**Sermon Title:** A Christ-Like Approach to Retaliation and Loving our Enemies!

* The commands found in Matt. 5:38-48 are some of the most difficult, controversial, radical demands Jesus ever put on the Christian and the world.

**A Few Thought-Provoking Questions:**

1. Do we really need to do what Jesus says in this text?
2. Do Christians really even have enemies, we are typically nice people?
3. How does one do what Jesus says here, loving an enemy seems super complicated?
4. How in the world does a person get to the point where one genuinely, in their hearts, wants to bless an enemy? – Bless those who curse you and abuse you… Radical Teaching…

**A Few Texts:**

**Matt. 10:25:**

**25**It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.

* Jesus makes the point to say if they criticized (and would later kill Jesus), certainly his followers should expect a similar experience.

**Important Sermon Point:** If you are a follower of Jesus, it is a given that you will have enemies.

**2 Tim. 3:12:**

**12**Indeed, **all who desire to*live* *a godly life*** in Christ Jesus **will be persecuted**…

**Luke 6:26:**

**26**“**Woe to you, when all people speak well of you**, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

* These verses make the point that if we don’t have enemies there is the potential that our godliness is probably not showing very well.

**Truth to Believe**: I believe as Christians we need to truly heed these verses. As the American culture continues to become more and more worldly, **those who take biblical stands** over cultural/worldly stands will face more and more opposition and hostility.

* How will you and I respond to the coming opposition and hostility?

**The Mosaic Law’s Purpose in the Two Statements:**

**V. 38** “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth:”

* The purpose for this commandment was to deal with people enacting vengeance upon others in unjust ways. Punishments must fit the crime and not be in excess of it.
* The problem with the Pharisees and Scribes was that this teaching was meant for judges only; however, they made it a matter for personal application, and considered it a matter of ***right and duty*** that one seek retribution.

**V. 43** “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy:”

* This was a teaching of the Pharisees and of the Scribes, and is nowhere in the Old Testament. Furthermore, they taught this with the following interpretation: ‘neighbor’ meant only an Israelite, which meant the Jews were to only love the Jews. At the same time this teaching regarded everybody else not only as an alien but as an enemy.
* The Pharisees and Scribes taught that it was Israel’s right and duty to hate all other people (gentiles). Many prominent Pharisees would consistently call all gentiles ‘dogs’ and the zealous Pharisees and scribes believed they were honoring God by despising everybody who was not a Jew.

**The Difficult Statements Jesus Makes in Matt. 5:38-42:**

* Turn the other cheek to one who assaults you.
* Give more than what is even asked if someone is suing you.
* If anyone forces you to go one mile (a military requirement of the day), go with them two.
* Give to someone who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who asks to borrow.

**Sermon’s Main Point: The Spirit of Jesus’ Teaching:**

* Remember that the Sermon on the Mount’s main purpose was not to teach some new laws or to replace the old laws, but it is rather to **emphasize the spirit of the law**. Looking at Jesus’ words here as commands that must be obeyed mechanically (to the letter of the law) with not spirit of the law, could lead good Christian people to be ***abused*** and could lead all Christians to be **pacifists** in many situations. Such things are not Christ’s intentions.
* The main purpose is that the followers of Jesus would show the world how ***free*** we are from vengeance, how ***free*** we are from the love of money, how ***free*** we are from the need of security, and how ***free*** we are to love even those who might persecute us.
  + Jesus is wanting believers to be so satisfied in Christ and to have such a deep rooted trust in God, that one is free from the need to seek or do vengeance, so free from the love of possessions that one gives freely to those in need, and finally being so free and satisfied in the profound forgiveness that God has demonstrated for God’s Children on the cross that we would love even those who might seek to harm or persecute us, as Christ loved and forgave his enemies.

**Romans 5:10: God saved us while we were still his enemies.**

**10**For if **while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son**, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

**Ways we bless our enemies:**

1. **Giving Freely (money, time, talents)**
2. **Forgiving Freely**

* We need to **hand vengeance over to God**. **Rom. 12:19** - “Vengeance is mine, I will repay…”
* Giving someone forgiveness *does not mean there are no consequences* or that *trust is owed* or immediately reinstated. **Trust is something that is earned** over years of faithful obedience.

1. **Love your Enemy Generously**

* Love takes action and premeditated thinking, at times, to truly effectively demonstrate love.

1. **Pray for your Enemy Faithfully**

**Jesus Promises Reward:**

* There is a reward in heaven, spectacularly beyond anything you lose on this earth in loving your enemies.

**Final Sermon Point:** V. 48 ‘Perfect’ – Christians are called to be like God and like Christ.