

Who's Child Are You?

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[0 : 00] If you are a parent, have you ever been told that your child acts just like you? And when you heard that, what was the context?

Wasn't good, was it? Wasn't good what your child was doing. Most of my son David's, which he's not here today, I wish he was.

Most of his growing up years, I heard that over and over and over again. He would do something and I'd get all upset, irritated, ready to get him.

And my dad would say something. I know another little boy who used to act that way. And my mother's favorite line was, he's just like you.

Never said that when he did something good. Always said that when he was getting into something. Who are you like? Are you like one of your parents?

[1 : 06] Or a grandparent? Or an older brother or sister? Are you ever, or has anyone ever said, you are like your heavenly father?

You'd think, well that's just crazy. Nobody would ever say that. That's impossible. Is it? Jesus said on more than one occasion, we should live in such a way that we would be called sons or children of our heavenly father.

So if Jesus said that, it's not impossible, is it? We're going to look at one such place today in Matthew chapter 5, verse 43 and following.

If you would, go ahead and turn there. And while you're turning, I want to sort of bring some people up to date if you haven't been here. Or remind those who may have slept through a part of it on one occasion or two.

Over the past several weeks, we've been looking at how we're supposed to respond to people who mistreat us. Maybe insult us. And what we've discovered, it is not easy and it is not natural.

[2 : 19] Look at these examples. Paul writes in Romans chapter 12, Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse them. A little bit later in verse 19.

Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God. For it is written, vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. And then we saw this from Matthew chapter 5, verse 38 and 39, what Jesus said.

You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

If you were not here and you want to go into the details of that message, what Jesus actually was talking about, what He wasn't, go online at our church website and listen to it and find out exactly what Jesus is talking about.

But just sort of as a little summary. We've learned that these statements were primarily, not exclusively, but primarily aimed at individuals who were being persecuted because they were Christians.

[3 : 34] What Jesus is talking about, He's writing to His disciples. Paul's, Paul's writing to Christians in Romans 12. And the idea is, as you live in this world trying to live out your faith and you encounter persecution, you encounter people who don't like you because you are my follower, because you're seeking to live as I have taught you.

And they mistreat you. They insult you. Don't seek revenge is what they're saying. Don't retaliate. Don't have this idea, I don't take anything off anyone. I don't get mad. I get even. The idea in all these statements, we've got to learn as Christians to treat people better than they treat us.

Boys and girls, boys and girls, we're supposed to treat people better than they treat us, not like they treat us.

Last week, we looked specifically at how God does not call us to live as pacifists in this world.

[4 : 53] To just passively sit back and take all the abuse, all the whatever people want to take out on us.

We looked at two things last week in particular. I want to give you a real quick summary. God provides justice and protection from evil people through governmental authority like police, like the court system, and on a national level, through the military.

God intends for justice to be carried out in this world, for justice to be served, not so much individuals seeking it, but as a governmental authority seeking it, like a law enforcement officer, like a military person, like through the court system.

And we get this in Romans chapter 13, verses 1 through 4, but I just want to read verse 4 right now. Look at it. He says, But if you do wrong, be afraid for he, he's talking about the emperor, the king, he's talking about government as if government was a person.

If you do wrong, be afraid for he does not bear the sword in vain. He's talking about lethal force. For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer.

[6 : 26] We also saw last week that God allows us to defend ourselves and others with deadly force when threatened by evil. Here's what we saw last week.

In Luke chapter 22, you see the verses on the screen. Jesus did not prohibit his disciples from walking around carrying a sword which was used to defend themselves.

Jesus, over three years of ministry, when he came to the end, Peter used his in an inappropriate way. We looked at that last week. But the point I want to make is, Jesus did not tell his disciples, you can't be armed.

They were armed. He knew they were armed. respected theologians explain that this is not only allowed defending yourself or other people under certain circumstances, but to do this is sometimes the absolute moral right thing to do.

Listen to John Frame, one of the most well-respected ethical writers, theologians you'll find alive today.

[7 : 44] He says, if someone seeks to kill you or a family member and there is no help available, it is right for you to ward off the attack by force if necessary.

Individuals may sometimes fight or even kill to preserve a life, but they should not use force, they should not use more force that is necessary in a given situation.

Norman Geisler is another well-respected writer on ethics. He, along with J.P. Moreland, they make an even stronger statement. Look at what they say.

To permit murder when one could have prevented it is morally wrong. To allow a rape when one could have been hindered is an evil. To watch an act of cruelty to children without trying to intervene is morally inexcusable.

In brief, not resisting evil is an evil of omission. And an evil of omission can be just as evil as an evil of commission.

[8 : 49] Any man who refuses to protect his wife and children against a violent intruder fails them morally. There's a time and there's a place.

We should pray that it never happens when Christians should act with force to protect someone, to protect their own life and it's morally right.

It's not just something that can be done. It's the morally right thing to do. God provides a way for us in this world, even us as Christians, to seek justice, to be protected from evil people who have no respect for human life, no respect for morality or authority.

That's important to understand. But, most of us will live our entire lives lives. And our enemies will never be such evil people as I just described.

Most of us, we have enemies who may insult us, who may mistreat us, who may abuse us, who may take advantage of us, who may persecute us because we're Christians, but they don't really threaten our life or our family or our community, our country.

[10 : 31] The way we interact with enemies is what Jesus says in Matthew 5, 43 as the general rule for us as individuals.

So let's look at it. Matthew 5, 43. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

The idea is not you love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you and by doing that you become sons of your Father or children of God. No. By loving your enemy, praying for those who persecute you, you demonstrate, Jesus is saying, that you already are a child of God.

Verse 46 now. Now back up, verse 45. So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven for he makes his son rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, he's talking about a greeting, not just, hey, how you doing, but a Jewish greeting of peace, of shalom.

[12:03] You're really wishing well, wholeness, a good quality of life on someone. It's a heartfelt kind of expression. Look at it again.

And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

He's talking there about being complete, about being whole, about living up to what God's called us to in the Sermon on the Mount. That last phrase, sort of a way he ends this section of the Sermon on the Mount.

But let's look at what Jesus is talking about. First, the natural way to respond to enemies is what he says in verse 43. You've heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. The Jewish leaders of Jesus' day taught people that's what you're supposed to do. That's what you, as a good Jew, will do. But that was not what the Old Testament taught.

[13:04] The Old Testament, most of us in here know, Jesus called it the second greatest commandment, love your neighbor. neighbor as yourself. Throughout the Old Testament, God commanded his people to love other people, not just their fellow Jews, but even an alien living in your land.

Help them, do certain things to provide for some of their needs. God commanded his people. But over time, the Jews developed this mentality, love your neighbor and your neighbor is a fellow Jew. Period. Love your neighbor, your fellow Jew, and then hate everybody else. Look down, despise everyone else.

And that was the mentality that was developed. To a Jewish person, if you were not a part of that group, you were looked down upon. You were a Gentile dog. You were not worthy of being spoken to in a proper way as we saw there toward the end.

What Jesus is doing here when he says, you have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. He's not quoting an Old Testament passage. He's quoting what was being said at that time.

[14:21] And what was being said at that time was this. Love people in a way that comes naturally. naturally. What was being said at that time is you just do what feels good.

You love those that are like you. People who look and think and act like you. You love them but just hate. Look down at those who are not like you.

Now, loving people who are like us, anybody can do that. You know, you think to yourself, I love my family.

I love my friends. I love people I work with. I love people I hang out with. There's a lot of people in this world. I genuinely care about them. Have an emotional attachment to them.

So what? Everybody likes people who are like them. Jesus says even the despised tax collectors, those traitorous Jews who work for the Romans, even those Gentile dogs, they do that.

[15:35] There's no reward in that. You're doing nothing special. Look at that follow-up question, the hard question, verse 47. What are you doing more than others if you just love those who love you?

or you just love those who are like you? What Jesus wants us to think is, how is your love as a follower of me?

How is your love different than unbelievers? Love those who are close to you. That's good. It's not bad. Love your family.

Love your friends. Love your fellow Sunday school class members. Love those people you work with, you play sports with, you hang out with. That's good. But don't pass yourself on the back. Don't think that makes you some kind of model Christian. That's nothing special. Gang members love one another, don't they? Thugs have a brotherhood.

[16:36] So to love people just like you means basically nothing in terms of it honoring God or being something commendable or something that is rewarded.

The question that Jesus is confronting us with this is this. Are you demonstrating that you are God's child by the way that you love people who are difficult to love that are in your life and you know who

they are?

Are you showing the world that you're a child of God by loving people that you don't like? And I hope nobody's gonna be so spiritual as to say oh there's no one I don't like.

You're lying to yourself. You don't like everybody. I can tell you this everybody doesn't like you. We know that don't we? Don't we? Aren't we aware of that?

Everybody does not like me. Think it to yourself. Everybody doesn't like me. But the opposite's true too. I don't like everybody. that's just the way it is.

[17 : 43] That's just natural. But what Jesus is calling us as Christians as His people love people that you don't like.

Love people that don't like you. Love people who offend you. Who insult you.

who oppose you about certain things. See what Jesus is teaching here is to go against our natural way of dealing with our enemies. So let's look at the next thing.

The supernatural way to respond to our enemies. What we're talking about all these messages from Romans chapter 12 about not resisting evil what Jesus is talking about about taking an insult turning the other cheek and what we're looking at today.

This is not normal. This is not natural. This is something that God has to give us the help the grace like Brian was thinking and the internal help as we'll talk about in a moment to do.

[18 : 47] The supernatural way to respond to our enemies verse 44 love your enemies. Let's think about what this does not mean first. Jesus is not saying when He says love your enemies you have to have an emotional or an affectionate kind of love for them like you do your family.

A lot of people are sitting right now you're sitting next to someone who is your family member or a good friend you just look around for a moment if you would just sort of glance around you don't have to stare at everybody but just look around if you're honest you love certain people in this room a whole lot more more heartfelt more deeply than you love other people.

I can't imagine anybody saying otherwise. Jesus is not saying you ought to love your enemy like you love your spouse or your child or your parent or your best friend or anything like that.

That is not in the realm of possibility that Jesus is talking about. Jesus is really not even saying that you have to like someone who is your enemy.

We all have enemies of various levels and he's not even saying don't let them be enemies.

[20 : 14] Hear this? He says love your enemy you identify this person is an enemy this person maybe has something against me they do stuff to me they hurt me you don't have an emotional feeling toward them you don't like them what Jesus is saying here when he says love your enemies is he's saying have a self giving type of love for them a love that seeks their good even when they don't seek your good a love that meets a person's need Jesus is not telling us to feel good about our enemy but he is telling us to do good to our enemies I think one good way to explain this or illustrate this Kent Hughes is a pastor he wrote about a book on Sermon on the Mount he tells a story a true life story it was one of his wife's best friends she and her family moved to a town house in a little community where everybody was quiet and neat got along well took good care of their place they got moved in they fixed it up the way they wanted it fixed up they worked outside in the yard front yard backyard they just had everything neat as a pen they were just as happy as they could be living in their town house when all of a sudden a family moved in next door that was just night and day different from everybody else the family that moved in next door they were loud they were obnoxious they were profane they could hear them yelling and screaming at one another using profanity toward one another in their town house they trashed their front yard instead of a green area like other people had a desert would just junk all over that front yard among these neat town homes well this lady let's call her family the

Jones family their life became miserable because they couldn't get away from it they went outside they saw signs of this neighbor inside they heard these neighbors Hughes said the final straw for the Jones family is when the boys of the Wyle family climbed over the backyard fence and spray painted orange paint on the Jones family patio wall where everything was neat and clean and fresh looking he says that Ms. Jones was just absolutely enraged she not only did not like these neighbors but she expressed that to God she was committed Christian and she understood what prayer was all about so she just talked to God I don't like these people I don't want to be around these people and she just sort of fussed in her prayer time complained as she prayed about these sorry neighbors that she had to put up with but then she made this statement to Hughes his wife she realized after a period of time

I'm wrong in my attitude my heart is not right with God much less these people and she says she literally got down on her knees and prayed Lord you know that I don't like these people at all help me to love them she said when she got up she felt absolutely no different but she decided she was going to start demonstrating love toward those neighbors she would start doing what she would do if she did in fact love them and she started doing that she started doing things like you know baking a pie taking things to them to eat just being friendly to them asking the other lady into her home to just drink coffee talk get to know one another this lady said this Jones lady said that they actually developed she developed a relationship with that lady and with her family and over a period of time those neighbors did not change they were still loud and profane and junky but Miss Jones said I did begin to love them and after a period of time those neighbors moved away and Mrs.

Jones response was she wept she said she had not only learned to love them she had learned to like them even though they didn't change their ways she liked them she just didn't like their ways C.S.

[25 : 30] Lewis wrote in his book Mere Christianity the worldly man treats certain people kindly because he likes them the Christian trying to treat everybody kindly finds himself liking more and more people as he goes on what Lewis is saying there what that Miss Jones actually did that's hard almost impossible for us to do on our own but as we've talked about throughout this series as Christians the Spirit of God lives within us and the Holy Spirit specializes in love Paul writes in Galatians 5 the fruit of the Spirit is love joy peace patience kindness goodness faithfulness gentleness and self control some people think that when Paul is writing about that he's saying the fruit of the Spirit is love and those other qualities are just part of what love is if we are children of

God we can love our enemies because the Spirit of God living in us will help us to will enable us to and one of the ways we can get that love flowing more naturally as a Christian naturally is to pray for them look at verse 44 pray for those who persecute you pray for people who have it in for you because you're a Christian and so they insult you they mistreat you they may even abuse you only because they don't believe like you believe they don't like it because you believe and live like you do so they persecute you but what Jesus is saying here praying for them help us to love them it's hard to hate people that you talk to God about just like that lady she didn't like them at all despised them but as she started talking to God about them not the first time probably not even for several days but as she was talking to

God about them she eventually got under conviction I've got the wrong attitude toward God and these people it's hard to pray for people about people and not develop something positive in relation to them so praying for our enemies that will help us to develop this love that Jesus commands us to have for them and the spirit of God living within us that's the spirit of Christ he will help us look at how Jesus did as followers of Jesus the Holy Spirit will help us to become more like Jesus and Jesus is the greatest example who prayed for those who crucified him like this father forgive them for they know not what they do this is the kind of love that demonstrates that we are God's children as

Jesus says there in verse 45 God demonstrates his love for all people even those who hate him by the way that he gives good gifts to everybody look at it verse 45 again he causes the rain he makes his sun shine on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust that's what's called common grace God just shows his common undeserved favor to everybody in various ways even those who hate him and despise him who are his enemies you know we need to stop sometimes just pause from time to time and think my salvation was not anything I deserved Paul makes it clear from this verse in Romans 5 8 God shows his love for us and this is that while we were still sinners Christ died for us you see

God comes to us to save us not when we cleaned up our life but when we're still sinners and willing to admit our sin and our need for him and our need for his forgiveness think about this for a moment there are some things about you if you're a parent you and your spouse that can be seen in your children there are some things about Lisa and me that can be seen in both of our boys children demonstrate something of the nature of their parents that also applies to God's children you know if you're a Christian the spirit of God has been at work in you ever since God saved you and so there should be evidence of his presence and his working in you you know when when God saves you puts his spirit in you

[30 : 42] Paul describes it like this in 2 Corinthians 5 17 anyone if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation God does a new work he puts the spirit in us gives us a new way of looking at life thinking about life living life a new way to live as you look at yourself how you live how you relate to people even enemies can you see evidence of the nature or character of your heavenly father in you there will not be perfect likeness in anyone but there should be some likeness and it should be growing developing over time and that certainly should include love even loving your enemies if there's no evidence of the love of

God in you there's no biblical basis for you to even think that you are a Christian that you are a child of God look at what it says in 1 John 4 whoever does not love does not know God because God is love so let me just ask you right here is God your heavenly father are you sure because you see how he has worked in you his spirits in you you're not perfect you're far from it but he is working in you shaping and molding you your character helping you to develop that Christ like character love not just for people like you but love for even your enemies you know if there's no signs in your life and that bothers you you think to yourself I don't see any evidence but I would like to be I want to be a child of God well admit to God that you're not if that's the case confess your sin change your mind about the way you've been living repent turn from it express sorrow to God over the way that you have sinned and dishonored him put your faith in

Jesus Christ understand that when he died on the cross he actually took your punishment paid the penalty for your sins call upon him now right now this moment to save you to be your savior your lord surrender your life to him now he can become your heavenly father you can be a child of God as you walk out here today if you came in not being but the final thought is as a Christian which most people in this room were professing Christians there should be evidence in our lives there should be fruit I want to ask you in specifically in relation to this message this morning do you love those that are hard to love are you asking God to help you not just to love in general but to love your enemies that's what he's called us to do let's pray together about it father show us now how we should respond so that we can leave here being and demonstrating that we are your children and in an attitude of prayer let's all just respond to the

Lord as we need to I'll be here at the front and be happy to pray with you during this time but the important thing is you listen to the Lord and obey him as he speaks to you