

# **To Seek and To Save the Lost**

## **Love Your Enemies**

*Luke 6:27-36*

**Rev. Freddy Fritz**

October 13, 2013

# Love Your Enemies

## Scripture

We are studying Jesus' "Sermon on the Plain" that is recorded in the Gospel of Luke 6:20-49. A similar – but not identical – sermon is recorded in the Gospel of Matthew 5 – 7.

Jesus opened his "Sermon on the Plain" with a description of the blessings that belong to those who have entered the kingdom of God, and he also warned those who have not yet entered the kingdom of God.

Then Jesus described how his disciples were to live as citizens of the kingdom of God. Unlike many preachers, Jesus did not soft-peddle his message. He did not try to sugar coat what he was about to say. He did not ease into his message with a funny story aimed to set his disciples at ease. No. Jesus immediately gave his disciples what commentator Philip Graham Ryken calls "The Hardest Commandment."<sup>1</sup>

Let's read Luke 6:27-36, which is the section of Jesus' sermon where he teaches disciples to "Love Your Enemies":

**<sup>27</sup> "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup> To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. <sup>31</sup> And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.**

**<sup>32</sup> "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is**

---

<sup>1</sup> "The Hardest Commandment" is the title of chapter that comments on this portion of Jesus' "Sermon on the Plain" by Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, Vol. 1 in the Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2009), 267- 278.

**that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:27-36)**

## **Introduction**

All of us find some people easy to love and others more difficult to love. And, if we probed deep enough, we would discover that there are some people we really don't like at all. In fact, some of us might even admit to hating them.

In his outstanding commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Philip Ryken tells the story of Ernest Gordon who wrestled with the question of loving our enemies. Ernest Gordon was a prisoner of war in the infamous Japanese work camp on the River Kwai during World War II. Extremely harsh conditions brought Gordon to the verge of death. Finally, Gordon writes,

I was headed for the Death House. I was so ill that I didn't much care. But I was hardly prepared for what I found there. The Death House had been built at one of the lowest points of the camp. The monsoon was on, and, as a result, the floor of the hut was a sea of mud. And there were the smells: tropical ulcers eating into flesh and bone; latrines overflowed; unwashed men, untended men, sick men, humanity gone sour, humanity rotting . . . . The last shreds of my numbed sensibilities rebelled against my surroundings – against the bed bugs, the lice, the stench, the blood-mucous-excrement-stained sleeping platforms, the dying and the dead bedmates, the victory of corruption. This was the lowest level of life.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Gordon, *To End All Wars* (1963; reprint Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 80-81.

In the providence of God, and through the compassion of some of his army friends, Gordon did not die, but survived. More than that, he and many of the men in his camp came to faith in Jesus Christ. They learned to love each other.

Yet they still found it impossible to love their enemies. As Gordon writes,

We had learned from the gospels that Jesus had his enemies just as we had ours. But there was a difference: he loved his enemies. He prayed for them. Even as the nails were being hammered through his hands and feet, he cried out, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We hated our enemies. We could see how wonderful it was that Jesus forgave in this way. Yet for us to do the same seemed beyond our attainment.<sup>3</sup>

Whether it seems beyond attainment or not, Jesus commands all his disciples to love their enemies.

If you are a Christian here today, if you are a disciple of Jesus, then today's message is aimed directly at you and me.

And if you are not yet a Christian, then I have good news for you. Today, you also will learn how to love your enemies.

## Lesson

In today's lesson in Luke 6:27-36, Jesus teaches his disciples that we must love our enemies.

We learn that we must love our enemies because of:

1. The Command about Loving Our Enemies (6:27a)
2. The Manner of Loving Our Enemies (6:27b-28)
3. The Illustrations about Loving Our Enemies (6:29-30)
4. The Rule for Loving Our Enemies (6:31-34)

---

<sup>3</sup> Gordon, *To End All Wars*, 156.

## 5. The Reward for Loving Our Enemies (6:35-36)

### I. The Command about Loving Our Enemies (6:27a)

First, we must love our enemies because of the command about loving our enemies.

It is very important to keep in mind the context of Jesus' sermon. Immediately after Jesus had selected twelve men to become his apostles, he came down from the mountain with them, stood on a level place, and preached the "Sermon on the Plain" to the apostles, disciples and a great multitude of people. Luke said that Jesus began his sermon by "(lifting) up his eyes on his disciples" (6:20). So the sermon was primarily aimed at disciples, that is, at those who were followers of Jesus.

Jesus told his disciples that by following him his disciples would have to endure poverty, hunger, sorrow, and persecution for his name's sake, but they would also have his blessing. Then Jesus pronounced warnings on those who did not follow him and who were living for themselves with no thought for God and the things of God.

Jesus wanted his disciples to know that God blesses those who follow him. In fact, in the fourth beatitude Jesus said, "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man!" (6:22).

With that context in mind, Jesus said in Luke 6:27a, "**But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies.**"

Jesus' disciples must have been taken aback. What? Love our enemies? How in the world do we love our enemies?

This is where knowledge of Greek is helpful. In English we have one word for **love**. But, as Leon Morris notes,

There are several words for love in Greek. Jesus was not asking for *storge*, natural affection, nor for *eros*, romantic love,

nor for *philia*, the love of friendship. He was speaking of *agape*, which means love even of the unworthy, love which is not drawn out by merit in the beloved but which proceeds from the fact that the lover chooses to be a loving person.<sup>4</sup>

*Agape* is different from all other loves. It is not a love based on natural affection, romantic love, or friendship. It is a love based on a deliberate, willful choice toward another and empowered by God. As Phil Ryken says, “Jesus called his disciples to show a deliberate affection that was not based on what people deserved, but on the grace of God.”<sup>5</sup>

Kent Hughes says, “But *agape* love supersedes natural inclinations and often exists in spite of them. It is a deliberate love, rooted in the will – a love by choice.”<sup>6</sup>

Mike Mason says, “*Agape* love is a deep, continuous, growing and ever-renewing activity of the will superintended by the Holy Spirit.”<sup>7</sup>

*Agape* love says, “I will love this person because, by God’s grace, I choose to love this person.”<sup>8</sup>

Well, so much for **love**.

But what about **enemies**? Jesus said, “Love your **enemies**.” Who are the **enemies** we are to love? The Greek word for **enemies** (*echthros*) “denotes the inner disposition from which hostility arises, i.e., hatred.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, an enemy could anyone “that is antagonistic to another.”<sup>10</sup> An enemy

---

<sup>4</sup> Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to St. Luke: An Introduction and Commentary*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 128-129.

<sup>5</sup> Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke*, Vol. 1, 270.

<sup>6</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 225.

<sup>7</sup> Mike Mason, *The Mystery of Marriage* (Portland, OR: Multnomah, 1978), 99.

<sup>8</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, 225.

<sup>9</sup> Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1964-), 811.

<sup>10</sup> Inc Merriam-Webster, *Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary*. (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, Inc., 2003).

could be a demeaning boss, an abusive family member, a divorced spouse, an angry neighbor, or even a friend who has grown distant because of a disagreement.

So, who is *your* enemy? That is an important question for you as a Christian to answer, because whoever is your enemy, Jesus commands you to love that person.

## II. The Manner of Loving Our Enemies (6:27b-28)

Second, we must love our enemies because of the manner of loving our enemies.

Jesus gave us three ways to love our enemies.

### A. *We Love Our Enemies by Our Actions (6:27b)*

First, we love our enemies by our actions.

Jesus said in Luke 6:27b, “. . . **do good to those who hate you.**”

Think of someone who hates you. Then think of something good that you can do for that person. And then do it! It is just that simple.

The problem is that we do everything we can to avoid the person who hates us. We don't want to have anything to do with that person. But Jesus said, “. . . **do good to those who hate you.**”

### B. *We Love Our Enemies by Our Words (6:28a)*

Second, we love our enemies by our words.

Jesus said in Luke 6:28a, “. . . **bless those who curse you.**”

Again, think of the person who curses you. Do not respond in kind. Instead, respond with heartfelt blessing!

C. *We Love Our Enemies by Our Prayers (6:28b)*

And third, we love our enemies by our prayers.

Jesus said in Luke 6:28b, “. . . **pray for those who abuse you.**”

Has someone abused you? Or, as some translations put it, has someone mistreated you, or spitefully used you? You may be deeply wounded and hurt. Again, you may want to have nothing to do with such a person. But Jesus said, “. . . **pray for those who abuse you.**”

It is almost impossible to pray for someone and hate him or her at the same time. What do you pray for? You may pray that God’s grace will overwhelm that person, and that he or she will see God as utterly holy and himself or herself as completely sinful and desperately in need of the grace of God. When you pray that way, you will love your enemy.

Now, you may be thinking how radically different and difficult it is to love our enemy. And that is exactly the point!

III. **The Illustrations about Loving Our Enemies (6:29-30)**

Third, we must love our enemies because of the illustrations about loving our enemies.

Jesus gave four illustrations about loving our enemies.

A. *We Love Our Enemies by Enduring Insults (6:29a)*

First, we love our enemies by enduring insults.

Jesus said in Luke 6:29a, “**To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also.**”

Some scholars say that Jesus is referring to an insult here and not to being struck on the jaw. In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus said, “But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (Matthew 5:39b). In the ancient world if a per-



son wanted to insult someone, he slapped the other person with the back of his hand on the opposite cheek. So, a right-handed person would slap another person on the right cheek when he wanted to insult him.

Jesus is not commenting about physical violence, but is telling his disciples to endure insults for his name's sake.

You may endure insults if your spouse or parent or family member or colleague or friend is not a believer and mocks your faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "**Offer the other cheek also.**" That is, love keeps enduring insults for Jesus' sake.

*B. We Love Our Enemies by Suffering Loss (6:29b)*

Second, we love our enemies by suffering loss.

Jesus said in Luke 6:29b, ". . . **and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either.**"

Jesus calls his disciples to be willing to suffer loss because we are more concerned about the needs of other people. He was saying that if someone was desperate enough to take our cloak (or coat), let him have the shirt off your back too.

*C. We Love Our Enemies by Sharing Generously (6:30a)*

Third, we love our enemies by sharing generously.

Jesus said in Luke 6:30a, "**Give to everyone who begs from you.**"

The Greek word for **beg** (*aiteo*) is better rendered as "ask." Jesus was not talking about giving to panhandlers, or to people who will use what is given for evil purposes, but about giving to those who have legitimate material needs.

*D. We Love Our Enemies by Abandoning Payback (6:30b)*

And fourth, we love our enemies by abandoning payback.

Jesus said in Luke 6:30b, “. . . and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back.”

Jesus is not talking here about people stealing but rather about people borrowing and not returning what is borrowed. Jesus said that we should not harass them for our goods.

So, in order to implement Jesus’ illustration about loving our enemies by abandoning payback I am no longer demanding that you who have borrowed my books return them! But, that only applies if you are my enemy! If you are my friend, I still want my books returned!

Seriously, how are we to implement these illustrations? Surely Jesus calls us to err on the side of generosity. But there are limits to what we *can* give or *should* give. There may be times when it is more loving *not* to give, because giving will hurt rather than help the person. We think of times when we do not give to our children because we know that what they are asking for may not help them but rather hurt them.

So, we are often called to make difficult decisions. We must decide that we love others – especially our enemies – by giving them what they truly need. We must not hold on to what we have but be willing to give it away as an expression of love. Leon Morris summarizes this by saying,

If Christians took this [command] absolutely literally there would soon be a class of saintly paupers, owning nothing, and another of prosperous idlers and thieves. It is not this that Jesus is seeking, but a readiness among his followers to give and give and give. The Christian should never refrain from giving out of a love for his possessions.<sup>11</sup>

#### IV. The Rule for Loving Our Enemies (6:31-34)

Fourth, we must love our enemies because of the rule for

---

<sup>11</sup> Morris, *Luke*, 130.

loving our enemies.

A. *The Rule for Loving Our Enemies Is Called "The Golden Rule" (6:31)*

First, the rule for loving our enemies is called "The Golden Rule."

Jesus said in Luke 6:31, "**And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.**" We usually say it this way: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Jesus' rule is really radical. There were other teachers who gave similar rules, but as far as we know, they were always put in the negative. Their rules were stated something like this: "*Do not* do unto others what you *do not* want them to do to you." This was not a radical law of love. Instead, it was merely a law of self-preservation.

Jesus' rule is applicable to everyone, even our enemies.

After the collapse of the Berlin Wall in 1989, no person in all of East Germany was more despised than the former Communist dictator Erich Honecher. He had been stripped of all his offices. Even the Communist Party rejected him. Kicked out of his villa, the new government refused him and his wife new housing. The Honechers were homeless and destitute.

Pastor Uwe Holmer, director of a Christian help center north of Berlin, was made aware of the Honechers' difficulties. Pastor Holmer felt it would be wrong to give them a room meant for even more needy people. So the pastor and his family decided to take the former dictator into their own home!

Erich Honecher's wife, Margot, had ruled the East German educational system for twenty-six years. Eight of Pastor Holmer's ten children had been turned down for higher education due to Mrs. Honecher's policies, which discriminated against Christians. Now the Holmers were caring for their per-

sonal enemy – the most hated man in Germany.<sup>12</sup>

This was so unnatural, so unconventional, so supernaturally sublime, and so Christlike.

By the grace of God, the Holmers loved their enemies, did them good, blessed them, and prayed for them. They turned the other cheek. They gave their enemies their coat (their own home). They did to the Honechers what they would have wished the Honechers would do to them.<sup>13</sup>

*B. The Rule for Loving Our Friends Is Called “The Reciprocal Rule” (6:32-34)*

And second, the rule for loving our friends is called “The Reciprocal Rule.”

**Jesus said in Luke 6:32-34, “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.”**

In each case, help is offered on the assumption of reciprocity. Almost anyone can offer this kind of love, because it is based on self-preservation.

The love that Jesus commands his disciples to demonstrate is radical. It is love not only for friends, but it is also for enemies. It is not limited to those who love you, help you, and repay you, but it extends even to people who hate you, curse you, and abuse you. And disciples can love like this because God enables and empowers you to do so.

---

<sup>12</sup> Reported by George Cowan to Campus Crusade at the U.S. Division Meeting Devotions, Thursday, March 22, 1990.

<sup>13</sup> R. Kent Hughes, *Luke: That You May Know the Truth*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 227.

## V. The Reward for Loving Our Enemies (6:35-36)

And finally, we must love our enemies because of the reward for loving our enemies.

### A. *The Reward for Loving Our Enemies Will Be Great (6:35a)*

First, the reward for loving our enemies will be great.

Jesus said in Luke 6:35a, **“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great.”**

Jesus encourages his disciples to keep in mind that if they love their enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, their reward will be great.

### B. *The Reward for Loving Our Enemies Reflects Our Relationship to God (6:35b-36)*

And second, the reward for loving our enemies reflects our relationship to God.

Jesus said in Luke 6:35b-36, **“. . . and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”**

Disciples who love their enemies demonstrate that they are in fact **sons of the Most High** God.

## Conclusion

Therefore Christians must love our enemies.

Jesus was hated. He was hated by Judas, by the Pharisees, and by all the people who demanded his crucifixion.

Jesus was cursed. He was cursed by the false witnesses who testified against him, the soldiers who mocked him, and

the governor who sentenced him to die a God-forsaken death.

Jesus was abused. He was abused by the priests who whipped him, the soldiers who hung him to die, and all the people who swore at him while he was dying on the cross.

His enemies struck him on the cheek, and struck him again, insulting his true identity as the Son of God. They took away both his cloak and his tunic, leaving him to die naked. They stripped him of everything he had, down to his dignity.

How did Jesus respond to his enemies? He responded by loving them and giving his life to pay the penalty for their sins. As he was dying on the cross, suffering at the hands of his enemies, Jesus was showing them his love – the very kind of love he called his disciples to demonstrate to their enemies.

Jesus was doing good to those who hated him, suffering the punishment they deserved for their sins.

Jesus was blessing those who cursed him, offering salvation to the thief on the cross.

He was praying for those who abused him, saying, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).

This is where we learn to love our enemies: at the cross, where we see that love demonstrated to the “ungodly,” the “sinners,” and the “enemies” of God, as Paul said in Romans 5:

- Verse 6: “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.”
- Verse 8: “But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”
- Verse 10: “For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.”

If you are a disciple of Jesus, if you are a Christian, you know that loving your enemies is impossible. That is why you and I must stay close to the cross of Jesus. It is at the cross of

Jesus where we see the power of God's love that enabled Jesus to love his enemies. And it is at the cross of Jesus where we find the power of God's love to enable us to love our enemies.

If you are not yet a Christian, you will never love your enemies until you first come to Jesus for salvation. Believe that Jesus died on the cross to pay the penalty for your sin, and then turn from, that is, repent of, your sin. Then, and only then, will God's power, the same power that enabled Jesus, enable you to love your enemies as Jesus loved his enemies.

Let me finish the story of Ernest Gordon. Eventually, Ernest Gordon learned how to love his enemies, the Japanese, as Jesus commands. After the war ended, Gordon and other POWs from the River Kwai made their long, slow way back to Britain, traveling through Asia by train. Along the way, they ended up in a rail yard next to a train full of wounded Japanese soldiers. Gordon describes their miserable condition:

They were in a shocking state; I have never seen men filthier. Their uniforms were encrusted with mud, blood, and excrement. Their wounds, sorely inflamed and full of pus, crawled with maggots. . . . The wounded men looked at us forlornly as they sat with their heads resting against the carriages waiting fatalistically for death. They were the refuse of war; there was nowhere to go and no one to care for them. These were the enemy.

Gordon tells how he and some other soldiers responded:

Without a word, most of the officers in my section unbuckled their packs, took out part of their ration and a rag or two, and, with water canteens in their hands went over to the Japanese train to help them. . . . We. . . knelt by the side of the enemy to give them food and water, to clean and bind up their wounds, to smile and say a kind word.

But not everyone was pleased with this remarkable dis-

play of compassion. One Allied officer said, “What bloody fools you all are! Don’t you realize that those are the enemy?”<sup>14</sup>

Of course, Gordon and the other officers realized it: that was exactly the point! The dying soldiers were the enemy, and for that very reason, Gordon and his friends were called to love them and do good to them.

They learned to give this kind of love from the same place where we can learn to give it: at the cross of Jesus. Jesus died for us and now calls us to give his love to others, including people who hate us.

Who are the enemies that God is calling you to love?

Do good to them. Bless them. Pray for them. Show them the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

---

<sup>14</sup> Gordon, *To End All Wars*, 196-197.



# Mission Statement

The Mission Statement of the Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church is:

*To bring people to Jesus Christ  
and membership in his church family,  
develop them to Christlike maturity,  
equip them for their ministry in the church  
and life mission in the world,  
in order to magnify God's name.*

## Sermons by Rev. Freddy Fritz

This sermon, and other sermons, by the Rev. Freddy Fritz can be found at:

1. [www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons](http://www.tampabaypresbyterian.org/sermons)
2. [www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp](http://www.sermoncentral.com/contributors/freddy-fritz-sermons-11181.asp)
3. [www.sermonaudio.com/source\\_detail.asp?sourceid=FredFritz](http://www.sermonaudio.com/source_detail.asp?sourceid=FredFritz)

## Tampa Bay Presbyterian Church (PCA)

*Answers for Life!*

Address: 19911 Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Tampa, FL 33647

Telephone: (813) 973-2484

Fax: (813) 973-4673

Email: [Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org](mailto:Office@TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

Web site: [www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org](http://www.TampaBayPresbyterian.org)

**PRAYER:**

O Lord our God, you sent Jesus to this world to live and preach and heal and die and rise again for sinners such as ourselves.

In his Sermon on the Plain Jesus taught that we must love our enemies. O God, I must admit that it is impossible to do in my own power. But, when I became your disciple, you gave me *agape* love, and you empower me to love everyone – even my enemies – with the same love that enabled Jesus to love his enemies. Fill me day by day with *agape* love. Fill every disciple day by day with *agape* love, so that we may love even our enemies as Jesus commanded us to love them.

And God, will you grant the person who has not yet become your disciple faith and repentance today so that he or she might also have *agape* love.

And for this I pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

**BENEDICTION:**

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and always. Amen.

**CHARGE:**

Now, brothers and sisters, go and serve God wholeheartedly!