

The Kingdom-Driven Life

“Love Without Hooks”

I. The “Upside-Down” Kingdom

- Jesus’ famous sermon takes us beyond an Old Testament understanding of the Law.
- Six times He uses the formula:

“You have heard it said”...(then He quotes an OT law or precept)

“But I say to you”....(then He strengthens the “old” by extending the matter to the heart)

- Don’t kill? Not only that-don’t even speak ill of another!
 - Don’t commit adultery? Not only that-don’t lust in your heart!
 - Don’t swear to tell the truth? Not only that-let every word you say be true!
- Now, the *ultimate* “new” commandment...

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 in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same? And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matt 5:43-48 NASB

Theme Of Message

Loving our enemies is the ultimate expression of a Kingdom-Driven life.

- This unconditional, non-retaliatory love might be called “love without hooks”.
- I think we need to pray!

II. Love without Hooks

A. A New Kind of Love

1. The English language over-works the term “love”...we love God, we love our spouse and our children...but we also “love” baseball, hot dogs and apple pie. We “love” the beach or the mountains and we “love” to go to the movies.

2. The Greek language, however, has several words for “love”:
 - a. **“Phileo”** in Greek is translated “love” in English, but it refers to “brotherly” love, a familial, (non-sexual) love. (Philadelphia is the “city of brotherly love”).
 - b. **“Eros”** in Greek is translated “love” in English, but it refers to physical or sexual love. (English words “erotic” and “eroticism” come from this Greek term).
3. But when the Apostles wrote of God’s love, a new word was used...**“agape”**...and this is the word that is reserved for the “God-kind” of love; an unconditional (covenantal) love based on a **choice**...

The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 7:7-8 NKJV

4. This “God-kind” of love is expressed in the kindness of God toward those who are His enemies and those who hate Him.
 - a. The theological term for this is “common grace”, describing how the blessings of God in His providence are freely given to the wicked and the just, the righteous and the unrighteous, the friends of God as well as His enemies.
5. This “agape” love was “incarnated” (made flesh) in Jesus of Nazareth...God’s love motivated Him to send His Son to die for us.

**But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.**

Romans 5:8-10 NASB

6. Jesus once again confounds human reason and understanding by demonstrating how contrary is the Kingdom-driven life to that of the world!
7. This is the ultimate expression of love:
 - a. Not simply loving our friends, or those who are easy to love.*
 - b. Not loving on the basis of what WE get out of the relationship!
8. Human love always hinges, at least in some degree, to what we get out of it... There’s always a “hook” in human love... God’s love has been called, “without hooks”!

“(Jesus) knows that when love no longer has to wait on the performance of others... an immense transformation has taken place.”

Adolf Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthaus, 195

9. "Agape" love, the God-kind of love, is supernatural and only consistently practiced when God has taken the initiative to place it in our regenerated hearts!

"...the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us."

Romans 5:5 KJV

B. No Grading "Curve"

1. Jesus tells us to "be perfect"; the term does NOT mean "sinless perfection".
2. "Perfect" in Greek is "telios", which is a term describing the "end-purpose" of something; it carries the thought of "completion" or "wholeness".
3. Jesus tells us that to love our enemies and live non-retaliatory lifestyles is to "incarnate" God's love and to "fulfill" His purpose for us in the world.
 - a. According to this, there's no greater measure of authentic Christianity than not only forgiving our enemies, but seeking their best interest!
4. Here we have the ultimate model for discipleship.

"...this characterization of God, (who makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust), becomes the framework for discipleship...the character of God is the pattern for human emulation..."

Richard Hays, from "The Moral Vision of the New Testament"

5. We might say that when we practice love in this way, we have come to real maturity, completeness, "perfection", and are as near as being like God as we might possibly be!

Men adjust the mark and grade "on the curve"...but God never does!

"If we had not suffered a serious decline in our expectations (of what the Gospel is and what it ought to do),

we should not have accepted (what is passing for the Gospel these days..."

A. W. Tozer, God's Pursuit Of Man

6. The "measure" is God the Father, nothing short of being like *Him!*
7. If we take this passage seriously, we come face to face with the greatest enemy of our souls...accepting a substitute for the true faith!

C. 3 Scriptures for Self-Examination

1. What is the "real" Gospel?

**"For *our* gospel came not unto you in word only,
but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance;**

1 Thessalonians 1:5 KJV

- a. When Paul refers to “his” gospel, he implies there are other “versions”.
- b. Any presentation of the Good News lacking a “power” and “Holy Ghost” element can’t be the same on Paul preached!
- c. If there’s anything we ought to take away from Chapter Five in the Sermon on the Mount it would be that the whole thing makes no sense unless there’s supernatural power equipping us to live out what it says!

“Wherever the Word comes without power its essential content is misses...in divine truth there is an imperious (pressing) note...an urgency, a finality which will not be heard or felt except by the enabling of the Spirit”.

A.W. Tozer, God’s Pursuit of Man

2. What is the genuine evidence a person is “in Christ”? How might I know I belong to God?

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17 KJV

- a. Notice, God does not take what we present of ourselves to Him and fix it up or improve it...He creates a new person!
- b. The term “born again” implies a new birth of a new person.
- c. This is not “turning over a new leaf” or “getting religion” or “feeling better about ourselves spiritually”...this is a radical heart change, primarily of the *affections* and motivations, including a new ability to love and forgive others not there before!

“The way it works in experience is something like this: The believing (person) is suddenly overwhelmed by a powerful feeling that only God matters; and soon this works itself out in one’s mental life...judgments...and values.”

A.W. Tozer, God’s Pursuit of Man

d. The evidence of such a transformation is “old things” are passed away and we can “behold” or see how all things are become “new”.

3. It is possible to be called a “Christ-follower” or Christian Church and not actually be one.

"Write this letter to the...church in Sardis...

"I know all the things you do, and that you have a reputation for being alive—but you are dead.

Excerpt from Revelation 3:1 NLT

- a. These scriptures are not presented to frighten us with doubts about God and His promises...but they are given to us that we might examine our “Gospel”, our lives, and the authenticity of our profession!

Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine. Test yourselves. Surely you know that Jesus Christ is among you; if not, you have failed the test of genuine faith. As you test yourselves, I hope you will recognize that we have not failed the test of apostolic authority.

2 Corinthians 13:5-6 NLT

III. Conclusion of Section

A. Jesus and the Law (Matthew 5:17-48)

1. Chapter 5 begins with the Beatitudes and moves to six examples of how the KDL relates to the Old Testament law.
2. The sixth and final example is the “Big Tamale”, the one that encapsulates all the others, since the practice of unconditional love necessarily fulfills the other five.
3. To love others as the Father loves us is the ideal of discipleship...and God does not grade on the curve.
4. This, above all, demands a heart change so supernatural that we are left in humility and faith to trust God for such a change!
5. This is the surprising response God calls for that is true “salt” and “light” to a dying world...As we might say in Texas, it’s the “Big Tamale” of the Kingdom Driven Life!

*Personal Testimony here available on podcast: www.cccaustin.com

B. Homework

1. Identify an “enemy”.
2. Choose to love them as God loved you, even when you were His enemy.
3. Pray for them.
4. Where appropriate, go the extra mile or make reparation.