



## *Love Your Enemies* - Matthew 5:43-48

As the fifth chapter of Matthew draws to a close, Jesus continues to challenge His hearers to develop a greater and indeed deeper understanding of what it means to properly relate to those around us. Starting once again with that which was known, “You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy”, Jesus quickly turns conventional thinking on its head.

It’s not really a challenge to love your neighbor if you exclude those who are difficult to love like people who you would consider to be your enemy.

As we learn from Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan, we are not always on the same page with God regarding who our neighbor is. At this point in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is countering the teaching of the Pharisees who taught that they were to hate their enemies, thinking that in so doing they were hating those who God hates. Instead, Jesus argues that we are to love and pray for our enemies.

Easier said than done! Am I really supposed to love the person who intentionally seeks to make my life difficult? Yes! Am I really supposed to pray for the person who betrayed me? Yes! If we imagine ourselves to be in a different position before our Holy God, than our enemies before us, we are in for a surprise. God loves us, even as we make life difficult and betray Him. God does not wait for us to get our act together and then extend His love and grace to us. Rather, God, in Christ, took the radical step to redeem us even while we were still dead in our sins.

Jesus was there to preach to these people the Sermon on the Mount because He was not willing to wait for them to return to Him on their own. Christ knew that on our own we were not capable of doing so. Likewise, we ought not to expect our enemies to make things right with us before we treat them as God has treated us. Thus, we are to extend the grace of Christ even and especially to our enemies, loving and praying for them, even while our relationship remains at odds.

*Thoughts for Reflection* Is there anyone you might think of as an enemy or someone difficult to love that you can pray for today?

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 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. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.