

Love>Pray>Bless

Matthew 5:43-48

OUTLINE:

- LOVE (our motive)
- PRAY (our power)
- BLESS (our mission)

QUESTIONS:

Q: The Pharisees are looking for ways to maintain their “self righteousness” by dumbing down God’s law to a standard they could more easily keep. Jesus says, ““You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” In what ways does this distort God’s Word?

“Grace is when you don’t get what you deserve (justice), but instead get what you don’t deserve---forgiveness, acceptance, and love (God’s favor).”

Q: Does anyone have a story of how your experience of God’s grace has freed you to forgive an enemy or someone who has hurt you?

“The degree to which we forgive those who have sinned against is a test of how much we actually believe the gospel”

Q: In Romans 12:14 the Apostle Paul writes, “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.” He calls us to bless our enemies and he contrasts blessing and cursing? What does it mean to curse someone and what does it mean to bless them (words/actions)?

Q: While acknowledging the reality that the issues are complex, the challenges are real, and the risks are many, how can we apply what we have learned from the Sermon on the Mount to the issues we face today regarding immigration and refugees in our day.

ADDITIONAL READING/PASSAGES**Exodus 23:4-5**

“If you meet your enemy's ox or his donkey going astray, you shall bring it back to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under its burden, you shall refrain from leaving him with it; you shall rescue it with him.”

Leviticus 19:33-34

“When a stranger sojourns with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. You shall treat the stranger who sojourns with you as the native among you, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.

Romans 12:14

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them.

Romans 12:20-21

To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Ephesians 2:13

“In Christ Jesus, you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Romans 5:8-10

but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by his blood, much more shall we be saved by him from the wrath of God. For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.

Scotty Smith (a prayer)

“Father, No matter the nation into which we were born, we were in the far away land of sin and death when you rescued us, and brought us into the gracious country of your heart. We were foreigners to your mercies, strangers to your grace, and rebels to your kingdom.”

“We are citizens of heaven and earth, with new-birth certificates and a calling to love others as you love us in Jesus. Though the issues are complex, the challenges are real, and the risks are many, free us to welcome foreigners, immigrants, and refugees, as you welcome us in the gospel. Increase our faith, enlarge our hearts, and supersize our love.”

Martin Luther King

“Why should we love our enemies? The first reason is fairly obvious. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction.”

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

-Phoenix Refugee Connections Training • March 18th from 1:00-4:30p. Whether you’ve been walking with your refugee friends for years or you’ve never met a refugee and are curious about the many nations in your community, this training is for you! Childcare will be available for birth through 5th grade at no cost. Register online at newvalleychurch.org/events