

The Law & Jesus: The Limit of Love

Matthew 5:38-48

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If you have your Bible, please turn with me to Matthew chapter 5. We are looking at the Sermon on the Mount this fall. Matthew 5:38-48. Last week, Pastor Randy began looking at this section in particular as he focused on verses 17-20 looking at the relationship between the law and Jesus showing that Jesus never intended to nullify the law, but rather He came to fulfill it in its entirety. Both passively and actively, He's engaged in the beauty and the perfection of God's law. And in so fulfilling it, He is calling people to Himself, to be living in a kingdom that is ruled by a covenant keeping God who is full of steadfast love and kindness.

This call to Himself is asking people to live in light of this kingdom. And of course, we see as we look through the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus is setting the bar high. He's calling His disciples to a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. Jesus then goes on to explain in this section that we're in now, verses 21-48, He's unpacking what this righteousness looks like. And He uses six antitheses, these six contrasting statements to shed light more on that principal from verses 17-20. So, keep that in your head. Wherever we might be in verses 21-48, it's all in light of, certainly, the Beatitudes, but then verses 17-20.

And in these contrasting statements, you hear Jesus say something to the effect of, you have heard it was said, but I say unto you. He's setting up one, and He's bringing it to our mind and into the forefront, and for us to then see what He's going to say in contrast. And with these six statements, Jesus addresses how we are to live in the kingdom of heaven and actually embody and pursue His righteousness.

So, today, we're going to look at verses 38-48. And in these last two contrasting statements, it really is a way of shedding light in ways that we seek to justify ourselves. And what I mean by that is, you know, asking those questions. How do we protect ourselves from a person where justice actually may allow it? How do we prevent ourselves from people where mercy may demand it? These kind of explorations of the heart that we protect ourselves or we prevent ourselves from actually demonstrating the righteousness that Christ would have for His disciples.

So, let's look at the text and pray asking His blessing on the reading and as we discuss the passage this morning. Matthew 5:38-48.

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'
But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

"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 sun 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."
[ESV]

This is the word of the Lord. Thanks be to God. Let's pray.

Father, add to the reading of your word, that we would hear the beauty, the challenge that's there, but also the simplicity of what it means to love without limits, to love as you love. We ask that you would help us to understand these things, and by your Spirit to actually embrace them and come to love them and come to seek to be a community that is marked by them. We pray for your help, Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen.

Love is a very powerful force, if you didn't already know that. The Roman poet Virgil once wrote that "Love conquers all." I didn't know Virgil said that. I just knew the quote and looked it up and found out Virgil said it. This is a really long time ago. This is way before Jesus, that there was a concept that love conquers all. Our libraries are full of books that tell of such powerful stories. Our music playlists have songs that speak of such love. Our Netflix tells us and shows us how much we can both enjoy and waste time, too, but how much we can actually watch, characters who embrace and who live out such powerful love.

Now, most people long for this. I mean, I dare say all people long for this. Some people experience it in various degrees. And I don't know about you, but no matter how many songs I hear or how many movies I watch, I never grow tired of stories of this kind of love. I'm not just talking about romantic comedies. In all of their cheese, there are even glimpses of such powerful love. But I'm talking about something richer. I'm talking about those stories of love that happen in the face of fear, love breaking through obstacles, love motivating a person to endure painful circumstances and heal broken relationships. This kind of love knows no limits.

And we see this love in our text this morning. We see Jesus communicating something that is profound about what He's doing as He comes to fulfill the law and to have His disciples reflect His righteousness. To reflect His character, we see that Jesus's disciples must possess a righteousness that reflects the heart of God. This passage this morning discusses two aspects of this righteousness in the life of the disciple. So, first, verses 38-42, we'll be looking at how a disciple of Jesus must give generously. And then the second section, verses 43-48, how a disciple of Jesus must love indiscriminately. So, let's look at these two sections.

First, in the first section, verses 38-42, we see Jesus approaching a topic of retaliation. He sets up the contrast this way by saying in verse 38, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'" That's actually very common language even in our culture. Even if you don't realize it comes from the Bible, there is an innate desire for that sense of personal justice, personal satisfaction. We see it in our children. Why did you hit him? He hit me first. We see it even in our own selves as adults. Why aren't you talking to that person? Well, they're not talking to me. This kind of tit for tat, what I get, I'm going to give back in kind. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

Here, Jesus is actually not addressing something that the Pharisees are getting wrong, necessarily, because it's prescribed in the Old Testament in the law. We see it in three key areas. I'll read just a few, and then I'll mention the third. But first in Exodus 21:23, it says this, "But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe." Again, Leviticus 24:19-20, says, "If anyone injures his neighbor as he has done it shall be done to him, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth. Whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him." This language is picked up in Deuteronomy 19:21 as well.

So, there is a principle, a law that then gets applied in different situations. So, this is kind of in view of what Jesus is bringing it up in contrast to the scribes and the Pharisees. The law that's mentioned, that's quoted correctly, is a type of judicial process. Now, it existed in many cultures outside of Israel and outside the Bible. For example, this kind of language of eye for an eye shows up in the code of Hammurabi in Babylon. Many cultures today practice similar judicial processes in their community to bring about justice when there has been wrongdoing.

And although this principle might seem extreme to our sensibilities, perhaps you see it as unnecessarily violent or outdated, there is evidence even by the time of Jesus that it was actually more

common to accept monetary payment for damages. So, even in the practice of God's law, there were other ways of bringing about that sense of justice than just eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.

Regardless of how you and I might react to hearing it with our ears today, it's incredibly important to understand the role that it played in the life of the people of God, to see its purpose, to see its wisdom in God's law. And this law has three goals in mind. First, to hold the guilty accountable. Second, to prevent escalating cycles of revenge and blood feud. This is the essence of what it means to not retaliate in kind, getting things out of hand and it being a never-ending conflict. And third, a purpose of this law would be for restraint from such violence in the first place because you're rightly fearing that what I exact on my neighbor would be exacted on me. So, maybe I need to calm down and think of other means to handle my problems. So, those three goals in mind, to hold the guilty accountable, to prevent escalation, and then also to restrain such violence, this is a good law for the people of God that God has given for His covenant community to govern themselves.

So, if that's the case, then why does Jesus bring it up here? How is it fitting the pattern of contrasting the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees with the righteousness of Jesus's followers? And we see the answer to be given in the second half of verse 39 where Jesus says, "But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil." The word here for "resist" suggests being in opposition to or setting yourself up in opposition against. There is an activity to it versus a passivity. There is an agency that's involved to this activity that isn't just merely, don't retaliate. Jesus is going further and much deeper in the implications of the law.

And He gives four examples that kind of illustrate this principle that He is calling His disciples to follow. So, let's look at these four small illustrations that Jesus gives. The first one is found also in verse 39. "But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." To be slapped in this way is to be struck with the open hand. But it could also mean to be struck with a fist. It could be struck with an item such as a rod or a whip. There is an actual physical assault that's happening here. And so, that's in view. But the text also gives another clue that there's something particular about this strike that's not just physical assault, but that it's actually more about a personal insult. And this idea is coming from being slapped on the right cheek.

In the culture of the day, the right hand, the right arm, the right side, the right being a place of honor. And it would even go so far as to suggest that the one who is doing the slapping is doing it with the back of their right hand, just to actually put salt into the wound, to really embarrass and disgrace someone. Maybe it's not even a hard slap. It's just something that is done to really bring about dishonor. It's not even too long ago that that existed in our own culture whether that was calling someone to a duel, sometimes men would slap each other with a glove. I've never seen anybody do that. I've seen Bugs Bunny do it. But in cultures today and in American culture not too long ago, a sense of personal honor drove someone to respond to that dishonor. This is what Jesus is getting at, and He's saying His disciples must resist this evil person, this person that is seeking to do harm to you in this way by insulting you.

So, for you, Christian, I think it's important for us to begin asking these questions as we unroll these examples. So, for you, what would be that slap? What would be that sense of someone intentionally bringing dishonor to you as a way of insulting you? Because if it doesn't matter to you, you don't retaliate. If something strikes you at the core of who you are and it's something that is significant and valuable to you, that is where we well up. That's the essence of where we want to respond. And Jesus is drawing attention to our heart and that motivation for how we interact with those who would bring insult to us.

The second example is in verse 40. "And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well." So, if you're listening to Jesus's sermon here, or you're sitting here this morning and listening to this for the first time, you may have been put off by that first suggestion. Of course, I'm not going to let someone insult me. Okay. Maybe that's not as tall of an order as this one. But Jesus begins to ramp it up and intensify the stakes for not resisting.

This situation in verse 40 involves someone taking you to court in a dispute. And the payment that's involved here in this court case, the tunic was the article of clothing closest to your body. It could be worn by itself, but it was often worn under other garments. And besides a loin cloth, this tunic would be the base layer of your clothing. The scandal that Jesus is bringing to the listeners' ears is twofold. So, outside of under garments, this loin cloth would imply that the result of this legal dispute would be nakedness.

And even so much more, by Jesus referencing the cloak, Jesus is specifically drawing attention to another Old Testament law that explicitly forbid taking a person's cloak. Why? Because if you take the tunic and you're naked, you need a cloak. And many people would also sleep with it. It was a blanket. It was an essential everyday carry for the people at that time that they needed. So, if you were to give your cloak in pledge during the day, it was to be returned to you even if you hadn't paid the debt back because of this law of kindness and mercy to the person that they would not be without protection and warmth.

So, Jesus is saying we must not resist the person who would take legal action against you. And even to the point of what is going to be costly for you, go ahead and go beyond that. So, what for you, I ask, are you willing to give up? What rights do you feel strongly about that you would defend yourself in a court, a dispute? What rights do you give up for the sake of the other? Jesus is beginning to press in and make us uncomfortable on what is our duty in a community. How do we live in light of this righteousness that Jesus is demonstrating?

The third example that Jesus gives is in verse 41, "And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles." The word here for "forces" becomes very helpful in understanding the full sense of what Jesus is getting at. And if you haven't been uncomfortable already, it's about to get more uncomfortable especially if you're an Israelite in Roman occupied Judaea. This idea of force comes from an older Persian word that dealt with the post office, let's say. So, if I'm a dispatched messenger and I'm on my horse, I am riding my horse until I can't ride it anymore, whether it's too tired to go further, even riding it to death. When I get off that horse, I have every legal right to take your horse and continue on my journey with high penalties if you resist that.

In the Roman time that Jesus is speaking, a similar law was in place by the Romans that a citizen could be conscripted for labor up to and not exceeding what would be the equivalent of our mile. The word for "mile" is a Roman word. It's not a Jewish term for distance. So, Jesus is pressing in on your comfortability on your obligations to who you think you're supposed to be loving, who you think you're supposed to be showing kindness to. And He's calling us to not resist these forms of punishment. I guess, we would even view them as punishments. Also, unfairness, injustice. But Jesus is saying here, if we are to not resist the one who is evil, we're not to resist the one who enlists our service involuntarily. Who's getting uncomfortable?

The fourth example in verse 42, "Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you." This begins to be a much more broad and general term of just those who have need, those who are asking for money, those who are asking for food, those who are asking for possessions that would be beneficial to them. Jesus is saying, do not refuse them. And the idea of borrowing, it's challenging because it's recognizing that maybe you'll get paid back, maybe you won't. Give to the one who begs. Do not refuse the one who would borrow. In this much broader situation, which would apply to many conversations in any given day, Jesus is saying we must not resist the person who would appeal for our help.

So, He begins to really press in on what are we willing to go for? What are our limits of extending such kindness to somebody? We quickly begin recognizing how we might even literally put qualifiers on that or subconsciously put qualifiers on that. Do they deserve it? Are they going to pay me back? Are they worthy of my help? Is it for a good cause? All these things can become ways that we begin to really ask the question to what Jesus is saying, is there a limit or is this no limit?

What are you willing to give up for your possessions so that another can be helped? What are you willing to do to go beyond the call of duty to serve another person? John Stott says this, "Jesus does not deny that this person," in the passage, "is evil. He asks us neither to pretend that he is other than he is nor to condone his behavior. What he does not allow is that we retaliate." So, getting in here, there's tons of caveats that we can and should talk about, but we just don't have time for this morning. So, we could say that there is no limit to what Jesus is saying. At the same time, we could say that there is wisdom that we must walk. There are situations that we need to interact with that might make it much more challenging to actually follow through with what Jesus is calling the disciple to be and to do.

The important part of this section is this. Jesus is not undermining the Old Testament law. Rather, He's exposing our hearts by directing us to the deeper root of the principle. It's not about seeking personal revenge or a sense of self-satisfaction and justice. Rather, living in the kingdom does not seek this revenge at all. Living in the kingdom reflects the values of God's kingdom. And in these demonstrable actions of our love not only for our neighbor but for the one who may be wronging us, how do we begin to comply? How do we begin to obey and live out what Jesus is saying? And it begins at the root. It begins at the heart.

And this feeds into the next section that we'll come to in a few moments. But the other thing I would say, that these hypothetical situations are not exhaustive. They're not something that we necessarily can always say, well, let me just take this verse 40 and draw the parallels to where it plays out in my life today. This is a challenge. And, therefore, we really need to live in light of our relationships in a community, a community of God's people who are wrestling with these things together, wrestling with understanding the wisdom of doing something, in community wrestling with the idea of when a brother or sister actually gives of their cloak and their tunic and now have no clothes, how does the body of Christ then care and meet the needs of those in the body of Christ?

And thus, that individual disciple who's seeking to follow the words of Christ is demonstrating the love of Christ to another person and, therefore, creating a wonderful opportunity that the people of God can then participate in public corporate witness to one another that we love one another when we also are in need because it is costly to give up your possessions. It is costly to go that extra mile when you don't have the time, when you don't have the resources. It is costly to be insulted. How do we encourage one another? How do we bear with one another in those moments? We certainly rely and lean on Christ. But we must also rely and lean on one another as His body.

This first section necessarily flows into the second section. I love how Matthew has beautifully put this summary of Jesus's teachings together. The idea of loving indiscriminately here in verses 43-48, starting in verse 43, "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." Here in this contrast, Jesus is addressing a partial truth, and He's addressing a partial distortion.

What's the truth? Well, actually, Leviticus 19:18 says, "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." This is where Jesus elsewhere quotes the summary of the law, to love God and to love neighbor as yourself. He's quoting Leviticus here. That's the right part. You are to love your neighbor.

The second part is the distortion where Jesus is challenging that what the scribes and the Pharisees had begun to embrace something else from scripture and misapply it to their relationships. So, this distortion is that part, "and hate your enemy." This is very likely the misappropriation of Psalm 139:21-22 where it says (and David is speaking here), "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." There are other places where the prophets even discuss what it looks like to be not only lamenting but protesting and being welled up with a fury of recognizing God's enemies. There is a place for this in

scripture. There is a place for this in the people of God. But it's the misappropriation that Jesus is trying to correct.

And what I mean by that is Jesus is challenging who the scribes and Pharisees were defining, who is their neighbor? You see, the scribes and the Pharisees, by nature of saying you should love your neighbor and hate your enemy, they were narrowing who can qualify as my neighbor. But we see Jesus's teaching going much further with the ideal, the intent, the purpose of God's law. He says to love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you.

I don't know about you, but prayer softens the heart when you're taking people to the Lord in intercession. You certainly need to go to the Lord in assessing your own heart, and David does that in Psalm 139. What's the next verse? "Search me, O Lord, and see if there is any grievous way in me. Know my thoughts. Know my heart." That is always to be in view when we have a sense of opposition from somebody, an enemy. Is our emotion matching the emotion of God in a right way?

So, for us to love our enemies, it necessarily has to reflect the heart of God. To pray for those who persecute you necessarily requires you to love your enemy. For you to know that Jesus Christ who is in the very presence of God our Father and is sitting at the righthand interceding on our behalf, taking people who are out for our hurt and our harm, and praying for them is an excellent way that we're actually loving them. It's disarming the heart. It's melting us to a sense of mercy and seeking the Lord's justice and not our own.

Jesus is going further to paint this in the context of who we are. Look what He says. "Just as you are sons of the Father, the Lord who providentially cares for the evil and the good, the just and the unjust." We see how the Lord is loving indiscriminately, providing for all of His creation, even those who are unknowingly or knowingly enemies of Him, who either just apathetically disregard Him or are vehemently hostile toward Him. But for us to be sons and daughters of the Father is to be family members of His household. And for us, our very hearts to reflect the values of His household.

And He goes into more examples of comparison and contrast. The first motivation, of course, being as we are in the household of God to love as He loves indiscriminately. But then Jesus is challenging two assumptions. First, those who love you, really focusing or highlighting just how transactional we have our relationships, how we live in light of, well, how can we be reciprocated? I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine. It's easy to love those who love you. He says, even the tax collectors do that. And in that context, that would be a reference of even potentially somebody who is in the people of the nation of Israel who is working for the Roman government and extorting his own people, paying taxes to Caesar, and skimming off the extra so that he can line his own pockets because the job doesn't pay very well. Even those people who would extort from their own people love those who love them.

And the second assumption is those you greet. He calls it a more affectionate term, "your brothers." "And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?" The Gentiles being a broad term for those who are not of the people of Israel, the other nations, those who are outside of the covenant, even those who are not marked by God's character and God's love and God's promises, God's word. Even those people will greet their brothers. We are to love indiscriminately as the Lord loves indiscriminately.

And of course, we see here in the final takeaway, verse 49, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Now, this is beautiful in two ways. It's a culmination of this section that we're looking at today. But it really is a culmination, a summary, of this whole section from verses 21-48. This encapsulation of the righteousness of a disciple, the righteousness of Christ is for us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. Now, this certainly is an allusion to the Old Testament that would say, "Be holy as the Lord is holy."

There are other places where it does use the word "perfect" as well. This sense, though, is actually in the future. This is lost in the English, but "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." This is a

wholeness. It is a reflection of the perfection of God's character, encapsulating full maturity. And it's holding out something that is true of Jesus's disciples now because of what is secured for us in the future. You with me? Make sense?

For us to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, it is both a possibility not in our own ability, but it's a possibility because of what Christ has accomplished in the fulfillment of the law. The totality, the wholeness of the very being of God is made accessible to His people by the mediation, by the love, by the sacrifice, the death, the resurrection of Jesus. This identity, the status of who God's people are is both already but not yet. Hence the hope that comes with the future tense. It's something that we are to be embodying and embracing now recognizing that we fall short and we continue to strive with the power of the holy Spirit and the abundant grace that Jesus gives. To be whole, to be mature as our heavenly Father is perfect is to embody this perfect love, this indiscriminate love, this ability to give beyond what we are able to give, to give generously from our heart and out of the overflow of our possessions. These things are not human.

There was a season of my life where I worked at a wilderness camp. It was an organization that partnered with the Department of Juvenile Justice. And my coworkers and I would always talk about how natural it was for these teenage boys who had committed minor crimes, how natural it is to protect yourself. It is not natural to love. You have to be taught love. You have to be shown love. You have to be demonstrated love. If you look on the front of your bulletin as we look at John's first letter, we can even know the love of God because He has first loved us. It is not natural to give generously. It is not natural to love indiscriminately.

If you look at these two sections, they are related because they explore the motivations of our hearts and the actions of our hands. If you have an outlook that mirrors these verses, verses 43-48, where you restrict who you consider your neighbor to be, in essence withholding mercy, you are actually removing yourself from the potential opportunities to respond in the way Jesus is describing in the first verses 39-42. If I find myself in situations described like Jesus describes in verses 39-42, I may show mercy to my neighbor, but I will require justice for my enemy. In effect, I would be failing to love as my Father in heaven loves. I'm acting as a judge. I'm declaring who should be my neighbor and who should be deemed my enemy. In the former, I require justice for me and no mercy for you. In the latter, I desire mercy for me and only justice for you.

Loving indiscriminately is hard. We cannot do it out of our own ability, our own minds, our own affections for someone. It will always be a challenge. But it doesn't nullify the call that Jesus is putting on His disciples. Loving our neighbor can be a little bit easier, and certainly, hating our enemy is simpler. But if I can determine who my neighbor is and who my enemy is, then I have simplified who is worthy of my demonstrations of the gospel to other people, those actions of love that reflect the love of Christ.

Here, reflecting the values of God's kingdom is the very heart posture for the one who cannot and does not reciprocate. Think about that. If Jesus is talking about how He has not come to nullify the law but to fulfill it, think back in your mind's eye of how Jesus in His own life fulfilled these very descriptions of what righteousness is, to not retaliate when He's insulted, to be silent when the accusers are falsely accusing Him of crimes He did not commit, literally striking Him, praying for His enemies as they drive the nails into His hands saying, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," the ways that Jesus had no place to lay His head and always gave to those who needed of Him. And likewise, again and again, Jesus demonstrating not answering the question, who is my neighbor? But showing a better way of asking the question, whose neighbor am I?

Now, we're not Jesus. We're not perfect. He's not asking us to be Jesus on our own as if we can boast in that. But rather, our boast is in Christ, and we seek to receive His love, His generous giving of Himself, the grace and mercy that pours forth out of His life, His death, and His resurrection, and we seek to walk in light of that because we've been changed by it. Our sins have been forgiven. And our very heart's disposition has been radically reversed. To have Christ's light to shine on us is to actually

penetrate the darkness of our heart and bring us into the love of the father. Jesus intends for His disciples to follow His commands. He sets the bar high. But the ministry of the holy Spirit enables His disciples to follow His commands.

Just a couple last comments here. As we talk about the relationship between the law and Jesus, and particularly in this section with the idea of, is there a limit to love? As we think about living in light of these descriptions of righteousness for the disciple, can we obey? Yes, in one sense, we can obey. We can perform these things outwardly, but fail to inwardly embrace them, thereby ultimately failing to obey them, to not fully obey from the heart. But for the Christian, this means there is grace upon grace even when we fail to love our neighbor as ourselves fully. For the non-Christian who is interacting with what are even the claims of Christ, in one sense there's obedience, that outward performance. But that outward performance does not gain you access to a status. It does not give you a way that brings you into the family of God in your own merit. So, for you, it certainly would invite you to hear Jesus's call where He says, come, follow me.

There are certainly ways that we cannot obey. We can outwardly fail to perform. We can internally reject and rebel against this law as well considering it foolishness, considering it immoral. There are certainly people who believe that Jesus's teaching is immoral and unjust. But here, again, the invitation is from Jesus to come and follow me.

There's a sense, too, for the Christian that you can outwardly fail in obeying these commands, but internally, your desire is to embody them. Your desire is to obey. But there is that conflict within you that we see in Romans 7. This picture of the life of the believer that you have not fully obeyed, but there is grace upon grace. And in this process of God's sanctifying grace is growing you to embrace it in your heart and practice it outwardly with others. And for the Christian, I do believe that there is opportunity and ways that we can actually outwardly perform these things and inwardly embody them. The Christian can experience this obedience. And we should. However, we do not reach a level of perfection in this life where this happens consistently or perfectly. But it's an ongoing practice. This is one of the reasons the early Christians were often called the followers of the way, the way of Christ.

This story of God's love, the glimpses of it are all on our music playlists. They're all over our Netflix. But do we have the eyes to see and the ears to hear those glimpses of God's love? However imperfect they may be, they reflect something that is truly magnificent about God's generous giving and His indiscriminate love. And for us as Christians, to abide in Christ, to grow in faith and to walk in His love is to love others in the same very way. May He provide the grace for us to do that with one another as well as our public witness to those who have no idea. And believe it or not, we live in a place where increasingly, people have never heard of Jesus. How we use our words to describe Him and how we live our lives in our actions are the ways that we demonstrate this limitless love that He has shown us through His Son Jesus Christ. Let's look to Him, be filled with His love, and let's pour out our love in worship of Him. Let's pray.

Our Father in heaven, we give thanks and praise, for indeed, your grace abounds. Your mercy is limitless. And you have treated us, your enemies, as neighbors and have poured out your love. Help us to love our enemies. Help us to pray for those who persecute us. Help us to be a people marked by this love and law of Christ. We pray this in Jesus's name. Amen.