

**Luke 6:27-31**

27 “But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you. 29 If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

What is the hardest thing you ever had to do? If you think about that question and how to answer it, what would your answer be? When I first came across this particular Scripture, it stuck with me. I read it over and over again and thought “Wow! This is tough! I don’t think I can do that.” It became my favorite scripture. We know from Passion Week that Jesus lived by this lesson that he taught. Now if someone were to ask me “What is the hardest thing to do?” The answer is to emulate the persona of Christ.

The first point that Jesus makes is one of engaging the listener by stating “you who hear me.” He is talking to a large audience of those that can hear him speak not everyone will listen. So, his sermon is addressed to those that are willing to actively pay attention to the lesson. The first concept that Jesus addressed here is love. He elevates the value of love to the highest realm possible. It is easy to love someone that will love you back. It is much harder to love someone that obviously does not love you back; where love is not reciprocated, they tolerate your presence but ignore you the rest of the time. Jesus steps beyond that group towards a more difficult group of people. To love your enemies is the hardest act of love to follow. However, that is exactly what Jesus did and we are followers of Christ. We are not just Sunday morning worshipers; we are to emulate the personality of Christ. This means we are required to love our enemies. This takes sincere and serious reflection and inner soul searching of the self and heart.

Jesus doesn’t stop there; he expands upon his lesson by requiring action on the part of the listener. Those that are listening to him are to do something nice. This is not just a lesson on doing good, but a lesson on taking goodness to the highest level. Do something good for those who hate you is typically not something on our daily to do lists. For most of us it is not even a goal for daily living to do something good for those that like us, much less those that hate us. We might make a New Year’s resolution to do something good for someone once in a while. But the promise gets broken as badly as dieting resolutions. The lesson from Jesus on doing good stretches way beyond human comfort levels into the realm of divine approval. To do good to someone that hates you is a recipe for improved relationships and peace. It is also a therapy for bitterness that ends up soothing the inner soul. The next time you hear someone complain about someone else, advise that person to “do something good for them.” It is hard to do! However, when you reach a level of spiritual development where you can do that, then you are entering into a realm of oneness with Christ. You have already taken on the title of Christ by calling yourself a Christian, now taken on the persona of Christ and be one.

Jesus hits hard with one hard lesson followed by a harder lesson. When he tells you to “bless those who curse you,” this is blatant aggression directed toward you. This is not just someone that hates you, this is someone that hates you and verbally expresses that hatred. According to Jesus, you are required to respond in the direct opposite. Most

people respond to anger with anger. But the lesson from Jesus teaches us that you respond according to who you are. You can go through life treating some people like they deserve respect. If you do so, you treat some people nice but not everyone. When you treat others like you are a Christian then you are nice to everyone, including the jerks, mean, rude, selfish, and obnoxious.

Jesus then elevates the lesson to the highest degree of escalation from someone cursing you to someone that actually physically assaults you. When someone hits you, do not escalate the conflict further. Jesus teaches us to have a positive impact on the world around us. We know this verse because we have heard it often. However, what we do not remember is how this point of spiritual maturity develops in his lesson from a perspective of love to a point of embracing the persona of Christ. Everyone can hear but not everyone will listen and very few will obey. Most people will not turn the other cheek. Some will fail to do so and promise to the next time. However, when you make an honest effort to take on the persona of Christ then following these difficult lessons are not so hard to do.

I think about the hardest thing I ever had to do physically was boot camp. Probably the hardest thing for me emotionally was being overseas during Christmas. From an intellectual stand point getting college degree while working full time was the hardest thing to do. As a pastor the hardest thing for me is ministering to the cases of trauma, suicides, and accidents. But in daily living, I think for most of us, if not all of us, the hardest thing to do is to follow these tough lessons from Jesus. We get bombarded in society by rude, selfish, and obnoxious people. We get victimized by greed and callous attitudes of those who hunger to be first and have more so that you can be last and have less. We are to hear Jesus, not just be present, but to listen, learn from Jesus, and apply the lessons in our daily lives. We are to love the unlovable. We are to do something nice to people that hate us. We are to treat others not according to who they are but according to who we are as Christians. Reaching into the realm of divine approval is the goal that we all should try to achieve. With that as your motive of operation then following hard lessons from Jesus become natural instead of hard. The ultimate guide to living a happy life falls in the realm of emulating the persona of Christ.