

The Sermon on the Mount: *Loving Our Enemies*

Matthew 5:38-48

Concerning Retaliation (v. 38-42)

- Again, Jesus is correcting misinterpretations of Torah
- The rule of retaliation: “Eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth” (Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Dt 19:21)
 - The purpose of this law was to put limits on retaliatory justice, not demand that it be meted out
- Jesus tells His disciples that we should choose not to retaliate at all
 - “Do not resist an evil person” is not a call to allow injustice to go unchecked
 - Rather, we are to forego personal vengeance
- Jesus gives three examples:
 - The other cheek (v. 39)
 - When insulted, do not retaliate, but prepare to endure another blow
 - Tunic & Cloak (v. 40)
 - The extra mile (b. 41)
- As Jesus’ disciples, we are to go above and beyond social expectations in how we give and serve, even when it is demanded of us (v. 42)

Love Your Enemies (v. 43-45)

- Again, Jesus corrects bad teaching
 - “Love your neighbor” is repeated throughout Torah (Lev 19:18; Dt 23:3–6; 25:17–19; Ps 139:21)
 - “Hate your enemies” is *not* found in Scripture and contradicts other commands of Torah (Ex 23:4-5)
- Jesus calls His disciples to a fuller & broader understanding of God’s desire for His people
- Love is not how we feel about another
 - It is how we treat them
 - Thus, even if someone is our ‘enemy’, we must treat them with love
 - This includes praying for those who seek to harm us
- By loving those who oppose us, we are modeling how God treats us, and acting as His children (Rom 5:8, 10; Col 1:21-22)
- If we are selective about whom we love, we are not reflecting Jesus
 - Rather, we look just like the rest of the world

Be Perfected (v. 48)

- Jesus calls His disciples to be ‘perfect’
 - Τέλειός (*teleios*): ‘perfected, mature, & whole’
- It is a call to become more like our Heavenly Father
- Striving to reflect Him to the world more and more

So What?

- Do we love others like God loves us? Even our enemies?!

Meditation Verse: *Matthew 5:44-45a*