

# Love and the Real Christianity

Presented by Pastor Scott Walters on 02/24/19  
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Jesus said, "Love your enemies: bless and pray for your enemies. "Thank you very much, Jesus, for those wonderful words. I'm sure they sounded well and worked fine back there in Galilee, but we don't live back then and we don't live in Galilee. That doesn't seem to be the way to live right now.

If anything we are encouraged to outwit our enemies, outmaneuver our enemies, and pile on our enemies because they mean to do us harm. We are brought up to be strong in this world. Maybe we'll have to tell Jesus that we'll have to put "loving our enemies" on our long-term goals. Right now. Not so much.

I'm a little reluctant to preach on today's passage from Luke today because I was always struck by a preaching professor who said that the less times the word 'love' is used, the better the sermon.

There is a lot of talk about love these days. There always has been. If you were to look in Bartlett's Book of Quotations or a Bible Concordance, the word 'love' is among the longest entries.

But Jesus and the Golden Rule did not say, "feel about others as you would feel about yourself." Rather, "do unto others as you would have them do unto you." It's not so much about feeling or sentiment – It's about doing; it's about conscious effort. Love is effort that is intended for the benefit of the other person. How can we do that to our enemies?

Today, I want to share with you two concrete ways in which today you may love, or come to love, your enemies. My first suggestion is to love yourself. And you might ask yourself, "What does loving oneself have to do with loving your enemy?"

We all can understand that we might have an adversary, but few of us realize that we also have inside of ourselves an inner enemy. Paul Tournier wrote about this "inner enemy" who contradicts the outer self.

This is the one who thinks the thoughts that we do not want to acknowledge as being our own. This is the one, inside of us, who has feelings and urges that we dare not express openly. Because to do so would throw into jeopardy the whole role that we have imagined for ourselves. This inner adversary is the one we try to hide from others, out of fear that they will reject us. Or because we think we could not stand to face him or her.

Jesus said, "Love your enemy. Bless and pray for your enemy." Isn't this the way of wholeness, not only for ourselves individually, but for our nation and our world? For the outer enemies that we create of those who oppose us, are just projections of the un-faced self within us.

But facing those things inside of us are scary. If we can embrace the shadow side of us, then we are free to accept others, even our enemies.

My second suggestion is to love God—the author of all life and the author of your life. The scripture says that God is Love. God is that spark of life and love is presented to us in the scriptures as a loving parent, our Loving Mother, our Heavenly Father, whose arms are outstretched, beckoning to us as Jesus' arms were outstretched on the Cross, inviting the world – even his enemies to come and enter the grace and mercy and justice that is divine love.

Love of God. Love your neighbor as yourself. The trinita of love. Just like we celebrate in Alexander Anderson's Baptism this morning. God and Alexander (through mom and dad) and the congregation knowing that love means not just feelings but responsibilities – love that is expressed in daily concrete ways.

# Love and the Real Christianity

Wherever you begin in the process of love, the spirit will take you through this holy trinity. It's the opening up of the heart to the heart of God.

Each time I open the book of sermons I have by Martin Luther King, Jr., I am moved by his grace and intellect. These are words King preached on year before he preached one of his final sermons in the pulpit of Dexter Avenue Baptist Church. This was at the height of the Civil Rights Movement and at the height of the violence in his own community—

“To our most bitter opponents we say, we shall match your capacity to inflict suffering by our capacity to endure suffering. We shall meet your physical force with soul force. Do to us what you will, and we shall continue to love you. We cannot in all good conscience obey your unjust laws, because non-cooperation with evil is as much a moral obligation as is cooperation with good.”

“Throw us in jail. Be we shall still love you. Send your livid perpetrators of violence into our communities at the midnight hour, and beat us and leave us half-dead, but we shall still love you. But be ye assured that we will wear you down by our love and our capacity to suffer. One day we shall win our freedom, but not only for ourselves. We shall so appeal to your heart and conscience that we shall win you in the process. And thus our victory will be a double victory.”

Jesus said, “Love your enemies. Pray for and bless your enemies.” Maybe this week we can make those beautiful words just a little bit more concrete.

And the people said, “Amen!”