

JESUS SAID WHAT?!!**8th August 2021 – week 6****HillSide's Minister – Rev' Allan Booth****THE KEY TO LOVING YOUR ENEMEY**

Blurb:

The world says: Hate everyone who opposes you...
 Jesus says: Love everyone, even those you do not like..

Psalm 103**Of David.**

- ¹ Praise the LORD, my soul;
 all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
- ² Praise the LORD, my soul,
 and forget not all his benefits—
- ³ who forgives all your sins
 and heals all your diseases,
- ⁴ who redeems your life from the pit
 and crowns you with love and compassion,
- ⁵ who satisfies your desires with good things
 so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.
- ⁶ The LORD works righteousness
 and justice for all the oppressed.
- ⁷ He made known his ways to Moses,
 his deeds to the people of Israel:
- ⁸ The LORD is compassionate and gracious,
 slow to anger, abounding in love.
- ⁹ He will not always accuse,
 nor will he harbor his anger forever;
- ¹⁰ he does not treat us as our sins deserve
 or repay us according to our iniquities.
- ¹¹ For as high as the heavens are above the earth,
 so great is his love for those who fear him;
- ¹² as far as the east is from the west,
 so far has he removed our transgressions from us.
- ¹³ As a father has compassion on his children,
 so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him;
- ¹⁴ for he knows how we are formed,
 he remembers that we are dust.
- ¹⁵ The life of mortals is like grass,
 they flourish like a flower of the field;
- ¹⁶ the wind blows over it and it is gone,
 and its place remembers it no more.
- ¹⁷ But from everlasting to everlasting
 the LORD's love is with those who fear him,
 and his righteousness with their children's children—
- ¹⁸ with those who keep his covenant
 and remember to obey his precepts.

¹⁹ *The LORD has established his throne in heaven,
and his kingdom rules over all.*

²⁰ *Praise the LORD, you his angels,
you mighty ones who do his bidding,
who obey his word.*

²¹ *Praise the LORD, all his heavenly hosts,
you his servants who do his will.*

²² *Praise the LORD, all his works
everywhere in his dominion.*

Praise the LORD, my soul.

Matthew 5: 43-48

Love for Enemies

⁴³ *“You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^[a] and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Sermon

This is the thing that even the most ardent follower of Jesus has a very real struggle with, loving our enemies. This struggle stretches back to beyond the crusades when hatred of another religious group was mandatory. Reaches all the way through the colonial era, when the colony had to be molded into a minor copy of the occupying nation. This struggle has wormed its way into how we express ourselves as a follower of Jesus and cuts into the heart of every individual that walks planet earth.

There is an older couple that are very special to us as a family; when I had the opportunity to assist them in renewing their wedding vows one of them said to the other... I might not like you all the time, but I will love you always. I see honest truth in that statement, often in relationships we might do things that annoy the other. We even find it exceptionally difficult to love everyone that is similar to us, let alone those that are different. But those things should never diminish the love that is shared. I was asked the other day if we could love someone while still thinking they needed a good attitude adjustment. My response was that anyone who has been the parent of a teenager has already done that and more. But what about those who support a different political candidate or party, or even those who support a different football team? Are we *really* expected to love all of them?

Yes, yes we are!

But how?

Well, it is simply not possible, it is beyond our own ordinary abilities.

Which is entirely why Jesus saying we must love our enemies is so mission critical. We have to submit to the work of the Holy Spirit in our life. To love as Jesus loves does not suddenly happen, it is a slow lifetime transformation. We know how to grow in knowledge, study intentionally and you will grow your intellect. If we wish to grow physically beyond the journey into adulthood, then we need

loads of physical training and hard work. To grow our ability to love like Jesus loves is not really any different. There is wisdom in the saying that what you hope to do with ease, you must first learn to do with diligence. In other words, we need to intentionally work on it.

A good place to begin is to open your heart submissively to the Holy Spirit. Join a home study or cell group, but one that is a little different to your normal circle of friends. Put time into forming new relationships, it will surprise you how easy it is to begin to care for people you are spending time with. Slowly that caring develops into a deep abiding Jesus love, wherein you genuinely want the very best for the other person. That, just there, is another clue as to how our ability to love grow toward loving as Jesus loves. We intentionally work on drawing the best out of one another, raising the other up, encouraging and supporting always.

A follower of Jesus named Bob Goff has written two vitally important books that teach about real world love: *Love Does*, and *Everybody Always*. He expounds the practice of intentional love, just do it! In the 17th chapter of *Everybody Always*. He explains how we get life's most frequent question wrong... we ask of friends, how is life working for you? What we should be asking is how is your life working for those around you? Bob refers to a children's story (*How full is your Bucket?* by Tom Rath) about how each of us carries an invisible bucket through life, what we fill our bucket with overflows into the world. If we fill our bucket with love; that is what will flow from our bucket into the buckets of people around us. The converse is also true. Occasionally we will encounter nasty people who try to steal things from our bucket, taking out joy and contentment then putting negative hurtful things in their place. When that happens we have to know where the lid is! Put the lid on and prevent unpleasant people from emptying your bucket. Bob put the children's story to the test, and carried a galvanised bucket around with him for months. He confirmed it really works! So be aware of how you are filling your bucket and what you are putting into other people's invisible buckets.

So how do we grow to love our enemy, by intentionally light of your son Jesus our Saviour. We pray against all the plans and purposes of evil in their lives and pray that only your plans would succeed and bare fruit in the lives of our enemies. By your grace allow us to grow in your love... Amen.