

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Luke 6:27-49

Key Verse: 6:27

"But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...."

Study Questions:

1. Read verse 27. What does it mean to "love your enemies?" What are several different kinds of love? (1 Jn 4:16b-18) What characterizes God's love? (Jn 3:16)
2. Read verses 27-31. Who are enemies? What are some "enemy acts"? How should Jesus' disciples respond? What did Jesus do? (Lk 23:34a) What does verse 31 mean?
3. Read verses 32-34. What can one do to overcome an enemy mentality? Read verses 35-36. How do we prove to be God's children? What reward does he give his children?
4. Read verses 37-42. What does it mean "Do not judge?" Why do people judge others? What should we do instead of judging? What does the parable in verses 39-40 mean? How can spiritual blindness be cured? (41-42)
5. Read verses 43-45. How can one recognize a truly great man? Read verses 46-49. Who is a foolish person and who is a wise man?

As we know well, the Sermon on the Mount was written by St. Matthew, who was Levi the tax collector. Because of his selfishness, he was bitter and injurious to others. The Sermon on the Mount depicts most excellently the holiness of God as well as the heart of God. Today we want to think about St. Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. Luke the evangelist and historian did not include all the contents of the Sermon on the Mount. St. Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount emphasizes love your enemy. Let's ask God's mercy so that we may love our enemies.

First, love your enemies (27).

Look at verse 27. "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do

good to those who hate you...." In this verse, we find two key words, "love" and "enemies." They say that there are three kinds of love. The first is passionate love. Passionate love heats up quickly and cools off quickly. In Leo Tolstoy's work there is a book named "The Resurrection." Nekhlyudov was a military officer. Katusha was a housemaid of Nekhlyudov's family. The young officer came home for Easter break. To Nekhlyudov's eyes, Katusha looked like an angel in her womanliness. Katusha, as a woman of lowly social status, looked up at Nekhlyudov as a noble prince. That night, the young man Nekhlyudov used Katusha to satisfy his passionate feeling. At the moment, Katusha was also very happy to be used by him. But after a few hours Katusha realized that she lost her purity. Then she felt she lost everything. She could no longer think of Nekhlyudov as a noble prince. Their passionate love ended up in this way. In her sorrow, Katusha began to indulge in prostitution and stealing and she enjoyed torturing herself. Finally, she committed many crimes and was sent to Siberia for lifetime exile. Nekhlyudov gave up all his honorable family background and his army officer's position and tried to save Katusha. But Katusha did not accept him because she had gone too far and was mentally ill. The second kind of love is friendly love. We call it "Phileo." Friendly love is conditional and relative. As we know well, Julius Caesar was a Roman military general. He helped make Rome the center of an empire that stretched across Europe. Caesar also won fame as an orator, politician and writer. He was great because he was a many sided man. He was great especially because he had a dream of world conquest at the age of 17. He was great because he refused the crown of the Roman Empire three times. As Julius Caesar had many friends and royal subjects under him, so he also had many enemies. One of them was Brutus. When Brutus lost the war, his life was spared by Julius Caesar in the hope of raising him as one of his best friends. Brutus stabbed Julius Caesar in the back. At that moment, Julius Caesar said in great dismay, "You too, Brutus?"

There are many people who enjoyed friendly love. But friendly love is, at best, maintained as long as the circumstances allow. The friendship between Prince Jonathan and David is indeed beautiful. Prince Jonathan knew that his father, King Saul, had decided to destroy David out of jealousy. Once, David defeated the Philistine champion Goliath and came into the city. The women sang, "Saul has slain his thousands and David his tens of thousands" (1Sa 18:7). Prince Jonathan promised David that he would help him escape from his father's attack. But Jonathan came to the point he

could not help David anymore. These two friends were sorrowful so they wept when they had to separate. But David cried much more.

The third kind is God's love. God's love is God himself. 1 John 4:16b says, "God is love." God's love is everlasting, as our God is everlasting. God's love is unconditional. God's love gives us eternal life and the kingdom of God as our inheritance. We human beings are helpless and too weak to do anything because of our sins. But Romans 5:8 says, "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." God's love is also absolute. God wanted to save men from their sins. But there was only one way to save men from their sins. Finally he sent his Son to this world. We call this the incarnation of Jesus. John 1:14 says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." The coming of Jesus was full of grace and truth. But his coming itself could not save men from their sins. So God made his one and only Son a ransom sacrifice for the sin of the world. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." Mark 10:45 says, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." We cannot love our enemies. But when we think about Jesus' life-giving ministry we can forgive them by the Spirit of Jesus..

Second, how can we love our enemies? (27-36).

Look at verse 27. "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you...." This verse tells us that we must love our enemies. The word "enemy" has a broad meaning. But if we confine the meaning to this passage, the meaning of "enemy" is very clear. For example, an enemy is one who curses you (28). An enemy is one who mistreats you (28). An enemy is one who strikes your cheek (29). In short, enemies are those who explode out of hatred. There are many ways for enemies to make people angry out of their hatred. If you want to make anyone furiously angry, strike his cheek. Then he will be furiously angry, because one's face represents his whole body and his character. Enemies are those who demand many things unreasonably. Thus, they make others angry. Verse 29b says, "If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic." In the ancient time, there were not many cloaks. Only very rich people could possess cloaks. They say that a good cloak cost one

year's income for high-class people. So trying to get another's cloak is an unreasonable demand.

But our Lord commands us to love our enemies by satisfying their demands in the hope of winning them over to God. Let's read verses 29-31. "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you." This is the basic attitude of children of God and it is the way of loving one's enemy. Evaluate your love of enemies as a child of God. Suppose someone struck your right cheek. As a result, he broke your high nose and your glasses. Can you say, "Please, finish by striking my left cheek." I think no one can do that. But we must obey the command of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The command of our Lord Jesus Christ seems to be too hard to put into practice. In history, those who wanted to obey the command of Jesus are truly innumerable. John Paton was a man who knew God's heart for the world. He was a pioneer missionary to the New Hebrides, a group of islands off the coast of Australia. He and his wife Mary opened a new mission on Tanno, an island inhabited by vicious cannibals. When one old missionary warned him that he might be eaten by cannibals, John Paton replied, "You are pretty old, aren't you? Soon you will die and be eaten by worms. I would rather serve the Lord and be eaten by cannibals." After they had been in Tanno only a few months, his wife Mary died of malaria, and their baby died soon after. John was heartbroken, but he said, "I will not run away." Then God blessed his language study and Bible teaching and many cannibals became the children of God.

There are two kinds of people. The one kind is ordinary people, and the other, the children of the light. If we want to be children of the light, we must have a love relationship with God. We must have a vine and branch romance with God. When something happens, we must think of God first before thinking of others. We must think of God particularly before thinking of enemies. Then we can grow. If we only love those who love us (32); if we only do good to those who are good to us (33); if we only lend money to those who are sure to pay the money back (34); then we are not children of the light, but animal men. So Jesus commands us in verses 35-36, "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get

anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Third, do not judge (37-42).

All sinners are very lazy. But when they have to judge others, they are like flaming fire. Therefore, those who want to be the children of God should not judge others. Those who want to be children of God should not condemn others. Here, judge has the same meaning as condemnation. Those who judge others are condemning others.

So Jesus said in verses 41-42, "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,' when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye." These verses tell us that those who judge others are very self-righteous. Self-righteous people can have microscope eyes to see others' faults. But they are so blind that they never see their own sins. Because they do not know what their sins are, they never repent. The self-righteous people are the Pharisees, those who collaborated with the Roman governor Pilate and nailed Jesus to the cross. They are as evil as the devil. They must come to Jesus and ask God's mercy to overcome their enemy mentality and grow up to be children of God.

Look at verses 39-40. "He also told them this parable: 'Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher.'" These two verses seem not to have a connection with this passage. But they have. Today's passage sounds negative. "Don't do this. Don't do that." Then we have nothing to do. There is so much bad in the best of us and so many defects and faults. No one can be a teacher. But in these verses, Jesus encourages us by saying that those who grow through much discipline will become like their teacher, who loves his enemies.

Fourth, a truly great man (43-45).

From times past to the present, there have been so many who have

wanted to be great men. Most truly great men were not discovered in their own generation, but several generations after they died. These days we enjoy grandiose classic music. But those who wrote these pieces of music were not people who were popular to their contemporaries. For example, Beethoven lived a hand-to-mouth existence even when he had to compose heavy music. Immanuel Kant was already ranking in the top level throughout the generations of scholarship as a philosopher. But he lived all his lifetime in a position equivalent to a T.A. so that he might have little time to teach, and finish writing his works, *The Critique of Pure Reason* and *The Critique of Practical Reason*. He did not receive due respect because he taught students for 50 years in a sort of T.A. position. But he established a new mainline of the philosophical field after him. Now he is very popular. There are innumerable stories of those who were not popular in their contemporary time but became men and women of benevolence.

Probably in their hearts, the disciples wanted Jesus to be very popular so that they would also be popular together with Jesus. James and John really wanted to be top leaders among the apostolic band regardless of Peter's existence. Jesus wanted to teach them true greatness. There is a saying which goes, "If a man wants to harvest a crop, he must have a one-year vision. If he wants to grow a fruit tree and harvest fruit, he must have a ten-year plan. If he wants to raise a great man, he must have a one-hundred-year vision." Jesus is saying that a truly great man is one who brings forth good fruits. It means he must grow as good fruit and he must cultivate the garden of the fruit tree and harvest good fruit. In other words, we cannot measure the greatness of a man. We can see a man's greatness when we see his life fruit. Life fruit is God's attributes, such as love, peace and joy. This golden rule is closely related to discipleship training, which requires time, effort, and much prayer and care. Those who raise many great leaders are truly great men.

Fifth, a truly wise man (46-49).

Speaking from a worldly point of view, there are many kinds of great men. But there is only one kind of great man in Jesus' teaching. They are those who hear the word of God and put it into practice. The disciples heard the golden rule, "Love your enemies," "Do not judge," and "Be a good fruit." But suppose they never forgave their enemies and held a grudge, and at the opportune time got revenge one by one instead of encouraging and

forgiving and supplying all the necessary things for God's children. Suppose they judged and condemned others. Suppose they never bought a bag of potato chips for their fellows. They cannot be called the sons of God. As a conclusion, Jesus gives us a story about the wise man and the foolish man. This parable is truly beautiful.

Those who hear God's word and do not put it into practice are like those who build a house on the sand. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction will be complete (49). These are truly foolish men. On the other hand, those who hear God's word and practice it are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When the flood came and the torrent struck that house, it could not shake it because it was well built (48). The foundation of all mankind is our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today we learned to love our enemies. May God help us hear his word and put it into practice so that we may be truly wise men. May God help us love our enemies.