



## The Golden Rule (Luke 6:27-36)



### Children's talk "Love your Enemies"

Rolo - "Do you love anyone enough to give them your last Rolo"

#### Love Your Enemies

Love - romance? friendship? No -  
putting others before yourself - agape.

But Jesus says love your enemies - love *your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28*  
*bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*

What's an enemy? Anybody who isn't a friend

But how are we supposed to do that - isn't Jesus being unreasonable?

He's done it already!

*NLT 1 John 4:9 God showed how much he loved us by sending his one and only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through him.10 This is real love—not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins.*

*Romans 5:9 And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation.10 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.11 So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God. NLT*

He died for us - are we trusting Him? If we know Jesus one of the most powerful ways we can witness is by showing love to those who aren't our friends.

### *Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

*A young musician's concert was poorly received by the critics. The famous Finnish composer Jean Sibelius consoled him by patting him on the shoulder and saying, "Remember, son, there is no city in the world where they have erected a statue to a critic."*

All people pick up enemies during their lives and the consequences can affect our lives in depressing our spirits like the young musician, or can result in persecution and death in some situations in the world. Jesus' definition of an enemy *Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*

Do you have enemies? I think most of us would like to think we don't have any. The problem is that even if we don't make enemies, people can be offended (even maybe because we are Christians) and make us enemies of them. The greek word for "enemy" here means a personal enemy. They are those who would do us harm - people who hate us, who curse us or people who mistreat us. But as we start to think on those who don't seem to like us, those who have made us victims of gossip or those who have treated us shabbily, then we realise that many of us have broken relationships somewhere in our lives, be they friends or family. And it's always upsetting isn't it when there has been a falling out, and people won't speak to us, or we have been offended by their behaviour. Maybe you have neighbours, family or workmates or even family who will hardly give you the time of day because you are a Christian. We all have experience of many or all of these. And as we bring them to mind again this morning then we hear the voice of Jesus: "love your enemies" - "love them".

It's easy when we read it to see what Jesus means. But when we realise in our own lives that there are people with whom we have a broken relationship; love your enemies becomes one of the hard sayings of Jesus. "But Lord why should I care for that person who despises my faith, for the neighbour who will have nothing to do with me, or the person never has a nice thing to say about me, for that guy who has tricked me, for the friend who deserted me." Jesus says, "Love Your Enemies" - and He means THEM!

Jesus helps us here by being pactical about what it means to love your enemy and how this honours God. Jesus gives them a saying they would know - *Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

It's known today as The Golden Rule and it sits here at the centre of this passage in verse 31 *Do to others as you would have them do to you.* It was common phrase to those hearing Jesus or to the readers of the gospel. It does not seem to have any religious origin. It was a well-known Greek proverb that Jewish people of the time used. The saying was absorbed into the culture of the Jews.

By the time of Jesus, *do to others as you would have them do to you* was in common use by Jews and great rabbis of the time used it to illustrate the commandment from the OT "love your neighbour as yourself". How do you show love to your neighbour? By doing to them as you would have done to yourself. Sounds good. Hmmm.

BUT it was strictly limited by the rabbis to people they saw as your neighbour; it did not extend to those who were your enemies or the "enemies" of God - Romans, Samaritans, tax collectors, "sinners", lepers (because "they must have sinned"). You didn't love them - or so the Jews said - but not Jesus.

*Do to others as you would have them do to you* is in our culture too. I'm sure you know many people who aren't Christians who live by it. It's one of those basic principles in life that God has wired into the conscience of man because it reflects what agape - the love of God, for is love - is agape - and we are made in His image. (1 John 4:18).

Lots of people and modern religions have *do to others as you would have them do to you* as part of their morals too because God has made it part of the human conscience. It's an outworking of what agape is all about, but Jesus takes that phrase and takes it to it's logical conclusion. If you are to do to others as you would have done to yourself; then you *have to love your enemies* because they are "others". You *have to do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.* Wow! Other religions may use the Golden Rule, but none go that far. Do unto others, yes; but not to enemies, particularly enemies of your faith. But "love your enemies is" EXACTLY what Jesus is saying here. Jesus is unique in how He interprets this.

And what's more He lived this rule in His own life æ we understood earlier: Romans *5:10 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.* He loved us so much that He died to redeem us while we were still enemies. And as Jesus speaks to His disciples He's just saying - "do the same as Me". He shows the true meaning of agape love as we put the needs of others beyond the needs of ourselves - even our enemies - in order to bring about THEIR redemption.

So what can we learn from this passage about loving our enemies - or in fact loving anyone else too?

● Love is costly

*29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

Love is costly. As we have thought on what love cost Jesus when He died on the cross for us, we know that agape love can be painful. To love your neighbour means to love your enemies as well as people you regard your friends. And putting out that hand of friendship to someone who may do harm to you can be met with rejection. Loving your enemy isn't thinking nice thoughts about them or trying to see the best in them. It involves you in cost. So that neighbour you don't like who cheekily asks to borrow your mower - well, why not bless him with a lend him the strimmer as well, even though you may wonder what condition they might return in after you've finished.

Sometimes we can be very protective about things can't we? Yet God has given us those things so that we can benefit others and further His kingdom. And maybe you'll make a friend.

And the bit about striking you on the cheek? Jesus uses an extreme example to make a point. It doesn't mean just stand there and take a thumping. But it does mean that if someone is trying to have a go at you unjustly, rather than retaliate, to be prepared to take another hit if it will make a positive difference. And by showing them care and prayer, you may just win them for Christ.

I remember a passage in *Run Baby Run* where Nicky Cruz confronts David Wilkerson who has introduced himself to Cruz by saying something like "I've come to tell you that god loves you and I love you too". Cruz is furious and threatens to cut him up. Wilkerson replies that even if he was cut up into a thousand pieces, each would still say "I love you". That's "love your enemies in action". Wilkerson got away with it - but he was prepared for his love to be more costly.

Eugene Peterson words this passage in this way in *The Message*: *Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer for that person. If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it. If someone grabs your shirt, gift wrap your best coat and make a present of it. If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life.*

The thing which marked out Jesus and which has marked out Christians for 2000 years is this preparedness to make the costly act of loving someone who has shown us hostility rather than friendship. It's all about Christ-likeness. And this action makes friends out of enemies - and better still - so impresses others that it leads them to Christ. And it makes a difference because if its done prayerfully it can bring

someone to Christ. That's why Jesus said *pray for those who mistreat you* - it worked for David Wilkerson as Nicky Cruz came to Christ!

The famous preacher, George Campbell-Morgan once said *the redemption of others start when we are prepared to put hands of friendship and love to people who have no time for us and even persecute us.*

More recently an American preacher called Larry Broding said of the Golden Rule *"Truly applied, the golden rule becomes Christianity's most powerful weapon to evangelise."*

#### ● Love is risky

*"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners' love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners' do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even `sinners' lend to `sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.*

Loving your enemies is risky. There is no cost or risk in being nice to your friends. It's easy to use our possessions when we think we are going to get something out of it for ourselves. Many people are quite happy to do to others as they've done to us. But to help, or to lend or to give when there is a risk that our enemies will still be our enemy afterwards is something else. But that's the whole principle of the Golden Rule. It's doing to others as we would have them do to us. It's helping in a way we'd like to be helped ourselves. It's about speaking to someone in a way we would like to be spoken to. Jesus said *But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back.* Expect no return. The Australian commentator Leon Morris has written: *"The Christian should never refrain from giving out of a love for his possessions. Love must be ready to be deprived of everything if needs be. Love must be our decision without regard for our possessions.*

Love is a risky business. Yet love can be the difference between peace and war. I remember when Nelson Mandela was released from prison. People wondered whether South Africa would descend into anarchy as old scores were settled. Yet he decided to practice the Golden Rule and encouraged others to forgive enemies and not settle scores. He's not a Christian, yet he showed how well this can work even with unbelievers when you are prepared to take the risk of love.

If unbelievers are prepared to take the risk how much more should we as the people of God. Loving others who are against us is a risky business – they may reject us. If you have any experience of evangelism, you'll know all about this. But do we stop loving them? Do we give up on them? God doesn't until the day they pass into eternity – and He bears the same disappointment as us when they reject our love because they are rejecting His. God wants us to take risks with love because as David Wilkerson found out; risk taken prayerfully with love lead to changed lives. So perhaps next time that neighbour asks to borrow the mower?

#### ● Love is godly

*35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

Loving your enemy is risky, it's costly - but it's God's way. He is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Once that was you and me - now we were the friends of God. God rewards the Christ-like and that means us making ourselves like Him and being *merciful, just as your Father is merciful*. And we discover here that the Lord rewards us for it. The reward of the death of Jesus on the cross was us! Perhaps the best blessing we could receive is seeing God blessing the lives of someone we have decided to show love to despite how they may feel or act towards us. But how God rewards the faithfulness of His people could well be the subject of another sermon – or a series!

Loving our enemies. Doing to others as we would have done to us. They are hard words of Jesus but by His Spirit I believe God gives us the grace to do it. So what have we discovered this morning:

- don't be afraid to take risk and bear costs to build friendships with those who you may identify as enemies – you may be the means of their redemption
- the church should not be the place for enemies because we are called to love one another – and there should be no-one easier to love than the people of God.

Love your enemies. Do to your enemies as you would have them do unto you. Hard sayings, but ones that reflect the person of Christ and His way of bringing redemption to men and women. If you find them hard sayings then dwell on these words from George Campbell-Morgan:

***“We say these are counsels of perfection. Such action is not practicable. The only reply is that these were the words of our Lord to His own and any criticism of them must be referred to Him! Only, let it be remembered that He who called men to such impossible heights, in redeeming grace, provided power to obey”. George Campbell-Morgan***