But they are the ones who hate you, curse you, abuse you, insult you, or take from you.
- So keep them in mind as we continue to the next point, to see how...

II. Jesus reveals our sinful "self-serving love" (vv.32-34)

Luke 6:32-34 (ESV)

³² "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.

- A significant hindrance in loving our enemies is our skewed understanding of what true love is.
- Jesus is continuing a very sound logical argument. His main idea he proposed was to love your enemies. So now he reveals and argues that the very obstacle that is in our way to love our enemies, is simply our love. Our love is what hinders us from loving our enemies. There is something about our love that is flawed because of our sin. And this is why sinners cannot love in the ways Jesus is teaching us to love.
- In other words, if we say we cannot or we will not love our enemies, there is something wrong about how we understand love. There is nothing wrong about what Jesus is teaching us. We have to understand that Jesus is the prophet of God. He is an authoritative teacher of God, and ultimately Jesus is God himself as the Son of God. So there is nothing off about Jesus' teaching that we should love our enemies. In fact, there is something wrong with us. All of us as sinners have a skewed understanding of what true love is. This is what Jesus is getting at as he asks his disciples a series of rhetorical questions (asks the questions and answers them himself).
 - He is telling us, if you love only those who love you, that's not love. If we do good or lend to only those who can give back to us, there's something wrong. And Jesus here is pointing out that our love is a selfish, self-serving love. It's not true love.
 - This concept of a self-serving love is so ironic, isn't it? For example, we see the same irony in our lives in the context of gift-giving. Whether it is for birthdays or for Christmas, just think about a time when you decided to save up or rally a lot of other people in getting a thoughtful, precious gift for one friend. It's wrapped beautifully and carefully. The friend opened the gift and was so surprised and so happy with that gift. Now, it's your birthday. What happens if the same friend gets you a gift that wasn't thought out well, it didn't cost nearly as much as your gift. What if that friend forgot your birthday, or worse, didn't even think about getting you a gift because they didn't have the time or the money to prepare a gift?
 - We have to be honest here: Would you feel a hint of regret giving him/her your gift? Would you think that your gift for your friend was actually a waste of your time, energy and money? If we think this way, then our gift isn't a gift. It would be a transaction. An exchange that is calculated.
- If our love is like this—a calculated transaction—then it is not love at all. True, genuine love is for the benefit of others at our own expense. True, genuine love is sacrificial. Selfless, not selfish. True, genuine love is kind and patient with others. True, genuine love is not arrogant and does

not insist on its own way (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). True, genuine love is not self-serving but self-giving. Giving generously to others who cannot give back the same amount.

Luke 6:32-34 (ESV)

³² “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.

- True, genuine love is what distinguishes “sinners” from “disciples” (sinners who have received the benefit of God’s grace).
- I believe this is Jesus’ challenge for all of us hearing his words today. True love is one of the significant distinctions between Jesus’ disciples and the rest of the world. We see this as Jesus is distinguishing his disciples from those whom he considers as “sinners.” And we have to understand why Jesus is making this distinction.
 - But first, we need to clarify what Jesus is not saying. Jesus is not saying that his disciples are sinless, perfect people. This is obvious because, if his disciples were sinless, then why would Jesus need to teach them how to live for God? They would already be doing so perfectly if they were without sin.
 - So, instead, the reason why Jesus is making this distinction is to highlight that true love has a significant “benefit”. And this is an interesting word that is used here because in the original language, it’s the same word that is most often used for “grace/gift” from God. So without diving too deep into the translation, I believe what Jesus is saying here is that disciples of Jesus Christ are able to love with a true, genuine love from God when they have received the benefit of God’s grace. If they only love with a self-serving love, there is no benefit because it’s not God’s love, it’s not God’s grace. True love is what distinguishes “sinners” from Jesus’ disciples. And Jesus’ disciples are indeed sinners who have the benefit of God’s grace. Sinners without the benefit of God’s grace are sinners who will remain with a false sense of love that will always be disappointing.
 - So, I would like to take a moment to personally extend Jesus’ direct yet loving challenge to all of us here:
 - For those who consider themselves to be Jesus’ disciples. Jesus is asking you: “If you call yourself my disciples, then are you going to do what the world does? Are you going to love like they do?” “Sinners” are those who only love those who love them. “Sinners” are those who only do good to those who do good to them. “Sinners” are those who only lend to those who will give back to them. If we claim to have received the benefit of God’s wonderful grace in our lives, will we continue to love with self-serving motivations? Or will we choose to love like how our God loves, and will we love even our enemies?
 - For those of us here who have not trusted in Jesus Christ, I also extend Jesus’ direct but loving challenge to you. Are you happy with how the love of the world operates? Can anyone really be satisfied with a self-serving love, only to give just to take back the same amount? I humbly ask that you consider how our love is broken and imperfect. Even in our most loving relationships, we are easily disappointed, if not, even more hurt by those we expect more love from. I pray that you can see this broken reality and continue to pursue God and his true, genuine love. And we will gladly come alongside you to help you in your discovery process with Jesus.
 - Now for all of us, here is the second life application.

Life Application #2: Confess your sinful “self-serving love” to God.

Some questions that can help guide your confession:

- Do I selfishly choose who to love?
- How is my love often a “self-serving love” and not a genuine, sacrificial love?

If our self-serving love and desires are not quickly coming to mind, then this life application will require us to reflect a bit more. So here are some questions that can help guide our confession: Do I selfishly choose who to love? How is my love often a “self-serving love” and not a genuine, sacrificial love?

And as we think about our love, and see the flaws in our skewed love, I believe God will guide us to look to him, whether for the first time, or for the thousandth time, to understand the depths of his true, genuine, sacrificial love that is out of this world. So when that happens, let’s confess to God our self-serving love, to position ourselves to receive the great wonderful benefit of God’s grace. This brings us to our last point, as we see how...

III. Jesus reminds us of our Father’s mercy (vv.35-36)

- Jesus closes his teaching with these two verses. He first summarizes all that he had mentioned thus far in the first half of verse 35: “Love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.” And then from here, Jesus reminds us of two important realities.

Luke 6:35-36 (ESV)

³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

- Our sin is a constant reminder that we were ungrateful and evil before God.
- I know that these verses focus on our reward but I would like to first point out that Jesus masterfully turns the tables, and flips our perspective to help us see how we can love our enemies. To do that, all Jesus does is remind us who we once were. Did you catch what Jesus is saying in the rest of verse 35?
 - He is reminding us that: We were once not children of God, the Most High. We were once sinners lost without God’s grace. We were once ungrateful and ignorant of God’s love. We were evil and rebellious against God. We hated God, we cursed God. And as we continue to sin, because we will as long as we are in these broken, fleshly bodies. As we sin, it is our constant reminder that we once were enemies of God. But, all the more the gospel reminds us how we are no longer enemies of God. And it is because of the death of Jesus Christ. Jesus dying in our place is our ultimate reminder that our Heavenly Father is merciful to us.

Luke 6:35-36 (ESV)

³⁵But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

- Jesus’ death in our place is our ultimate reminder that our Heavenly Father is merciful to us.
 - As God enemies, we needed the greatest mercy of all because we were rebelling against the greatest authority and power over all. And as sinful people, we are responsible for abusing God, putting to death his beloved, only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. Because it was for our sins Jesus died. Jesus died as a criminal, though he was innocent.
 - He died sacrificing his life for such enemies of God so that we could be given another opportunity to repent and turn to God. And opportunity after opportunity to confess our sins and follow him. And how generous is our Lord and Savior! Jesus did not seek revenge and rather prayed for his enemies as he hung on the cross, saying, “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). This is the glorious news of the gospel, that though we were ungrateful and evil enemies of God, yet God still loved us. Yet God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved (Ephesians 2:4-5; cf. Ro 5:10-11).
 - So for all of us who claim to be disciples of Jesus Christ, we cannot say loving your enemies is ridiculous because we are the recipients of Jesus’ love. We cannot say loving our enemies is

impossible. Our Lord and Savior has done it to us. And has done it for us. When we believed in Jesus, he gave us new hearts that beat with his true, genuine sacrificial love.

- Of course, loving our enemies will never be easy. But it is possible through Christ who has loved us, undeserving sinners like us who were once ungrateful and evil enemies of God. Christ has taken what is impossible and made it possible by his love.
 - This is God's mercy he has offered to us. This is his kindness for his enemies. This is who our God is. And as our Heavenly Father is merciful, we as God's people, Jesus' disciples, we must be merciful, especially to our enemies.
- And when we love our enemies, do good, lend with expecting nothing in return, Jesus says your reward will be great and "you will be sons of the Most High".
- What does Jesus mean here? Because it can sound like we are being offered a deal. If we do this, then we get that. But Jesus is not setting up a transactional, calculated relationship with us, as if we could ever do something in order to deserve a reward from God. The only thing we ever deserved from God as his enemies was his wrath and punishment for our sins. On top of that, Jesus just said, expect nothing in return for what we do.
 - So, instead, Jesus is saying that, when his disciples live out Jesus' teachings, no matter how difficult or unnatural it may be to us... When we love our enemies with the mercy God has given to us, we truly show ourselves to be the children of God. We are no longer living like enemies, but as children who have received mercy.
 - (i) We must realize how ungrateful we would still be to God if we do not extend mercy to others.
 - (ii) We must realize evil we would still be before God if we do not extend forgiveness to others.
 - (iii) Loving our enemies is not an option. It's not easy, and it will take a long time for certain people in our lives. However, it is not an option. Because when we deliberately withhold mercy to people in our lives, we directly reject God's mercy to us.
 - (iv) Honestly, after writing this line in the sermon, I was struggling with anger and frustration that had been piling up in me this past week. What a struggle it was to extend mercy to those who have made our families like difficult. I don't want to share all the details in this context, but just letting you know that all the way up until last night, I was asking God to help me remember his mercy so that I can extend his mercy.

Life Application #3: Cover your enemies with God's mercy, starting with prayer.

- Prayer helps us to neutralize any pride in us. Some enemies we consider might be right here in our church. I pray, you will be set in your heart, preparing now. Trying to forgive in order to observe the Lord's Supper in a few weeks. Lord's Supper reiterate our willingness to extend God's mercy to one another as his people. It's a visible and regular reminder that Christ has died to give us mercy. So we should extend mercy to one another.
- Some of our relationships are formed by function, calculating relationships/friendships: do we justify our limitation of our love, time, energy, heart by avoiding, etc. How should Christians act/consider such relationships with one another?
- Prayer also helps us address

Life Application:

- 1) Consider who your current enemies are.
- 2) Confess your sinful "self-serving love" to God.
- 3) Cover your enemies with God's mercy, starting with prayer.

As we apply God's Word this week, let's remember again, the one thing...

The One Thing:

*Love your enemies genuinely and do good generously
for our Father has given us his great mercy.*