

Luke 6:27-36

“Agape Exemplified”

Amy Carmichael wrote, “You can give without loving, but you cannot love without giving.” Certainly that captures the heart of Christ in this section of scripture that’s before us today. We’re in the midst of this message taught by Jesus that in many ways (but not with out exception) mirrors the Sermon on the Mt found in Matt’s gospel.

If we were to pull back so as to get a basic overall “aerial” view of this sermon which encompasses Luke Ch 6 Vs 20-49 I would basically sum it up by saying that it *begins* with blessings that come *to* you, it ends with the stability that will be found *in* you but at its heart is the *Love of God* that’s to be flowing *through* you. We see here love as the *principle*, and how love becomes *practical*.

Love was always at the heart of teaching of Jesus because love is the very essence of the character of God. It’s is *such* an integral part of who God is that the bible even personifies love as it declares in no uncertain terms that, “*God is love,*” 1 John 4:16

So we have before us a whole section here that is filled with imperatives, filled with commands dealing with the attitude or characteristic of sacrificial, self-giving love all of which were readily manifested in Christ Himself. Jesus was definitely the type of Man who practiced what He preached and He would never ask anything of anyone else that He Himself wasn’t already about.

As we consider this *particular portion* of scripture that we’re looking at today a little more carefully I would outline this passage something like this. **(Title and list)** Agape Exemplified: Vs 27a The Exhortation, Vs 27b-30 The Application, Vs 31 The Culmination, Vs 32-36 Further Explanation/Clarification

Let’s read Vs 27-36 in its entirety then we’ll come back and begin to isolate some of these Vs individually.

Vs 27-28

Now if you're anything like me when you read that you sorta think, "Uh, ok that's a... pretty tall order to fill." Well, let me just tell you that apart from Christ *in* you it's an *impossible* order to fill because that which Christ commands of us (which BTW these are commands, they're non-options) is the polar opposite of all things *natural* for us. It is not natural for me to love my enemies, it's natural for me to *hate* my enemies. Jesus isn't asking us to do what's *natural* He's commanding us to submit to the *supernatural* work of His Spirit in our lives.

Ok, 1st things 1st. Jesus says, "But I say to you who *hear*:" the implication being that not everyone *will* hear. This is a phrase that's equivalent to that which Jesus would use on other occasions when He would say, "*He who has ears to hear, let him hear!*" Matt 11:15 The idea being that just because you're listening that's no indication that you're *hearing* what I'm saying, just because you can look at things with your eyes that doesn't necessarily mean that you can *see* what's in front of you. There are those of whom the bible speaks, "*Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive;*" Matt 13:14 There are those who quite frankly will just choose not to obey the Lord to deal with things in their own way. They are those who will not hear.

What's does it mean then to hear? In Luke Ch 8 as Jesus explained the parable of the sower and spoke of the seed that was scattered He said this, "*But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having heard the word with a noble and good heart, keep it and bear fruit with patience.*" Luke 8:15 So those who hear are those who have a soft and receptive heart, who keep (that is *obey*) the word and patiently await the reaping (or results) of the word in their life. We've talked about it before, God will not enlist you to do anything but that He will not *empower* you to do it. So that when you purpose to obey He will supply the necessary means of your obedience (which amount to His grace and the power of His Holy Spirit in your life).

Having said that here's the exhortation; "Love your enemies". Keeping with in the context we spoke in our last study in Luke regarding the fact that the one who is poor in spirit (humble of heart) who hungers and thirst's for righteousness; and weeps over sin both in their lives and the net effect of sin in the lives of others would in reality far from making friends would create enemies.

Reason being is that a life like that shines as a light in an otherwise dark world, a life that's earmarked with humility exposes pride in the lives of others. A life that resonates with a hunger after righteousness shines the light on the appetite for sin that's so prevalent in most. A life that shows a brokenness over sin makes obvious the one who's indifferent toward the matter. People don't like that, it causes them to respond often times negatively toward you; they become an enemy *of* you.

How does Jesus define who your enemies are here? By identifying them as those who "hate you" who "curse you" and who "spitefully use" you. That is, they falsely accuse and intentionally slander and insult you.

Now when these things are happening to you, you have an enemy on your hands. How are you to respond? Retaliate in like manner? Fight fire with fire? No; "love" them in return. The word love here is in verb form meaning that's it's not a warm fuzzy emotion but rather it's an act of my volition, my *will*, I make a purposed resolve to respond in a positive way to a negative action. It's the word "agapao" which as I mentioned is the others oriented, self sacrificial, always giving love of God.

It's not something that is with in your ability, it's God's love in you, flowing through you by the power of His Spirit. Now stay with me; it's in *verb* form which means it's an action, it's in the *Active* (causative active) voice meaning that it's the source from which the action springs. It's in the *Imperative* mood which means it's a command and it's in the *Present* tense meaning it's to be an ongoing, never ceasing action. It's not a "1 time shot" kind of thing, it's ongoing.

So this has nothing to do with my emotions; how I *feel* about it is irrelevant; what's relevant is whether or not I'll be obedient to the command of Jesus in it. Now think about it; this principle of loving our enemies is the very thing that brought Jesus to this earth to begin with. Because as we mentioned last time before we're in Christ, far from being "Ok" with God the bible teaches we're at war with God. The bible says that, "...*Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*" Rom 5:6-8

Christ died for the *ungodly*, that's you and me prior to our reconciliation to God through cross of Jesus Christ Jesus loved His enemies and He demonstrated that through His willingness to die for those who hated Him. Now He calls us into that same level of love, to actively pursue good in the face of evil; to love those who are our enemies.

Now listen. I want to deviate for just a moment as long as we're on the topic of that which we've been commanded to do which is to love our enemies. If you, if I am to love my enemies, how much more do you suppose this applies/in the context of our spouses? I only bring that up because of the alarming rate of divorce and marital failure with in the body of Christ today. If I can't submit my life to God and choose to love (by the act of my will to obey [by His grace]) my spouse whom I have vowed before God and man to love *on*, do good *to* and stay together *with* till death do us part this person who has had equal intentions toward me. How can I ever hope to fulfill the command to actually love *my enemies*? We've got to get past this place whereby we acquiesce and nod in agreement to spiritual platitudes being spun our direction and get serious about asking God to pour Himself into our lives in a way that makes manifest His love through us. That He might truly teach us the nature of *abiding in Him*.

Because that's the key to His love pouring into and out through us. Jesus said, "*I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.*" John 15:5 Don't think that these things we're speaking about today will happen in your life (or my life) apart from abiding in Christ, the fruit of the *Spirit* is love; this is the work of God in us; it's not something we drum up through sheer determination. Apart from Christ we can do how much? Nothing...

Ok, how is this principle made practical? What is the application of this exhortation? What does this love look like in real time? Jesus gives us 6 attributes of this love.

6 examples to consider; it's not so much a series of rules as it is an attitude of the heart that shows itself positively in the face of negativity. Jesus isn't necessarily administering legal duty as much as He is an inner disposition, these are examples of how agape is fleshed out in real time.

This love looks like, doing “good to those who hate you,” like blessing “those who curse you” and like praying for those who “spitefully use you.” It looks like allowing your character to be defamed as opposed to venomously retaliating in like manner, like a willingness to give freely and treating others as equally as I’d like to be treated. You love like that and you love like God loves; that’s what Jesus tells us there in Vs 35

“Do good to those who hate you,” don’t just go situation neutral, “Well I won’t hate them back.” That’s neat, but it’s not love. Love isn’t simply ceasing the negative but it’s pursuing actively the positive. We’re to pursue the benefit of those who seek our detriment! Even as Christ sought the benefit, the forgiveness and was laying His life down for the very ones who were nailing Him to the cross. He was doing good to those who hated Him.

He says, “Bless those who curse you.” Paul echoed this in Romans 12:14 when he said, “*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.*” In reality the bible teaches that it’s just as inconsistent for the man (or woman) of God to issue forth blessing and cursing from the same mouth as it is for a well to issue fresh and saltwater from the same spring. James said, “*Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?*” James 3:10-11 Over and over again the bible exhorts us in a similar manner, that we’re not to return evil for evil, or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing (1 Pet 3:9). They may speak *ill* of us, but we’re to speak *well* of them.

“And pray for those who spitefully use you.” What you’re going to discover is that as you pray for those who seek your harm is that your heart toward them will begin to soften; it’ll remove the “poison” from your attitude toward them. The best thing that could happen for your enemy is that he/she would come to know Jesus Christ in a personal way. Pray for them, that God would reveal Himself to them, that they might come to know Him and be changed by Him.

Vs29

Now when He talks about being struck on one cheek and offering the other let’s understand what’s being said here. What’s not being said is that we should be passive in the face of physical assault. When Jesus was struck on the cheek He didn’t offer the other one as well, He rebuked the one who struck Him.

In that culture a slap on the face was more of an assault on your character than it was an assault on your body. (Like in the older movies when someone would remove their glove and slap someone else in the face with it). It's an insult to their person, not a physical assault.

He's not saying, "If someone is swinging a baseball bat at you don't defend yourself." As a matter of fact on the night of His betrayal He told the disciples, "*...he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one.*" Luke 22:36 So defending yourself (or your family) from physical assault isn't a biblical conflict.

But you recall when the religious leaders were assailing Him with false accusations and bogus charges? It was then that like a lamb before its shearers are silent so He opened not His mouth. We read in Matt 27:12-14, "*And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, 'Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?' But He answered him not one word, so that the governor marveled greatly.*" They were defaming His character but He refused to defend Himself and entrusted His vindication to the Father; vengeance is Mine (says the Lord) I will repay. We're not to worry about retribution or fighting fire with fire; we're to entrust our vindication to the Lord. You can say what you like about me, God knows and my vindication lies with Him.

Vs29b-30

Couple things here briefly; all these things really invoke a life of faith, you can only give away your cloak if you trust that God will provide for you to obtain another one. You can only give to everyone who asks if you really trust that God's going to keep you in supply.

Having said that we shouldn't divorce this principle from the rest of the word of God; when it says I'm to give to everyone who asks there's context to that. There are times that someone might ask me for something that will in no way benefit them and might only feed their sin nature. Giving someone everything they ask for isn't necessarily love; some people make their living taking advantage of your compassion. Just because you're a believer that doesn't mean that you turn off your discernment, to the contrary its senses should be heightened. The bible is pretty clear that if a man won't work then neither shall he eat. The idea being that we're not to enable freeloaders.

So we really need to be praying for wisdom on things like this so that we're able to discern what's really going to help someone. "Give a man a fish you feed him for a day, teach him to fish you feed him for life." So don't extract Vs like this from the context of the whole counsel of God's word; exercise wisdom.

Vs31

"The Golden Rule"; here Jesus makes something painstakingly clear and that is this: when it comes to my treatment of people I will never treat anyone better than I'll treat myself. That our tendency as humanity is to look out for #1; that's why the bible says that we're to love our neighbor as we love our self. So Jesus assumes that we want the very best for ourselves spiritually and otherwise; when you mess up how do you want to be handled in that situation? Do you want to be beaten down; belittled and made to pay?

Or would you rather be forgiven; treated kindly and with compassion? We read in Matt's gospel where Jesus said, "*Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*" Matthew 7:12 If you'll just treat others *not* how they've treated you but how you *want* them to treat you you'll fulfill the Word of God. The idea here is that people see passed you, passed me and see Jesus in me and in you that they might be drawn beyond the natural to the supernatural love of God for them and be saved.

What's important for you and me isn't that we be vindicated before our enemies but that we become more like Christ in our character. But notice that Jesus takes the principle from passive to positive. He doesn't just saying, "If you don't like than don't do it to others." That's a common principle in many religions; but Jesus takes it from passive to active, that we would even take the initiative to *do* to others what we want people to do for us. Jesus says, "Hey, take the initiative and do good for others."

Vs33-34

Here Jesus is basically slamming the human behavior of "reciprocity." "You scratch my back I'll scratch yours." Of course it also works to the negative, "You punch my eye, I'll break your nose." It's a pretty standard rule of thumb for virtually every culture in every society. It's not that in and of itself that's a bad thing, it creates a certain stability where there would otherwise only be uncertainty in every relationship on every level.

But what Jesus is saying that the Christian isn't to be governed by the norm of reciprocity. He's calling us to a higher plane, another "norm" that's to replace it. We might call it the "Initiative of love." We're not *reactive* we're *proactive*; we're not to only do good, be kind and lend to those whom we think will return the favor. We do what we do with no return expectation because that exemplifies the love of God. Believe you me He didn't do what He did for us in sending Jesus Christ to die for our sins because that somehow *helped Him*, or was a benefit to Him. Jesus is saying, "Hey listen; God doesn't allow us to live on the same level as the reprobate sinner; the one who knows nothing of the love of God, or the character of God, or the mercy of God. So if you love, do good, or lend to those will repay and return the favor how does that separate you at all from the ungodly?" We want to show those who need the Lord that there's a love *in the Lord* that's not available in this world.

Vs35

Here's the idea, you do these things and people will see the love of God in your life; "you will be sons of the Most High." His attributes will be on display in your life. He's kind to the unthankful and evil. He gives them the breath of life, the ability to work and make a living so as to put food on their table. All the things that they take for granted are the result of His kindness and His grace toward them.

Vs36

God has the right to throw us all into the pit of hell because we've all sinned against Him. However in Christ God doesn't give us what we deserve, He shows mercy. He's merciful, you may have the right to exact retribution; but because we're in Christ it's not about our rights. It's about demonstrating the love of God to a soul who would otherwise be headed for hell; therefore we're merciful in the hopes that they will see Jesus and be drawn *to* Jesus through us.

Prayer Points:

God apart from You these things are nothing short of impossible for us. But we acknowledge once again here today that for You nothing will be impossible. You can enable us, and empower us to do good to those who hate us, to bless those who curse us and pray for those who spitefully use us. Help us Lord to abide in You, and that Your word might abide in us; that we learn what it means to let love take the initiative in our lives to do good to others; to love our enemies and be sons and daughters of the Most High.

Jesus led by example, He came to us when we were His enemies and demonstrated His love for us in that He gave His life for us. He shed His blood upon the cross that we might experience the forgiveness of God and receive the gift of everlasting life; that's the kind of love that God wants you to know, to experience. Not something that's based upon reciprocity, He just loves you; He's taken the initiative with you. The question is this; how will you respond? Will you reject Him, or will you receive Him?