

Following Christ in the Real World When Enemies Attack

You must be kidding.

“You are the salt of the earth.”

“You are the light of the world.”

Matthew 5:43-48

“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵ In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸ But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

His expectation for us: Be perfect.

The word Jesus uses means whole or complete.

It is something to strive toward and it is something which God will help us with.

Think of this “be perfect” as a journey; as a maturing process.

The Tough Command

Love your enemies. (εχθρος – ech-thros)

Matthew 5:44-45 “Love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.”

So what does Jesus expect us to do?

Loving an enemy is a personal act.

Luke 6:27-28

Do good to those who hate you.

Bless those who curse you.

Pray for those who hurt you.

Jesus is not calling you to do what you can do. He is opening the door for you to do what He knows you cannot do. And he will be there with his help.

1 John 4:20

"If we don't love people we can see, how can we love God whom we cannot see?" (1 John 4:20) Maybe you should think about it this way.

"In the way you do not love your enemies, that is how far you are from God." (Steve DeNeff)

Prayer:

"Lord, everything in me cries out that you must be kidding. But I know you're not. I don't know how to love like this. Please help me."

So What?

*Today's Scripture is from the New Living Translation
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Want to hear this again?

The sermon is posted on the church Web site by Monday evening.

*www.heritageqc.com Hit "**Watch sermon on-line**"*

To dig deeper, visit John's blog at www.NowWhatJohn.com

Now What? Resources for Reflection & Growth

Throughout this series John has repeatedly said, “You are the window through which the world sees and assesses God.” Before you became a Christian you were on the outside looking at Jesus through the window of someone else’s life. Think of someone whose life attracted you toward Christ. Think of someone who repelled you. What was the difference in the characteristics of those lives?

Read Matthew 5:43-48

Jesus called us to “be perfect”...to deep commitment to the process of becoming like Christ.

- Read the following scripture. 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:13; Philippians 3:12-16; Hebrews 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 1 John 3:2-3
- We are not yet “flawless” – that will happen when we get to heaven. But what do these verses suggest about how we are to live today?

John spent a while talking about “enemies.” Why do you think we hold grudges, get angry, nurse hurts...why do you think we have enemies?

Read Romans 5:6-11

- What do you see about how Jesus treated us?
- What did it cost him to bring us to peace with God?
- How could you bring that principle into your relationship with an “enemy”?

Turn to the top of page 2 in the note guide.

- What do you think John meant when he said, “Loving an enemy is a personal act”?
- What are the three action steps Jesus told us to take in Luke 6:27-28?
- Take a few minutes to think about a way to practically apply that in your life.
 - Identify a person who might fit in the enemy category.
 - Choose a specific action step or two you will take.
 - When will you do this?

Steve De Neff said, “In the way you not love your enemies, that is how far you are from God.”

- Read 1 John 4:20

Spend some time in prayer asking God to help you love like Jesus loved.