

Love Your Enemies – Really?

Sermon Notes for Feb 26, 2017 at Brentwood



Ps 119:33-40 and Matthew 5:38-48

**But I say to you, Love your enemies,
and pray for those who persecute you ...
(Matt 5:44)**

Provocative Ponderings that Call Forth Our Potential in Christ

- Throughout the Sermon on the Mount as recorded in Matthew, Jesus is advocating a different way of seeing the world, a different way of acting in the world – he urges us to see the world through God’s eyes, through the eyes of the One who loves the world so much that he comes in the flesh to bring it back into tune with his intentions – in short, those intentions are God’s SHALOM – justice, peace, and joy for everyone in a flourishing garden of delights – and this future comes on earth as in heaven
- “But I say to you” – Jesus’ manifesto – a declaration of his views, motives, and intentions – deeply rooted in the traditions of Abraham, the Exodus, and the prophets – Walter Brueggemann on prophetic imagination – “Prophetic ministry seeks to penetrate despair so that new futures can be believed in and embraced by us” – this is what Jesus is doing in his Sermon on the Mount – laying out a manifesto of God’s way of seeing the world and being in the world, he will face the temptations of his age – more on that next week
- To go and do what Jesus teaches here – and that’s a refrain throughout the Gospels – that’s the challenge – I don’t know about you – I can’t do it on my own – I need the constant support of the Holy Spirit working through the fellowship of the friends of Jesus that is the church in order for this kind of resilience to become, over and over, the formative force in my life – I need this constant reminder of how sees the world and invites me to align my attitudes and behaviours with his, as seen most clearly in Jesus of Nazareth
- We talked a lot about this complexity at Bible study on Friday night – how hard it is to take this point of view, and maintain it consistently, especially in a world divided by anger and fear – in the end, however, if we are going to be the faithful friends of God Jesus enabled us to, we need to mature constantly in seeing things through God’s eyes – see through God’s love – treat people with God’s love – grow in God’s love – and that means turning over all our fear, anger, hatred, and desire for vengeance over to God – trust that God will deal with it in God’s time and in God’s way – not ours to control

At this point in our ponderings, then ...

The emphasis in this text, as it is throughout Jesus’ sermon, is love – to live God’s love is the way to serve only God – that determination drove the devil away at the end of the temptations – and that service means loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us – what does this look like? – it looks like a black congregation in Charleston, NC, along with members of the broader community, gathering for prayer and offering forgiveness to Dylan Roof the day after he had come to a bible study in their church and shot 9 people to death because he hated blacks, saw them as inferior and a threat to his ideal of a pure society – that’s what living this text looks like

Notes for a sermon preached by Brian Fraser,
minister with Brentwood Presbyterian Church, Burnaby, BC