

“Loving our enemies”

April 21, 2013

Today’s message is a response to the events related to this past week’s terrorist attack in Boston. We’ve seen many responses so far:

- Medical response.
- Law enforcement.
- Government leader response: President, Governor, Mayor.
- “Man on the street” interviews capture the emotional and mental gymnastics.

My job is not medical, security, political, or social in nature ... I want to talk with you, candidly, about a spiritual response to these events.

Jesus shared a short talk to his disciples in Luke 6:27-36. One of these verses is very, very familiar to you, it is the “golden rule,” which says “Do to others as you would like them to do to you.” This is NOT the principal of reciprocity ... treating others AS they treat you.

“Terrorist attacks you, you attack them.”

That is what we expect from Law enforcement, the Department of Homeland Defense, politicians, and even our emotional/mental thinking regarding terrorist attacks. “Get ‘em before they get us.”

But, again, let’s remember the golden rule isn’t “eye for an eye” or “tooth for a tooth.” We are told by Jesus “treat them as you WISH they would treat you.” Let’s investigate this attitude of Jesus deeper, and perhaps why it is so crucial for each of us to embrace.

Luke 6:27-36 (NLT)

²⁷ “But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.

²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.

²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also.

³⁰ Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back.

³¹ Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

³² “If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them!

³³ And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much!

³⁴ And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get

credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.

³⁵ “Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked.

³⁶ You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.

“Loving Your Enemy, Jesus Style”

A. You *may* not be ready to love your enemy yet.

Luke: 6:27, Jesus said “But to you who are willing to listen ...”

Anger, hatred, and revenge are super-strong indicators that we’re not ready to listen. Even our instinct for self-preservation, or our natural desire to protect our loved ones can certainly stop up our ears.

ILLY: The concussive effect of bombs can rupture the ear drums and make us unable to hear. That can happen spiritually too! The shock-wave of these attacks have certainly rendered some of our ears deaf to what Jesus might say to us. It is the Holy Spirit’s task to heal our spirit to the point of being able to hear Jesus.

B. Loving our enemies means we must decide how to respond to evil.

Luke 6:27-28, “ ... I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.”

Do terrorists qualify as an “enemy” for this passage? In other words, are terrorists so vile, so evil, so _____, that these words of Jesus don’t apply? What is test Jesus uses here?

- “... to those who hate you”
- “... those who curse you”
- “ ... for those who hurt you.”

I conclude that terrorists do in fact meet these criteria, and therefore we must honestly grapple with Jesus’ words.

So, what to do with evil? There is an escalation from hate > curse > hurt. So too, our response changes ...

- Do good. There is a season when you can help those who hate you.
- Bless. There comes a time when you can no longer help, but you can hope.
- Pray. Finally, there comes a time when only prayer remains.

C. Understand that every day is “opposite day” for a Christian.

Luke 6:29-31, If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also.

³⁰ Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back.

³¹ Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

Bottom line: as a believer I am expected to be different than non-believers.

D. Why? Because your nature flows from your Heavenly Father.

Luke 6:32-35, ³² “If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them!

³³ And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much!

³⁴ And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.

³⁵ “Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked.

We try to understand evil people and are flabbergasted. “How can you DO that to innocent people? Blow them up? An 8 year old child!” The truth is that we do what is natural for us ... and until Jesus transforms us, sin is natural, as is hatred.

ILLY: The song scheduled for today is Katy Perry's “Firework.” The main point of that song is that there's a spark of some kind within us ... and we need to let what's inside come flying out in a spectacular burst of color. Here's the problem: If it's hate inside of us, then that burst of color is an evil “boom, boom, boom.” Our human nature is broken until we're patched up by Jesus.

But, what about ME? Where does my nature come from? I am a “child of the Most High.” So, that makes me different.

Different, how? “He is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked.”

CRITICAL TRUTH: We are talking about Grace, God's decision to love the unlovable. So, I am called to be kind to the unthankful and wicked also.

E. Bottom Line: Compassion always.

Luke 6:36, "You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate."

God loves you even on your worst days. When you are unthankful and wicked, God still has compassion for you. But wait ... what is you're REALLY unthankful, or horribly wicked? Still, your heavenly father is compassionate.

Is there some line in the sand you can cross where God throws up His hands and says, "nope, no more love for you"? There isn't.

And, because there is no limit to God's compassion for us, we must love our enemies.

A closing prayer, "Dear God, today we ask for Your grace to love our enemies. Help us be good. Help us to bless. Teach us to pray. In Jesus' name, amen."