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**Grace Fellowship Church, Port Jervis, New York**

**February 5, 2017**

**Overcome Evil With Good**

**John 15:18-21**

**Prayer:** *Lord, we just again thank you for how precious the blood of Jesus is. And Father, this is the reason why we can come before you today, this is the reason that we celebrate and thank you for what the gift the cross is to us. And Lord, this morning, again at this communion service we are going to open up your book and we're going to again look into it and we want to grow in our knowledge and understanding of what it is you've done for us, and so I pray that you would give us the presence of your Holy Spirit, that we might again by that power in your spirit understand and make a permanent part of our lives what you have for us here. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*

Well, as I say each month, this is the day that we remember Jesus Christ and his cross. And Jesus on the night before he died, he met with his disciples for the last time and he shared a Passover supper with them that we record in Matthew 26:26. It says: *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it, broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my*

body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." And Jesus took bread and he took wine and he offered them up as symbols of his flesh and his blood and then he asked the disciples to eat the bread and drink the cup in order to symbolically eat his flesh and drink his blood. And then he asked them to repeat the remembrance of this sacrifice on a regular basis, and this is what we do, and this is what we call the Lord's table. And we celebrate it once a month by meditating on what it is the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us by examining ourselves, asking God's Holy Spirit to convict us of sin, by confessing our sins and by participating in the elements. *John 6:53* says: So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you."

And if you've been following, we're in the life of Jesus and we made it to the 15th chapter which opens up with a lengthy story about the vine and the branches, and Jesus made it clear that we are here to glorify God by bearing fruit on those branches. And the fruit that we are to bear he again makes clear in *Galatians*

5:22. It says: *The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.* Now I said last time, I said, well, really, I mean, who wouldn't want those kind of characteristics for themselves, I mean, they really are what defines an attractive person. But I also pointed out that there's a big difference between the fruit of the Spirit that Jesus is talking about and just being patient or kind or gentle, and the difference is that the fruit that Christ is speaking of always relates back to himself. And what Jesus is telling us is that we are here on earth as branches connected to him and we are charged with the task of reproducing in ourselves by the power of God's Holy Spirit the very essence of who Jesus Christ is. What Jesus is looking for to see reproduced in you and me is the love of Christ, is the joy of Christ, is the peace, the patience, the kindness and all the other characteristics of Christ because altogether, all of those fruits represent the loveliness of Jesus Christ. And the fruit of the Spirit is the living embodiment of the loveliness of Jesus, and God is determined to grow that fruit in you and me. And what I want to look at this morning is the reaction that we can expect when we grow and when we display this fruit. Jesus says in *John 15:16-19*, he says: *"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name,*

he may give it to you. These things I command you, so that you will love one another." So far so good, but then Christ turns a corner and he says in the next verse, verse 18, he says: "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you." Here's what God is saying that sounds so counterintuitive and what he's saying is to the extent that you display the fruit of the Spirit, to the extent that you display these wonderful characteristics of Christ that made him the loveliest person to ever walk the face of the earth, to the extent that you express his loveliness, you will be hated. I mean there's a reason why 2 Timothy 3 says: *All who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.* And I speak about this all the time, the reason for it is that there is a war, and it's a war going on in the spirit world, it's a war that's been going on literally for eons. And Revelation 12 actually says that there was a war in heaven and that the good guys won and the bad guy lost and he was thrown out of heaven and he landed right here on this very planet that we live on. And ever since that moment, these two kingdoms have been at war and the two combatants are the kingdom of God and what is known as the world, and they're diametrically opposed to one another. And the ruler of the kingdom of God is obviously the Lord Jesus Christ; the ruler of the kingdom of this

world is Satan. Jesus even referred to him as the ruler of this world in *John 14:30*, he said: *"I will no longer talk with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me."*

Now those who are in the kingdom of the world are there by default, they're there basically by birth. They are sons and daughters of Adam who are born into a fallen world with a fallen nature bent already toward the kingdom of this world. And because they are born this way, they don't really have a sense that they've entered into this kingdom. Being of the world is as natural to the citizens of this world as is breathing. In fact, if you were to suggest to the citizens of this world that there's a war going on right now and that they stand in opposition to another kingdom, the kingdom of God, they probably look at you like you had two heads. I mean, they don't see and they don't see because they can't see. *2 Corinthians 4* says: *In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.*

Now on the other hand, the kingdom of God is comprised of people who've been given the privilege of opened eyes and opened ears because God has chosen them before the very foundations of time to bring honor and glory to himself. And those who are in this

kingdom, the kingdom of God understand that they are there by grace alone and not by anything in their conduct that made them worthy of this honor, made them worthy somehow of God. God refers to the difference between these two kingdoms as the difference between darkness and light. And in 2 Corinthians that verse that we just looked at, God basically said that the enemy is actively working to blind the eyes of unbelievers so that they do not see the light of the gospel. That's where we all were before we were saved and that's why Jesus said to us that he has come to bring sight to the blind. You see, it is a grave error to think that the battle is so easily identifiable as the comic books would have you think, that this battle between good and evil is basically Batman versus the Joker or Riddler; it's just not that simple. The kingdom of this world is far more subtle than that. You know, it's been accurately said that the battle of the ages has never been cast as a battle between good and evil; it's always cast as a battle between different ideas of what is good. I mean you think about it, Hitler did not think that he was evil. Hitler thought that killing Jews was a good thing, a moral thing, and that's precisely how the enemy works and that's how the kingdom of this world successfully blinds its citizens. See, the kingdom of this world represents everything about life on this planet minus God. You have to remember that the ruler of this world started a war over jealousy about worship and that he craves worship more than anything and he is setting about

the task of obtaining that worship. But he's got a problem. You see, the market for all things that are good and true and right and noble is already taken up. It's already owned by the God who is good and true and right and noble. The enemy is left to contend with whatever is left and everything that is left is evil and untrue but it's been repackaged as good and true. That's why God says in *Isaiah 5:20*: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.* You see, everything that you experience in this life is filtered through that basic grid, and whether you're in school, whether you are at work, whether you're with your family, you will find that the pressures in life are never directed at this flat out dichotomy where people can say, oh, that's good and that's bad, that's good and that's evil. I wish it was like a fairy tale 'cause at least in fairy tales you knew who the good guys and the bad guys are; but in this world, you have systems all around you designed to force God out, designed to flip good and evil upside down, designed to celebrate a Godless existence without you having the slightest idea that that is exactly what is going on. And that's the world's system. And what we have in our text this morning is Jesus warning us that if you buck that system, you will pay a price. What he's saying is don't expect to find evil-looking people dressed in black shouting that there is no God. Instead expect to find sweet and loving and

caring people teaching your kids that you came from nothing, that you arrived here by virtue of absolute chance and that when you die, you simply become fertilizer. See, that's the truth of God's creation flipped upside down. That's how this world works. And here's where the hate comes from. You're not allowed to disagree with this world. I mean, if you buck the world's idea of creation, you instantly become a knuckle-dragging, anti-science Neanderthal. You all know it. You know what that's like. That's because Jesus says, If the world hates you, know that it has hated him before it hated you.

You see, you cannot step on what this world holds sacred without paying a price. And the same goes for marriage. I mean, the world now presents its view as the new normal. And again, you don't have people officiating in some kind of pagan, demonic ceremonies that look like they came out of some Hollywood horror movie set. Instead what you have is a sweet, caring, soft-spoken minister officiating at a same-sex wedding that shouts out to God that his original plan that a man should leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife and the two shall become one flesh, that that plan, that's no longer relevant, that's no longer real. And the person officiating may be the sweetest, kindest and most loving person thinking that they are simply spreading kindness, but they're not. That's the nature of darkness, it entraps those



within it. Again: *Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter.* And so we say woe to them but woe also to their victims. You see, buck the system and be prepared to have the world tell you that you are now a hater, that you are someone who now denies, enjoys denying somebody else the right to love whomever he or she wants, and be further prepared to have the so-called Christian community join in that as well and to tell you that and there's a reason for that. The reason is: If the world hates you, know that it hated him before it hated you. And understand something here, understand that you don't quickly arrive at a situation where good and evil look so similar that you can readily swap one for the other, and most people won't even know it. You see, the world is far more clever than to be open and blatant about its warfare with the kingdom of God. And so it is with another cherished position in the world and that is the position of child sacrifice. You know, if you've ever watched any of the debates around abortion, you'll notice one thing about it and that is the word "abortion" itself is verboten. You will never hear that word or almost never. And the only word you'll ever hear associated with the word "abortion" is the word "choice." Just think about it now. When you hear the word "choice," what do you think of? It's not what you thought of ten years ago, I guarantee you that. It's the classic example of how the world works. You

see, we had a march last week and we had a debate that goes on during that march and about that march, and part of it has to do with the debate that surrounds this ultimate act of war which is the taking of human life, and the debate centers pointlessly and endlessly around this word. And this march that took place just a few weeks back had 500,000 people marching, and one of the primary reasons that they were marching is that their idea of choice in their view is being threatened. Now there was a group of women that the leaders of the march felt compelled to publicly repudiate. It was a group called "Feminists for Life." Now this was a group of women who agreed with much of what the march was standing for but who said life is sacred and the taking of that life is a grievous sin. For that they were removed. But understand something, this is a classic example of how the world works. You have a march to celebrate choice and it feels compelled to eliminate a group of people for choosing a choice not in line with the organization that celebrates choice. I mean, how this organization labeled themselves pro a choice, they would be above board, they would be speaking in some ways a truth, but that's not how the world works. Everything is done with a sleight-of-hand. Instead of the ostensible appearance is that -- they want you to think that the ostensible appearance is that you have the ability to make choices when everybody knows there's only one choice that's acceptable, and if you don't endorse that choice, once again, you

are a hater. You are a hater who wants to deny women the basic rights to their own bodies. That's how the darkness operates. And the reason why and what Jesus says to us is if the world hates you, know that it has hated him before it hated you.

You see, it's incredibly complicated now to determine who the good guys and the bad guys are because by virtue of its nature, the world hides its true intent in darkness. But over against that darkness, over against that darkness is something that the kingdom of God revels in and it's something that it refers to as "the light." And here's the amazing thing about the light. No one who has it has it because they deserve it. I mean, any one of you who have been given enough light to determine and see just how this war has fought have been given it because you've received a gift.

*Ephesians 2:8 says: For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast.* You see, you have that light because you've been privileged to be given eyes to see and ears to hear. And if you are a child of God, it's because God has reached down into that darkness and he has yanked you up and placed you in the light. He makes that crystally clear in *1 Peter 2:9*, he says: *But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his*

*marvelous light.*

What you have to understand about the world is it's not a place, it's a system. It's an entire framework of life designed to shake its fist at God without the average citizen of the world even realizing it. So we start to wonder how in the world did we ever as a culture get to the place where we can look at things like evolution and homosexuality and abortion and see them as a normal part of living life in 21st century North America? We wonder how did they become part of the fabric of our culture? Well, they are in fact exactly how the world operates. They are the essence of darkness masquerading as light. But over against that, God says to his sheep, you are a holy nation, you have been called out of darkness to proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of that darkness into his marvelous light. But then Jesus tells us precisely what we can expect. He says: *"If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you."*

But again, we're talking here about bearing fruit and this is where fruit bearing comes in play. You see, the world has its points of influence where it has stabbed its darkness into the light all the while masquerading as light and God calls on us to push back that darkness but he tells us that we have to fight in a unique way. We have to fight the way he fights. And *Romans 12:21* sums it all up,

it says: *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.* That's a completely different way of responding to the world's evil. And you know, we can sing it, we're very comfortable singing all about it, but do we really believe it? Do we really practice it? The world says evolution defines where we come from and where we are going and the kingdom says no, no, this world is a gift, and you're responsible for stewarding it. You know, both sides have ample reason to seek to protect the environment from two completely different starting points. Living as a responsible steward of the earth is a way of overcoming evil with good. So is a healthy marriage. You know, the world points to the sickness of the state of our marriages and it points to that as a means of legitimizing same-sex marriages, it couldn't be worse as they say, and they have a point. Celebrating marriage the way God intends it to be is another way of overcoming evil with good. And the same applies to abortion. It's not just holding a position, it's actively doing something about it, whether it's foster care, whether it's Young Lives or volunteering at a pregnancy center, it's doing something. Again, you attack the world at its systems the way God intends us to attack the world; you overcome evil with good.

There's a lot of talk these days about refugees and what the government is doing and how the government is supposed to respond to that but, you know, you can wait for years for that to

straighten itself out or you can seek to overcome evil with good right here and right now by contacting Catholic Charities or the International Rescue Committee and saying, "Here am I, what can I do to overcome this evil?" All of the scriptures that I see quoted in support of the care of strangers, well, they apply right here, right now, not just to governments but to us as individuals. Why wait for the government to do what is biblical when every one of us has an obligation to lead biblical lives as individuals? I was thinking about it and I think one of the worst refugee situations we have is the kids who are stuck in foster care. I mean that's where the world fails terribly. I know a little bit about that because my son and his wife have been into foster care and they say the system is incredibly broken and it desperately needs people who are willing to shed light into that darkness, people who are willing to overcome evil with good.

I was looking at *Desiring God*, and there was a section in there about that. This is Darren Carlson. He says this, he says: Foster care is a system run by the government -- that is the world, and you can expect exactly how the world works it -- where minors are put into the custody of the state and placed with foster parents to care for their daily needs. Brokenness festers among foster care children. Many of the teenagers have significant needs due to years of abuse and abandonment. Some will physically attack

you or your children. Many teenagers are even living in shelters because it's hard to find a family to take them in. Others are junior high children who are confused about their sexuality having been abused by their parents or family friends. Still others are in elementary school and have had to be pulled out of their home because of a drug raid where their mom and her boyfriend were arrested. My son knows all about that stuff, happens all the time. Foster care, they say, is hard on foster parents. If you care for newborns, you encounter things like meth and cocaine addiction or fetal alcohol syndrome. You may receive a call like the one to a friend, asking, "This newborn's mom has HIV. No one is willing to take her. Will you?"

I acknowledge the refugee crisis is real but it's out there, it's somewhere on the political horizon. Foster care is as near as your home. We've had people in this congregation who have done that and have just reached out and been foster parents. It's literally overcoming evil with good. And that's where fruit bearing comes into play. But again, God says when you exercise love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, don't expect the world to appreciate it. God says in as straight forward language as he can that it will not. He said if the world hates you, know that it has hated him before it hated you. Furthermore Jesus says in *John 15*: "*Remember the word that I*

said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you." We get only tiny, tiny little tastes of the rejection that Jesus got from the moment of his birth when Herod actually tried to murder him until his final breath on the cross having experienced the rejection of his own Father. So I think Jesus can speak from experience when he tells us not to expect attaboys from the world.

As the elders begin to distribute the bread, I want us for take some time to consider the cost of identifying with the one who was hated without a cause and consider what God is saying to you about how you can personally overcome evil. I also would like us to consider this warning that God gives about communion itself in *1 Corinthians 11*. He says this: *But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.* And I say this every single time, I say communion is an extremely serious undertaking and to enter into it in an unworthy manner as to literally court disaster. And so I ask if you're not absolutely confident that you are a child of the King, then just pass the



elements by when they come to you. If you first need to be reconciled to your brother and sister before you bring your sacrifice to the altar, pass the elements on. Again, on the other hand, I say this as well, you can make the mistake of thinking that unless you're living a flawless Christian life that you're not worthy to receive communion, and we know that, too, is also a mistake the enemy loves to pile on. Being a child of the King doesn't mean that you don't sin, it doesn't mean that you never fail. What it means is that you recognize that you have received the gift, the gift of salvation and the gift of salvation means you understand you're never capable of earning it. It's a gift. I quote Dane Ortlund, he says this: "In the kingdom of God the one thing that qualifies you is knowing that you don't qualify, and the one thing that disqualifies you is thinking that you do." It also means that when we do fail, when we have sinned and we are aware of that sin, it's because the Holy Spirit of God is within us convicting us, and so we grieve and we grieve as children who know we have a Father who longs to forgive us and cleanse us. God says in *1 John 1:9*: *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* So being a child of the King doesn't mean that we are flawless, doesn't mean that we are without sin. What it does mean is that we understand when we do sin we have an advocate with the Father, we have someone speaking out in heaven on our behalf. *1 John 2:1*

says: *My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have an advocate with the Father -- Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. And so because we have Jesus's righteousness and not our own, we are now free to eat from this table. So if you love your Lord, don't deny yourself the privilege that Jesus purchased for you. He lived the life that we were supposed to live and then he died the death we all deserved to die so that we could be made worthy of heaven. And so as we sit here just marveling at the fact that by his blood we are made righteous and that by his blood we are enabled to eat at his table. I want you to consider the other part of that formula. Are you willing to be hated without a cause as he was? Are you willing to overcome evil with good?*

*1 Corinthians 11:23 says: For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." So take, and eat.*

*John 15:17 says: "These things I command you so that you will love one another. If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I*

*chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* We are commanded to love knowing the response to refusing to accept the world's view of reality is going to be hate. You know, I've spoken about the hatred that the world already has towards anyone who defies its systems, but there's a deeper hatred than that. I've shared this story before but I don't know of another one that better illustrates the point, so I'm going to repeat it, and it's R.C. Sproul. It's a story that he tells in his book *The Holiness of God*, and he spoke of a time when Billy Graham played golf with President Ford and there were two other PGA golfers that were playing in that same round. And after the round was over, one of the PGA golfers was asked what was it like to go golfing with Billy Graham? They said the man grew red in his face and you could just see steam coming out of his ears and he started to curse and he said, "You know something? I don't need Billy Graham shoving his religion down my throat." He said the man was so steamed that they gave him some time to just kind of cool down, but then a friend came up to him and finally asked him if Billy had given him a really hard time out there on the course. The pro said, "No, he didn't even mention religion. I just had a bad round." Well, this is the way Sproul put it in his book. He said Billy Graham is so identified with religion, so associated with the things of God that his very presence is enough to smother the wicked man who flees when no man pursues. Luther was right. The pagan does tremble at

the rustling of a leaf. He feels the hound of heaven breathing down his neck. He feels crowded by holiness. Even if it is only made present by an imperfect, partially sanctified human vessel. If the world hates you, know that it has hated him before it has hated you.

When we lived in California, I once went to dinner with a couple that I knew from back east who were out in San Francisco on vacation. If you ever go to live in a place where people like to go to, whether it's Florida or San Francisco or some other place like that, you find you're going to have a lot more people who want to visit you, which is fine if you like hospitality and we enjoyed that, that was fine. But this couple came out and I didn't know the guy real well, I knew the gal well. And so we went out to eat and they wanted to know why I was so different, what had changed so much in me. And in the course of the dinner, I said, you know, I pointed out that no man's goodness was good enough to satisfy a holy God but that God himself had become one of us, that he had lived out his life perfectly, that he had gone to the cross and he was willing to exchange his life of perfection for our life of sin. And I could see that the guy was starting to get agitated. And he had had a couple of drinks and so he was kind of getting loosened up, and as we walked back to our apartment -- and again you got to remember, you're in a city, we lived in the Richmond District

which, you know, you got apartments on both sides and as you're walking down to the apartment, your voice tends to carry and bounce like you're in kind of an echo chamber. And so he was so agitated that he just started -- he started to raise his voice, then he started to scream and yell at the top of his lungs. "So I'm not good enough for God? So no matter what I do, it's not going to be acceptable to your God, is that how it works?" I said, "Yeah, that's how it works." And he got louder and louder and I said, "That's how it works, but Jesus Christ came and died for you." He got louder and louder and I got softer and softer thinking a soft answer turns away wrath and didn't want to get into it right in the middle of the block as we were going down, but I still remember him shouting, I remember his companion trying to calm him down and I was thinking of that same story that Sproul tells of the anger that was in this golfer, and I understood exactly what was going on.

As the elders distribute the cup, I want you to consider one sentence from Sproul that sums up what Jesus is telling us about why folks react so negatively to the gospel and why the love of Christ is so frequently met with the hatred of man. Sproul said, he feels the hound of heaven breathing down his neck. You see, nobody comes into the kingdom of God without confronting their sin and no one finds that pleasant. And we're all, as Sproul says,

imperfect, partially sanctified human vessels doing what Christ has called us to do and that is to bear fruit. And to the extent that we bear that fruit will be the extent that we are following after our master who said: *"'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours."* And what he's saying here, what he's -- understand what Jesus is trying to get across here. He's saying don't be shocked, don't be surprised and most of all don't be silenced when folks don't respond to your gospel with warm fuzzies. I'm not put off in the slightest by people's bad reaction to the gospel because I vividly remember what a flat out jerk I was when people decided to share the gospel with me, when people approached me when I was still an enemy of the gospel. I remember those folks understood how to overcome evil with good, and Christ's call to be fruit bearers really means that we are to represent the loveliness of Christ in every way, so much so that the only thing that should be offensive about you and me when we present the gospel, the only thing that should be an offense is Christ. 2 Corinthians 6 says: *We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way.* I'll be the first one to say it becomes increasingly difficult to walk the line that calls out evil as evil and good as good while still demonstrating the love of Christ, because the world has now successfully conflated conviction

with hatred. And it responds exactly how Jesus said it would respond. Jesus said: *"If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you."* See, to warn someone that they are on the pathway to destruction is the most loving thing you can do, but the world has successfully translated that sacred responsibility into hate speech, and the more you're willing to love that way, the more you can expect a pushback from the world. After all, if the world hates you, know that it hated him before it hated you.

You know what the worst reaction to the gospel is? It's not shouting, it's not anger, it's not mockery; it is instead indifference. I've experienced all of those reactions, and by far the person who says, "Hey, man, hey, I'm glad that works for you, I'm glad you're into it. I'm not into it." That's the person I have the least amount of hope for. Jesus said in *Revelation 3*: *"I know your works: You are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth."* And Jesus is speaking to churches but that applies across the board to people. Indifference is the most deadly form of rejection that you can get. I much prefer my friend shouting out his hostility than someone who is condescendingly dismissive as I always was when people tried to

share the gospel with me. But either way, the fight, the fight belongs to us, and our way of fighting is clear. *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

There are three things that Jesus is teaching us in our scripture this morning. Number one, don't ever, ever expect a pat on the back or an attaboy from the world simply because you've demonstrated the fruit of the Spirit. Expect a pushback and understand why. Again, verse 21: *"But all these things they will do to you on account of my name, because they do not know him who sent me."* And number two, be encouraged that you are following in the footsteps of your Master. Jesus said, *"'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you."* And number three, be encouraged that the world's pushback of the gospel given, of the fight fought on Christ's terms where the only offense that we give is the offense of Christ himself and whether that response may be in terms of mocking or threats or flat out lies, it is a sign of God's blessing. Jesus said in *Matthew 5: "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

Consider the cost of bearing fruit for Christ. Consider also the



greater cost of refusing to do so. Just take a moment to meditate. *1 Corinthians 11* says: *In the same manner he also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."* So take, and drink.

This is our part that we call heads, heart, and feet, where we ascribe a practical application to what it is it means to remember the Lord Jesus Christ. And I saw on Facebook just the other day a scripture quoted, and the scripture was *Romans 13:10*, it said: *Love does no harm to its neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* Now, the context of that scripture was a cartoon. And the cartoon consisted of three suited preachers surrounding a prone person lying on the ground bleeding, he's covered with a rainbow flag, and the preachers are beating him with bibles. This was a Christian who had put out this -- this cartoon. And what they were trying to say is that -- and again, let me repeat the quote: *Love does no harm to its neighbors; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.* What they were clearly trying to say is that Christians, evangelicals, harm their neighbors, they beat them down with their bibles. You know, *Ephesians 4* says that we are to be speaking the truth in love, and that's a balancing act. That has two different parts. If you speak nothing but the truth, well, you're a legalist or a Pharisee. If you have nothing

but love, you're probably a liberal. But you have to have both. *Romans 12:18* says this also, it says: *If possible, as far as it depends on you, be at peace with everyone.* You know, it also says put no obstacle in anyone's way, and that was what I was trying to say is that the offense that we are allowed to be to those we share the gospel is Christ. And if you're one of those people that are thumping somebody with your Bible, then that cartoon applies to you and that's not the offense of Christ, that's the offense of us. We have to find the way to make Christ alone the offense. You know, for Sproul's case, the example that he gave, the golfer, the offense was Christ alone. My friend at the restaurant, the offense was Christ alone. You know, we have opportunities to see what it's like to actually work out what it means to overcome evil with good even here in our neighborhood. You know, people get into all kinds of squabbles. We got into a squabble with our neighbor right over there because some kids went into his yard and stepped on some of his flowers and he was very unhappy, some people encroached on his parking space. I don't know if you know it, but one day he got out a stepladder and he put a boom box on it and he turned it on rock and roll and he cranked it all up so that we could hear his displeasure. And so we wanted to find out what in essence the problem was. And so we went over there and basically what he said is your kids stepped on our flowers, my flowers, and I hate your music coming out of the windows when I'm trying to sleep in the

morning. We could do two things. We could say, well, we've got our rights and you've got your rights and we can start a big fight. That's what everybody else does. That's the way it works. We said, you know something? We're sorry. Our kids had no business being over in your yard. One of us baked him a tray of brownies, we got him a gift card at Wal-Mart. We said it won't happen again, and we will be very careful to keep our windows closed in the morning when you get up. He didn't know how to respond to that. I mean he's ready to duke it out. Overcome evil with good. He had -- he sent us a card thanking us for our kindness. That doesn't happen all the time. In fact, sometimes when you try that, people respond in a very brutal way but they respond that way because they don't know what to do. Everybody around us in this world is used to punching back. They're not used to dealing with somebody who fights the way Christ tells us to fight. They're not used to dealing with somebody who says you overcome evil with good. There is a power in that, a supernatural power in that. God is willing to give it to everyone of us and when we try it, we will have that power. That doesn't guarantee results, but it guarantees that you're doing it the way Christ would do it. And so I want to ask us all this morning if there's somebody in your life right now that is working evil into your life, if there is somebody that you could point at and you would love to just pop 'em one right in the nose, you'd love to act the way the world acts, you'd love to respond the

way the world responds, why not try to fight this one Christ's way? Why not try to overcome evil with good? So if you have somebody in mind, I'd like to close in prayer and I just ask that you keep that person in mind as we pray.

*Father, I thank you for who you are, I thank you for the words that you have spoken to us and we understand if we are hated, it's because you were hated first. If we are persecuted, it's because you were persecuted first. And Father, there are people who hate us, there are people who persecute us for reasons that have something to do with the kingdom or nothing to do with the kingdom, but you have told us that the response you expect from us is to overcome evil with good. And so I pray for every single person this morning who may be thinking of somebody who is working evil in their lives, that you would give us, give them the grace, the wisdom, the peace, and the power to respond in some specific concrete way that represents good, that they would unleash that power, that supernatural ability, Lord, that they would be obedient to you, and that you would take pleasure in that. And I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.*