

Love Your Enemies, Part 2

Luke 6:29-39

September 10, 2017

We are, today, back in the Sermon on the Mount, the account that's recorded in Luke's Gospel, there in Luke 6. And we'll be starting verse 27. We were introduced last time to Jesus' command, "Love your enemies," and we tried to think carefully about what love really is. And then how to practice that love toward others and our enemies in particular. Today, we're going to move ahead. We're going to consider some of these implications as Jesus clarifies his meaning with certain instances of enemy-like behavior. What does it mean to love our enemies in this case or that case?

And so toward the end especially, we're going to get kind of practical, talk about some practical what it does not mean and what it does mean. But we want to begin by reading the text and I'm actually going to read a little more here, kind of the main body of the sermon there in Luke 6:27-38.

Follow along as I read. "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 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. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

"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. 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. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

"Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven;

give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." Now as we begin, get into the main body of the sermon, Jesus begins the main body of his sermon by commanding us to love to the very fullest extent. And to the least loveable people. And even when it costs us.

Jesus takes the person who is most remote from us relationally, an enemy, that is someone who hates, curses, and abuses us, and commands us to pursue that person in love. That is, as we just read, that is how God has been loving us all along. He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. He is merciful to all. That is how we will show forth our reconciliation to him through Christ when we love others as he loves, even to those who are rather unlovely.

We're so accustomed to that kind of love. We're so accustomed to that kind of continual outpouring of love from God. He gives us food and shelter. He gives us both needs and wants. God gives us all sunrises and sunsets, all kinds of beautiful and pleasurable things to enjoy. He has granted us

the capacity to think, to enjoy, to reason, to reflect, allowed us to laugh, allowed us pleasures, babies being born, mothers and fathers, all of that. He's given us the physical, mental ability to work, to provide, to achieve, to reach out, to strive, to discover. All of that.

And after all of his continuous giving to us, which is his love, it's a daily, hourly, minute-by-minute love, it's really clear evidence of the sin-nature in all of mankind that we have taken his love for granted. Romans 1:21 says, "Although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him." In other words, we, the human race, mankind, all of us born into sin with a sinful nature, we have failed to praise and thank God for his love poured out on all humanity in general and all of us in particular, each one. He has poured out that love on all of humanity all the time.

In addition to recognizing and giving thanks to God for his love toward us, God also intends for us all to demonstrate that same kind of love toward each other. It's not enough to just sit back and appreciate God's gifts, to, you might say, passively enjoy, kind of like watching a program on television

and just enjoying it and turning off the television and going to bed. It's not like that. We must also practice what God shows us. That is to say, God's actions are our example. The daily manifestation of this communicable attribute of God, that is, God is love, becomes a mandate for us to follow.

The two greatest commandments: love God, love your neighbor. The Bible tells us we're to love God by loving our neighbor. "If anyone says," 1 John 4:20, "If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he's a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen." So we demonstrate love for God by loving our neighbor and in Luke 6:27 and 28, Jesus extends the definition of neighbor, what does that word mean? He extends it even to those who relate to us as enemies.

I am thankful that Christ extended his love for me when I was his enemy, aren't you? Don't you rejoice in that daily? We've spurned his love. We have, each one of us, assaulted his character in some way. We've blasphemed his name. We've misrepresented him. We've failed to honor him as God or give thanks. But showed his mercy while I was yet a sinner, a rebel,

an enemy, he showed mercy by loving me, reaching out to me all the time. And then that love was even to a higher degree, a particularly redeeming kind of love resulting in my salvation.

Romans 5:5 says, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who's been given to us." Without that gift of the Holy Spirit, without that gift of God's love being poured into our hearts, we cannot love, we will not love as Christ commands us to love. First John 4:19, "We love because he first loved us."

So those who are not redeemed, those who are not regenerated by the Holy Spirit, they don't love like this because they cannot. They must first be recipients of that divine, particular redeeming grace to cause them to be born again that they may put their faith in Jesus Christ, repenting of all sin. And the Holy Spirit given to them as a gift, that love is poured out within their heart and now they are able, enabled by God, enabled by the Spirit to love as he loves.

This is precisely what Jesus is commanding here, to extend them this love of God through us toward other people, having

been transformed as we are. Having been transformed from enemies into friends, from strangers into children. We're to act like God's children. And as we do, God will extend his love, which in general, for all humanity, is the indiscriminate kind of love for friends and enemies alike. As it says here, he's going to grow that same kind of love within us. He's going to extend it through us to others, even to enemies.

Now, that little summary should bring you up to speed with what we learned last time in the first two verses, Luke 6:27-28. And today, as I said, we're going to consider the implications of those verses. This command to love our enemies, what does that actually look like in real life? We could summarize what we learned last time as extending love for all. But this morning, we're going to learn what it means to endure all for love.

Look at verses 29-30 again. "To the one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from the one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back." When we extend the outstretched arms of love

to our enemies as Jesus commands us to do in verses 27-28, it doesn't always turn out well for us, does it? Sometimes our enemies bite the hand of love that's been extended to them. But even at that, even when we are harmed, our Lord's command to love our enemies, it remains.

The word for "love" is the word *agapao*. That's the verb for "love." That's the same word Jesus commands his disciples to practice here in verse 27 and following. We took some time to understand, examine that word *agapao*, to contrast that word with other Greek words for love, like *storge* which is affection for family, or *philia*, which is the love of close intimate friendship, or even *eros*, the intense passion of romantic love.

None of those other words for love, which in their own place can be an appropriate and legitimate expression of love and interest, but none of those other interests for love parallel the selfless, the sacrificial, the generous, the extravagant, unconditional nature of *agape* love. But that is precisely the kind of love that we are commanded to show as a regular habit of life, again, these are present tense verbs,

toward all of our neighbors, even to those who treat us as enemies, for the sake of Jesus Christ.

Now we're going to cover verses 29-30 in a three-point outline. So maybe just jot down these points very quickly, and then we'll come back and fill those in a bit. First, in verse 29, we're going to see how love governs our expectations. How love governs our expectations. Then, secondly, in verse 30, we'll see how love governs our attitudes. So first, expectations, then attitudes. Then taking the, both of those verses together, thirdly, we'll see how love governs our reactions, or we should say our responses. Our expectations, then attitudes and then reactions, okay?

Let's get right into the first point, love governs our expectations. You can write, dictating how we expect to be treated. Love governs our expectations, dictating how we expect to be treated. Christ commands us here to love even in the face of injury to person or property, which is what we see there in verse 29. The language here, I've got to admit is pretty strong and it comes out well in our English translations. "To one who

strikes you on the cheek," literally that is, "punch you in the jaw, you are to offer the other also."

Many of us, I know many of you are more familiar perhaps of the milder expression over in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew 5:39, "If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." And that, over there in that context, is about enduring a personal insult, not an attack, not injury. Obviously, an insulting slap on the cheek can be included in what Luke records here because this is more extreme. Here in verse 29, the picture has something to do with something hurts you more than your pride being offended. It has to do with taking a punch in the face.

In fact, look at the rest of the verse, "From one who takes away your cloak don't withhold your tunic either." The cloak refers to an outer garment, like the clothes we wear on the outside, which is seen on the outside. It's made up of fabric that's durable, it can hold up to normal wear and tear, which, you know, depending on what you do for a living, can be quite severe. So strong outer cloak clothing.

Tunic, that refers to something that's softer. Softer that's worn as an undergarment. Softer, close to the skin, underneath the cloak made of more comfortable, cooler, breathable fabric. So if someone comes after your outer garment, like your coat, your outer shirt, don't withhold your inner garment either. That's what he's saying here. Agape love means we're willing to endure physical attack resulting in injury and even the loss of our clothing.

Now, under what circumstances is this ever going to happen? Under what circumstances are you going to find yourself punched in the jaw and having your clothes ripped off your body? Any former New Yorkers here? This is a mugging, right? That's what's pictured here. He's describing a mugging, in which the violence is intended as a means to intimidate, to overcome any resistance that you may offer to having your stuff stolen, your wallet, your jewelry, in this case, your clothing, which in the First Century, clothing was a pretty expensive commodity. Jesus is saying something that is getting our attention, isn't it?

All you gun-toting Coloradoans, right? "You mean I can't just pull out my gun and shoot him in the head?" Before you

worry that I'm going to encourage you to leave church today, take a beating and get robbed by some hoodlum, I want to talk about what this verse does not mean. One commentator suggests the principle in this verse is what we see illustrated in the non-violent resistance that was taught and promoted by certain Social Justice leaders. And his view is common. It's become even more common.

Here's what he wrote, "The Twentieth Century was powerfully altered by courageous observance of this essential teaching. Gandhi's radical response to injustice, which he inherited from Tolstoy and bequeathed to Martin Luther King Jr., was to 'become naked,' i.e., put himself in a defenseless posture, vis-à-vis, powerful aggressors, in order to shame them into repentance by the evil in their hearts. The result of Gandhi's unconventional behavior was the liberation of India from British rule. The result of similar behavior on the part of King, massive gains of civil rights for African Americans in the United States. In each instance, powerful and systemic structures of oppression were undermined by non-reciprocal and non-violent practices that were informed by and modeled on the essential teaching on love articulated here."

Is that what Jesus is encouraging his disciples to do, to engage in non-reciprocal and non-violent protests? Is this about shaming powerful aggressors to repentance and thereby undermining systemic structures of oppression? In light of some fairly recent history, that is the political and social protest led by men like Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela and others, it's become quite popular among Christians to find that as an example of this and to advocate for some kind of Christian pacifism and they use for support texts like this one here.

Now, I want to tell you, I'll be the first to tell you that I can admire some of the public actions of people like Gandhi, Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., Nelson Mandela, but I don't believe they are examples of how to practice what Jesus commands us to do here. Jesus is speaking to his disciples and it's his practice of love that sets the example for us. His example. The behavior of social political reformers is not where Christians should find the pattern for their day-to-day lives.

Furthermore, the motivation at the heart of this, the ultimate goal of practicing love, it's not to shame others into

repentance or to effect any change in the behavior in other people. Leon Morris, the commentator, cites someone who said, "Always forgive your enemies, nothing infuriates them more." Now we can all smile at that sentiment, right, because we understand that. That is the all too familiar thought and presence of the desire for vengeance and retaliation that we harbor in our hearts. We all feel that.

If we're going to lay down our own resistance, we want to get some little jab back at our aggressors, right? It makes us feel pretty good to think, "If I forgive, that's a greater weapon than a knife or a gun. If I forgive, it's going to really eat at them in their hearts." Is that really what Jesus is commanding here? I would assert to you no, it is not. That's actually the diametrically opposite motivation and goal for practicing love. Morris went on to say, "It's possible to be outwardly forgiving without showing real love." That's exactly right. Outwardly forgiving, but anger and hatred in the heart. Outwardly passive, but inwardly, hard as a stone. That's not *agape* love.

That is not how Jesus loved his enemies. His practice of love was the outward fruit of an inward affections. "The good tree bears good fruit." It's consistent with the kind of tree that it is. Practicing love does not have to do ultimately and finally with outcomes, but with the pursuit of and in growth and in living according to the excellence and the wisdom that's manifest in this divine virtue.

While our love in the face of hostility may indeed shame our enemies as we see in passages like Proverbs 25 or Romans 12, we practice love merely for the sake of the excellence of that virtue. We practice love, this love that Jesus command us here with a view to pleasing the Father for the privilege of showing his love toward all, merely for the sake of bringing glory to God by how we love other people.

So while it may be cool and in vogue and in fashion these days to suggest Christians look to Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. and Nelson Mandela, we need to realize there were social, cultural, political forces at work to make those men effective in what they were attempting to do, and I believe attempting to follow those kind of secular examples is precisely what keeps

Christians from understanding what Jesus was actually teaching which was applied here to individual Christians. If individual Christians were looking around at social, political formers who try to do all this on a large scale, they're never going to be able to put this into effect, practical effect in any daily living.

The pronouns here in verse 29, I say this is "individual" because the pronouns are individual. The pronouns in verse 29 are singular in number, not plural. In verses 27 and 28, the verb forms there and the pronouns there are in the plural because Jesus is speaking to his disciples are a group, those who are the hated, the persecuted for his name's sake. But in verse 29, Jesus takes this to you, to me, to all of us individually, each and every one of us. "When someone strikes you personally, you individually on your cheek, when someone takes away your own cloak," he's not taking here about social, political movements. He's talking about individual trials in individual day-to-day practical life.

So we're not supposed to look at verse 29 and then immediately move to images of Gandhi or Martin Luther King Jr.

We're not trying to change the world here. We're not trying to undermine systemic structures of social injustice. We're doing this simply to follow Christ, who is leading us into conformity with the love of his Father. It's something far more profound and eternally significant than some temporary, external reform of social structures, which are here today and gone tomorrow.

Okay, so then what does this mean, "to turn the other cheek?" We talked about what it does not mean. Well, now we want to talk about what it does mean. Listen, the same way that, remember back when we talked about the opening of this sermon and who Jesus was speaking to? In the same way that Jesus was talking about the internal thoughts and attitudes in defining rich and poor, that is it doesn't have to do with actual dollars and cents in the bank account, but rather has to do with one's attitudes and affections towards dollars and cents. It's the same thing here. Jesus is getting, he's using a very poignant, powerful, vivid image of getting mugged to get at the heart of our attitudes of verses 29-30, teaching us to practice meekness in love.

I don't know if any of you have ever been robbed, ever been mugged. I hope not. I hope it's not a common experience. I've been robbed, not mugged, but robbed. Some thieves, we were living in Californian and out there the garages are not all closed. Sometimes you have a parking bay, and you park in there, but it's all open. We had our bikes are all chained up. We're seminary students, poor, and we don't have much. But we had bikes that we liked to take out for, you know cheap opportunities for some recreation and refreshment. And in a locker out there were all of our tools and other things were stored and all chained out.

I came out there one day to find chains cut, the bikes gone, all my tools, men, you understand, right? Come on. All my tools gone. Okay so there's the loss you feel and then there's the anger that you feel. There is the desire to retaliate. You feel it's not just the loss of property, but you feel like someone has kind of come in underneath the armor. They've come in and they've done something against your manhood and you just want to strike. I don't know. Do you guys feel like this? You just want to strike out.

So we feel, we feel this anger, we feel this desire to retaliate, the desire for vengeance. And it's not just to get our stuff back, it's to pay that dude back for what he did. "Come on, taking my kids' bikes! What are you thinking? I'm a seminary student, I'm doing work for the Lord!" Even as I'm feeling it, I can see how incongruous it is to my Christian profession. That is what I say here, that taught me a lesson. It taught me about the anger that exists in my heart that with just the slightest provocation can erupt and come forth.

That's what Jesus is doing here with this illustration. How would you respond if this happened to you, a mugging? He's getting to the heart of our attitudes. He's getting to the fact that he wants us to teach us to respond in the meekness of love. When we pursue obedience from the heart to Jesus' command to love, not just our friends and relatives, not just our neighbors and acquaintances, which you all understand is hard enough. We're to love even our enemies. When we pursue obedience from the heart to love like God loves, then we will be like Jesus Christ, who described himself in Matthew 11:29 as "gentle and lowly in heart." We'll be meek people.

Meek people don't treat hostility and persecution for the sake of Christ, even if that should result in bodily injury or the loss of property, we do not have an attitude of vengeance or retaliation. Why? Because, just to remind you of our point, love governs our expectations. It dictates how we expect that we ourselves should be treated. Jesus loved sinners. They responded to him with hostility, beating him, scouring him, stripping his clothing, spitting on him. They stripped his clothing and gambled for it at the foot of the cross upon which he was crucified, right in front of him, adding insult to injury.

How did Jesus respond? He didn't react in anger. He didn't retaliate. He didn't return insult with insult. He responded in love, praying for his executioners. He prayed, "Father, forgive them for they do not know what they're doing." According to Luke 23:34, get this, it says he prayed while they were casting lots to divide his garments. Jesus loved his enemies. When they injured him, when they took his clothing, he responded with meekness and grace, showing even more love for them.

Beloved, that is the example that should govern our expectations. That is the example that dictates how we expect to be treated. If we follow him, we are going to be treated the same way for his sake. If we're treated the same way, we need to look to him yet again to find in him the perfect example of a meek and loving response. I like how the commentator Alfred Plummer put this. He said, "So far as our personal feeling goes, we ought to be ready to offer the other cheek and to give without desire of recovery whatever is demanded or taken from us. Love knows no limits," get this, "love knows no limits but those which love itself imposes. When love resists or refuses it's because compliance would be a violation of love, not because it wouldn't involve loss or suffering."

Did you get that? We're going to repeat that later in the sermon. Listen to what Peter, Jesus' closest disciple, was able to discern from Jesus' example, you might, if you're quick, you might be able to turn over to 1 Peter 2:19 to follow along. If you're not quick, sorry. But remember on the night of Jesus' betrayal, Peter drew a sword that night. Remember that? He tried to decapitate those who came to arrest Jesus. He saw, I think Peter saw clearly the injustice, the utter injustice of what was happening.

Here they're coming to arrest and to hurt and to harm and to scourge and eventually probably to kill one who never committed one sin. It's absolute injustice. If that's not worth fighting, if that's not a cause worth fighting for, I don't know what is. He drew a sword. He was going to decapitate this guy. He responded like we all instinctively tend to respond. And Jesus, remember he told Peter, "Put the sword away," and healed Malchus, who ducked the blow, but still lost his ear. Jesus restored the ear. Once again, Jesus loving his enemies right there. And then Jesus submitted to the suffering, the persecution of that satanically inspired force of darkness. That unjust suffering became the vicarious suffering that resulted in the forgiveness of sins for all of Christ's people. Peter also in that moment discerned an example that's set for all of us.

Look at 1 Peter 2:19, "For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly. For what credit is it if, when you sin and are beaten for it, you endure? But if when you do good and suffer for it you endure, this is a gracious thing in the sight of God. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you,

leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly."

Now we're going to get the practical crucial issue of our response, our practical response in our third point. For now, I just want you to see how verse 29, it's about attitude toward Christian persecution. It's sets our expectations, dictating how we should expect to be treated, as followers of Jesus Christ. And because we set our mind expecting shabby treatment in the service of Christ, and sometimes even violent hostility for our Christian testimony, we won't be surprised at the hostility. First Peter 4:12 says, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you, as though something strange were happening to you. But in so far as you share Christ's sufferings, rejoice."

Now an expectation of suffering, persecution, sets our attitudes as we're going to see in our second point. But first, let me just mention that Paul applies this principle of non-

retaliation rather broadly. Romans 12:19-20, "Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, as it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.' To the contrary, 'if your enemy is hungry, feed him,'" he's quoting out of Proverbs 25 here. "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

Look, we love our enemies. We leave the punishment of our persecutors' sins to God. We hope to see that persecutor be saved, and then all that persecutor's sins are going to be forgiven in the cross work of Jesus Christ, like ours are. Wouldn't that be even better, to sit before the throne of God for all of eternity worshiping God with that persecutor? Because that same sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross that saved you from your sins saves him from his sins or her from hers. Wouldn't that be wonderful?

This is about setting our expectations. This is about loving our enemies, leaving the punishment, the vengeance to God. We love our enemies and that overcomes their evil with

good, just as Christ loved his enemies, overcame their evil with his good.

Now, let's consider a second point. Now that love has set our expectations, we also see that, number two, love governs our attitudes, dictating how we think about our stuff. Love governs our attitudes, dictating how we think about our stuff. Christ command us to love with an attitude of disinterest toward material things, and on the other side, generosity in giving. That is to say, we're to be ready and willing to give without stinginess, without regret.

Look at verse 30, "Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back." We've already been introduced to this from the very first word of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus drew a line in the sand between the rich, upon whom are all the woes, and the poor upon whom are all the blessed pronouncements. It's the attitude of the rich and the poor that's in contrast there, right.

The poor have already cut ties with this world and its wealth. All their hope rests with God in heaven, so here when

we come to verse 30, this is no surprise to us. This is completely in line with what Jesus has been saying. This is the logical extension of the love demonstrated in and through, to first and then and in and through the *ptochos* poor believer, who is rightly oriented to the world, to wealth, to whatever possessions they have.

Look, we recognize that our stuff, though it's legitimately ours, it's ultimately God's stuff and not ours, is it? We're just stewards. So we give to everyone who begs from us. From the one who wants to take away your goods, we don't demand them back. It's interesting in this verse, when Jesus issues the command for us to give, in the verb tense and everything there, he breaks ranks with the other three commands in verses 29-30. The other three commands, "Turn the other cheek," "Don't withhold your tunic," "Don't demand them back," those commands are response to the actions of others in the sense of what we're willing to endure.

This command to give, it's also a response to the request of somebody else but it requires us not just to endure, but to part ways with something, to give something up. Again, this has

to do with our attitude toward our things. Love dictates that we hold onto our possessions loosely. Love dictates we're willing to part ways with our goods, our stuff. One commentator put it this way, "A Christian so far as he is concerned would neither refuse anything nor claim anything back." Or again, Leon Morris, "The Christian should never refrain from giving out of a love for his possessions. Love must be ready to be deprived of everything if need be."

So that's just a short point, number two there. By design it's short. Love governs our attitudes, dictating how we think about our stuff. Now we want to get into some practical matters about how to implement what Jesus teaches here. We want to make sure we don't run off half-cocked and misapply what Jesus is saying because there are practical consequences to all of this teaching. We need to understand what Jesus meant by what he said, which we try to do here, focusing on the expectations and attitudes that he's after in these verses. But we're going to learn more about his meaning, then, if we consider how to apply this teaching in a biblical, principled implementation of wisdom. Wisdom.

So let's use the rest of the time this morning to think about practical implementation. Here's the third point, love governs our reactions, then add a comma, love governs our reactions, informing our practical responses to hostility, need and greed. Love governs our reactions, informing our practical responses to hostility, need and greed. At this point, I just want to remind you of one thing we clarified last time.

In Ephesians 5:2, Paul summarized the love of Christ. "Christ loved us by giving himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God." That text helps us see four clarifying points about this *agape* love that we're to practice toward neighbor and it extends to our enemies. Christ's love for us, like his love for us, our love for others is to be, number one, a love of action. It starts with a decision of the will, but it necessarily extends outward in real practical action.

Our love is, number two, to be a love of sacrifice, willing to suffer loss, even like Christ, ultimate loss. Number three, our love should always pursue the highest God-defined good for the other person. That's very important. Love pursues the

highest God-defined good for the other person. And finally, number four, our love should please God. You can have the right end, but the wrong means to the end, right? You can pursue a godly end but pursue a sinful means to get there. Many churches, they want to see people converted for the sake of Christ. They want to see conversions and people filling up the church with, let's say, good motives. But then they pursue the wrong means. They offer entertainment and draw people in. They try to get as many bodies in the church and they use whatever means necessary. That is not pleasing to God.

Our love has to be a love of action, a love of sacrifice, pursuing the highest God-defined good for the other person, and number four, it has to be fully pleasing to God. That is, it should be defined by the wisdom found in the precepts and principles of Scripture. That is how Christ loved us, how he still loves us. That's how we're to practice loving others, as well.

So with true love in mind, having understood the expectations, the attitudes that true love requires, let's go back through each one of Jesus' commands. And let's see how

love governs our reactions, how biblical wisdom dictates our practical responses to hostility, need and even to greed. First, consider the loving wise reaction to hostility. That's verse 29. Then we'll think about the loving wise reaction to need in verse 30. Then finally, we'll look at the loving wise reaction to greed there in the last part of verse 30.

So first of all, how do we respond to hostility? "To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from the one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either." What does biblical wisdom dictate here? First of all, I just want to point out that what Jesus, what Jesus did when he was literally struck in the face. Did he literally turn his cheek and invite a second blow? No, not really.

Here's what happened at his trial. Recorded in John 18:22-23, "When Jesus had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, 'Is that how you answer the high priest?' Jesus answered him, 'If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong; but if what I said is right, why do you strike me?'" He rebuked the one who struck him on the cheek, as a matter of pursuing a faithful testimony of

God in that situation. That's what love dictated, what wisdom dictated at the time. He didn't say, "Go ahead and hit me again. In fact, all you come along and start pulling out your clubs and give me some blows." That's not what he did.

Now, to be sure, in his heart, there's no spirit of retaliation or vengeance in his reply, no reviling in return. And that's how we see John 18 correspond and harmonize perfectly with Luke 6, as it's properly understood. But his response, just notice, was not a wooden literal, turn the other cheek for a second blow. Now, let's start to answer the question by recognizing that in context Jesus is talking about hostility that comes in connection with our Christian profession. It results from our testimony for Christ.

So when we face hostility for our evangelistic outreach, when we face hostility for our Christian conviction and commitment, which, beloved, is going to be tested in these days, when our missionaries face hostility in a foreign context because they represent Christ in an aggressively hostile country, as we've said, we should expect it. And you know what, we don't harbor any spirit of retaliation. We don't have any

feelings of vengeance. We love those people. We love them. We should never be deterred from our Christian commitment even in the face of hostility. We need to continue propagating the Gospel witness. We need to continue standing for the truth.

So if Jesus is referring to hostility in response to our identifying with him, response to carrying out his work on earth in obedience to the great commission, it clarifies a lot for us, doesn't it? Now we understand how this, how the scope of this shapes up. This means, first of all, aggression on a state level. That is, nation against nation, one country invading another country. Or aggression on a civic level. That is criminal activity, like the typical New York mugging or rape or violent crime. Turning the other cheek and surrendering our property is not, here, what Jesus is teaching. Why is that?

Because that's not truly loving, is it? Just to remind you of what Plummer said, "When love resists or refuses it's because compliance would be a violation of love, not because it would involve loss or suffering." So on a state level, Christians can still be members of the military. On a civic level, Christians can still be members of law enforcement. In fact, those

professions are ordained by God as ministers of righteousness for the protection of the innocent. That's his plan.

Additionally, it's not loving to allow criminal aggression to continue whether for the sake of the victim or the victimizer, the criminal offender. It's not loving to allow the outward manifestation of sinful hurtful behavior to continue. That is, mugging or rape or physical abuse or inflicting injury or whatever. Again, that's why God ordained government authority, gave the state the power of the sword for the protection of society.

Beyond that, it's also not loving for those of us who are charged with the care, the provision the protection of our families, it's not loving to allow someone to hurt them. That is not good or pleasing to God at all. We find the principle in 1 Timothy 5:8, "But if anyone does not provide for his relatives, especially for members of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." We often take that into financial provision, which is very, it's true, that's exactly what it's saying. But the principle there, it's the height of your responsibly to take a blow from a criminal

and turn the other cheek and allow that criminal to knock us unconscious. Why? Because God has placed us in a position to provide and protect our families. And so we provide and protect. We protect ourselves, too.

For the sake of innocent victims in society, for the sake of the criminal himself or herself, we need to stop the criminal from violent behavior. Violent crimes pile up for that person more guilt before a holy God, bringing shame upon that person before God, before man. That criminal is destroying his life by committing violent crime. So in love, we cannot allow that to continue. Now, we're not vigilantes. We make use of God ordained authority given to government. God gave the state the power of the sword, not the power of the sword to each one of us to execute justice on our own terms as we see fit.

In our culture, in our time, government allows us to bear arms and protect people, property. We certainly can make use of those rights. If the government says, "No more," what do we do? We obey, we submit to the government. They will be held responsible for how they use that power of the sword. But primarily, criminal activity, along with the threat of foreign

powers, it is the ministry of the government to protect us. Romans 13:4 says the government is "God's servant for good." So for those who do wrong, they should "be afraid, for he does not bear the sword in vain. He is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer."

So having clarified the loving response to violent aggression of criminals and foreign hostile powers. Let's return to the way we respond to hostility for the sake of Christ. In our obedience to his great commission, in our stance for the truth, there's a very real sense where we should expect hostility, sometimes violent painful hostility, even injury to person and property, in our identification with Christ in the outworking of his will. By God's restraining grace, that violent hostility is not the norm. It isn't universal, but it does happen. If we look around at our brothers and sisters around the world, it is happening. We should not be surprised when it comes.

Take a look just quickly at Hebrews chapter 10. I just want to show you this very, very fast. You're already in 1 Peter, so turn to your left to Hebrews 10 and verse 32. This

acknowledges the reality that these First Century Christians endured. The letter was written to encourage these Hebrew Christians who were facing incredible pressure to leave off assembling with the church and then to return to the synagogue of their former Judaism. So the writer instructs the Hebrews, encourages, admonishes, even warns them sometimes rather strongly not to do that. You can hear the writer pleading with the Hebrew Christians in that tone here in Hebrews 10:32.

He says, "But recall the former days when , after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings." So the writer is saying, "Look, remember these things and don't return to the synagogue. Stay put. You've already gone through the pain." "You endured a hard struggle with sufferings, sometimes being publicly exposed to reproach and affliction, sometimes being partners with those who were so treated. For you had compassion on those in prison, you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. Therefore don't throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. 'For yet a little while, and the coming one will come and will not delay; but my

righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.' But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and preserve their souls."

Hebrew Christians, dear people, dear saints, they had been practicing Luke 6:29. They carried out Christian love, even for enemies, even in the face of hostility. And it was Christian love because of their Christian testimony. And, beloved, it's coming here, too. This is going to be such a, this is going to be a text we live in and soak up and encourage each other with.

Well, that's hostility. Secondly, verse 20, or verse 30. Go back to Luke 6:30. How do we respond to those in need? How does Jesus intend us to obey the command, "Give to everyone who asks of you"? Is that without measure? Is that without making judgments about merit and true need? Well, to illustrate the nature of the principle teaching Jesus is giving here, let's consider the command to "Give to everyone who asks."

Just a footnote here, the ESV translates the word *aiteo* as "beg," rather than "ask." If the idea of begging were in view

here, the word would probably be *deomai*, rather than *aiteo*. Or if there were a preposition prefixed to the word *aiteo* as in Luke 18:35, *epaiteo*, then "beg" is the right translation, okay? Here, the emphasis isn't on necessarily the dire nature of the request, as in "begging." It's just simply on the fact of the request. So we should probably translate this or read this is as, "Give to everyone who asks of you," and not, "Give to everyone who begs from you."

The command itself "to give," it's once again a present tense imperative mood. The present tense, it refers to the aspectual nature of this command. The meaning is the word "to give continually, regularly, habitually." Giving is to be a regular habit and pattern of the Christian life. The lifestyle that we practice is one of giving, extending grace and love. The practice of regular giving then demands a number of things, right?

First, it means if we're going to give like this, it means we've got to work hard and work diligently. Paul said, rebuking the thief in Ephesians 4:28, "Let the thief no longer steal, but rather, let him labor doing honest work with his own hands so

that he may have something to share with anyone in need." That is to say, the thief doesn't repent merely by discontinuing the habit of stealing, the thief repents fully by no longer stealing, and also by laboring, by working hard, by working diligently. Why? So he can buy that boat he's always wanted? So he can finally get that new toy, take that vacation, whatever it is? No! Hard work yields paychecks with which the repenting thief can provide for his own needs and then share with anyone else in need.

So Luke 6:30, "Give to anyone who asks you," this demands first of all that you've got a job, a sufficient job that can provide for your needs and your family's needs. First Timothy 5:8, "The one who doesn't provide for his own family is worse than an unbeliever and has denied the faith." Can't do that. You've got to provide for your family, got to practice good stewardship so that money you have leftover, you can share with those in need.

So this, secondly, means we give as a matter of regular practice of stewardship. We work hard so we can gain paychecks and have enough money to give to others in need. That's the

idea of stewardship. It presupposes property ownership and the management of resources. That's what God intended for us to do. Now think about this just by way of illustration. Think of what it would mean if you saw one of these like, you know the guys you see holding the signs are "homeless." "Homeless" is the euphemism we use these days. When I was young, we called them "bums." I don't think that's in vogue any longer.

But they were drugged up people holding signs, approached, and asked you for whatever money. It usually said something clever or funny, sometimes just said, "Give, you know, whatever you've got, pal. Thanks." And "God bless." There's always the "God bless" on there, right? And we remember, so we see that guy with the sign, and we remember Jesus' words, "Give to everyone who asks," and you say, "Whoa, don't go anywhere. I'll be right back." You immediately go home, you sell your house, you sell your car, you sell all your possessions, liquidate absolutely everything. Cash in hand, you walk back to that guy and you give everything to him.

Now going back to what's truly loving. You've taken action, yes, right? And you've been sacrificial. Was that act

truly doing what was good for that person? Was it truly pleasing to God? Look, you may have obeyed the letter of the law, but you can only do that once, right? Now you've become the beggar. Because without a vehicle, you can't get to work on time or regularly. You can't get a good night's sleep without a home, etcetera, etcetera. So now you're the welfare recipient. You're mooching off everybody else who didn't act so foolishly and impetuously, impulsively.

Not only that, but after you hand over your small fortune to this homeless druggie, it takes him a week or two to pump all your money into his veins. Now he's dead from a drug overdose. So although you took action, you did something remarkably sacrificial, your action didn't keep the ultimate good of that homeless druggie in mind. Good as defined by God in Scripture, to do what would lead to that man's salvation. And so, you didn't please God at all. You get the idea. "Give to everyone who asks of you," but be thinking Christians. Do it according to wisdom.

Finally, verse 30, how do we respond to greed? Perhaps this has to do with someone's negligence in repaying a debt.

That seems to be the idea here. "From one who takes away your goods, do not demand them back." Does this mean Christians, then, are prohibited from taking a lawsuit before the courts? Do we always give money to that freeloading family member? You know, the one who's always chasing that get-rich-quick scheme, needs your investment to bring it about?

Well, again, we need to ask what's the spirit of Jesus' command and what does true love dictate? The spirit of this is to hold on loosely to your stuff, to be ready and eager, to give and to lend, expecting nothing in return. The spirit of this is that we're to be ready to part with money, with goods, with personal property, all for the dictates of love. Never harboring any resentment toward anybody we give anything to. Again, as Plummer put it so well, "Love knows no limits, but those which love itself imposes. When love resists or refuses, it's because compliance would be a violation of love, not because it would involve loss or suffering."

So what does love dictate in this situation? Is it truly loving and for the good of others to allow dishonest business practices to continue or to allow predatory lending to continue

or whatever it is? Or in the case of the lecherous friend or family member, is it really the ultimate good of that person to keep on pouring, pumping money into them, to fund their laziness and their greed, their chasing whims. Certainly not, but this happens all the time, doesn't it? We see this in families everywhere. I think it's so common because of a misguided compassion, a sentimental view of what love us, perhaps also due to a misunderstanding of texts like this. But again, the love Christ showed us conformed to the pattern of divine love, which was active and sacrificial, yes, but also in pursue, in pursuit of the highest good and the object of that love and fully pleasing to God, his divine revelation. That is the love practiced according to divine wisdom.

So if there's no wisdom in bad stewardship, thoughtless sentiment, and misguided compassion, then we need to question the nature of that love, too, don't we? But legitimate needs, even from enemies of the Gospel who asks us for help. Discerning which requests are legitimate and which ones are illegitimate, that requires some investigation, doesn't it? It requires some, I mean handouts are easy but checking into what's good and righteous and pleasing to God, checking into the legitimacy of the need, checking into the person.

We have a deacon's fund here. We love to help people as much as we can. But all the time we have written on the form, "Do you mind if we check into your finances? Would you be willing, open and willing to receive counseling from us about your financial situation?" People have to say, "Yes, I'm willing." We want to get into their situation so that we're not just pouring more money down a money pit that they have in their life, syphoning off all the money they have earned and all the money we give them. We need to, investigating requires more love, doesn't it? It requires more investment on our part, doesn't it?

We should be eager to meet needs with whatever resources God has made us stewards of even when the request comes from an enemy, and even if that enemy proves to be unscrupulous as enemies can sometimes be known to be like, doesn't pay us back. Look, we're willing to cut our losses and to keep on loving them in spite of that sin. That's the principle. That's the point. That's what we love to do.

Well, we're well out of time and I hope some of that was helpful. But let's pray and just ask God to give us wisdom in loving all our enemies and friends and everyone in between, shall we? Father, we just want to thank you this morning for the time and the text. We thank you for what your wisdom teaches us, what your Word shows us using vivid imagery of muggings and lending and things that come up in daily life all the time. We pray that you would give us more insight and wisdom than, than we've had before and help us to love, making that investment with our hearts and our time and our resources, loving enemies, friends, everyone in between. For the sake of your glory and for the sake of the name of Jesus Christ. It's in his name we pray, Amen.