

2/20/2011

THE PRAYER OF THE DAY O God, the strength of all who put their trust in You, mercifully grant that we may trust you to defend us against all adversity and, trusting in You, we may love all people, even our enemies; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

THE OLD TESTAMENT LESSON Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18 (*God encourages the believer to love other people as much as the believer loves himself or herself.*)

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 "Speak to the entire assembly of Israel and say to them: 'Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy. . .

9 "'When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God. 11 "'Do not steal. "'Do not lie. "'Do not deceive one another. 12 "'Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the LORD. 13 "'Do not defraud your neighbor or rob him. "'Do not hold back the wages of a hired man overnight. 14 "'Do not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block in front of the blind, but fear your God. I am the LORD. 15 "'Do not pervert justice; do not show partiality to the poor or favoritism to the great, but judge your neighbor fairly. 16 "'Do not go about spreading slander among your people. "'Do not do anything that endangers your neighbor's life. I am the LORD. 17 "'Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt. 18 "'Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

THE GOSPEL LESSON Matthew 5:38-48

(Jesus encourages the child of God to apply the principle of an "eye for an eye" in the Christian life by turning the other cheek, walking the extra mile, and praying for those who hurt him.)

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' **39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.** 40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' **44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons 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.** 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

THE SERMON “The Sermon on the Mount – Godly Love” Matthew 5

INTRO - Ravensbruck was a German Concentration camp primarily for women. Over 130,000 women were imprisoned there, and at least 90,000 died. One of those imprisoned there was Corrie Ten Boom, whose sister died there. In the hand of a dead child a prayer was found, It read, **O Lord, remember not only the men and woman of good will, but also those of ill will. But do not remember all of the suffering they have inflicted upon us: Instead remember the fruits we have borne because of this suffering, our fellowship, our loyalty to one another, our humility, our courage, our generosity, the greatness of heart that has grown from this trouble. When our persecutors come to be judged by you, let all of these fruits that we have borne be their forgiveness.**

- I. This story of forgiveness and love for an enemy seems unreasonable, impossible. Yet God calls us in the sermon on the mount, to act in ways that are different than the world, to act in ways that show we are children of God,
 - A. At the end of Matthew 5 Jesus calls His followers to the most difficult part of living as His child.
 1. In verse 39 Jesus says, **39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.**
 2. He expands on this in verses 43-45, **43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.**
 3. No wonder Jesus concludes this section with the words, **48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**
 - B. When someone hurts us, the natural reaction is to hurt back. When someone hates us, the natural reaction is to hate back.
 1. The amazing example of the girl in Ravensbruck, as a child of God, was to love the enemy who mistreated.
 2. When was the last time you had an enemy, someone who hated you, someone whose hurtful deeds made you angry?
 3. Did you treat them as they had treated you? Or, did you act in an unexpected way as a child of God?
- II. The story is told of two brothers who visited a clergyman to help them with their ongoing disagreements. After some time talking they reconciled their differences and shake hands. As they were about to leave, the clergyman asked each one to make a wish for the other. The first brother turned to the other and said, "I wish you what you wish me." At that, the second brother threw up his hands and said, "See, Rabbi, he's starting up again!"
 - A. Jesus here isn't just calling us to love. Love is natural to all who have been created by God, and not just feelings, but actions of giving for another.
 1. But, all people also fight selfishness which gets in the way of love.
 2. Is there a husband or wife here, a parent or child, who does not love their family but has still hurt them?
 - B. But, It not only seems un-natural in our sinful minds to love those who have hurt us, there is a fire in us to repay those who have hurt us.
 1. Maybe you have not only heard, but even said, "I don't get mad, I get

even.

2. The reason the Old Testament called for “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,” which Jesus quotes, is because if someone hurts us, we want to hurt worse.

C. People of this world, even those who know they are children of God struggle not only to understand, Jesus’ call, but even more to love our enemies, and pray for those who persecute us. Just look at the Middle East.

III. But, actually Jesus does not just give us insight into this call, he also gives us some practical help in working to keep this command.

A. When Jesus says, “**Love your enemies,**” he gives us some help.

1. God-like Love is not a feeling as much as an action.

2. Even when we feel hurt and resentment for those who have hurt us, we can still choose to act in kindness, in patience, in understanding, in forgiveness.

B. When Jesus says, “**pray for those who persecute you,**” this is guidance that can help us to love our enemies.

1. When we pray for those who have hurt us, who hate us, who are enemies, it can even change our heart and our feelings.

2. When we pray for your enemy, we may learn to understand them, or pity them, but you don’t grow in hate for them.

3. God’s help for this impossible task is the insight that prayer is the first step of love which is shown in actions.

4. When we pray, God changes our hearts.

C. Jesus says, **Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be sons 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.** God does not treat us as we deserve.

1. You see, we deserve God’s punishment.

2. He created us holy, but we seek to follow our own desires and reject God’s will

3. God sent Jesus, who died to pay the price for our sin, but we often want to rule our own life, rather than follow our Savior.

4. But God is not like we are.

A. **He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.**

B. God is constantly calling us to His forgiveness and love in His Son, His Word, in Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.

C. God is there offering eternal life instead of punishment, promising His love for His children, even in the valley of the shadow of death.

D. God does not treat us as we deserve but in mercy and love.

CONCLUSION - When the first missionaries came to Alberta, Canada, they were savagely opposed by a young chief of the Cree Indians named Maskepetoon. But he responded to the gospel and accepted Christ. Shortly afterward, a member of the Blackfoot tribe killed his father. Maskepetoon rode into the village where the murderer lived and demanded that he be brought before him. Confronting the guilty man, he said, "You have killed my father, so now you must be my father. You shall ride my best horse and wear my best clothes." In utter amazement and remorse his enemy exclaimed, "My son, now you have killed me!" He meant, of course, that the hate in his own heart had been completely erased by the forgiveness and kindness of the Indian chief. Jesus calls us to do the unthinkable, to love our enemies. It is not easy, even for Christians. But, God is simply calling us to act different than the rest of the world, to love others as He has loved us.