

The Heart of Love

Matthew 5:38-48 - NCBC, October 6,
2019

Main Point: **God's children reflect their Heavenly Father in how they love difficult people.**

- Sacrificing their earthly rights (38-42)
 - To dignity (39b)
 - To valuables (40)
 - To freedom (41)
 - To ownership (42)
- Sacrificing their earthly rewards (43-47)
 - Through servicing (44a, 46)
 - Through prayer (44b)
 - Through hospitality (47)

Application: **Glorify your Heavenly Father by reflecting His perfect love! (48)**

Opening Announcements:

Biblical Counseling Training Conference occurs February 9-14, 2020 in W. Lafayette, IN. We are thankful to be able to scholarship the conference tuition for any of our church members who attend. Great equipping opportunity for personal biblical growth and creating a culture of competent and compassionate soul-care in our church family! Please contact the church office to sign up.

<<In Christ Alone>>



What a joy to worship Jesus together this morning. Our God is so amazing – He changes us and conforms us more into His likeness even as we praise and celebrate His worth together.

Let's continue our worship now by opening our Bibles to **Matthew chapter 5, verses 38-48**. Today's Scripture calls us all to supernatural love – a perfect love that fulfills God's law.

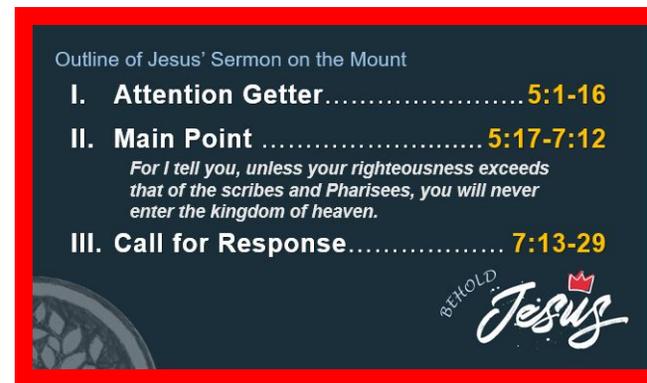


While you're preparing for the public reading of Scripture, let me just encourage you to make sure to benefit from our *Recommended Resources to Own* in the commons. Our elders desire to equip you with Christ-centered resources that will encourage your spiritual growth in the head, heart, hands, and home of Christ-likeness.

And this week, we're making a new resource available called the *Matthew Scripture Journal*. If you write in your Bible, or benefit from taking notes during sermons, please pick up a copy of this Scripture Journal today and use it however it can be helpful throughout the rest of our Matthew sermon series to catalogue all of your notes in one place.

We are thankful to Crossway Publishing for making this resource available at such an affordable price... so please get your complimentary copy today. Write your name in the front cover, and start benefiting from this gift which can serve your study of God's Word.

This morning we consider Jesus' teaching against revenge and partiality as He again illustrates the superiority of His kingdom righteousness compared to the righteousness of religious legalism.



You will remember that Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount with 8 different Beatitudes – getting our attention with the radically topsy-turvy nature of those whom God favors in His kingdom. He doesn't bless the strong and self-confident – but the dependent, the mourning, the meek, and those who crave His kingdom righteousness.

God's kingdom is very different than what everyone expected. God's people are light and salt – radically different from the world with all of its religious and irreligious self-loves.

So if someone asked you to summarize the main point of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in one sentence, I pray you could immediately answer from **verse 20**: *Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

The main point of Jesus' sermon is that God requires a radical kind of holiness – a supernatural kind of righteousness – that human effort can never achieve. There's no way for anyone to work their way into God's blessing.

Instead we must humble ourselves, and hunger for the righteousness of a perfect substitute in our place!

Illustrating the Heart behind God's Law 		
Verse	You have heard...	But I say...
21	You shall not murder	Anger is real problem
27	You shall not commit adultery	Desire is real problem
31	You shall use divorce papers	A hard heart is real problem
33	You shall not swear in God's Name	Deceit is real problem
38	You shall retaliate eye for eye	Vengeance is real problem
43	You shall hate your enemy	Self-love is real problem

Ever since stating His main point in **verse 20**, **Jesus has been giving 6 different illustrations** of how the Jewish traditions fall short of fulfilling the law's true intentions.

It's not just the act of murder, but the heart of anger which condemns our souls. It's not just the act of adultery, but the desire of coveting that deserves hell. The presence of divorce papers can never excuse hard heartedness. And frivolous and evasive oaths only betray lying hearts.

All six of these illustrations between **verses 20 and 48** are proving the point of **verses 20 and 48**. We aren't part of God's kingdom unless our *heart* has been made righteousness by faith in Christ alone.¹ Kingdom living is not about outward appearances. We aren't qualified to be one of God's children until His very own nature has

¹ 2 Corinthians 5:21
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been given to us – on the inside – through the miracle of spiritual rebirth!

Verses 38-42 call out the retaliatory vengeance that we so easily justify in our own hearts. Then **verses 43-47** call out our self-love that makes us look and act more like this world than God's kingdom. Both of these illustrations penetrate to the core of our souls.



So let's stand in honor of the reading of God's Word. From the English Standard Translation, I'll begin reading in **Matthew 5:38**:

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

This is God’s Word. Please be seated.

Let’s Pray.

This week America was astonished to watch an 18-year old brother of a murdered man ask the judge for an opportunity to hug the murderer at her sentencing trial.²

²

<https://abcnews.go.com/US/jury-deciding-sentence-police-officer-amber-gu-yger-wrong/story?id=66002182>



On the witness stand, this young man looked right at the woman who killed his brother and said these words,

I know if you go to God and ask him, He will forgive you. I love you just like anyone else and I’m not going to hope you rot and die. I personally want the best for you. I wasn’t going to say this in front of my family, I don’t even want you to go to jail. I want the best for you because I know that’s exactly what Botham [the name of his deceased brother] would want for you. Give your life to Christ. I think giving your life to Christ is the best thing Botham would want for you.

Such love and forgiveness is extraordinary and supernatural ... only possible for those who have first been so loved by God Himself.³

Remember, God rescues and saves sinners like us for this purpose – that we would live as salt and light for the greater glory of God!⁴ The Christian must live radically

³ 1 John 4:7-12

⁴ Matthew 5:13-16, c.f. Ephesians 2:10; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Corinthians 5:9

different from unbelieving society. And there's no greater evidence of our citizenship in God's kingdom than our sacrificial love towards difficult people here on earth.

Christian, you are never more like God than when you love your enemies, and forgive those who have sinned against you. This is Jesus' main point here.



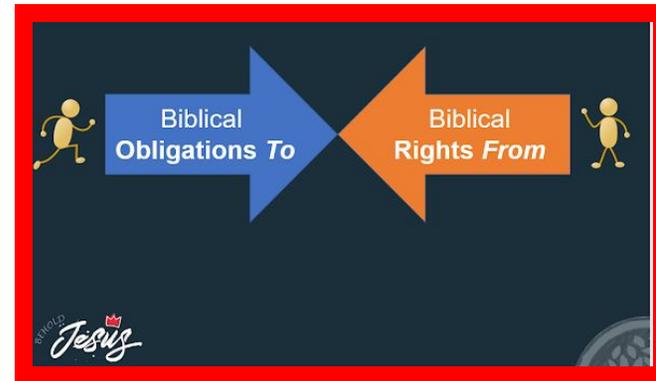
God's children reflect their Heavenly Father in how they love difficult people.

Such love is humanly impossible. All human religion, just like what the scribes and the Pharisees taught the Jews, lowers God's standard by twisting God's law in some way to preserve self-love. But Jesus is clear – only perfect love for enemies fulfills the righteous intent of God's law.⁵

Church I'm praying that God will use this message to transform some of our most deeply held beliefs this morning. Because we live in a very individualistic culture that highly values one's own personal rights.

⁵ Romans 13:8; Galatians 5:14
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We must think biblically about our personal rights. What do the Scriptures teach about my personal rights, and how does this relate to what Jesus is illustrating in this section of **Matthew 5**?



The Scriptures speak about personal rights as relating to others' biblical obligations towards us. Biblically speaking, personal rights are simply the receiving side of biblical obligations.⁶

In other words, children are commanded to honor their parents in Scripture. Thus, we could say parents have a biblical right to be honored by their children. Or since Scriptures command everyone to love and respect one another, we could say every person has the biblical right to be loved and respected by everyone.

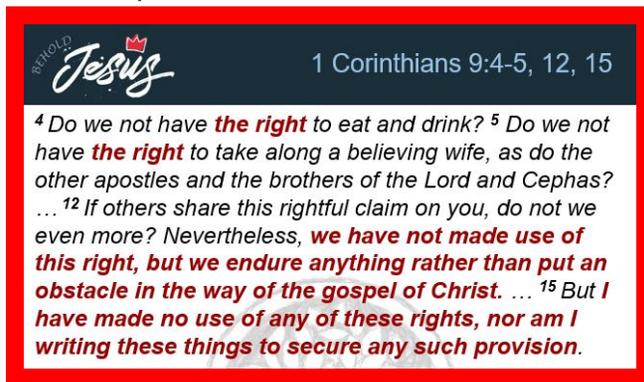
Do you see how this works? Your biblical rights are just what Scripture would cause you to expect from God or others if they were fulfilling their biblical obligations towards you.

⁶ I'm indebted to John Frame for this insight.

So culture doesn't give you any rights. Your personal rights are given to you by Scripture, as God defines how you should expect to be treated by Him and others.

However, when the New Testament does speak directly of personal rights, it most often shows them being surrendered for the sake of Kingdom purposes.

For example,



in **1 Corinthians 9**, Paul explains how he has voluntarily relinquished his biblical right to financial compensation from the churches so as to not put any obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Although Paul knew the Scriptures obligated the churches to financially provide for his needs, he says in **verses 15**, *I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision.*⁷

So having biblical rights doesn't mean Christians should ever demand their rights.

Listen carefully,

⁷ C.f. 1 Corinthians 8:9; 9:4-6, 12, 18; 2 Thessalonians 3:9
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Christians are responsible to fulfill their biblical obligations towards others, but Christians are never responsible to demand their biblical rights from others.

There is a real temptation today in our climate of claiming personal rights to focus our energy on making sure others fulfill their biblical obligations towards us. Today's culture focuses most of its energies on demanding others fulfill their obligations to us – rather than making sure we are fulfilling our biblical obligations to others.

Remember, Christians have been purchased and redeemed by our Heavenly Father.⁸ We are no longer our own. Therefore, God is now responsible *for* me. God is responsible to make things right when others fail in their biblical obligations towards me. God is the defender of the Christian's personal rights; the Christian is not responsible to make sure his or her own rights are met by others.

⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:20

Here's another way to say this: Personal rights should never be the basis of your relationships with others.⁹ Such a mindset is contrary to God's law, and will only suffocate your ability to reflect the heart of your Heavenly Father in your relationships with others.

I believe this is what Jesus teaches in **verses 38-42**. God's children reflect their Heavenly Father in how they love difficult people by,



Sacrificing their earthly rights (38-42)

Not defending or claiming their rights, but laying aside their rightful claims – just as Jesus did Himself.¹⁰

Following His pattern, Jesus quotes from the Jewish tradition in **verse 38** with the phrase,

You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

⁹ Indebted to Sinclair Ferguson for this concept.

¹⁰ Philippians 2:6-8

Now this was a direct quote from **Exodus 21**,¹¹ **Leviticus 24**,¹² and **Deuteronomy 19**.¹³ However religious legalism had selfishly twisted this commandment by ripping it out of its context and turning its intention on its head.

We must always be careful to interpret God's Word in its context, loved ones. A text without a context is a pretext for a proof text!¹⁴

The immediate context for this specific law in all three occurrences is the judicial system of God's nation. God was instructing judges to ensure that due legal process would limit a punishment to match the crime.

So if you knocked out my tooth, God's judiciary system would make sure I didn't knock out your tooth and cut off your tongue. Which of course would give your family reason to burn down my house, which would in turn cause my family reason to kill your herds, etc.

The original purpose of God's law was to limit personal retaliation and revenge, and keep injustices from spiraling out of control into blood feuds or intertribal warfare. The main purpose of this law was to control or limit the desires for personal revenge.

But the Pharisees had ripped this law from its judiciary context, and taught it as an individual license, in fact a mandate, for revenge. If someone hurt you – you know

¹¹ Exodus 21:24

¹² Leviticus 24:20

¹³ Deuteronomy 19:21

¹⁴ Credited to Dr. John Street

what the law says – an eye for an eye – so you better make sure to get them back!!

Jesus wants to abolish all licenses for personal revenge and restore God’s true intent of His law. The real fulfillment of this law is the man who doesn’t seek any retaliation from those who have hurt him, but rather loves him.

That’s why He says in **verse 39**,

But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil.

Never seek revenge or retaliation. Do not make your rights the basis of your personal relationships. God’s law calls us to love evil people sacrificially –willingly surrendering our earthly rights out of love.

This is so radical – let’s be careful we understand what Jesus is and is not teaching. This teaching is not for nations or for the Christian’s relationship with governments. For those subjects we must look to **Romans 13** and **1 Peter 2**. Accordingly **Matthew 5:39** has nothing at all to do with whether Christians can work as police officers, or soldiers, or whether or not governments can exercise capital punishment, etc.

Matthew 5:39 is teaching that kingdom righteousness pursues love for others, rather than my own personal rights. Jesus is speaking of when you’ve been hurt *personally* by someone. And your heart wants to lash out with bitter revenge... He says you fulfill the law when you give up your personal rights and instead pursue what’s most loving for your enemy.

You may object... “Is Jesus asking me to sacrifice without limit for the sake of evil?” No. God’s law never asks you to sacrifice beyond true love – beyond that which would truly be for the eternal good of the other. Such love is supernatural, isn’t it? And when the reporters see this in action as they did this week in Texas, it recalls the love of our Heavenly Father who refused to retaliate against us, but sacrificially laid down His own life for our eternal good.¹⁵

Now quickly, consider four specific illustrations in **verses 39-42** of how Kingdom citizens willingly sacrifice their earthly rights in their relationships with difficult people.



First, in **verse 39**, *if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also*. In that culture, a backhanded slap to the face was a severe insult.¹⁶ Therefore this is an attack on our right **To dignity**.

¹⁵ 1 Peter 2:24

¹⁶ Matthew 26:67-68; Mark 14:65; John 18:22

So when someone insults you deeply – don't retaliate or lash back. You are a child of our Heavenly Father, and your future is full of glory!

Instead – turn the other cheek. In other words – do not retaliate. Stay gentle and humble. And keep pursuing a loving relationship that maintains vulnerability. Give them an opportunity to kiss your cheek next time. After all, love cannot coexist with fear.¹⁷

Then in **verse 40**, *And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.*

Here Jesus calls us to willingly sacrifice our rights **To valuables**. The cloak was a poor person's only covering at night. It was such a symbol of valuable security that the law forbade anyone taking it as a pledge or as payment for a debt.¹⁸

But Jesus teaches, if you legitimately lose a lawsuit, be willing to voluntarily surrender even your legal rights to your most valuable security rather than cause hard feelings with your adversary.

Verse 41: *And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.* Jesus' original audience knew exactly what He was referring to here. The Jew's territory was occupied by the Romans. And by Roman law, any Roman soldier could commandeer any Jew to carry their pack for them for a mile. This was bitter oppression. Slavery. And the Jews fiercely hated it. But Jesus radically teaches that the intention of God's law for

¹⁷ 1 John 4:18

¹⁸ Exodus 22:26-27

nonretaliation is actually positive. The righteous willingly sacrifice their right **To personal freedom**, as they rest in the freedom for which Christ has made us free!¹⁹

So instead of throwing down the soldier's pack after walking exactly a mile ... do the unexpected and seek to win their heart by love rather than retaliate on the basis of your personal rights!

Finally, **verse 42** calls us to sacrifice our personal rights **To ownership**.

Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

We must die to ourselves, and remember that we are now God's stewards. God owns all that you have, there's no place in the righteous heart for the stingy, tight-fisted, penny-pinching spirit that is always seeking your own personal profit.

If it is not loving – or for the other's eternal good, then of course you should not give. But if your gift or lending would serve the eternal good of another difficult person in your life – righteousness demands that you give freely and cheerfully as God's steward.

Loved ones, we must not squirm our way out of this supernatural mandate for righteousness. Remember, Jesus' words do not destroy civil nor criminal justice. Jesus' words destroy self-love.

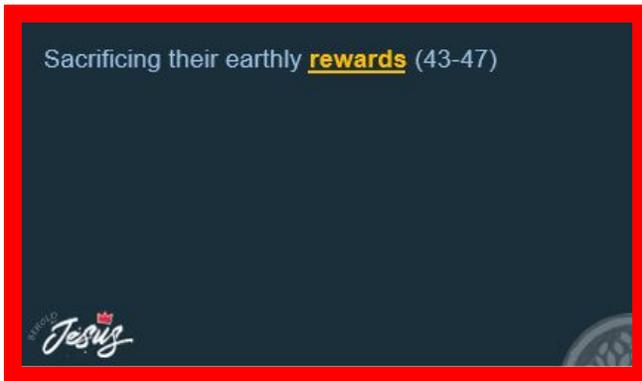
This is the supernatural perfection of love that is required by **Matthew 5:20** and **Matthew 5:48**. This is of course

¹⁹ Galatians 5:1, 13-14

how Jesus Himself responded to those who insulted Him, and took His cloak, and forced him to carry their own burden of sin, and stole His very life.

This is sufficient conviction to drive all of us to the cross! None of us love with this kind of radical sacrifice. Such righteousness is only possible through union with King Jesus!

But Jesus is not done is He? In **verses 43-47** He presses the demands of love even deeper calling us to reflect our Heavenly Father in how we love difficult people by,



Sacrificing our earthly rewards.

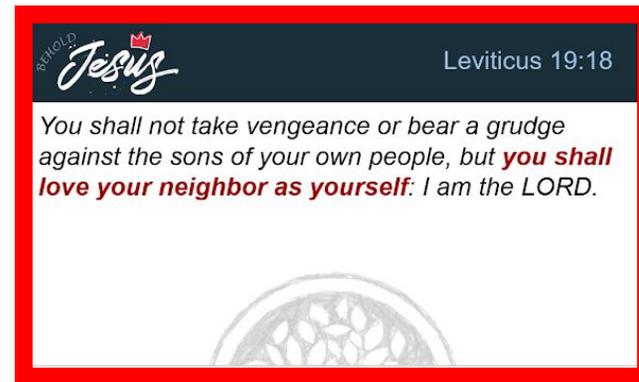
For the sixth and last time in this sermon, He repeats the same formula designed to contrast their legalism with His superior righteousness:

You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

Now Jesus is going for their religious jugular. Because the common rabbinic tradition which Jesus quotes here

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had a major omission and a major addition which entirely perverted the intention of God's law.



Leviticus 19:18 taught *you shall love your neighbor as yourself*. But their legalistic tradition had omitted the phrase, "as yourself." Such standard was not possible for people to meet after all.

And since we know from **Luke 10** that the scribes had narrowed the definition of neighbor to only those people of their own kind whom they approved of ... it seemed natural to add that God would have us hate our enemies.²⁰

But in **verse 44** Jesus says something radical:

But I say to you – here's the real intention of God's law for loving your neighbors that you have so distorted in all your man-made traditions – *love your enemies*.

²⁰ Contra Exodus 23:4-5

Sacrificially give your life away for the most difficult and vile and irreligious and blasphemous people that you know.

You see whenever we read this, we tend to partition certain people in our lives into an untouchable category that allows us to nod politely at Jesus' words without actually submitting to the full weight of its demands.

But an honest heart can't get around those three words: *Love your enemies. ... And pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.*

Listen – if you're a citizen of God's kingdom, then you've been made a partaker of your Heavenly Father's nature.
²¹ Your heart of self-love has been replaced with His heart of supernatural love! Like Father, like son!

Verse 12 earlier had encouraged us to expect persecution, just like the prophets. But now, Jesus says when you love and pray for your enemies you are just like your Heavenly Father Himself. For God demonstrated His love towards us, while we were yet sinners, by dying in our place to bring us back to Himself!
²²

Sacrifice your personal rights, and sacrifice your earthly rewards. You must stop living for the here and now, Christian. This world is not your home. And the father of this world is no longer your father!
²³

²¹ 2 Peter 1:3-4

²² Romans 5:8

²³ John 8:44

Give yourself away in the pursuit of the eternal good of your enemies – just like the 18 year old man this week in Texas,



Through serving, Through prayer, and Through hospitality.

After all, even God gives rain and sunshine impartially – both to the good and the evil. So likewise, all of God's children should give up our earthly profiteering and serve, pray, and welcome all people without partiality.

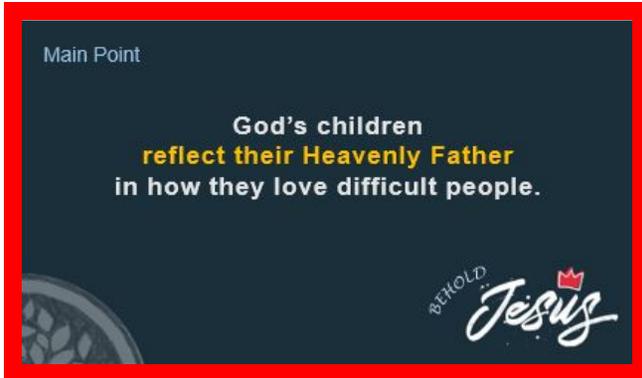
I don't want us to miss **Verses 46-47**. Jesus strongly makes the point that Kingdom people should be radically different than the world. What's going to show others our Heavenly Father's love if we live for earthly rewards just like the rest of our unbelieving friends, and if our love is just as selfish and partial as our unbelieving neighbors?

Hear the haunting inquiry of **verse 47**, as you consider your relationships with the most difficult people in your life today:

What more are you doing than the other unbelievers?

You consider yourself religious because you regularly attend church, and call yourself a Christian. But it is how you treat your enemies and those who take advantage of you that truly shows whether or not your righteousness is really better than those whom you believe to be the most inferior and despised of all society.

Church -



God's children reflect their Heavenly Father in how they love difficult people.

The true disciples of Jesus Christ shine like lights in this world because of the supernatural quality of their love.²⁴



So therefore **Glorify your Heavenly Father by reflecting His perfect love!**

Verse 48 serves as the perfect bookend for all six illustrations that Jesus has used since making His main point in **verse 20**:

You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The slightest hint of self-love inside your heart disqualifies you from God's kingdom.²⁵ God's law demands a perfection in both attitude and action.

And so once again this Sermon on the Mount drives us to the cross – where all of our self-love is *crucified with Christ so that now it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*²⁶

²⁴ John 13:34-35
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²⁵ James 2:10

²⁶ Galatians 2:20

Do you know the love of Christ? Has His perfect love overcome all your fears? Has the Father's love set you free? O the whole law is fulfilled in this statement: You shall love your neighbor as yourself! May we abide in God's love and reflect the heart of our Heavenly Father as we share His perfect and unconditional love with the most difficult people in our lives.



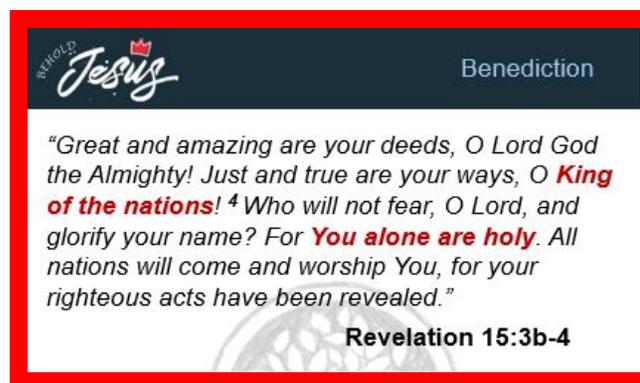
Let's pray.

<<Love Lifted Me>>

New members form reception line at back

Reminder for New Comer's Luncheon immediately following 2nd service today!

Let's pray our benediction together as we dismiss.



Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! 4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.
Revelation 15:3b-4



Recommended Resources on The Heart of Love:

- Exodus 21:24-25
- Leviticus 19:18; 24:17-23
- Deuteronomy 19:21; 32:35
- Proverbs 24:29; 25:21
- Mark 12:31-33
- Luke 9:23-24; 10:26-27
- Romans 12:17-21; 13:8-10
- 1 Corinthians 6:1-8; 13:6
- Galatians 5:14
- Hebrews 10:30-39
- James 2:8
- 1 Peter 2:20-23
- 1 John 4:7-12

- *Protecting our Witness – Part 2* sermon on 1 Cor 6:1-8 preached on 3/16/14 at <http://www.livingwaterspeoria.org/messages>
- *Evangelistic Exiles* sermon on 1 Peter 3:8-15 preached on 7/15/18 at <http://www.myncbc.org/>
- *How to Think about Suffering* sermon on 1 Peter 4:12-19 preached on 9/23/18 at <http://www.myncbc.org/>

- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/basic-primer-rights-obligations/>
- <http://restorativejustice.org/am-site/media/love-and-justice.pdf>

- *Love in Hard Places*, DA Carson
- *Selfishness*, Lou Priolo
- *Generous Justice*, Tim Keller
- *The Peacemaker*, Ken Sande
- *Unpacking Forgiveness*, Chris Brauns

Discussion Questions:

1. Review Matthew 5:39-42. Which (if any) personal rights should you protect at any cost as a Christian? Is this passage teaching that Christians are doormats? Discuss your answer in view of Romans 12:18-21 and Hebrews 10:30-39.
2. Compare Matthew 5:39 with 1 Peter 5:8-9. What does it mean to “Do not resist the one who is evil?” Are individuals or governments/nations the intended audience of this command? Explain why this Scripture is not teaching pacifism in its context. (c.f. Romans 13:1-4)
3. Read Genesis 4:23-24 and Leviticus 19:18. How does the spirit of vengeance or retaliation affect one’s pursuit of justice? Explain how Leviticus 24:17-22 is both just and merciful at the same time.
4. Read Luke 10:25-37. What does this parable teach us about the relationship between justice and love? How do you define justice and love? (c.f. 1 Corinthians 13:6) How does your relationship with your Heavenly Father empower you to suffer with hope as you love difficult people?
5. Read 1 John 4:7-12. Do you know God’s love for you? How does the reception of His love change your

perspective on your own “rights” and difficult relationships with others?