



Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Matthew 5.38-48 | May 13, 2018

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I. Follow Up from Last Week

In last week's study of Luke 12, we looked at two different mindsets of relating to our possessions and finances. How have you tried living with an abundance mindset this week? Where did you notice the mindset of scarcity creeping in?

II. Introduction

This week we continue our series Next Door as it is in Heaven. Just before Jesus' ascension into Heaven, he tells his disciples, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Matthew 28)

While we often remember the imperative "go", the emphasis is actually on "make." As such, Jesus was saying something more like "As you go, make disciples..." We, too, are to "make disciples" as we go about life in our neighborhoods! But to do so, we need to be disciples, as well!

III. Connecting with One Another

When have you been tempted to "get even"? If you did, did it work?

IV. Study the Text

a. Read Matthew 5.38-42.

The Old Testament law was given in an effort to limit judicial sentences to parity with the crime committed. In Jesus' day, however, it seems these passages were being quoted to justify "getting even."

In verse 39, a person is humiliated by being slapped with an unclean left hand or the back of the right hand (each a serious sign of disrespect). What does Jesus say to do? How would that change the situation?

In verse 40, a person is being sued for their clothes, but Jesus instructs them to hand over the second (and only other) article of clothing they had, in front of the judge. What would that prove (about the plaintiff)?

In verse 41, a Roman soldier requires a Jewish person's unpaid assistance. How should a follower of Jesus respond?

In verse 42, someone is trying to take financial advantage. What should a disciple of Jesus do?

Why do you think Jesus gives these countercultural instructions?

- b. Read Matthew 5.43.

The first half of Jesus' quotation is found in Leviticus 19.18. The second half, however – "hate your enemy" – is not a quote. Where do you think his audience "heard that said"?

Where do you hear people encouraging others to hate (or abhor, detest, or despise) a group or person?

When have you been tempted to hate (or abhor, detest, or despise) someone else?

- c. Read Matthew 5.44-45.

Does Jesus tell us to not have enemies? What did he say instead? What's the difference?

Who are your enemies?

- d. Why do you think Jesus commands his disciples to pray for their persecutors?
- e. While us city-dwellers might think of sun as good and rain bad, Jesus' first century listeners recognized each as a gift, since they were dependent on them for the flourishing of crops.

Such gifts are given to both righteous and unrighteous. If you were imaginatively paraphrasing this verse, what other opposing groups could you fill in? (think religiously, politically, culturally, generationally):

He causes his sun to rise on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_,  
and sends rain on \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

Go ahead, write in the empty spaces. How does it feel to affirm that God gives generously to your enemies?

How do these examples from nature help you love your enemies?

- f. Read Matthew 5.46-48.

Why is it not enough to only reciprocate love to those who love us?

What does Jesus think about his followers only interacting with other Christians? Why is it important to interact with others?

What could they teach us? What could we teach them? Why do we need both?

- g. Where could you apply Jesus' teachings in your neighborhood this week?

#### V. Pray

- a. Ask God to open your eyes to your enemies within your neighborhood and throughout the world,
- b. Thank Jesus for his example of loving those who insulted him, praying for those who hurt him, and dying in the place of humanity,
- c. Lift up the witness of Good Shepherd church in our community.