



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 12.03.2023

“Love your Enemies”

Preacher

Pastor Nathan Bean

Scripture

“17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,”[b] says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

“If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.”[c]

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

Romans 12:17-21

Thought

We, as Christians, are called to live differently from the rest of the world. This kind of different living is more than a one-off action, but rather a continual repetition of action and resolve to live in a way that contrasts to our default human nature.

This extends to how we treat our enemies. Jesus doesn’t just say for us to tolerate our enemies or to put up with them - rather, he instructs us to love them. This is not an emotion, rather it’s based on action. Treat your enemy with the action of love.



The world watches how we treat people who do wrong to us, and see the way we respond to those whom we disagree and differ from.

A modern-day challenge is that we often don't label people our 'enemies'. We're far too sophisticated for that - rather, we have people who we simply don't like, people who we label as less intelligent than us, write-offs, wrong, ill-informed or downright moronic. Yet the fact is that by definition, they are our enemies, and Jesus calls us to love them. To "Agape" them, which is to show love in a way that is not based on their merit to deserve it.

Loving our enemies means handing over control to God and trusting that He will determine the outcome. This is not passivity, rather it's a healthy, life-giving confrontation to seek restoration of a relationship. Not in a vindictive way, but in a truly releasing sense where we leave the outcome to God, and trust our control to Him. We trust that God is the great referee, that He sees the heart, and we don't keep taking back control. Otherwise we risk falling into the temptation of feeling superior to others. Fooling ourselves into thinking we would never act like them or do something as low as them - yet the hard truth is, given the right circumstances, we probably would.

Ultimately, Christ calls us to reflect what He has already done for us. It's not easy, but it starts with realising that all have sinned and fall short. While we were still His enemies, Christ died for us. He is kind to the ungrateful (that's us), and he's forgiving of the undeserving (that's also us), and it's from this place that we can truly release control of our need for resolve.

As Humans, we are bound together in brokenness, united in our fallen nature and redeemed only by the grace and blood of Jesus. Christ calls us to release the hurt back to the Lord, to do good, and to understand that there is grace for all, grace for us and grace for those who hurt us if only we release it into the everlasting arms of the Father. May we truly lay down arms and go forth, showing actions of love to the world around us, and loving others as Christ has loved us.



Discussion Points

1. Is there a balance between loving our enemies and not allowing ourselves (or others) to be misused or abused?
2. How did Jesus show love to those who persecuted him?
3. How do we apply this to those who do evil to us, or those who we strongly disagree with?

Personal application + Prayer

Jesus,

You personified love in action while I was far from you. Thank you for your undeserved kindness, your unmerited grace towards me. Grant me the heart and the understanding to reflect this radical love and grace to others, even those who hurt me. Father, I release unto You the areas of my heart that have held onto control for retribution or resolve. Teach me to trust in Your perfect nature, Your ultimate sovereignty, Your everlasting grace for me and everyone in my world. May I truly be a vessel of your loving kindness for all.

Amen