

## Sermon on the Plain; “Love and Mercy”

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April 5/09

Introduction : In the remotest part of the Equadorian rain forest lives a group of people named the Huarani people.

- Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century every encounter with the Huarani had ended in death.
- From the conquistadors to the Jesuit missionaries to the gold and rubber hunters and in the 40s-50s it was oil companies.
- Known to kill oil company employees who ventured into their areas.
- Even known to lay in wait right outside their own quarters.

Their savagery and killing prowess would strike fear into the heart of everyone.

Became known as the Auca because of their reputation for killing and savagery. “Auca” which is a derogatory name means “naked savages”.

Enter 5 missionaries who felt led by God to reach and preach the gospel to the Huarani

-friendly contact established, camp set up, initially hopeful and then

-All 5 missionaries Brutally murdered.

-2 years later Rachel Saint, -Elizabeth Elliot and Nate's widow (after much prayer for the huarani) move in with them and a murderous tribe becomes a missionary tribe

How would you have responded? How would I respond?

How does Jesus say we are to respond?

When reading this passage we should try to remember who Jesus is speaking to . Phil mentioned last Sunday the Jesus was speaking to his disciples. So lets get the mental picture here.

- The night before (vs 12) we find that Jesus had gone to the mountain to pray, and spends the whole night praying to God.
- In the morning he calls his disciples to him and from among those he calls 12 of them whom he also named as apostles (vs13)
- After that he descends from the mountain with the 12 apostles and we read in (vs 17) that there is a great multitude of “his disciples and a great throng of people from all over Judea and Jerusalem” and even the coastal regions. There may have been thousands of people listening that day.

-Where ever Jesus went, he gathered a crowd; people wanting healing, believers, curious, skeptical, critics, Pharisees, scribes and everyone in between.

We learned last week Phil told us that he was preaching about the Kingdom of God

and that the Kingdom of God is that place or that realm where God reigns..

We also learned that He gave 4 “blessed are you” statements that define certain aspects of kingdom “life” and kingdom “people” and He also gave 4 “Woe to you” statements that define people who are not of the “Kingdom of God” Those who are not disciples. So we saw that there were two distinct groups of people. Those of the Kingdom of God and those not of the Kingdom of God.

Now we move into our passage for today.

Vs 27- Jesus “re-specifies” who he is talking to. In my NASB he says, “*But I say to you who hear*” He doesn't mean those who are within ear shot. Its not directed to people who simply have the ability to hear sound.

The Message puts it this way “*To you who are ready for truth*”

What Jesus is going to say next will be unbelievable, incomprehensible to some and even sinful and blasphemous to others. But to a certain number of people, people belonging to Gods kingdom, those people who let God reign... His words, although they will be a challenge, will be understood. I pray that God will grant us the wisdom and strength to put into action his words.

So he says to those who hear, to those who are ready for the truth

27) “*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you*”

28) “*Bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*”

Did you get that? Did you “hear” it? Are **you** ready for the truth?

*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,  
bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*

Let me just say that an audible gasp rose up from the crowd!

Do you remember when Jesus asked a young man what the greatest commandment was? And then the second greatest. The answer was “*love God and love your neighbor.*”

So everyone understood somewhat, that we are to love our neighbors But there was a traditional line of thinking ( and this was taught by many of the Pharisees and religious teachers of the day) that it was fine to hate your enemies. It was even a virtue. This was the normal accepted teaching... to hate your enemies. But now Jesus comes along, again, and turns tradition on its head.

Don't just love your neighbors, love your enemies. If anyone who knew how to shake up a crowd Jesus did!

Let me explain. Over centuries Gods true religion had been changed, morphed into what is called Judaism which was a mixture of Old Testament teachings and traditions that contained thousands of rules and regulations and codes to be followed. To the general public who believed in Judaism, their spiritual virtue was so tied to their obedience of these laws (their form of Judaism) that what Jesus had just told them to do was immoral, ungodly and offensive. Just imagine walking up to a Jew in Jerusalem today and tell them to love the suicide bomber who is planning to blow up a marketplace or place of worship.

And imagine saying something like that with hundreds, maybe thousands of people listening . That might be what the scene was like.

So he says “ Love your enemies.” He says to us today.  
“ Love your enemies! people of Oaklands!”

**How you may ask can we love our enemies?** How do we love that neighbor who has loud parties until 4am every weekend? How do we love the car thief who stole our car? How do we love the uncle who abused us when we were young? How do love the drunk driver that took the life of our child? How do we love our enemies?

Are we supposed to feel affection for them? Should we be getting all warm and fuzzy for our enemies. I don't know about most of you, but I am not built that way.

This love that Jesus says we should have is AGAPE love. We've talked about what that is before here at Oaklands, so let me just say that it is a godly love. It is a love of choice meaning it is a love we choose to have and give, Agape love is an action oriented love.

And because it is a love that is expressed in actions, Jesus tells us how to love our enemies. The noun is AGAPE but the verb is AGAPAO. Jesus tells us how to agapao our enemies, how to show this love; how to act it out.

He says in vs27- do good to those who hate you  
vs 28- bless your enemies, pray for them  
vs 29- turn the other cheek, put others before yourself.  
Vs 30- give freely, don't expect favors back for doing a favor

All of these actions go totally against our human nature but mark this well... these actions are perfectly in line with Gods nature so they should be perfectly in line with

people who claim to be Gods family or disciples of Christ.

This is where the rubber meets the road folks!

This way of loving is impossible for sinners. It is a supernatural love which goes way beyond what the sinner is capable of.

**Jesus describes how a sinner loves in verses 32 and 33.**

They love those who love them. They do good to those who do good to them. They lend to those who lend to them. That is the way they think. That is the way they are wired. There are limits on their capacity to love but because we are regenerated, because we have God the Holy Spirit living in us, there are no limits to our ability to love. The only limits are the ones that we chose to put on. This sacrificial love, this unconditional love is evidence that there has been a transformation, a divine transformation in our lives. It is the platform that makes the message believable.

**We are to love evangelisticly.**

It was this type of love that brought me to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. My mother was a confirmed Anglican so I was raised with a mother who told me often that God was real and that Jesus was real but just being told these things did very little in convincing me that I needed God as part of my life.

My parents kind of live by the rule that you do unto others what they were going to do unto you only you do it first. And my parents expected the worst to happen to them so they were determined to get the upper hand. It was kind of look out for yourself first theology.

So I lived my life like that. If I knew someone was going to steal from me, I would steal from them first. If they were going to slap me on the right cheek, I would hit them first.

But then I met people who live their lives according to Verses 27 and 28. Anne Marie's parents loved me when I was unlovable. They gave to me even when I had stolen from them. They prayed for me and blessed me when my actions were costing them in many ways.

They showed me what agape love was.

When I gave them nothing but reasons to hate me, they chose to love me and it was that love and their expressions of that unconditional and supernatural love that convinced me of Jesus Christ's love for me more than any thing else. More than any book or any sermon or any argument.

Had they been your average run of the mill unregenerate, normal human type people, they probably would have done whatever any other normal, self respecting couple would have done and **shot me dead** when Anne Marie showed up at their doorstep, pregnant, destitute and with a druggie boyfriend in military jail for trafficking.

But the real expression of their “loving your enemies” was when she showed up on the doorstep the **second** time, still pregnant, me still a druggie and having been thrown in jail again and instead of shooting me invited me for Christmas and lavished and I mean loaded me down with more gifts than any one else got. Talk about turning the other cheek. And I kid you not, they actually gave me a coat and shirts. How biblical is that!?! This love is an evangelistic love.

Easter is coming next weekend. Throughout history there has been no greater expression of that type of love the Jesus expressed. Jesus had His cloak taken and every other garment He had, He was slapped, whipped, abused and humiliated. Hung on a cross to die and mocked while He hung there. He was surrounded by his enemies and what did He do? He prayed for them. *“Father forgive them.”* When He could have wiped out every single one of his enemies with a single word He prayed for them and you and I are alive because of it. We have all at one time or another been Christ's enemy and He has interceded on our behalf. Where punishment was deserved He showed mercy.

*vs 31- “And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way.”*

This is what we call the golden rule. We all learned it as kids didn't we. “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

We want love and mercy shown to us don't we? This verse tells us that what we want for ourselves we are give to others. Don't treat sinners the way they are treating you. Don't even treat them the way they are treating each other. Treat them the way you want to be treated even though they may not be treating you that way.

This Golden Rule may **seem** to be a kind of a universal teaching. We've been given the impression that it is mentioned in almost all the world's religions. But this rule, This Golden Rule is a strictly Christian teaching. All other forms of it are negative. One resource that I used this week says this.

“The most famous Jewish rabbi Hillel said, “What is hateful to yourself do not do to someone else.” What **you** don't like, don't do to someone else. The book of Tobit in the Apocrypha says, “What you yourself hate, to no man do.” The Jewish scholars of Alexandria who translated the Septuagint advise, “As you wish that no evil befall you but to be a partaker of all good things, so you should act on the same principle toward

your subjects and offenders.” Don't do them evil so they won't do you evil. Don't hurt them so they won't hurt you, that's the idea. Even Confucius taught this same principle in a negative way. Confucius taught, “What you do not want done to yourself, do not do to others.” There are many other forms but you get the idea. In every case the emphasis is negative. Don't do to others what you don't want done to you. That's how the world works. But that thinking falls short of what Jesus would have us do. It falls short of God's standard. God's standard says that even though you may be doing me harm I'm going to love you in the way that I would like you to love me.”

In the next few verses 32-34 Jesus describes the attitude of the “world” or in my NASV He calls them “sinners.” People who are not part of God's Kingdom.

Those who are not His disciples act in this way....

They only love those who love them.

They only do good to those who do good to them.

They only lend to those to whom they expect to get something back in return. Something extra in return.

But if we follow vs 35... *“love your enemies and do good and lend, expecting nothing in return; and **your reward will be great.**”* What reward is that? Eternal reward? I think not. He already mentions in verse 23 that your reward is great in heaven because you are ostracized and ridiculed and insulted for Christ's sake.

I believe our reward is that we will be seen by the world as sons of “the Most High.” Because of our treatment toward sinners and the way we respond to them they will see us as being “very much like God.” This is the way that we manifest our Sonship.

*He wraps up this section by telling us in vs 36 to, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*

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In the earlier verses Jesus has told us to give what is not deserved.

Love, pray, bless, do good to those who mistreat us. Give that which is not deserved.

Now He adds to that by telling us not to give what is deserved.

Judgment and condemnation.

We have been recipients of God's love and God's mercy and He is telling us now to represent Him by acting toward others the way He has acted toward us. Are there people

who deserve punishment and judgment and condemnation for what they have done?

Sure there are but that is up to God to decide how and if and when those things will happen. We are to give, (verse 38) give of the love that has been given to us, give of the mercy that has been given to us

and Jesus says, ***“Give and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap.”***

Who will pour into our lap? ...

Those who have received this Kingdom love, this Kingdom mercy. The ones who we have treated the way we want to be treated. *“For” it says, “by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”*

This is heavy stuff...a weighty subject. This is a call to us that can't be accomplished without God's control over our lives and in our lives. May we be a people who are known for our love and mercy to those who would hate us and to those we might consider our enemies. May our enemies one day be called children of God.