

## Discovering God

### Part 4: What does it mean to love your enemy?

John 13:1-5 and Matthew 26:20-29

**Summary:** Jesus' radical example of loving our enemies, even those who betray us, shows us how to experience the transformative power of love over fear and hatred.

#### **Main Ideas:**

The voices around us have been desperately trying to convince us we have enemies all around us.

Loving our enemies seems like the stupidest, most unproductive thing in the world.

Jesus changed the world by insisting on loving his enemies.

Empathy opens the door to love.

Loving our enemies is a conscious choice to purposely do good for them.

Love pursues reconciliation over winning.

Jesus died to love his enemies.

We make excuses and don't even try loving our enemies because we're afraid.

When we are free of fear we are free to love our enemies.

When we love our enemies, we become a part of God's mission of reconciliation.

#### **Invitation:**

Read Romans 12:14-21

Pray, "Let me see my enemy(ies) through your eyes."

Find one way to purposely love an enemy this week.

#### **Discussion Questions:**

1. In what ways do you think our culture encourages us to see others as enemies?
2. What does empathy mean to you, and why might it be important in learning to love our enemies?
3. Read Romans 12:14-21 What fears come up when you think about loving your enemies? Why do you think we often resist this teaching?
4. What is one practical way you could love an "enemy" in your life this week?
5. How can your group pray with you this week?

---

#### **Transcript:**

**WE:** Right now... 1/3 of you are thrilled, 1/3 of you are angry/worried, and 1/3 of you knew you weren't going to be happy either way.

For months/years, we've been told by politicians/the media/celebrities/our great uncle on social media... that if we don't defeat "them" (the enemies of our country) everything is going to fall apart.

**The voices around us have been desperately trying to convince us we have enemies all around us.**

And what makes it even worse is...

We turn around and there are all of our “in our face” enemies we have to deal with every day too...

- Co-workers, Bosses, Teachers, Neighbors, Exes.
- Hardest for me... people who I feel have been disloyal to my friendship.

Often it's not just that you don't get along, some of them are actively out to get you or purposely hurt you or someone you love... whether it's with their actions or their votes.

So what do we do with these enemies?

- Obviously... We fight them... that's what they are for, that's what you do to an enemy... right?
- If we don't stand up we are weak! And we will lose.

Doesn't mean we get physical...

- Complain about them
- Post about them
- Subtly undermine them
- Make jokes at their expense (something I never do)
- And sometimes we have to argue, belittle, and defeat them.

But none of those really seem to work, do they?

- Just makes them dig in deeper and fight back even harder
- Cycle of trying to beat each other

Well, Jesus had another option... **Matthew 5:43-47**

- Love your enemies? That's so stupid.
- It's sweet and all... But it would never work in the real world.
- How do you win that way?
- Most of us wouldn't just come out and say this... but our conversations/our social media posts/the way we talk about people... show this is what we think

Why? B/c **Loving our enemies seems like the stupidest, most unproductive thing in the world.**

- But Jesus showed it's one of the most powerful things humans can do.

Not JF... don't worry you don't have to do this. Keep fighting and hating.

JF... You don't have a choice here. This is a direct command from your King... so now what?

What does it mean to love our enemies?

- And not just stick our heads in the sand and surround ourselves with people who agree with us?

Let's see how Jesus did it... and discover God's heart toward his enemies.

Jesus didn't just tell us to do love our enemies... he gave us an example to follow.

## Jesus changed the world by insisting on loving his enemies.

No better example than the way Jesus loved the man whose name has become synonymous with evil/betrayal/disloyalty...

One of Jesus' main 12 followers... the one who betrayed him to his death... Judas.

**GOD:** All four accounts of Jesus' life tell the story of Judas from different angles...

- And they all agree Judas didn't just accidentally let things slip and it caused Jesus to be arrested...

After spending 3 years with Jesus, listening to him teach, watching him heal, being in the inner circle of 12...

- Judas went out of his way to offer Jesus to his enemies, the religious leaders...
- And then led the soldiers to Jesus when he was arrested.

Can't imagine a worse betrayal... hits home w/ my loyalty issues.

And at Jesus' last meal before he was arrested he showed what it truly means to love your enemies...

**John 13:1-2** We don't know the exact reason Judas betrayed Jesus

- Could have been the money...
- Could have been disillusionment that Jesus wasn't fighting the Romans
- Whatever his motive was... Satan took advantage of Judas' feelings/weaknesses and prompted him to betray Jesus.

And Jesus knew all of this... and Jesus loved Judas anyway

B/c he also knew Judas' story.

- No matter how terrible his reasons were, no matter how terrible his actions were... Jesus understood how Judas got there.
- Knew he was being manipulated/controlled by sin.... He was a slave to sin
- Which gave Jesus empathy for him... compassion/understanding.

## Empathy opens the door to love.

- Doesn't mean what they are doing/did was right.
- Doesn't mean we agree

But, when we see others through God's eyes, even our enemies, we start to love them like he does.

**John 13:3-5** Such a profound section...

Jesus knew he was the King of Kings... Creator of the cosmos with all authority and power... SO... he washed his disciples' feet.

And don't let this slip by... Jesus knew Judas was actively in the process of betraying him... AND he purposely washed his hairy, calloused, stinky, dusty, donkey poop-covered feet.

Jesus looked at one of his worst enemies... and didn't just tolerate or ignore Judas and pat himself on the back for keeping his cool and not making a scene... he purposely chose to humbly serve Judas and do good for him.

**Loving our enemies is a conscious choice to purposely do good for them.**

It's a selfless love... it takes self out of the equation and says... You are created in the image of God. That makes you important. That makes your needs as important as mine. What do you need right now? Not, what do I think you need, what do you truly need right now?

It's a love that gives w/o asking for anything else in return.

Jesus washes all of their feet and then takes it even further...

- Look at the rest of the story from Matthew's perspective.

**Matt. 26:20-25**

Keeps it vague... middle eastern meal they were all dipping into the same bowl... could've meant any of them.

- Doesn't call out Judas, but lets him know that he knows.
- Doesn't bash him, doesn't expose him, doesn't throw him out...

Seems like Jesus is giving Judas a chance to come clean, change his mind, and change his role in the story.

- He knows he has to die... but Judas doesn't have to be a part of it.
- So he gives him a chance to step back and get perspective... gives Judas a chance to return.

**Love pursues reconciliation over winning**

But Judas doesn't take the offer...

- The other disciples called Jesus 'Lord' ("Is it I, Lord") while Judas used the lesser title Rabbi.

And if I were Jesus I would've said, "Seriously Judas?! You know exactly what you are about to do. You know I know exactly what you are about to do. I gave you a chance, but now it's time for some smiting of my holy smiter."

But Jesus is better than me. Instead, he invites Judas into an even deeper relationship...

**Matt. 26:26-29** This is the first communion... where Jesus gives us a representation the new agreement between God and humanity.

- Humans don't have to try to earn God's approval... b/c he's proven his love by coming to earth, dying, and rising again for us.

It represents the fulfillment of God's promise to humanity... that we will put an end to sin and death.

And Judas was there for the whole thing... Mind Blowing

Jesus handed Judas the bread and the cup saying, "This represents the death I'm about to die for all of you.

I'm dying so my enemies, including you, can be forgiven."

### Jesus died to love his enemies.

Sadly, even though Jesus gave him chance after chance, Judas still goes along with the plan.

- Leads soldiers to Jesus and betrays him with a kiss.

The next morning, Judas seems to come to his senses, is overcome with regret, repents, throws his payment at the feet of the religious leaders, goes out, and ends his own life.

A few hours later Jesus also died... Then on the 3rd day after his death, Jesus rose from the dead... defeating sin and death, proving he was God.

And b/c of his great love. B/c of his love for his enemies... WE are free and those who follow him are empowered and commanded to love their enemies the same way.

Now maybe you're thinking to yourself... That's a nice sentiment... It's a good story... a nice ideal.

But, come on, it doesn't work in the real world.

- Jesus is one thing, he's God... but if we love our enemies like this...
- We'll look weak and people will take advantage,
- We will always lose, and evil will always win.
- They might think we agree with them and they won't know they are wrong
- And if I love them and do good for them... how's that fair? They won't get what they deserve.

Those are some good excuses... but do you know where they come from... FEAR

### We make excuses and don't even try loving our enemies b/c we're afraid.

Jesus didn't have those fears... Do you know why?

- We kind of moved past it quickly.
- Go back to **John 13:3**

Jesus knew the Father had given him all authority. Knew who he was... Didn't need to fear his enemy/betrayer

- He knew he was in and had all control
- He knew that true and perfect justice would be done in God's perfect way and timing.

And we don't have to fear loving our neighbor if we trust that Jesus really is who he said he is and will do what he said he will do.

We can trust his perfect justice, timing, and sovereignty.

This is the key for every JF... When we are free of fear we are free to love our enemies.

**YOU:** So right now who is your Judas? Who is your enemy?

Maybe they are actively seeking your harm. Maybe they have hurt you or someone you love?

- Neighbor? Ex?
- In law?
- Co-worker/Boss?
- Betrayal by a friend?
- Maybe it's just a faceless Trump supporter/Kamala supporter?

MLK: Love is the only creative, redemptive, transforming power in the universe

Do you want your enemies to go away... love them and transform them into your friends.

Invitation:

- Read Romans 12:14-21 (what this looks like in action)
- And pray, "Let me see my enemy(ies) through your eyes."
- Find one way to purposely love an enemy this week.

Whether they accept it or not.

- You are only responsible for your part.
- Tell yourself, "I'm just gonna love you even harder!"
- Right now... Maybe the best way to love them is to pray for them.

And don't forget to ask yourself... Who have you been a Judas to?

- Ask forgiveness, accept God's forgiveness, and start actively loving.

**WE:** So even if the politicians are right and ½ of our neighbors are our enemies purposely seeking to destroy everything we hold dear... do you know what that means for a JF?

- It means we have a lot of amazing opportunities to practice loving our enemies.

In a divided world, we have an unprecedented opportunity...

What if instead of adding to the anger, the hate, the darkness...

- We, the followers of the only true King, were a bright beacon of love and forgiveness?

Our King has called us to love our enemies, just as he loved us.

- We don't have to fear looking weak, being taken advantage of, or losing.
- Trust the one who has overcome all things.
- Love is not weak; love is powerful.
- Let's take one step this week to love our enemies, and let God handle the rest...

When we love our enemies, we become a part of God's mission of reconciliation.