

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT – MATTHEW 5-7

Love Your Enemies, Part 2: A New Father, a New Kind of Love

Matthew 5:43-48 | Faith Church of Linden

By Daniel Patz on September 27, 2026

INTRODUCTION

We turn to the last verse of chapter 5, verse 28, which ends a section in the great Sermon on the Mount. In just a minute we will start at verse 43, but I want you to think on these words:

"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

How can I be? It rings with the words we find in 1 Peter and in Leviticus: "You shall be holy, for I am holy," says the Lord God Almighty (1 Peter 1:16; Leviticus 19:2). Can this be true for us? Is this just a hypothetical, and we fall on our knees and say, "I can't, I need grace instead"? What does this word perfect mean and is it really for me and you?

We come this morning to the sixth and final example of a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees (v. 20). This is a righteousness that obeys God's law inside and out. It is obedience from the heart and in action: motive and movement. It is doing the right thing for the right reason, caring about the intent of the law and not just the bare minimum. It is one who loves the Lawgiver and loves his law, trusts him, and seeks to do all that he says, so that others would see and give glory to our Father in heaven.

This righteousness is not the vehicle to getting saved but the fruit of Christ's salvation and the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. No one

enters the Kingdom without this righteousness, but it isn't something we do to earn the kingdom. It is fruit. This righteousness is founded on a righteousness first given by Christ on the cross, and it is now lived out with the help of his Spirit as we grow in working out our salvation.

So we come to this last passage of the chapter, and it is so high and lofty, especially when we feel the intensity, the ferocity, and the agony of real enemies. Let's read verses 43-48.

"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:43-48 ESV)

Here's my aim this morning. Last week, in the first part of loving your enemies, we saw that no retaliation is allowed, but grace to others. This week I want us to see that this grace, which comes in the form of loving our enemies, is founded on our relationship with our Father.

THE AIM to see that: A new Father makes a new kind of love.

Last week I told you this sermon would be called "Overcoming Evil with Good," from Romans 12:21. That is still here. It is the positive side of this command: not only do we not take revenge, we bless and pray for and love our enemies. But I have titled it after the aim, because the reason we can overcome evil with good is that we have a

new Father. And that new Father changes the way we live: how we think about marriage, commitments, desires, truth, and of course those called our enemies.

In October of 2024 I preached a sermon called "Love Your Enemies". There I talked about the reality of enemies, the demand of Jesus to love them, and six reasons for loving them. I re-listened to it this week, and I refer you to it. I'm not going to rehash it, but some of it will come through this morning.

THE TEXT

Notice the **distortion** of the Pharisees: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'" Nowhere does Scripture say that. Leviticus 19:18 says we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Perhaps they reasoned that because we are to love God and hate what he hates, and because God will ultimately bring vengeance on his unrepentant enemies (as the psalms, which are glorious and fully true, declare), we should hate our enemies, or those outside our camp. That's far from the truth. Even Exodus 23:4 gives instructions of mercy toward an enemy.

And so Jesus says, for the sixth time, "But I say to you": love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. We will have enemies. Jesus forecast that at the end of the Beatitudes: we will be persecuted for righteousness, and we should rejoice and be glad, for great is our reward in heaven (vv. 10-12). We are not hiding from the world but shining as lights in it. And until Christ returns, those who truly reflect our Father will have people who cannot handle it, because the light repels them in their evil works, and they hide, or they try to hurt in anger and revolt against God himself.

Two years ago I talked about big enemies and little enemies. There are the big enemies that martyrs have, like those who hid Jews in World War II, those who have laid down their lives on the mission field, and believers in parts of Muslim Africa who are murdered with their families for the name of Christ. That is not our experience. But we all have little enemies: people who are rude, selfish, betraying, narcissistic, manipulative, and hateful. They sit in chairs in this room, they are most likely in your family, and they are often at work. This passage tells us to love them and pray for them.

We need to hear this passage – especially the truth about our Father. We need it to throttle us in the best possible way, so that we are gripped by the truth of God's love. And if you do not know that love personally, be warned, even terrified, that you would be separated from it unless you repent and receive Christ.

1. A DIFFERENT KIND OF LOVE (vv. 44, 46-47)

Jesus makes it very clear that this love is different from what the world does. If you love those who love you, that's what everybody else does. That's what the tax collectors do. They love because they are loved back or because they get something from it. The tax collectors were the wicked mafia, but legal. They exploited and betrayed their own people as they negotiated for their own gain with the oppressive rule of Rome. They were the sinners of sinners. And yet they love or care for those that care for them.

But Christians love their enemies. Of course they love their neighbors as themselves, but Jesus is describing a very different kind of love, a love that, as we will see in the next point, comes from above. I would say this love includes at least four things.

1) This love refuses revenge.

We saw that last week. We do not seek our own vengeance but entrust ourselves to a God who judges justly (1 Peter 2:23).

2) This love releases the debt.

This love forgives those who sin against us. We will see this in the Lord's Prayer, where we forgive as the Father has forgiven us (Matthew 6:12). Mark 11:25 says that when we are praying and remember that someone has sinned against us, we should forgive. We are to forgive seventy- seven times (Matthew 18:22).

3) This love overcomes evil with good.

This love seeks the good of the enemy. In Luke 6, Jesus expands this: bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, do not demand back what is taken, do to others as you would have them do to you, lend expecting nothing in return, and be merciful as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:27-36). This is what Paul means: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:21).

4) This love prays for the enemy.

To pray for our enemies is to wish them well. It is to cry out to God for them to be saved, to receive his mercy and be changed. It is to ask God to show them what we would want him to show us in our worst moments. It is to surrender our will and our rights and long for those who treat us poorly to be blessed.

It is a strange thing that Christians can do this, and we are to be known for it. The world should see Christians praying for, blessing, forgiving, and not retaliating against their great enemies and their small ones. When Jim Elliot and the others were speared to death in Ecuador by the very tribe they had come to reach, Elisabeth Elliot and

Rachel Saint went and brought the gospel to the people who killed them. Where does this love come from? How could Corrie ten Boom spend her life bringing healing and restoration to former concentration camp guards who were responsible for her sister's death and years of horrid torture and humiliation?

How can we be the kind of people who forgive the little things, and then the really big things?

2. A DIFFERENT KIND OF PEOPLE (v. 45)

We have a different love because we are a different kind of people. We are different because we have a new Father. We used to be of our father the devil, a liar and a murderer (John 8:44). We were like the first Adam, who disbelieved God, and we were by nature children of wrath like the rest of mankind (Ephesians 2:3).

But the Sermon on the Mount assumes a whole different reality for those who follow Christ. We have a Father in heaven who always sees us and cares for us, a Father who sent Jesus to rescue us. And when we show enemy-love, we reflect him as he really is. Romans 5:10 makes it clear that while we were enemies, God loved us and gave us his Son.

We are different and it pertains to our past, present, and future.

1) A different past: we were enemies, and our Father loved us.

Time after time we are told to forgive and love and show mercy because we have received forgiveness and mercy (Ephesians 4:32). Our past is the testimony of a peacemaking God who rescues rebels and makes them his sons. That's why the Beatitudes say, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God" (v. 9).

It is God's will that **we never get over our past in this sense**: we never forget that we were the chief of sinners and he showed us grace (1 Timothy 1:15). We are to grow in our sense of poverty of spirit and of the riches given to us in Christ. There is no enemy we are called to love who has treated us worse than we have treated the Creator of the universe. We despised him and rebelled against him until he intervened, sending his Son to die for us and giving us the faith without which we would never have turned to him. Our salvation is all of him. Everything we have has been given. That should give us mercy and pity toward our enemies.

2) A different present: we have our Father's nature and our Father's nurture.

We have a relationship with our Father, and his DNA is in us. He is working in us now and has given us his Spirit. Paul says in Ephesians 5:1 to be imitators of God as beloved children. So we take up the family occupation of love. Just as our Father loves enemies and makes them family, we extend his love to others.

1 John 3:9 (ESV): "No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God."

1 John 4:7: "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God."

And we are not only given his nature; we are nurtured by him.

1 John 3:1: "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are."

Jesus says he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. Stop and think about that.

Our Father is the Sovereign One over the sun and the rain and every element in the universe, and he is our Father. He loves us and shows mercy to us all the time. We will see in this sermon that he always watches, knows what we need before we ask (Matthew 6:8), and gives good things to those who ask him (Matthew 7:11).

May these Sundays in God's Word be a way he nurtures you and shows you how much you are loved. He does this in Christ Jesus, our Good Shepherd, through whom the Father's love comes to us. All the promises of God are Yes in him (2 Corinthians 1:20). Notice that verse 48 does not say "as God is perfect," but "as your heavenly Father is perfect." Because he is our Father, we have a new nature and we are nurtured, and that makes a foundational difference in how we love.

3) A different future: our Father sees, and our Father rewards.

Our Father will keep us to the end, and he rewards his own. This passage jabs at the Pharisees, who thought themselves outstandingly righteous but were just like the Gentiles who greet only their own brothers. What reward will they have? The implication is that we will have one, and we will see that clearly in chapter 6 (Matthew 6:4).

Those who pursue God-pleasing lives, with his help and in dependence on him, will be rewarded. They are not doing it for the praise of man but because they desire God, and they would never have desired him unless their Father had given them a new nature and shown them his love. So we live looking to a glorious inheritance. But let me be clear: the righteousness and love we show is never something we manufacture and take credit for. It is his work in us. When he rewards us, we bow before him, knowing all along it was not I, but Christ in me (Galatians 2:20).

CONCLUSION: A WHOLE-HEARTED PEOPLE LIKE OUR FATHER (v. 48)

Now we come back to verse 48, where we started.

"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48)

I do not believe verse 48 is only the end of the paragraph that begins in verse 43. It reaches back to verse 17. This "therefore" gathers up all of this righteousness: righteousness that overcomes sinful anger and seeks reconciliation, that fights with God's help against lust, that honors the sanctity of the marriage vows, that tells the truth and keeps its word, that shows grace and not retaliation, and that loves even its enemies. "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

"Perfect" is not the best translation. It would be better to say, "You shall be whole, as your heavenly Father is whole." By that I mean complete, inside and out: a person of integrity in mind, heart, and body, who cares as much about motives and loves as about mere outward actions. It is the same-on-the-inside-as-the-outside person. This is not sinless perfection this side of eternity, but a wholehearted person oriented toward God. And it is not manufactured in the flesh. It is the result of salvation, in which we have been given a new heart in the new covenant. This is what we saw in verse 8: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

So I call you to this: be whole as your Father is whole. True believers, you have a Father who has given you a new nature, so you have the heredity to be this way, and he nurtures you. Feed upon him and be nurtured by him all the more. Never forget, and only grow in understanding, how Jesus has saved you. Let every Sunday be a time

when your heart leaps for joy as you hear the gospel preached, and as we take it upon our lips at Communion every third week. And as you meet with your life group and read your Bible and daily learn to pray and meditate on the Word. Let it be fuel, feeding you with the nurturing care of your Father, who leads you to love and live as he lives.

Maybe He Isn't Your Father: And if you are here this morning and have not come to the end of yourself, realize that you can never attain to God's holiness. You must fall before him and receive the free gift of salvation Jesus offers. Jesus died on the cross for sins, for that is what he came for. He rose again, he is at the right hand of the Father, he is truly the Son of God, and he will someday come to judge. If you plead with him for mercy, he will make you, an enemy, his friend and family. You will become a child of God, and he will be your Father. He will give you a new nature, he will nurture you, and he will begin to make you whole as he is whole.

This is what Jesus was talking about back in chapter 5, verse 3, where we began with the Beatitudes. Oh, the blessedness! Here is what flourishing looks like: to be made like our heavenly Father, whole and complete, in this world. Yes, it means persecution, taking up our cross, loving our enemies, forgoing our rights, and giving mercy to people who don't deserve it. And this is what we were gloriously made for.

A new Father makes a new kind of love.

Let's pray.