

122818

- I. My Notes... WWC message 123018
- II. Series: Let's Live
 - a. Title: What the World Needs Now
 - b. Text: Matt. 5: 43-48 CSB
 - c. Quote: If this is to be a Happy New Year, a year of usefulness, a year in which we shall live to make this earth better, it is because God will direct our pathway. How important then, to feel our dependence upon Him! - Matthew Simpson (Clergyman)
- III. Introduction
 - a. We are heading into a New Year. It's a time for reflection, remembrance, and renewal. This time is always exciting because it is filled with hope (of something better, something new) and the expectation of a fresh start from the past struggles. I have talked to many people recently that are hoping for a better 2019. This past year seems to have been filled with many more challenges and Change is difficult, change can be exciting, change is constant. Recently, I have spoke with people about the changes they have seen in their lifetime. It seems that life gets faster and faster. In many ways, we are in such a rush that we have lost the ability to connect – to relate to one another. And the biggest reason for that might just be that we have forgotten (or not learned) how to relate to the Lord God. Authentic relationships accept and do their best to understand. Sometimes understanding comes in the quiet moments and then there are times that it arrives because of the hard questions. Authentic relationships are a risk because the “real you” may not be the image you want others, and God, to see. “God loves you unconditionally, as you are and not as you should be, because nobody is as they should be.” [Brennan Manning, (John Blase

(2011). "All Is Grace: A Ragamuffin Memoir", p.192, David C Cook)]. Once we realize that we are all in a similar boat, that each person has their brokenness and incompleteness which causes struggle and a sense of insignificance, then we can begin to move forward and build a bond that helps and encourages.

- b. Now you have probably jumped to the thought, "here we go again. Be kind, be nice, love each other... Is he really going to talk about this again?" I really feel that during certain points on our journey, the Lord gives preachers/teachers a message that they need to dwell on for some time. Overall, I know that a big part of what I preach and teach about is grace. But I know that recently, I have talked about the importance of love – loving the Lord God and loving others. Many are praying for revival. There is a big theme from many of the churches in America is that things must change – that we, in the US, need to draw closer to the Lord. Love is the key, it's the doorway, to revival – to change – to a paradigm shift. *"What the world needs now is love, sweet love, It's the only thing that there's just too little of. What the world needs now is love, sweet love. No, not just for some, but for everyone"* (Hal David and Burt Bacharach, 1965. Sung by Dionne Warwick). Think about it... We were created in Gods' image (cf. Gen. 1:27) and we have come to know that "God is love" (ref. 1 John 4:8,16). So, we must learn to live in a manner that may go against our nature. Loving others, including those that seem unlovable, proves – it verifies – our faith, our testimony, what we believe
- c. It's really a simple idea but one we have so much trouble with. If believers, if the church got this LOVE THING right then revival would be inevitable. People are changed by demonstrations of love and kindness – we (believers) have been. "What makes you think that you who so readily judge the sins of others, can consider yourself beyond the judgment of God? Are you, perhaps, misinterpreting God's generosity and patient mercy towards you as weakness on his part? Don't you realise that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (Romans 2: 3-4 Phillips NT). It

was kindness (Greek, charis), the infinite grace of the Lord God, that brought us into a relationship with Him. With relationships being so key to our life, we should be those conduits of grace to facilitate them.

- d. For change to take place in this world, we must be willing to change. It starts with removing the "I" from those parts of our nature that we battle. I know that sounds trite, but can you spell SIN or PRIDE without that letter in the middle?

IV. Text

- a. Our text is some practical advice that the Lord Jesus gave in the Sermon on the Mount. There are real steps and even benefits that are outlined

- b. Matthew 5:43-48 (CSB)

"You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don't even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

- c. I want to tell you this is very practical instruction

- d. So many people come to church or listen to pastors looking for answers. Almost looking for a formula or steps to take so that they can do what is "right"

- e. Being right is not the goal – being loving, demonstrating kindness and compassion is

- f. Often, in talking to (counseling) others, I ask people if they would rather be right or be loved. It's amazing how many people state that being right is the most important.
- g. Here's my take.... If you are always trying to be right – it is difficult to be loved; but if you are seeking to be loved and to show love – you will always be right
- h. I want to share with you (man, that sounds so “religious” but I don't know how to say it) what I have learned from this passage

V. I Wanna Know What Love Is

- a. I referenced Romans 2:4 earlier to make the statement that it was God's love and grace that brought us into a relationship with Him
- b. The next verse talks about God's judgment for our actions and our deeds. If we are loving, compassionate, supportive, encouraging, ... those are the things God is going to ultimately judge us on
- c. He sees our hearts, not the way we try to do things. 1 Samuel 16:7 (MSG)
“But GOD told Samuel, "Looks aren't everything. Don't be impressed with his looks and stature. I've already eliminated him. GOD judges persons differently than humans do. Men and women look at the face; GOD looks into the heart.”
- d. In our text, Jesus tells us how to love others.
- e. Think about the things you know about love and the expectations you have about what love is...

VI. Love isn't What We Think

- a. “You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.”
- b. “Love your neighbor” is a reference to Leviticus 19:18... more on that later

- c. It's the other part of that statement that is telling
- d. Hate is part of the human condition. Hate is wrapped up in selfishness
- e. Love is not about you but about the actions you show to others
- f. Maybe we need a better (personal) definition of who our neighbor is. Where we live and work, where we shop, where we get our gas and drive... this (extended) community is our neighbor.
- g. Contained in this group are people we are not going to agree with or understand or even like.
- h. It's often said that the opposite of love is hate. And so, in our human condition we think that if we are being told to love our neighbor then we must hate our enemy.
- i. First, let me say the opposite of love isn't hate – it's apathy (indifference, not caring). Love and hate are closely related
- j. Next, our enemy... as humans, as believers, as people – who is our real enemy?
- k. See, we can always choose to show kindness and compassion, we can share the mercy and grace we have come to know – to all people, anytime
- l. Our real enemy is the one who doesn't want what is best for man, what is best for the world – any thoughts?

VII. Love is....

- a. Can I just say this before I get into some practical explanations?... Love renews us
- b. Love is not just the feeling, the emotion – it's the support and strength it brings, it's the hope it gives, and it's the inspiration it brings to be and achieve God's best in our lives

- c. Love is treating All others with respect. You don't have to agree with them, but you can choose to respect them (try to understand who and why they are)
- d. Love is blessing others. Speaking kindly to them and about them
- e. Being mean – cursing others, is a sin (a mistake that doesn't honor the Lord). It is “missing the mark” in being a relationship builder. (see James 3: 5-6)
- f. Gossiping – saying or telling things about others, especially when they are around, that is critical or demeaning misses the mark too
- g. Be a blessing... speak kindly or don't speak at all
- h. Love is choosing to do good to others...
 - i. Luke 6:27-28 (NCV)

“But I say to you who are listening, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who are cruel to you.
 - ii. Romans 12:20-21 (NLT2)

Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.” Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.
- i. Our actions and attitudes speak – they testify of what we know and trust
- j. Love is praying for others. Not just those that we know or hear about having a need. It is praying for all.
- k. The Lord has called us to live different, to be above the ordinary – the norm.

- l. Most people are destructive to others they don't like. Anybody can respond with mean words, with unforgiveness and disdain, but only a child of God can respond in love to an enemy.
- m. Do you think you are being impressive, are acting cool for doing something ordinary? At church we tend to act in love... whether it is with people we see week in and week out or when we encounter a visitor. But that's about as risk free an environment as you can get.
- n. We are called to be different, we are called to live as an example of the truth we know. Remember what it says in the text - If you just greet those people you know, like, and agree with, how are you different from anybody else? (my paraphrase, verse 47). That's ordinary. Believers are to be extra ordinary (that's you and I).

VIII. Let's Live

- a. Are these some practical actions we can try to live by?
- b. Be kind... say good things... when you are able, do good things for someone... Pray
- c. Can you see some behaviors that might need changing? Can you picture some circumstances, in which, you can choose these actions?
- d. We can have perfect aim. Jesus told us to, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (vs. 48 CSB). On our journey we can have a destination in view.
- e. I think that might be what Jesus is encouraging in us. Learn about the Lord God by developing a deep intimacy in our relationship
- f. Do your best to understand His heart and try to act the way He would

- g. In our walk, we have a standard – something to compare ourselves with. It's the Lord. When we compare our lives to others it can turn into competition because we are looking at different standards

IX. Last Words

- a. "One cannot define one's neighbor; one can only be a neighbor," Haddon Robinson said. "Your neighbor is anyone whose need you see, whose need you are able to meet." A neighbor is someone who says, "What is mine is God's and what is God's belongs to my neighbor because my neighbor belongs to Him." (Haddon Robinson, Preacher – Professor)
- b. I am learning that the direction of my path has changed. We, believers – Christians, must be different. We can't be defined by the standards of others.
- c. One thing you will probably see (over these next steps) is the way that I am bringing sermons. I sense a change in my preparation and application
- d. In preparing for today I read all kinds of stories and information that could apply to this passage we are talking about. There are some wonderful stories but one thing struck me – they are from the past. Love is an action. We can learn from those stories or we can take the inspiration of God's words to us and write some of our own stories.
- e. I am sure that things have happened in our walk that have inspired and encouraged each of us. And these instances have taken place to inspire us toward continued behavior of this kind.
- f. Let's Pray
- g. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May His love flood your path and flow onto those that surround your life.