

#Jesus said 'Love your Enemies'

The verses Mathew 5:43-48 and Luke 6:27 are both Jesus talking to his disciples and the Jews. It's part of a group of sermons called The Sermon on the Mount or sermon of beatitudes, which means supreme blessedness. Straight away we know that this sermon was taken seriously and really took to their hearts. Through out the new testament we're told how Jesus is constantly traveling from one city to another but at the beginning of Matthew chapter 5 we're told 'he went up to the mountainside and sat down'. The fact that he sat down and stayed in one place for a long period of time tells us that he must have been serious. What Jesus is telling us is something that he really wanted us to understand and put into practise.

Mathew 5:43-48

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

I think we should start with who are our enemies? People at school or work, people we see or try not to see regularly. They are people that have hurt us, betrayed our trust and most of them are people we were once friends with, others are people we don't really know that well. In the bible as a church our enemies would have been tax collectors or people who persecuted the church but we would have had personal enemies as well. Similarly today we have people like that which is why this passage was for the disciples as much as it is for us today.

Why do we have enemies?

I said before about people hurting us but it is also a lot about judgment. In our society it's now normal to judge people for how they look. But why do these things matter? The answer is they don't. It's said that it takes less than 30 seconds to make a first impression, are your enemies actually enemies or have you just judged them on a few times you've met. Sometimes this is the case, not always but it's important to question why we don't like people and whether we're just being judgemental and need to get to know people better. We don't have the right to judge others as they don't have the right to judge us.

Why is Jesus telling us to love these people now and not before?

In the old testament one of the ten commandments is 'Love thy neighbour' but people took this as only love fellow Jews and people who they knew and cared for. This is where the saying hate your enemy came from. Maybe they were trying to justify the hatred towards people who had done wrong to them. Everyone at this time, Jew or non Jew would have been taught the saying 'love your neighbour and hate your enemies. But Jesus turns round and goes against what they've grown up with and believed and says no, you must love everyone the same even if they have done wrong towards you. He's really challenging their ways of living. It wouldn't have been easy to love your enemies nor is it going to be easy now.

Jesus didn't just say these things and not follow through like some religious leaders in the bible who were hypocrites but he set an example for all of us. He died on the cross so that not only we could be forgiven but even his enemies. So that those who persecuted

him and the disciples, those who beat him and even nailed him to a cross could also be forgiven. If Jesus could forgive those who did that to him, why do we find it so difficult to forgive people.

Why should we love our enemies?

Mathew 5:48. Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. We know that we can never be as perfect as God, but we can try. We're taught in the bible to follow Jesus and become more like him, we can do this by loving our enemies. God gives us countless second chances even though we don't deserve them, you giving someone a second chance could change everything. It has a knock on effect. Most enemies or people we don't like are people disliked by more than one person. But if we turn around and love them, others will follow. If we hide among our friendship groups and family we won't make a difference to anyone's lives. Showing someone attention by caring for them could change their opinion of you.

In Galatians it says we are called to live in the grace of Christ. Grace means set apart, we're meant to behave and act differently to everyone else and loving your enemies is one of the ways in doing so. We're meant to stand out and verse 47 'if you only greet your own people, what are you doing more than others?' supports that. We should stand out so that Jesus can be made to know. Sometimes it may feel like we don't fit in but we're serving God. God is Love, so if we show love to others we are also sharing a glimpse of God.

How to love our enemies?:

I'm going to take verses from Luke 6: 27 onwards for this bit

27 We're told 'Do good to those who hate you'. It's not saying go out of here and invite every enemy you've had around you to your house. But treat them like a friend, if you see them greet them, smile at them, include them in to your group. Just a small conversation could make a difference. Go out your way to show them you actually care for them.

28 'Bless those who curse you'. Speak nice things to others about that person, don't let others speak bad of them otherwise you might as well join in. If we show others we love our enemies they will see God's love in you. If you talk to people about how you like someone they will also see them as you describe them. Again it has a knock on effect on people around us having a bigger impact than we can realise.

28 'Pray for those who ill-treat you'. I don't mean pray 'God kill them now', but pray that you can become friends and ask for encouragement to speak to them. Ask God to take any angry or bitter feeling towards them away. God's there to help us on the way were not on our own. Ask God to forgive them. But don't say this half heartedly. The Lord's prayer says 'Forgive those who sin against us'. When we pray we should remember that we're talking to the almighty God so we should mean every word we speak. If you haven't forgiven them it won't make a difference because you will still feel the same away and treat them the same way. Forgiveness is a big part of loving.

This is a line I got online 'To forgive is to truly acknowledge the injury and yet be able to understand, require no restitution for the injury, and go on with the relationship'. So before we can love someone we have to put the past behind us. It's not saying what they did or said wasn't wrong or hurtful but accepting that you're ready to move on and show the love of God. We need to remember it may lead to someone becoming a follower of Jesus which is our job as Christians. We are here for him.

Quick story but wont go into too much detail. I didn't exactly get on with many people in school and I held a lot of hurt and anger for some of these people. In the first year of college it still bothered me sometimes because I hadn't dealt with it. We went to soul survivor last year and I remember praying with Dan and some others and he said to me you need to forgive them. So in my head I said lord I forgive these people. After i felt like the feelings of anger and upset towards them go and although I didn't really see these people must anyway, when i did see the it wasn't a big deal and talking to others about them didn't make me feel annoyed.

The important thing to remember is that we're not in this alone, God is with us every step of the way. And that we have the power of Jesus on our side, so even if its tough its possible. God is working for our good so no matter what good or bad thing have happened or will happen he will guide us. All the good and bad things build us up to who we are.