

## Fishers of Men: *Loving the Lost*

**Text:** Matthew 5:43-48

Introduction: *Jake DeShazer*

### Summary and Perversion of OT Law

<sup>43</sup> *Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.*

- Remember, Jesus came to fulfill, not abolish the OT Law.
- The wicked Jews of Jesus day had perverted God's holy law in two ways: by omission and by addition.
  - o Omission
  - o Addition
- Now, the Jew's perversion does make perfect "worldly/fleshly" sense:
  - o Love the ones who love you
  - o Hate the ones who hate you
  - o This seems to be a reasonable formula for societal order and happiness.
  - o However, because of sin, and the virtual guarantee that we will sin against one another, this is, in fact, a "death spiral."
  - o And more importantly, if there is no higher law than this, then we are all doomed. *For there is no Gospel.*

### Clarification and Amendment of OT Law

<sup>44</sup> *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;*

- Here is Jesus' clarification/expansion on OT law ("*But I say to you...*")
  - o Love (don't hate) your enemies
  - o Bless (don't curse) those that curse you
  - o Do good to them that hate you
  - o Pray for them that
    - "*despitefully use you*"
    - *Persecute you*
    - *Pray for them*

<sup>45</sup> *That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.*

- Here is the rationale for Jesus' clarification/amendment:
  - o *So that* you may be the children of your Father in heaven who...
  - o Note: The *extreme* goodness and graciousness of God
    - Who is kind to those who will go to their graves hating, reviling and cursing Him.

<sup>46</sup> *For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?* <sup>47</sup> *And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?*

- And finally, four rhetorical questions to establish Jesus' clarification (given in two couplets):
  - o If you only love the ones who love you, what reward do you have?
    - Don't even the publicans do the same?
  - o If you only salute your brothers, what are you doing that others already do?
    - Don't even the publicans do that?

<sup>48</sup> *Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.*

- Therefore:
  - o Be perfect
    - Complete, lacking nothing

- Brought to (arrived at) it's end
  - Mature, fully grown
- Even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect
  - The "perfection" of which Jesus speaks has a referent/context:
    - Love for those who hate us
    - Mercy to those who persecute us
    - Blessing for cursing
    - Prayer for malevolence (wishing/working evil to others)
  - "Even as..." denotes *in the same way/fashion* as our heavenly Father.
- Note: In this short passage Jesus has twice invited his audience to regard God as "their heavenly Father" (wow!)
- Jesus insists that there be a "family resemblance." If God is indeed our "heavenly Father" then we must needs resemble Him in our love for, and service to, the lost.

### Application:

This is the Gospel: *God loves people who hate Him*. God is kind to people who don't deserve His kindness. He is merciful to people who deserve His wrath. He blesses those who curse Him. Wow!

- Receive it for yourself
  - Live under *grace*
  - Revel in the reality that God is "your heavenly Father" (2X)
  - Note: You cannot proceed to the next two application points until you have apprehended grace for yourself. It is the prerequisite for what follows. You cannot give what you do not have. But what you have by faith, you cannot keep from giving away.
- Receive it for the world
  - Don't despair about the rebellion of the world as if there were no hope because of man's sin. Man's sin is but the backdrop that makes possible the clear display of the mercy of God.
  - As the high priests represented and performed their duties for all of Israel, we are priests for the world (as God always intended for Israel to be.) If the world rejects God's goodness, then we need to receive it for them, on their behalf, praying that God would bring to pass that which we have received by faith.
- Live it out (Service and Hospitality)
  - Active
    - Actions, not merely "warm-fuzzy feelings" of goodwill
  - Extravagant
    - Rain and sunshine
    - Life and breath
    - God's Son
  - Intentional
    - Well conceived and executed kindness
  - Omni-beneficent
    - Neighbors and enemies
  - Unilateral
    - For the sheer joy of loving, expecting nothing in return.

(N.T. Wright) "The Sermon on the Mount isn't just how to behave. It's about discovering the living God in the loving and dying Jesus, and learning to reflect that love ourselves into the world that needs it so badly."