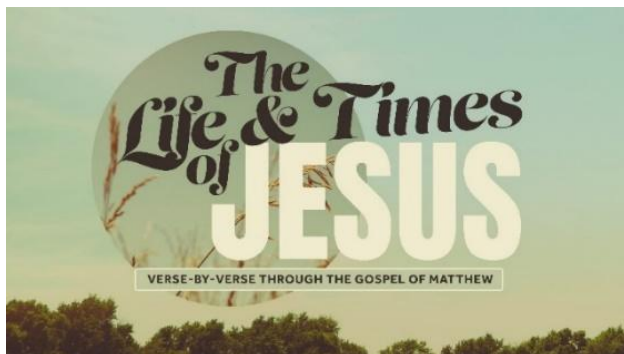


## FELLOWSHIP NOTES ~ SUNDAY, July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2025



### Part 6: “Kingdom Righteousness” (Part 3)

Matthew 5:43-48

This morning we’re wrapping up this section of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount that we’re calling “Kingdom Righteousness”. In this section Jesus has described what it looks like practically to live as citizens of His kingdom.

Jesus said that Kingdom righteousness includes...

1. Guarding your heart against hatred - if you hate someone in your heart and wish they were dead, God says to Him you’re guilty of murder.
2. Protecting your heart and mind from lust – if you commit adultery with someone in your heart and mind, God says to Him, you’re guilty of adultery
3. Maintaining Gods’ standard for marriage – God never created marriage to end in divorce. To divorce your spouse is sin unless one of the spouses has been sexual immoral with someone else.

4. Being truthful in everything – Don't be deceptive, do what you say you're going to do. Let your yes mean yes, and your no mean no. Kingdom citizens are people of truth.

And finally, last Sunday we learned that kingdom righteousness includes...

### **5. Refusing to retaliate but instead blessing others in return**

Citizens of Jesus' kingdom aren't to be the kind of people who retaliate against someone else for an injustice done against them – even when they have the right to.

And Jesus gives several examples of non-retaliation...

1. Don't retaliate against an attack on your personal dignity
2. Don't retaliate if someone tries to attack you through the legal system
3. Don't retaliate if someone tries to take advantage of your freedom
4. Don't retaliate if someone tries to take advantage of your possessions and property

While Jesus is pretty clear on this point, at the same time there are still some unanswered questions that seem to hang out there that come to our minds.

So before we move on, let me try to address some of these, by identifying what Jesus ISN'T teaching here...

**(Slide) 1.) Jesus isn't teaching that we should be willing to be a "doormat" for everyone who wants to take advantage of us**

Jesus' call for kingdom righteousness here doesn't mean that He wants us as Christians to allow ourselves to be abused or taken advantage of by everyone around us.

His point is that if we're going to glorify God and be His reflection of righteousness to the world, we need to have pure hearts and be as accommodating as we can to those around us who don't know Christ as Savior.

Jesus doesn't expect us to put ourselves in places of danger or to just allow ourselves to suffer injustices of every kind. Rather, His emphasis is that we NOT respond to others when we are mistreated the way the world responds to actions of mistreatment, by retaliating.

Our first response should be one of kindness and forgiveness. Choosing to forgive is a sign of strength and wisdom. Getting even is a sign of weakness and foolishness.

**(Slide)**

***"A person's wisdom yields patience; and his virtue is to overlook an offense."***

**Proverbs 19:11**

When was the last time someone offended you in some way? How did you respond? God says the way he wants us to respond is by overlooking the offenses of others. In other words, just let it go.

Has someone in our church offended you in some way – and maybe they don't even know it? Are you holding on to that offense in your mind and heart? Godly wisdom says to be patient and just let it go. Forgive them and move on.

In Matthew 18, Jesus set the standard for the length and the breadth of our forgiveness...

*(On slide)*

***“Then Peter approached him and asked, ‘Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? As many as seven times? ‘I tell you, not as many as seven,’ Jesus replied, ‘but seventy times seven.’”***

**Matthew 18:21-22**

Jesus' point here is that there should be no limit to our forgiveness of others.

Again, this sets us apart from the world, whose standard of forgiveness is limited, while Christ's standard of forgiveness is unlimited and it's HIS standard that we should offer toward others because He offered that to us!

Second,

**(Slide) 2.) Jesus isn't teaching that we should take no stand against evil at all**

Jesus and the apostles opposed evil with every means and resource available to them, and we should to. For example, he stood up to the moneychangers in the temple courts multiple times.

God clearly teaches us in Romans 13 and other places that we should uphold the law, and take a stand for what is right and oppose those who would break the law.

To not restrain evil, and to fail to protect the innocent and the vulnerable is NOT what Jesus was insinuating when he tells us here to not retaliate when we are wronged.

We have to remember that the context here in Jesus' sermon reflects our personal dealings with people who have evil intent against us, and He commands us to not retaliate against them when they personally attack us.

Third,

**(Slide) 3.) Jesus isn't teaching that the possessions and resources He provides for us should all be given away to others whenever they ask**

Whatever God has given to you, for the meeting of your needs, you have the right to keep it and use it as you see fit as long as it glorifies God. Jesus isn't saying here that you have to give away to others what He has given you and live a life of poverty.

(But what about the Rich Young Ruler? Jesus told him to sell all his possessions, give them to poor, and follow him. Jesus used this as a test for this young man to reveal the true condition of his heart. This wasn't meant as a command for all followers of Christ.)

When Jesus says to us here in verse 42 to “Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you”...

He’s telling us that as citizens of his kingdom, it would be pleasing to the Lord if we placed our God-given rights of the management of the resources

He’s given us on the altar of obedience to Christ along with those resources. Let God have control of what He’s given us and trust Him by doing what He tells us to do with them.

Afterall, what we have doesn’t ultimately belong to us. It came from God, everything we have still belongs to God, and to hold it with clenched fists when right in front of us is a person with some kind of need that God has sent our way to meet...

Well, an attitude like that and an unwillingness to open our hands and be generous to others, doesn’t reflect the kingdom righteousness God wants us to have. It doesn’t reflect the generous character of Christ who gave His all for us.

On the other hand, Jesus doesn’t require us to be generous toward people who make foolish requests of us. If someone asks you for some money so they can go buy some more liquor and get drunk again, that’s a foolish request and one we shouldn’t respond to it.

At the same time, we should ask God to help us identify ways we could help meet the felt needs of that person in some way instead of just immediately turning people like that way.

Chances are, God brought that person to our attention for a reason and a purpose. Surely He will also give us the insight and the wisdom to not necessarily give them what they ask for, but to perhaps give them something they haven't asked for, and to give it with the love of Jesus.

Now, let's move on to the last section here in chapter 5 and this is the 6<sup>th</sup> and final example of kingdom righteousness that Jesus contrasts with the righteousness of the Jewish leaders of His day and calls all citizens of His kingdom to pursue...

**(Slide) 6. Not just loving your neighbors, but also loving your enemies – Matt. 5:43-48**

Remember, with each example of kingdom righteousness Jesus identifies, He takes the Old Testament standard God set in the Law and highlights it.

Then He identifies the standard of the religious leaders of His day which was a twisted version of God's Law, and He exposes their inaccuracy of God's standard and then finally He hits home how the standard should be applied in our lives as citizens of His kingdom of righteousness.

So here's the Old Testament standard in regard to loving your neighbor...

**(Slide)**

***“Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.”***

**Leviticus 19:18**

God taught His people the Jews to instead of taking revenge against a wrongdoing of a neighbor, to refuse to take revenge or even hold a grudge against their neighbor.

In fact, they were to go out of their way to love their neighbor in return. And to do it because God said to and because that is the way God treated them. He wanted His people to be like Him. Love was to be shown toward others in tangible, practical ways.

Let me show you an example of this that God gave to His people...

**(Slide)**

***“If you see your brother Israelite’s ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it; make sure you return it to your brother. Do the same for his donkey, his garment, or anything your brother has lost, and you have found. You must not ignore it. If you see your brother’s donkey or ox fallen down on the road, do not ignore it; help him lift it up.”***

**Deuteronomy 22:1,3-4**

Doesn’t that sound like a right neighborly thing to do? And it was! It was huge. Animals were everything in their agrarian society. They used donkeys and oxen for lots of things especially plowing their fields.



In our day it would be like saying, “If you see your neighbors’ \$500,000 John Deer tractor sitting on the side of the road because someone stole it and left it abandoned on the side of the road...

Don’t just let it sit there. Get it back to your neighborhood. It’s valuable to him. He can’t plow his fields without it. It’s his livelihood. He needs it. His family won’t eat if he doesn’t have it.

But God even took it a step further. Let’s say you have a neighbor and he’s not friendly to you. In fact, he’s downright rude and mean and spiteful to you and no matter what you do, he still won’t change.

He lets his cattle graze on your land. He steals your water rights making it hard to provide water for your animals.

He never helps you no matter how desperate you may be. He steals things from you and covers it up so there’s no proof to bring it to the authorities. Here’s how God taught His people to treat neighbors and other people like that...

**(Slide)**

***“If you come across your enemy’s stray ox or donkey (field dress them and serve them for dinner – it’s what he gets for treating you wrong! :), you must return it to him. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you lying helpless under its load, and you want to refrain from helping it, you must help with it.”***

**Exodus 23:4-5**

What was God's standard for treating your enemy? The same as it was and is for treating your neighbor: with love. In spite of how they treat you, God doesn't want us to treat our enemies the way they treat us, but instead to treat them with love.

And by the way, the context here isn't referring to war-time enemies, though there may be times when this can be applied. The context, again, is personal relationships.

Do people who mistreat us deserve to be treated with dignity based on how they treat us? No! Is it hard to do? Absolutely! But this is the standard God has always set for His people both under the Covenant of the Old Testament and in the kingdom of righteousness that Jesus established...

Love your neighbor and love your enemy alike. But the Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day had again twisted God's standard. They taught people to love the people they got along with, and to HATE their enemy....

Which is exactly what they did. They hated Gentiles and they hated sinners – people who lived apart from God's laws. And they changed the standard of love. Look again at verse 43... "You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor..." Wait, what? What's wrong that... Love your neighbor?

That's what the religious leaders taught, but it's incomplete and it changes the whole meaning. Again, here's what the law said...

**(Slide)**

***“Do not take revenge or bear a grudge against members of your community but love your neighbor as yourself; I am the Lord.”***

**Leviticus 19:18**

They left out “as yourself”. They didn’t want to love their neighbors like they loved themselves. That was way too much love to pour out on others they didn’t like and even hates.

They loved themselves more than they loved anything or anyone else, and there was no way they were going to love others with that kind of love, especially fellow Jews who they considered sinners. So, they simply left it out of their teaching.

But they also perverted God’s law by adding something else to it: they taught it this way – vs. 43, “Love your neighbor and HATE your enemy.”

They actually saw it as a righteous act to hate their enemies – which for them was especially Gentiles. The Jews are God’s chosen people and everyone else were infidels and sinners mostly because they WEREN’T God’s chosen people. They felt they were actually pleasing to God by hating all Gentiles.

So look again at verse 44a (READ)...

That's the standard God had always wanted His people to live by – for His people to not only love their neighbors but love their enemies as well. In fact, in God's eyes they're one and the same.

Jesus clarified this for everyone in Luke 10. A Jewish expert in O.T. Law asked Jesus this important question: "Who is my neighbor". And Jesus didn't say, "well it's the people that live around you, the people in your neighborHOOD."

No, instead he told them a parable about the Good Samaritan and he stressed the truth that by definition your neighbor isn't just the people in your neighborhood.

It's anyone you might come across in your daily life who has a need. God wants us to love those needy people and exercise goodness and generosity toward them. Like the Good Samaritan did in Jesus' parable.

JEREMY'S ACCIDENT: People stopped and helped people out of their vehicles. Let them sit in their own vehicles until the ambulances arrived. One lady stuck her head inside Jeremy's window and offered to pray with him which he accepted and she did!!!

That's what it means to be a neighbor. God says anyone and everyone is to be considered a neighbor – someone we should help in any way whenever we see a need of any kind.

Someone has said that True love, God's love, is need-oriented. When we meet the needs of others, even our enemies, it means we're willing to sacrifice our time, our own personal resources, safety, and anything else necessary to assist in meeting someone's need.

We have the opportunity to do that right now by helping to meet the need – not of an enemy, but of a fellow believer - who's moved into our community and needs help furnishing their apartment. I hope we'll step up as a church and be good neighbors.

Someone has said...

**(Slide)**

***“Love’s question is never who to love – because we are to love everyone – but only how to love most helpfully. We are not to love merely in terms of feeling but in terms of serving others. God’s love embraces the entire world, and He loved each of us even while we were still sinners. God wants us to love in the same way, viewing even our enemies as neighbors.”***

In Spain back in the mid 1500's, Christians came under severe persecution. One Christian man who was sentenced to die for his faith, managed to escape during the dead of winter, but a lone soldier kept coming after him.

On the run, the man came to a frozen lake. Though the ice cracked under his feet he managed to get across the lake safely. Just as he set his foot on the other side, he heard the soldier behind him screaming. He had fallen through the ice and was beginning to drown.

The Christian man had a choice: he could keep going to freedom, or turn back to help that soldier and face possible imprisonment, torture and likely death, or even himself drowning in the cold water.

In an instant, he went back out on the thin ice of the lake and rescued his enemy. Why? He knew he had no other choice if he was going to be faithful to His Lord who told him to love his enemies.

Fellowship, as you leave this service today and go back out there – into the world – your “enemy” takes on many forms: people who are mean to you, intolerant, judgmental, spiteful, even downright ugly in their treatment of you.

And sometimes those conflicts can be with business partners, people in your neighborhood, at school, in your family – with your adult children or parents, even your husband or your wife. And God has called us to love them like He loves them.

And that’s not all, He’s called us to pray for them. READ vs. 44b.

Once again, Jesus is not only our master and our teacher, He’s also our mentor and the one we emulate. On the cross while suffering at the hands of his tormentors, Jesus prayed for them. He prayed, “Father, forgive them. For they don’t know what they are doing.”

Loving our enemies is not natural for any of us. The only way we can have the right loving attitude and actions toward our enemy is to pray for them. The great pastor from the 1800's, Charles Spurgeon said, "Prayer is the forerunner of mercy."

Only when we make our enemies a matter of prayer, are we able to treat them in a loving, merciful manner the way Jesus wants us to. We love them because they are sinners in need of God's grace and forgiveness just like we once were before coming to Christ for salvation.

Let me ask us all a question: Who do I have on my prayer list that is antagonistic, spiteful, unloving, disrespectful, or even downright devious, toward me?

God wants us to pray for them. Prayer can turn our hearts to see them through the eyes of Jesus and His love for them and give us a heart of love for them as well. That's the power of prayer.

Go home and look over your prayer list and ask God to show you who's not there but needs to be on there, someone you never thought to pray for because of their opposition toward you, and begin to pray for them faithfully and watch what God does – in YOUR heart, as well as in theirs.

Look at verse 45... READ 5:45-47.

Loving as God loves doesn't make us sons or daughters of God the Father, it's the proof that we're children of God. Anybody can love someone who's going to love them back. That's easy.

Christ calls us to love those who may never love us back. That's the righteousness that pleases Christ and the love that will stand out in our sinful world. That's how we become the salt and light in the world God wants us to be.

Look at the last verse... READ 5:48.

I've said over and over and over again in this study of Jesus' sermon, that the standard that Jesus is holding up for us to follow, is the one set by Himself and by God the Father. God wants us to be like Him.

Our God is perfect. His perfect righteousness is the standard that we are to emulate in our daily lives. God's desire in saving us is that with His help, with the presence and the power of His Holy Spirit living inside us...

With the perfection and power of the Bible, the Word of God, being washed over our minds and our hearts as we read and study it and learn and memorize it and obey it every day...

With the help of the body of Christ, the local church, to love each other, serve each other, challenge each other and fellowship together...



THAT we will increasingly become more and more like Him, until we enter His presence in heaven where our sin natures will be no more, and we will be in perfect fellowship with Him forever.

As I said last Sunday, we're all a work in progress. So, how are you progressing? Are you moving forward in Christ's righteousness? Are you stagnant in your spiritual growth? Are you sliding backward and in need of a fresh fire for the Lord today?

We can't do what Jesus said in verse 48 today in our own strength. It's impossible! Jesus demands of us as citizens of His kingdom of righteousness that we live and become like Him and like our heavenly Father.

That's His expectation for each of us. It's not optional. And the only way we can do that is by depending on Him.

God has given us an impossible task, so that we will look at ourselves, realize that we are utterly incapable of fulfilling it, and in utter desperation, turn to Him and ask Him to help us and trust that He will work in our lives to bring us into that state of Christ-like perfection that we are working toward now and will realize once and for all one day in heaven.

Just after W. W. II the Communists seized control of Romania. Wherever Communism spreads, freedoms are lost, especially religious freedom and that's what happened there too. So the church went underground.

Pastor Richard Wurmbrand was a leader in the underground church. In 1948 he was arrested and imprisoned for over 8 years, released, and then rearrested for another 6 years for a total of 14 years.

What happened during those days of imprisonment are recorded in this book which he wrote after his release in the 1960's. Pastor Wurmbrand went on to establish a ministry many of you are familiar with – The Voice of the Martyrs which continues today 25 years after his death getting relief to or brothers and sisters in Christ imprisoned for their faith around the world.

I encourage you to watch the movie about his life that can be accessed on the Voice of the Martyrs website. It's a textbook example of what it means to live as a citizen of Christ's kingdom of righteousness.

**Youtube Clip: "Solitary Prayer: Tortured for Christ" (6:16)**  
**[www.youtube.com/watch?v=dazD7Z5vSjo](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dazD7Z5vSjo)**

I use this illustration for this reason: Since the possibility of anyone here ending up in a Communist prison anytime soon seems extremely remote...

If Richard Wurmbrand was able, under the power and control of the Holy Spirit to love His enemies and pray for those who so severely persecuted him, in the harsh and hostile environment he was in for so many years..

Then certainly you and I can with God's help learn to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, under the power and control of the Holy Spirit in the must less harsh and hostile environment where we live here in central Iowa. Fellowship, let's live as citizens of Christ's kingdom.