

GLENKIRK CHURCH



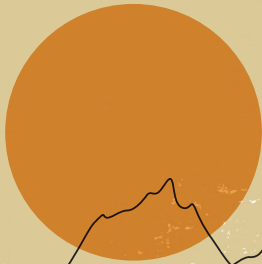
WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

The DEVO

SEPTEMBER 25 - 29, 2023

Re-Formed:

Sermon on the Mount



Sermon Series 9/3 - 11/26

MONDAY

Read **Matthew 5:38-39; Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21**

As we continue the Sermon on the Mount teaching series, this week's theme is "Re-Forming Our Affections."

It's important to remember who Jesus is speaking to even as we read the Sermon on the Mount with our Western eyes and interpretation. He is speaking to Jews. They indeed have heard it said, "Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth" (Exodus 21:24) because it is in the Torah, the books of the Law. "In Israel and other cultures, this principle [of retaliation] was enforced by a court and refers to legalized vengeance; personal vengeance was never accepted in the law of Moses, except as a concession for a relative's murder (Numbers 35:18-21)." (Craig Keener) So retaliation or revenge for a wrong or hurt done to me personally is not and has never been acceptable. However, that doesn't stop our knee-jerk reactions to want to hurt someone back in the same way or worse.

But Jesus wants to turn that teaching on its head and re-form their/our thinking. "But I tell you," Jesus says, "do not resist an evil person" (Matthew 5:39). What does that mean or look like? In Jesus' times in the ancient world, getting slapped on the right cheek was a horrible insult. A person could have been prosecuted for this in Jewish and Roman law.

Last year I felt like I had been “slapped on my right cheek” by a colleague at a public event where I work. I’m not perfect for sure, but I think I was so stunned by his words that I just stayed quiet while he went on raving. I’m not sure that I’d call myself a “fine wine,” but I’ve definitely matured over my years in life, so I did not respond. I immediately looked for an administrator but ended up having to call one.

This incident felt horrible, and because it was so publicly done, there was no way to contain the wildfire of gossip that occurred afterward. I had done nothing wrong in my eyes, but apparently this colleague felt I had. I feel that in my silence of not retaliating, I offered him my other cheek.

QUESTIONS

If you have had (or were to have) something like this happen to you, how did you (would you) handle it?

PRAYERS

For For His Children (FHC)

Pray for protection for the children, caregivers, and staff at For His Children—within the homes, as they travel to school and work, and over the cities where they live. Pray that no evil would come near them, that God would bring peace to Ecuador, and that the children have protection from rising gang violence.

TUESDAY

Read **Matthew 5:40-41**

Can you imagine owning only an inner and outer garment and someone stealing your outer garment (cloak)? Matthew 5:40 presents another aspect of the same temper of forbearance. This time the action is not in regard to a physical act of violence, but one of dealing with petty litigation that can mess with a person's peace. It's better to yield than insist on rights.

This kind of theft in Jesus' time would lead to legal recourse. "Although conditions in 1st century Palestine were not quite that bad, this verse could indicate divestiture of all one's possessions, even (hyperbolically) one's clothes, to avoid a legal dispute affecting only oneself." (Keener) Jesus gives this advice in verse 40 even though a person's legal recourse would be a sure thing. Even a creditor would not have been able to take a person's cloak because that might have been the only thing that he had to cover himself to keep warm at night.

Jesus talks about another way someone might force his or her will on another (v. 41). Again, in Jesus' time "Roman soldiers had the legal right to impress the labor ... of local residents." (Keener) Jesus probably raised a few eyebrows at this statement by telling them not to resist going the one mile but even showing them a loving service by going two miles. "The influence of Rome is shown by the use of the Latin word (slightly altered) for the *mille passuum*, the thousand paces which made up a Roman mile—about 142 yards short of an English statute mile." (Ellicott's Commentary)

The instruction is plain enough and the people listening, and now reading, would understand: Suffer any injury that can be borne for the sake of peace. Give your concerns to the Lord. Avoid disputing and striving. Our battle is not against flesh and blood.

Regarding my incident, I did not retaliate against this colleague. I didn't even want to talk about it with others. I complied with my administration by going through with a conflict resolution meeting and filed a complaint with the district. Then I let them handle it. I prayed for God's peace in my heart. My battle was not against flesh and blood.

QUESTIONS

How will you prepare your heart for the next injustice, small or big, that is done to you—for it will happen? Can you remember when you showed non-resistance and loving service?

PRAYERS

For For His Children (FHC)

Praise the Lord for the spiritual growth of the kids and staff. Please pray for Him to grant them wisdom, kindness, and the ability to understand His love and mercy so that they can lead by example with their faith and inspire others. Pray that God's presence will always lead and guide them.

WEDNESDAY

Read **Matthew 5:42**

“Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.” (Matthew 5:42)

This counsel from Jesus doesn't seem to belong in the same category as the preceding three, does it? We don't think of begging or borrowing as an injury, but more of a nuisance. It is good, however, to be in the habit of giving and showing love. But we do need to use wisdom in how and what we give to those who ask.

“It is seldom, perhaps never, good to give to a person who is able to work (2 Thessalonians 3:10). To give to such a person is to encourage laziness and to support the idle at the expense of the industrious. If such a one is indeed hungry, feed him; if he needs anything further, give him employment. If a widow, an orphan, a man of misfortune, or an infirmed man, lame or sick, is at your door, never send any of them away empty.” (Albert Barnes) It's just hard, if not impossible, to know where our money goes when we give to random people. I like to offer to buy them food or pay for their gas rather than give them cash.

This is true of a poor and needy friend who wishes to borrow. We are not to turn away from or deny him/her, but there needs to be some limitations that relate to the other duties we have in our lives. I think we can be very creative when it comes to giving to the needy or helping out a friend.

I've had a friend borrow from me and insist on paying me back with interest even though I told her that I did not want or expect that. I had to graciously accept her desire to do so. I've lent money to other friends not expecting to get paid back at all. In all cases, I must judge if I can lend the money without knowing if I'll be paid back.

The Lord has given me much. I ask for His wisdom in how to steward the money He provides for me. The most important thing we can do is pray for those in need.

QUESTIONS

What are some creative ways you have given to people in need who are asking for help?

PRAYERS

For For His Children (FHC)

Pray for guidance in carrying out the mission of caring for God's children who are vulnerable or orphaned. Pray that the FHC staff members stay focused on our heavenly Father and that He gives wisdom to FHC leadership in how to best serve hurting children. Our trust remains in His righteous hands!

THURSDAY

Read **Matthew 5:43-45; Leviticus 19:18**

Jesus has been extending, deepening, and spiritualizing Old Testament Law. His transforming touch invests in all old commandments with a new inwardness, sweep, and spirituality; and He gives a final supreme commandment of universal love. He refers to one of the two greatest commandments: *“Love your neighbor as yourself”* (Mark 12:31).

In Leviticus 19:18, God says, *“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”* But Jesus tells them that they have heard the *“hate your enemy”* (Matthew 5:43) part, too. It is not from Scripture but has been added on. So, Jesus comes back to the idea of not exacting revenge or *“an eye for an eye”* (Matthew 5:38), but love and pray for the ones who persecute you. We cannot hate others if we pray for them; we cannot pray for others if we hate them.

When I shared with a mentor about the incident that happened to me at school, the first thing she said to me was to pray for this colleague every time he comes to mind. I needed to hear that. So, I indeed started to do that. I know this was just as much for me as it was for him. I did not want to let a root of bitterness start to grow in my heart towards this man. So, I asked the Lord to soften my heart toward him and to bless him with whatever he needed.

As a believer, I am a child of God and called to show His love to others. How can I not demonstrate God's love to all: those who are my neighbors (easier to love) and those who persecute me (harder to love)? Remember Jesus' answer to the man who asked, "*Who is my neighbor?*" (Luke 10:25-37). Jesus told the parable of the good Samaritan. Everyone is my neighbor. I am without excuse. I must love my neighbor no matter who he or she is.

The Lord "*causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous*" (Matthew 5:45). He shows His mercy to all. How can I not do the same? In the Mosaic Law, Moses says we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Jesus says we are to love our brother *better* than ourselves.

QUESTIONS

How are you showing God's love to people who are hard to love?

PRAYERS

For For His Children (FHC)

Pray for the children awaiting international adoption. Pray for love, protection, and hope as they yearn for their forever family. May God's guiding hand bring them to the loving homes they deserve, and may He grant strength and patience to the families in the adoption process.

FRIDAY

Read **Matthew 5:46-48**

It's so easy to love the people you know and are comfortable with. Today's Scripture reading is a lesson to us in the church as we welcome visitors and/or push ourselves out of our comfort zones to get to know other members and attendees whom we don't know that well.

In Jesus' day, tax collectors were considered apostate, or having abandoned their religious belief in order to work for the Romans, collecting taxes from their own people. They would have been seen in the same category as thieves and adulterers. Jesus is saying in Matthew 5:46-48 that even these wretched people would love their benefactors. In loving those who love you, there is no evidence of superior principle—for even the worst of men will do this.

And if you only greet your own acquaintances, or countrymen, or relatives, or friends by wishing them a good day or by asking them how they're doing because you know they will return the greeting, "... what great matter was this ... when even the very Heathens, who had nothing but the light of nature to guide them, did the same?" (John Gill)

This brings us back to the fact that we are to be imitators of Jesus. We are to be continually transformed into His likeness. We are, after all, image bearers of God! Would Jesus not be greeting and getting

to know everyone in our congregation if He went to church with us? When I don't know people, I try really hard to ask them their names and get to know one thing about them. If I don't remember their names, I just humble myself and ask them to remind me.

Jesus says to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect. "The Aramaic word for 'perfect' can mean 'complete' or 'whole,' including the nuance of 'merciful' (Luke 6:36); in this context, it means fulfilling the requirements of Matthew 5:21-47." (Craig Keener)

We are to show love to all our neighbors as we love ourselves, show mercy to all our neighbors, show Jesus to all our neighbors.

QUESTIONS

How will you broaden your "neighborhood" to include those whom you may not know or who are a little more difficult to love?

PRAYERS

For For His Children (FHC)

Please join us in praying for three-year-old Sara* who was recently placed in the loving care of For His Children. She has experienced so much trauma and pain in her young life. We pray that she can experience God's love and healing for her body and soul.

(*Name has been changed to protect her privacy.)

Sources

- Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), p. 60-61.
- Charles John Ellicott, *Ellicott's Commentary for English Readers* (London: Cassel Publishing, 1896). See <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/ellicott/matthew/5.htm>.
- Albert Barnes, *Barnes' Notes on the Whole Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Classics, 1962, originally printed in 1834, publisher unknown). See <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/barnes/matthew/5.htm>.
- John Gill, *Exposition of the Entire Bible* (Originally printed from 1746-1763, publisher unknown). See <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/gill/matthew/5.htm>.

