

NOON BIBLE STUDY: MATTHEW 5 (PART 8)

MATTHEW 5:43-48

YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IS WAS SAID: *LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR & HATE YOUR ENEMY*

LEVITICUS 19:13-18

"HATE YOUR ENEMY" IS NOT A COMMAND FROM THE BIBLE BUT A COMMONLY ACCEPTED PRACTICE OF HUMANITY. GOD HATES EVIL AND ALSO PUNISHES EVILDOERS BUT NOWHERE DOES GOD COMMAND HIS PEOPLE TO "HATE THEIR ENEMY". THIS IS AN INSTANCE WHERE JESUS IS ACKNOWLEDGING THIS IS WHAT MOST PEOPLE SAY AND BELIEVE.

BUT I SAY TO YOU: *LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, PRAY FOR THOSE WHO PERSECUTE YOU.*

WHAT & WHY?

1 - THIS REVEALS US AS SONS (AND DAUGHTERS) OF OUR HEAVENLY FATHER (V. 45)

LOVE AND DOING GOOD TO THOSE WHO ARE YOUR ENEMIES IS ROOTED IN GOD'S CHARACTER. JESUS REMINDS HIS DISCIPLES THAT GOD LOVES THE RIGHTEOUS AND THE UNRIGHTEOUS. HOW DO WE KNOW GOD LOVES BOTH GROUPS? BECAUSE HE CARES FOR BOTH GROUPS IN VERY OBVIOUS WAYS - THE SUN AND THE RAIN.

THIS GIVES US SOME INSIGHT INTO WHAT IT MEANS TO "LOVE" ONE'S ENEMIES. GOD IS NOT JUST FEELING AN EMOTION TOWARDS THOSE WHO HATE HIM, HE IS DOING ACTS OF LOVE AND GOOD TOWARDS THEM - SUN AND RAIN. WE NEED TO MODEL THIS OURSELVES - TO LOVE ONE'S ENEMIES DOESN'T JUST MEAN REFRAINING FROM DOING THEM HARM BUT DOING THEM GOOD AS WELL. (AT THE VERY LEAST WE PRAY FOR THEM).

2 - RAISING THE BAR ON JUST DOING WHAT "EVERYONE" DOES

TAX COLLECTORS & GENTILES - THESE TWO TYPES OF PEOPLE WERE CONSIDERED THE MOST VILE OF THE CULTURE OF JESUS' DAY. TAX COLLECTORS WERE JEWISH CITIZENS CONSIDERED TRAITORS TO THE NATION BECAUSE OF THEIR ALIGNMENT WITH THE ROMAN EMPIRE. THEY WERE CONTRACTED BY THE ROMANS TO COLLECT TAXES FROM THEIR OWN PEOPLE AND WOULD OFTEN OVERCHARGE TO RECEIVE THEIR OWN PAYMENT, LEADING TO WEALTH GAINED BY THEIR NEIGHBORS' MONEY. GENTILES, ALSO KNOWN AS PAGANS OR NON-JEWISH PEOPLE, WERE CONSIDERED UNCLEAN BY THE JEWISH NATION BECAUSE OF THEIR UNCLEANNESS AND IMMORALITY. THEY WERE PEOPLE WHO DID NOT BELIEVE IN THE GOD OF ISRAEL NOR FOLLOW HIS LAWS.

IF WE ONLY LOVE THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE US (AKA NEIGHBORS BUT NOT ENEMIES), WE'RE NOT LISTENING TO JESUS. LOVE FOR ONE'S ENEMIES IS A DISTINCTIVE OF THE FOLLOWERS OF JESUS AND THE PEOPLE OF GOD. FOR DISCIPLES OF JESUS, OUR LOVE FOR OTHERS ISN'T BASED ON THEIR LOVE FOR US BUT BASED ON GOD'S LOVE FOR US - AND MORE SPECIFICALLY GOD'S OWN CHARACTER. WE ARE BEING CALLED BY JESUS NOT TO BE OR DO "THE SAME" AS EVERYONE ELSE. FOR THE AUDIENCE OF JESUS, THE FACT THAT HE CITES THAT THE TAX COLLECTORS AND GENTILES LOVE THOSE WHO LOVE THEM WOULD HAVE BEEN VERY CONFRONTING.

PERFECTION?!!!

THE GREEK WORD TRANSLATED "PERFECT" IS τέλειος (TELEIOS) WHICH MEANS PERFECT IN THE SENSE OF COMPLETE OR FULL. IT IS USED 20X IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND IS TRANSLATED PERFECT, COMPLETE AND MATURE. OBVIOUSLY WE ARE FLAWED AND IMPERFECT, BUT THE CALL OF JESUS HERE IS THAT WE ENDEAVOR TO HAVE LIVES THAT ARE SHAPED TO FULLY BE LIKE GOD AND HIS CHARACTER. BY LOVING NEIGHBOR AND ENEMY WE'RE PERFECT/COMPLETE/MATURE IN OUR ACTIONS OF LOVE. THERE ISN'T GOING TO BE A PERSON WE WON'T SHOW LOVE TO. BY PRAYING FOR NEIGHBOR AND ENEMY WE'RE PERFECT/COMPLETE/MATURE IN OUR CARE FOR OTHERS BEFORE GOD. THIS IS JESUS' PARALLEL STATEMENT TO ONE THAT IS OFTEN REPEATED BY GOD IN THE OLD TESTAMENT TO HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL.

EXODUS 19:5-6 - 'NOW THEN, IF YOU WILL INDEED OBEY MY VOICE AND KEEP MY COVENANT, THEN YOU SHALL BE MY OWN POSSESSION AMONG ALL THE PEOPLES, FOR ALL THE EARTH IS MINE; 6 AND YOU SHALL BE TO ME A KINGDOM OF PRIESTS AND A HOLY NATION.' THESE ARE THE WORDS THAT YOU SHALL SPEAK TO THE SONS OF ISRAEL."

LEVITICUS 11:44A - FOR I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. CONSECRATE YOURSELVES THEREFORE, AND BE HOLY, FOR I AM HOLY.

LEVITICUS 19:2 - "SPEAK TO ALL THE CONGREGATION OF THE SONS OF ISRAEL AND SAY TO THEM, YOU SHALL BE HOLY, FOR I THE LORD YOUR GOD AM HOLY.

LEVITICUS 20:7, 26 - YOU SHALL CONSECRATE YOURSELVES THEREFORE AND BE HOLY, FOR I AM THE LORD YOUR GOD. **26** - THUS YOU ARE TO BE HOLY TO ME, FOR I THE LORD AM HOLY; AND I HAVE SET YOU APART FROM THE PEOPLES TO BE MINE.

DEUTERONOMY 18:13 - "YOU SHALL BE BLAMELESS BEFORE THE LORD YOUR GOD.

JESUS IS LOOKING AT THE NEW COMMUNITY HE'S CALLING AND COMMANDING THE SAME FROM US. WE ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD AND SALT OF THE EARTH - THERE SHOULD BE A GOD-LIKE-NESS (AKA GODLINESS) TO OUR WORDS AND DEEDS.

ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT VERSES OF THIS SECTION WAS MATTHEW 5:20

MATTHEW 5:20 - "FOR I SAY TO YOU THAT UNLESS YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS SURPASSES THAT OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YOU WILL NOT ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

WE DISCUSSED HOW THE CROWDS WOULD HAVE BEEN SHOCKED BY THIS STATEMENT AT FIRST BECAUSE THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES WERE CONSIDERED THE MOST RIGHTEOUS PEOPLE AROUND! YET, JESUS IS SHOWING THAT TO BE RIGHTEOUS AND PURE, ONE MUST NOT SIMPLY FOCUS ON THE EXTERNAL BEHAVIORS OF A PERSON, BUT START AT THE HEART AND ADDRESS THE CORE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, SIN AND HOLINESS. THROUGH CHAPTER 5 WE HAVE DISCOVERED HOW WE DO THAT. YOU WON'T MURDER IF YOU DON'T HATE. YOU WON'T COMMIT ADULTERY IF YOU DON'T LUST. YOU WON'T BEAR FALSE WITNESS IF YOU JUST SAY YES AND NO. IF YOU TAKE YOUR MARRIAGE VOW SERIOUSLY BEFORE GOD YOU WON'T GET DIVORCED. YOU WILL END THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE AND VENGEANCE IF YOU GO THE EXTRA MILE RATHER THAN SEEK YOUR OWN WAY. AND YOU BE LIKE GOD NOT BECAUSE OF YOUR FANCY RELIGIOUS GARMENTS AND LONG ELABORATE PRAYERS - BUT BY LOVING EVEN YOUR ENEMIES.

THIS IS THE AMAZING AND BEAUTIFUL WAY OF JESUS - A WAY THAT IS HARD, BUT NEVER DESIGNED TO BE LIVED APART FROM A RELATIONSHIP WITH AND EMPOWERMENT BY OUR LORD HIMSELF. CONSISTENTLY REVISITING THE WORDS OF JESUS WILL HELP ANCHOR US IN A TURBULENT TIMES WHERE THE CULTURE IS CAUSING US TO DRIFT AND AT TIMES OUR OWN DESIRES CAN PULL US FROM THIS GOOD AND NARROW WAY THAT LEADS TO LIFE.