

# Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom

## Love My Enemies • Message 8

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#### A. Introduction

We conclude *Jesus at the Center of the Kingdom*.

- Leviticus 19:18; Luke 10:26-27; 1 John 4:16

#### A. The final message in this Sermon on Mount series (ch.5) is entitled **Love My Enemies**.

1. This is the sixth “*you have heard*” statement in which Jesus points out what the people had been taught and believed to be true was not according to the Scripture.
2. We may also have some misunderstandings about what the Bible actually says:
  - “God works in mysterious ways.” – No, He does, but there is no verse. Isaiah 55:8.
  - “God will never give you more than you can handle.” – No, 1 Corinthians 10:13 relates specifically to temptation.
  - “God helps those who help themselves.” – No, God helps the helpless. Romans 5:8.
  - “Hate the sin but love the sinner.” – No, but true according to today’s passage.
3. Jesus used the subject of love again, clearly point out the pride and hypocrisy of the Jewish teachers (scribes and Pharisees). [APP.: What will it show about me?]
4. Theme verse:  
“*But I say, love your enemies!*”  
**Matthew 5:44a (NLT)**
5. APP.: Ask yourself: “Do I have enemies?” “Who do I hate or avoid?” “Of whom am I jealous?” “Who would I love to see fail, be exposed, hurt or humiliated?”

#### B. Loving my enemies... (Matthew 5:43-48)

##### 1. Expresses godly character. (Matthew 5:43-45. C/R: John 3:16; Acts 14:16-17; Romans 5:8-10)

1. “*You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy.*”

**Matthew 5:43 (NLT)**

[“You have been taught this. It’s known and accepted.”]

2. This was what the scribes and Pharisees, experts in biblical law, taught about love.

3. “*Love your neighbor,*” was adapted from Leviticus 19:18, which actually says

“*... love your neighbor as yourself. ...*”

**Leviticus 19:18 (NLT)**

[This command was repeated 7X in New Testament]

4. The phrase “as yourself,” was omitted because it was inconceivable that these lawyers should care for people equally with themselves since most people were ignorant of the law and did not strive for righteousness as they did (inferior).
5. They viewed *neighbors* as only people they accepted and approved of and excluded tax-collectors, sinners, Gentiles, even common Jewish people.
6. The law did not say “hate your enemies,” it was added through rabbinic tradition.
7. God’s judgment against sinners, idol-worshipers and immoral people did not give Jewish rabbis the right to exercise their own judgment, to *personally* hate, despise and punish people who disobeyed God but also who disobeyed *them!*
8. These rabbis moved from hating those who did evil *according to God’s definition*, to hating those who did evil *according to their* [the rabbis’] *definition*.
9. But God did not grant them—or us—the right to *hate* anyone on His behalf!

10. These lawyers altered God's command to fit their prejudices and preferences.
11. APP.: Have we regarded people as enemies whose lifestyles we disapprove while excusing our own violations of the Bible's standards, especially in moral matters?
12. Jesus said at Matthew 5:44:  
*"But I say, love your enemies!"* [theme]  
**Matthew 5:44a (NLT)**
13. Our tendency is to base love on the desirability, attractiveness, pleasantness, of the object of our love, but true biblical love is a response to the object's need.
14. The love of God (Greek *agape*) is so great that it even embraces His enemies!
15. Jesus didn't say you have to *like* the enemy or what they do or have done to you.
16. *Love* in this instance does not mean emotional affection; it refers to an action, an act of the will, which causes us to be concerned about another person's welfare.
17. Loving a person with different opinions and disapproved actions is something we *do*, not something we *feel*.
18. It is a commitment to do what will benefit and not harm this dissimilar person.
19. Jesus also said at Matthew 5:44:  
*"Pray for those who persecute you!"*  
**Matthew 5:44b (NLT)**
20. God's truth exposes sin in people, which produces guilt and fear of punishment.
21. They often deal with these uncomfortable feelings by denying the Bible's truth or rejecting the existence of God—and if that fails to comfort them—they might attack believers in God and His truth, which Jesus warned us about (John 15:20).
22. Prayer for a persecutor (or any adversary) helps us spiritually and emotionally.
23. Prayer for people you resent is the only way to remove hatred from your heart.
24. God is love; the greatest evidence of our relationship to Him is our love for others, especially others who are opposed to us. (John 13:35; 1 John 4:16)(Uncle Jim)
25. *"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."*  
**Matthew 5:45 (NLT)** [common grace; Acts 14:16-18]
26. God grants favor to all (followers and foes) not only sun and rain to grow food, but also good things like families, jobs, art, music, nature, romance, joy, which gives everyone evidence of God and His goodness (Acts 14:16-17; Romans 1:20)
27. God's love embraces the entire world (John 3:16); He loved each of us even while we were still sinners and were actually His enemies living in unbelief. (Enemies?)
28. There is no more rebellious or sinful action than mere unbelief—to deny God as our Creator with the right to rule over our lives and reject His Son as our Savior.
29. *But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. ... For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of His Son while we were still His enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of His Son.*  
**Romans 5:8,10 (NLT)**
30. APP.: Recognizing that God loved and saved me when I was a sinner and His enemy, am I willing to show love to, and pray for, people who oppose me?

## B. Loving my enemies...

### 2. Exceeds the ordinary. (Matthew 5:46-47. C/R: Proverbs 25:21-22; Philippians 2:13; 1 John 3:18)

1. *"If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans [Gentiles] do that."*  
**Matthew 5:46-47 (NLT)**
2. Jesus exposed the law teacher's hypocrisy by saying their love for people they preferred was nothing more than what people they detested and disrespected did.
3. Tax gatherers were dishonest extorters of Jews for the Romans and Gentiles were outside of God's concern and mercy, enemies of His, headed for destruction.
4. These self-righteous lawyers would have been enraged by Jesus' comparison.

5. Loving family members and friends is good and normal, but not worthy of reward.
6. God rewards actions *against* our natural tendency to do what is in our best interest, what brings us pleasure, like relating lovingly to people we are comfortable with.
7. God recognizes and rewards sacrificial actions, not self-serving ones.
8. Jesus calls His hillside audience to do the *extraordinary*, beyond what is expected, by showing (*demonstrating*; 1 John 3:18) love to *adversaries* and *opponents*.
9. God had already given this instruction explicitly in the Old Testament.
10. *If your enemies are hungry, give them food to eat. If they are thirsty, give them water to drink. You will heap burning coals of shame on their heads, and the LORD will reward you.*  
**Proverbs 25:21-22 (NLT)** [Also at Romans 12:20-21.]
11. When you show love for a foe, God will reward you and your antagonist may become convicted about His actions and experience shame (*burning coals*), which can cause reconciliation towards you and possibly repentance towards God.
12. If we have love for an enemy or adversary, we will not relish that person's judgment by God, so we will make efforts to prevent it from occurring. (burn?)
13. If you return mistreatment for mistreatment, you won't change an adversary's attitude, but kindness might lead to repentance; God's kindness does (Romans 2:4).
14. "No one could do that!" Not in their own strength, but they could in God's power.
15. *For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.*  
**Philippians 2:13 (NLT)** [APP.: Will you follow God's will for you?]
16. If you are a believer, a follower of Jesus Christ, you aren't ordinary; you are exceptional, supernatural, so you can respond in extraordinary ways.
17. Our faith is evident and influential when our actions are unusual; when we are kind, gracious, forgiving, generous, to people who have mistreated us. (Matthew 5:16)
18. APP.: Are you willing to show love to people you don't like to lead them to God?

## B. Loving my enemies...

### 3. Exhibits maturity. (Matthew 5:48. C/R: Matthew 19:26; Romans 5:5; 1 Thessalonians 3:12)

1. *"But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect."*  
**Matthew 5:48 (NLT)** [Greek *telios* = mature, complete, Hebrew meaning is fulfillment of purpose.]
2. The great purpose of salvation, the goal of the Gospel, and the great desire of God's heart, is for all people to become like Him—*perfect!* (become like Jesus Romans 8:29)
3. Jesus isn't saying we must become sinless, rather, He is encouraging us to strive for an intended end or completion; to become *mature*. (1 Corinthians 2:6; 14:20; Ephesians 4:13)
4. God-like perfect maturity in any area, including showing love, is impossible in our own strength, but what God commands, He provides the power to accomplish.
5. The *perfect* person is in a right relationship of complete commitment to God, desiring to know and do God's will, to fulfill His purpose, in every area of life.
6. We mature spiritually by experiencing situations where we must deny ourselves, our wants, our rights and our preferences to fulfill God's purpose for our lives.
7. This includes attempting difficult assignments beyond our natural human abilities such as *loving our enemies*, which He will enable us to accomplish.
8. *And may the Lord make your love for one another and for all people grow and overflow, just as our love for you overflows.*  
**1 Thessalonians 3:12 (NLT)**
9. APP.: Do you want God to enable you to love people that you don't like?