

## “Loving Like Jesus”

– Luke 6:27-36

by **Pastor Tim Dodson**  
at **JF Believers Church**  
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Luke 6: 27-36 *"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 "bless those*

*who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. 29 "To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. 30 "Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. 31 "And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. 32 "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33 "And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 "And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. 35 "But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. 36 "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.*

**Love.** Such an interesting subject matter in light of the week that has just passed for me. Certainly I am left often wondering if humanity really has the capacity to love or frankly even really understand what such looks like in a real and practical manifest. I, myself, have in the past gotten into trouble for loving too little and certainly been pained many times for loving too much, if that is possible. Maybe what that is, is loving the wrong way...I don't know that I fully grasp such. I have suffered for thinking that another or others think and understand love as I do, and when one day that is manifested as not being the case, then I am left to return to the chalk board to rethink and rewrite my equations.

We all know that scripture is full of references to love. We know that God Himself is referred to as literally *being* love...which certainly changes the playing field, though I don't know if it ultimately clarifies for most of us. However such would tell us our search for understanding here can only be discovered therefore through understanding more of God and His nature. And because God is so contrary to the secular worldview and culture that we live in, we have to at the same time abandon our societies definitions, and reject even the modern religious highbred of ideas about love. A cursory look around will evidence that our lack of understanding the person of Jehovah God inevitably goes hand in hand with confusion concerning love...how to express it, and how to receive it. The apostle John in his letters has much to say about the issue of love and how critical the presence of such is in the lives of born again individuals...and says if it is not, then you are in fact *not* a born again individual at all. It's not like we within the faith community are without information, direction, and instruction concerning this issue, so why do we fail so often and so dramatically?

Love is a lot of different things in our culture. For many it is a feeling...the 'buzz' of an emotional connection. I believe that that 'emotional connection' is one of the most quickly and powerfully addictive elements known to mankind, for which we will be willing to throw away everyone we know, everything we are, everything we are called to be, even everything we have in order to gain or sustain that "high." Ironically, it has been that 'need' that by far leads as the most destructive issue that I have ever witnessed in all the years of my ministry. To get and keep it, there is no price too high.

For others love is merely an arrangement, a 'negotiated partnership of mutual benefits and essential needs.' For these, love is essentially a contract. A bilateral agreement designed to both meet a need and offer security. Such can be voluntary, or even necessitated by circumstances. But it serves to fill a purpose and eases the natural pains and loneliness of this fallen world.

There is "common love." The love for family. Love for friends. Love of a good movie, your cat, Cosetta's pizza, or a long Harley ride. All of which one loves until something happens and we no longer love it. This love is obviously contingent upon what we get out of it. Marriages are supposedly a famous place to find this illusive element, yet it is no secret that marriages can and often do proceed without love being in the mix, or with some sort of adulterated version that is the custom designed for the parties involved.

Mostly it seems, that across the board the common factor is this: *as long as the contract works for the parties involved, the game is on, and when it does not, we're done.* It seems that what we call love in our culture is generally managed by performance. You know, "...love is demonstrated by what it does for me." "If you really love me, you would do this for me." "As long as you do this for me, I am in love..."

The world is full of examples of arranged love, emotional driven love, or the pop-culture love of Hollywood and TV sitcoms. But the love Jesus expresses to us and calls us to 'pass on' are none of the things described above. Jesus denounces our modern culture's version of love. It is clear that to possess true love requires both an understanding of what it is to be loved by God as well as how God desires us to love in light of his initiation.

The directive that Jesus herein lays out is poignant and intensely clear. The only way to avoid its call and the ramifications of its obedience is to hide. To sweep this passage under the rug and stay away from Luke 6 as much as possible! "**Love your enemies.**" While the meaning is overtly transparent here to anyone simply reading the text, still the questions will be asked by both those that are lost in the search for its deeper meaning as well as those who loath the ramifications of acknowledging the definition: "*what exactly is love?*" and "*who exactly is my enemy?*"

The surface handling of this message is far from what we will find if we plumb its depths. "**Love** your enemies, do **good** to those who hate you, **bless** those who curse you..." That's all fine and well, but once again what IS the love that is spoken of here? What IS the "good" that we are to do, and what IS this blessing we are to bestow? Our versions? The world's versions? Hollywood's? Is this the "pass it on" that our culture attempts to promote? Just exactly what is Jesus saying here? It certainly doesn't count if we deliver pizza when what was ordered was Chinese and claim "well it all *food*...so what does it matter?"

I know some believers who live to at least attempt to practice a Christ-defined love. They pour their lives and hearts into those around them and even into those who desire to hurt them. They seek the best for others and protect them like they would their own children. They keep the door open to a 'return of the prodigal' and invest in every way to the life success of those around them. But make no mistake...the reality is, these folks bleed a lot. Those who love in this way and to that degree, dearly pay for the practice of such a style of love.

Jesus sights some examples. The one who "slaps you"...we would interpret such as meaning more than a physical action but rather an act of personal rejection and a rejection wrapped in insult and tied up with disrespect. The manifest of love in this situation, we are told, is to "turn the other cheek." In other words, to stand and continue in such a fashion as to quite possibly offer the perpetrator a chance to do it again. Our natural tendency is of course to protect ourselves...to cover and defend. But one cannot love if he is not present. Adulation can be conducted from afar, but love seems to demand personal presence and involvement.

***"To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also..."*** Really? Couldn't that have the potential to turn into a beating? I am careful herein not to paint a picture of overt passivism. Using God and Christ as our templates, we must step back and ask "why?" Not in the respect of questioning the wisdom of such a directive...we don't get the freedom and latitude to do that...**He** is God, we are not. But to ask why in the respect of "what is the objective?" What is the outcome, the result that is sought by such an action?

The objective cannot be to merely to avoid my personal response that could upset or deter the offending person. It cannot be so hollow as to merely serve to allow the offender comfort or free course to inflict hurt and pain on those around him. If this was what Christ meant, then why would he not simply leave the Pharisees alone, or worse, accommodate their actions for the sake of their calm and comfort? Where then did comments like "you are a bunch of snakes....white-washed graves...you hypocrites...children of the devil, etc." come from? One might be inclined to say that such was not very nice things to say and is hardly love manifested! How do we rectify this quandary?

If we again step back and see this through the lens of Christ, this is not a call to be a doormat for the sake of some kind of Gandhi-like passive resignation. Through that lens we can gather that it *is* a call to be a doormat if that is what is best for the other person. If that is the best way to express a love, the good, the *blessing* that nurtures the other person. But if doing so is in fact a poison and is ultimately destructive to that person, how is that love? How is letting someone go around and indiscriminately slap everyone an example of loving? (for the slapper or the slapped?) Do you let your children go around and slap everyone? Would anyone think that was a good love manifest toward your children? But should we then kick the three-year-old out of the house because he smacked another kid who took his toy? One cannot see this subject in light of the surface handling of this passage alone, and then swing to the other side when scripture presents God allowing or even causing events that manifested in pain or even death and then call *that* the whole of the picture of love either! Our doctrine must embrace the whole of scripture and the whole of the nature of God.

Jesus did not excuse the heart and priorities of the rich young ruler in Luke 18 out of some sort of overt passivity or to express what could only then be seen as not love but comfort...a 'hospice comfort.' For there is no love unless there is a heart that desires the best for another and the willingness to help that person find their way to that high road place. Such is the action of true parental love. God love is perfect parental love...the desire to "raise us up in the way that we should go."

Verse 31 tells us clearly that “...as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.” That doesn’t mean “well, I would like everyone to give me large sums of money so I should walk down the street and give out large sums of money too.” It means, I want grace, and so I give grace. I want a second chance, and so I give a second chance. I want compassion... understanding...respect for my efforts even if such fails, and patience as I grow. Therefore I must be willing to give all those things as freely as I desire to receive them.

Jesus did endure a lot of being worked over and taken advantage of by those who were spiritual infants or had not yet matured to a point of understanding. Those who chased Jesus around seeking their own good...they no doubt would have said they “loved” Jesus, and they were repeatedly given food and healings and rescues. Many also in that crowd would have had little attachment to Christ or His greater vision, but they still received all the good stuff that He gave. But these folks held no position, they were not by anyone’s design set in place as mature examples of God and his nature and ways. They had not voluntarily taken the mantle of leadership, nor did they speak to lead and advise. They yet lacked the knowledge of the nature of God.

God allowed the dislocation of the hip of Jacob as Jacob tried to wrestle God and His direction. He struck Saul blind, gave Miriam leprosy, and had the earth open up and swallow some people who rebelled against Him. And how could we even begin to explain the flood in this context? Jesus made no attempt that we know of to rescue Judas and He kicked Peter’s butt on more than one occasion. But if you look at the bigger picture, everyone involved in such scenarios *knew better*. How often these situations were a “slap to God’s face” but God did not “turn the other cheek.” He often *did* turn the other cheek and granted mercy and grace to people that certainly did not deserve it. But in these other many accounts, He factually slapped them back. Because they wanted to be a leader of men, a teacher, a guide...whatever. Because they wanted to saddle up to Jesus and disobeyed, rebelled, got prideful, wouldn’t listen, etc etc. Because doing so was the best manifest of love. Why? Because “to him that much is given, much is required.” The great preacher A.W. Tozer once said “*It is doubtful whether God can bless a man greatly until He has hurt him deeply.*”

God’s love for me has involved patient nurturing, gracious 2<sup>nd</sup> chances, and merciful encouraging. It has involved direction, teaching, communication, example and experience. It has also involved spanking, loss of privilege, blunt and often painful correction, and icky medicine that I preferred not to take. It was and is all, by His own description, love. And it is all the way I am to love in response. My love...if it is Christ love, can never be contingent upon reciprocation. I cannot love only those who love me or reciprocate towards me in a positive manner. That is not *other* love but rather a factual “self-love.” Romans 5:8 says “...*God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*” God loved us *before* we love Him, and further, even if we don’t!

We who seek to love as Jesus loved must “Love our enemies *as Jesus loved His*, do good to those who hate us *as Jesus did for those who hated Him*, and bless those who curse us *as Jesus blessed those who cursed Him.*” And always, *always* pray for those who spitefully use us. But love is never ever a “one size fits all” grab bag gift that fits every occasion. One must in every occasion attempt to *think* like Christ...*react* like Christ, and deal with other’s like Christ would. And if God IS love, then to do so IS love. However, that takes discernment and Holy Spirit indwelling. Will we make mistakes? Oh yes. But if we go it alone, then our love will not be His...no matter what it may look like. To *love like Jesus* is to *live like Jesus*...

*My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue,  
but in deed and in truth. 1Jn 3:18*

*Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another;  
love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous... 1Pe 3:8*