

**Go Another Mile
Matthew 5:38-42**

May 26, 2019

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; 40 and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; 41 and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. 42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

Today we continue Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and, it may seem that the more Jesus speaks the harder it is to live by what he teaches. This is the most powerful sermon ever given and it is a close parallel to the "Sermon on the Plain" in the Gospel of Luke. Last week (Matthew 5:21-24) we were instructed to let go of anger, not to insult anyone, or call anyone a fool. Plus we learned that we must also offer reconciliation. In fact, the Lord places a high priority on reconciliation.

Today we learn even more hard lessons. I think probably each one of us could give a testimony on a personal experience where we have struggled with following each one of these commandments. We all have failed; all of us have had anger, and have insulted someone, or have called someone a fool. All of us have failed, in one way or another, at reconciliation. We all have desired vengeance, failed to give a little extra when it was needed, ignored a beggar, or refused to even lend something. We could all give a testimony on any one of these very hard lessons to follow. But they are lessons for all of us. That's because we all encounter them multiple times, on regular basis, throughout our lives. I have to remind myself "I am a Christian; a follower of the teachings of Christ."

Why does Jesus give lessons that are so hard to follow? Jesus delivers a doctrine of faith which has instructions on how to treat others. I call them hard lessons because they are hard to follow. As people, we are controlled by selfish desire and our own wants. We humans tend to follow our own individualistic doctrine of faith. We humans believe what we want to believe, and follow whichever doctrine suits us. But Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets, and to instruct us in the way of true righteousness. So, if you are really a follower of Jesus (which is what we call ourselves as Christians) then you will follow the teachings of Jesus. So, to illustrate his doctrine of faith Jesus gives practical examples to live by; turn the other cheek, give your cloak, go another mile, give to all who ask, and lend without refusing. Jesus' doctrine of faith is basic unselfish temperament.

We live in a society that is ruled by money and power. The ethic of this world is "do to others before they do to you." If they do something bad to you then your response is measured by the degree of the offense. Jesus brings into the world of power dynamics lessons that teach do not retaliate and do not seek vengeance. Instead, exercise restraint out of love. The love that Jesus teaches and exercises is love like God gives to us. How do we live out the teachings of Jesus in contemporary society? By understanding we have received greater love. This is love that is greater than any offense. This is the love of God and it has already given. When we recognize the extent of God's grace that has already been given to us then we can exercise restraint.

When your doctrine of faith is the teaching and action of Jesus (by the way, the actions of Jesus match perfectly with the teachings of Jesus), when your doctrine of faith is the model of Jesus, then you have a brand new attitude. You are ruled by love, appreciation, a new law, and a new way of living. There is a greater righteousness - moral behavior expected of the followers of Christ. Referring to this section of Scripture the commentaries call it antitheses because it

contradicts conventional expectations. Jesus teaches us that God condemns anger and a failure to forgive because it goes against the will of God. So, we are commanded by Jesus to take the righteous path of life where you find true happiness as a spiritual well being engulfs you. True happiness is found in the spiritual realm of Jesus.

In the way of Jesus there will be no violence, no need to stockpile weapons, no need to lock doors, no need to protect your possessions. If the way of Jesus you will not need to lock up belongings because you want to share your belongings. Lawyers, judges, and suing people will be obsolete. No one will resist a neighbor because you do not need to.

This is the way of the kingdom of heaven. If someone does something bad to you the Christian response is to consider how do I respond with only that which is good? How do I build up the other person? How do I represent Christ? The idea is not to be a victim. The idea is to be a human being like Jesus. Love and bless everyone even those who do you wrong. This world would not be a world of power dynamics. This world would be ruled by love. No one would hesitate to give. The vast resources are shared and given out of love. There would be no need for shelters because no one would be homeless. There would be no need to feed the hungry because there would not be any hunger. Hateful words and hurting words would not exist. Every walk of life would be met with compassion

Yes, the commandments of Jesus are hard to follow when you are ruled by the world. But when you realize the extent of God's grace, the fact that love of a greater power has been given to you. Then carry appreciation for that gift of love with you and in you. Be ruled by that love like Jesus is ruled by that love. Find a realm of reality that is spiritual, uplifting, and ruled by divine love, then going that extra mile is easy.