



WE WILL NOT TOLERATE EVIL

1. Today we'll go through a passage that belongs to the second category within Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.¹ If you remember, I said that here Jesus describes the vision of righteousness that God requires His people to live out. That means those who proclaim themselves to be disciples of Jesus must align their lives with God's vision of righteousness. Let's recall that most Jews by then had accepted the Pharisaic vision of righteousness, which was widely respected among the people. Jesus knew that—He lived in that culture—and being fully aware of the Pharisaic view of righteousness, He told the people that God's vision of righteousness is far above, much higher, than that of the Pharisees. Here, Jesus describes how the one who declares himself His disciple must live and behave.

1.1. Likewise—and forgive me for repeating myself, but I truly want you to grasp the heart of Jesus' teaching here—when Jesus says He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, He is actually telling His people this: *"I, as the Messiah, am now telling you how the fulfillment of Moses' Law will look when I establish God's Kingdom on the earth. Every idea the Father intended to convey to our ancestors through Moses' Law will be brought to completion when I reign. Then the whole world will see what it truly looks like when a people live out Moses' Law in their daily lives. We will promote righteousness, mercy, goodness, forgiveness... we will be peacemakers of God. We will not be like the other nations that have ruled throughout history—in contrast to them, we will not tolerate evil, injustice, hatred, violence, greed, or selfishness... all of that will be forbidden in the Kingdom of God."*

1.2. For all these reasons, I believe that in the following text Jesus describes what the heart of a Jew must look like if he is to inherit the Kingdom of God in the future. Yet we, too, can draw application for how a person in this present reality ought to live and behave if they desire to inherit the Kingdom of God.

¹ Sermon 37, § 1.1. b)

MY ENEMY IS IN TROUBLE

2. (Luke 6:27–28) But I say to you who listen: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

2.1. These commands from Jesus carry great weight, don't they? If we are honest with ourselves, we'll admit it's impossible to do this consistently. It's natural for us to defend ourselves, to judge, or to take revenge on an enemy. To pray for our enemies—as Jesus asks us to—honestly, I'm not even sure I want to do that.

2.2. If you remember, in my previous sermon I tried to explain what it means to love your enemy. It is not an intimate love like the love we feel for those close to us. Jesus does not ask us to love our enemies intimately, but to will their good despite the evil they may have done to us.

2.3. Let me show you a life example of what it looks like when someone loves his enemy. But before I do, a short background: who was the greatest enemy of the Jewish people while Jesus was among them? The Romans. They oppressed the Jews in every possible way, treated them with hostility, burdened them with taxes, filled them with fear through various forms of intimidation, and called them by insulting names. In short, the Romans hated the Jews, and they made that hatred obvious through their actions. Jesus knew that His people personally hated every Roman who lived in their land. He knew that within their homes, people nurtured hatred and resentment toward the Romans. They couldn't express it publicly—they were afraid.

2.4. Likewise, the Jews also hated their neighbors, the Samaritans. Their shared history was turbulent, and religious disagreements had turned into mutual hatred. One piece of evidence for that is this: when Jews from Galilee traveled to Jerusalem, they would go around Samaria in a wide arc, taking a longer route, even though going through Samaria was much shorter.

2.5. Even within the Jewish nation itself there were enemies—tax collectors, prostitutes, and other sinners. Since Pharisaic teaching promoted hatred toward such people, the common folk hated them as well.

2.6. Now that we understand more clearly whom the Jews considered their enemies, we can better grasp Jesus' life and the reasons behind His actions. From the Gospel accounts we know that Jesus, unlike His people, loved tax collectors, Romans, Gentiles, Samaritans, lepers, and prostitutes... But how exactly did He love them? To answer that, we need to understand what Jesus' role was while He lived among His people. His role was to be the "star from above," the "light to the world"²—He was showing the way. He showed what a human being should look like if they desire to inherit the Kingdom of God. In other words, He was God's messenger with the mission of teaching others the wisdom of God. With that in mind, Jesus approached every person. He loved every human being by speaking to them about God's goodness and grace. Jesus, just like His heavenly Father, desired that every person be blessed with the gift of eternal life—regardless of their position or past.

² Luke 1:78-79

2.6.1. That was Jesus' role—He was a teacher. Now let's shift our focus to His people: not everyone could be a teacher, nor did God expect everyone to be one among His people. But God did require His people to promote His holiness and goodness through their lives.

2.7. Let me describe a situation that could have happened in real life: a Roman, a Samaritan, or a tax collector is traveling down the road. His horse gets startled, throws him off, and overturns the cart full of goods. The accident happens in the middle of the desert, in the middle of nowhere. Suppose the cart crushes his leg, leaving him trapped and unable to move. On the other side, I, a Jew, am traveling with my son toward a certain city. I'm a tradesman, teaching my son the craft—that's why he's with me. From afar, I see that something has happened. As I approach, I realize it's a Roman. Or a Samaritan. Or a tax collector from my town. My heart tells me to pretend I didn't see anything, to just keep walking—after all, this is my enemy, the one who has caused me harm my whole life. How many times have I heard the rabbi in the synagogue say, *"Hate your enemies"*? My father taught me who my enemies are, who God's enemies are. And I have taught my son who our enemies are. Maybe it's better to just pass by, to act as if I saw nothing.

2.7.1. This moment, as a Jew, places me before a choice of who I will be: will I be one who loves his enemies, who does good to those who hate him, or one who is content with the worldly, Pharisaic vision of righteousness? My son stands beside me now. What kind of father do I want him to see me as—now and in the future? Will I be like my heavenly Father and love my enemies as He does, or will I keep hating them as I always have?

2.7.2. If, despite my hatred toward my enemy, I decide to help him—if I rescue him from trouble, bind his wound, and take him to the nearest town for help—then I have chosen to promote God's righteousness. I have decided that I want the same blessing for my enemy that I want for myself.

2.7.3. Perhaps my act toward him—my enemy—will shatter his old convictions. Perhaps he, moved by my deed, will desire to become a better man. Perhaps he, too, will want to follow Jesus' vision of righteousness. On the other hand, my son, who witnesses my choice, will also be faced with the decision of what kind of man he wants to become.

2.8. Before we go further, let me say this: these are not absolute and literal commands that Jesus wants to impose on us. The circumstances people face—or will face—determine what promoting God's goodness toward an enemy will look like. We must not think that in every situation we are to express God's goodness in exactly the same way. As we continue through the text, I'll try to explain more clearly what I mean by that.

OUR CLOSEST ONES CAN BE THE MOST DANGEROUS

3. For example, in Matthew 5:23 Jesus says to His people: *"If you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering."* My question is this: what if the very thing that has caused tension between you and your brother is actually good in God's eyes? What if, after a period of witnessing, during which your brother (or your friend, neighbor, father, mother, sister) has been living immorally, you decided—out of love—to warn

him not to continue in that sin, and because of it he became angry with you and no longer wants to speak to you? Can you then go and present your offering at the altar?

If we were to take Jesus' words literally—"First be reconciled to your brother..."—then you couldn't go and make your offering, because you are not on good terms with your brother.

3.1. But I personally believe that in such a case you could still go and offer your sacrifice at the altar. Why? Because you have done what is right in God's eyes. You have promoted His righteousness. You told your brother that what he was doing was not pleasing to God, and for that reason, you were free to go and bring your offering.

Through this example, I wanted to show that the situations life places us in determine the way we will carry out Jesus' command.

3.2. All right, let's continue: "Bless those who curse you! Pray for those who mistreat you!"

To the ear of a Jew who had been abused all his life by Romans, Jesus' words made no sense at all. *"I have to do good to a Roman? I have to love the Gentiles? I have to forgive those who have tortured our people for decades? Are You serious, Jesus? What are You asking of us? That's impossible!"*

3.3. If we're honest, all of us would initially react the same way to Jesus' vision of righteousness. But in time, if we are God's children, we begin to understand what God is truly asking of us. We begin to want to live out Jesus' vision of righteousness in our own lives.

3.4. In the lives of Jesus' listeners, the "abusers" were the Romans. But in the life of someone close to me, the "abuser" was, sadly, his father. He physically abused him for most of his life. What I find deeply admirable is that my close friend—whom I've known for fifteen years—has never once promoted hatred toward his father. He has never tried to plant a seed of bitterness or evil in me against him.

The irony is that I, along with some other family members, have spoken judgment and condemnation over his father more than once—while my friend, the one who perhaps carries lifelong emotional scars, chose not to.

Did he ever hate his father at some point? I don't know; I would assume he did. But he chose to bless him. He did not judge him before others. He did not urge others to hate him. He even went to his father and told him, *"I forgive you for everything you've done to me."*

3.5. With that said, does that mean God has forgotten the unjust things that father did to his son? No. He is the righteous Judge who repays each person according to his deeds. One day, the righteous judgment of God will reach my friend's father—perhaps he knows that deep within, and maybe that very awareness gave him the strength to forgive his father. One thing is certain: my friend did not want to be the judge; he chose to hand judgment over to the Righteous One. And in doing so, he loved his enemy—and freed himself from bitterness and hatred.

— Thank God that I've had the privilege of witnessing that man's life. His act should stir within us a sense of shame, followed by awe—and a hope that one day, we too might do the same in our own lives. —

CLEANSE ME, YAHWEH

4. Now we move on to a new verse. **(Luke 6:29)** *Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer the other also; and whoever takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic from him either.*

4.1. When we read Jesus' words in Luke, it's easy to assume He's speaking about physical violence. But why does Jesus use the "cheek" as the place of the strike? Why didn't He say, *"If someone wants to beat you, injure you, or harm you physically—let him, turn to him the other side, don't defend yourself"?*

Again, we must not take Jesus' commands literally. Every life situation dictates how we can best express and promote God's goodness in that specific moment.

4.2. To gain a fuller picture of what Jesus meant by this command, let's look at **(Matthew 5:39–40)** *But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also.*

4.3. When we consider these verses together, we can conclude that Jesus is speaking about the condition of our spirit when someone accuses us of something. What matters is how we respond to accusation. Someone can publicly humiliate us with words, and our natural instinct is to defend ourselves at all costs—to justify ourselves before others, to prove that we're not like that, that we would never do what we've been accused of.

4.4. The first thing we must understand is this: we love ourselves deeply, and we care immensely about what others think of us. Because of that, we're often willing to verbally wound another human being just to protect ourselves. Jesus tells us not to do that. He teaches us that what others think of us is not of ultimate importance.

Jesus wants us, when accused, to stand firm in the desire to open the accuser's eyes—to show that we are not like them, not driven by self-justification. And sometimes that means staying silent while being accused. Why? Because we recognize that in that moment, words are pointless.

4.5. There will be times when someone will personally attack us precisely while we are trying to do them good. By "good," I mean when we've noticed that a dear friend is walking down a wrong path, and when we warn them, they lash out at us in anger.

And what we do then—that's what Jesus wants us to learn. He tells us to stand firm, to reject what instinctively rises up within us—the desire to retaliate.

Jesus says: *"Reject that. Do not do it. Let them strike you on the cheek—stay silent. Offer them the other cheek. Do not do what they do to you. Promote God's goodness. You've said what needed to be said—now step back. Do not be like those who accuse you."*

4.6. That's one example of how we should understand this command. King David had a very different kind of situation in his life. The story of King David is found in the Old Testament, and I encourage you to read it—there is much to learn and apply to your own life. You'll find it in First and Second Samuel.

4.6.1. In short: David was a simple shepherd before the prophet Nathan told him that one day he would become king of Israel. At that time, King Saul reigned, but he gradually lost God's favor. Therefore, Yahweh decided that the royal line would come from David's house.

Over time, David gained great fame among the people. Why? Because he triumphed in battle against the enemies of Yahweh. Saul, consumed by jealousy, began to hate David and tried to kill him several times. Each time, David escaped. During his flight, he had several opportunities to kill King Saul—but he chose not to. Why? Because he believed that only God, Yahweh, had the right to do such a thing.

4.6.2. David confirmed his convictions through his actions. For example, when King Saul was tormented by an evil spirit, David would come to his chamber and play the harp for him, knowing Saul loved its sound... that music soothed him.

4.6.3. Several times Saul took pity on David and brought him back to his court, and during that time David again played the harp for him. But after a while, evil and jealousy would once again take hold of Saul, and he would begin plotting to kill David anew.

4.6.4. Throughout all of this, David never desired harm for his enemy. David trusted Yahweh, not himself—it was his duty to love his enemy. His choices made him one who hungered for God's righteousness, not his own. In other words, David allowed Saul to strike him on the cheek; he gave him the other cheek as well. He refused to do the evil Saul wanted to inflict on him.

4.7. Now a question arises—and this is a theoretically possible scenario: what if David hadn't managed to escape every time? What if Saul had cornered him, drawn his sword, and was about to kill him—would David have defended himself? I believe he would have. I believe David, in an effort to save his life, would have killed Saul. Would that have meant that David broke Jesus' command to "turn the other cheek"? No, it would not. Why do I think so? Because up to that moment, David had done everything possible to avoid becoming like his enemy. That's why I believe we cannot take Jesus' commands as absolute. As I've said, life situations determine how we express and promote God's goodness. In this case—where it was theoretically possible that David would have to kill King Saul to save his own life—I believe that in God's eyes, that act would have been good.

4.8. Likewise, my dear friend from the story mentioned in (§ 3.4.–3.5.) has every right to stop his father from continuing to inflict physical or emotional harm. He can do that now—he's a grown man, no longer a little boy without the strength to defend himself.

— Turning the other cheek does not mean we are foolish; it does not mean we allow someone to abuse us in any way if we have the power to stop it. Turning the other cheek means that within ourselves, we must desire not to repay evil for evil. —

4.9. One more thing before we move on. Remember, I said that God's vision of righteousness does not demand perfection in execution; rather, we must desire to be such people—and in God's eyes, that is enough to remain in right standing with Him.

4.9.1. David was not perfect in living out God's righteousness—you might have gotten that impression, but he wasn't! He sinned greatly in his decisions: he was unjust, deceitful, adulterous—but at times he stumbled forward, metaphorically speaking, along the path of God's vision of

righteousness. And that made him the kind of man who wanted to be righteous. He wept when he failed; he knew he was poor in spirit; he hungered for what he could not perfectly fulfill. He longed for God to reshape him according to His own vision of righteousness.

And if you doubt that—read the Psalms of David, and you'll see that their very context is David's prayer for God to form him into His image of righteousness.³

LET'S MOVE ON WITH LIFE

5. All right, let's continue: "Whoever takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic from him either." Once again, Jesus gives this command in a context that any Jew listening to Him could understand. In those days, a cloak and a tunic were of existential importance to a Jew. Some had only one cloak and one tunic in their wardrobe. Whenever they began their day—wherever they worked or traveled—they would not leave without their cloak and tunic. The cloak served many purposes: during the day it protected from the scorching sun—for instance, when walking through the desert toward another city. When taking a break to rest, a Jew would pull the cloak over his head to avoid being burned. And at night, since many Jews slept on the rooftops of their homes where it was cooler, the cloak they wore during the day would become their pillow and blanket. In other words, a cloak was everything to a Jew in those times.

5.1. Now that we understand what the cloak meant, I ask: was it common for someone to come and demand a Jew's cloak? I don't know. But I believe Jesus is once again speaking about the spiritual condition of the heart and how one responds to certain circumstances in life.

5.2. It was possible, theoretically, that someone—a thief, perhaps—might have wanted to take another man's cloak to sell it or keep it for himself. It was also possible that a poor man asked for someone's cloak because he didn't have one. We know that in one of his sermons John the Baptist said, *"The one who has two tunics is to share with the one who has none."*⁴

5.3. I don't believe Jesus was asking a Jew to give away everything he possessed just to be good in God's eyes. It is reasonable to care for yourself. It is reasonable to plan your future and save. But how we respond when someone asks us to give—that's what Jesus is highlighting here. Many Jews who had more than one cloak often denied help to those who had none. And why? Because selfish and irrational fear gripped them at the thought of losing something they had worked so hard for all their lives. Their focus was on having the best possible life here and now; they didn't care about what belonged to God—that is, the Kingdom of God. Only those who understood that the coming of God's Kingdom was more important than anything they possessed were able to give away their cloak, and even their tunic.

5.4. Let's go back for a moment to the thief who might have stolen your only cloak: it is right to seek justice; Jesus does not call us to abandon justice. But the focus of our lives should not be to achieve justice at any cost. If we see that we won't obtain it, we must turn, accept it, and set our minds on finding a new cloak. We must not remain bitter because someone has wronged us. "Give them your

³ A few examples: Psalm 51:3-4, 12; 143:2, 10; 25:4-5; 40:12; 37:30-31

⁴ Luke 3:11

tunic also—let go of the thought, and move on with life.” That would be the application in such a case.

5.5. A tunic surely carries many meanings, and again—depending on the situation—it can represent different things. But I believe what Jesus was saying to His people here was this: *“You may come to a point where someone will ask you to give up what you believe to be one of the most important things you own. And when they ask for what is dearest to your heart, you must decide to give them all they ask for. Give not only what costs you little—give what you most wish to keep. Let it go. In other words, one day, God the Father will ask you to give up your very life—your sense of purpose—so that you may serve Him. Train yourself throughout life to let go of what matters most to you, because if you don’t, you will not let go of your life in order to serve the Father. In the end, you will not inherit the Kingdom of God!”*

5.6. In the life of a believer then—and even now—*this sense of purpose* can take many forms. For some, it may be the pursuit of a career or calling that once began in faith but has slowly become the source of identity and pride. For others, it may be the comfort of wealth and possessions, the illusion of security that quietly replaces trust in God.

It can also appear in subtler ways: in the pride of knowledge or spiritual achievement, when we begin to measure our worth by how much wiser or more righteous we seem than others. Sometimes it hides within our reputation or status—our fear of losing respect, of appearing weak or foolish for obeying God’s call.

For some, it may even be the deep attachment to dreams long cherished, or to relationships that have become dearer to us than the One who gave them. And in rare, sacred moments, it may be the ultimate surrender—the giving up of our very life for the sake of Christ.

Whatever form it takes, this sense of purpose—when not surrendered to the Father—can become the very thing that blinds us to His will. Only when we learn to let go of what we hold most dear can we truly say that we live for Him alone.

5.7. When life confronts us with that truth—in whatever way it comes—we must surrender ourselves. Not only must we give our cloak, but we must also be willing to give our tunic. We must be ready to stand bare, stripped of everything in this world.

— Yet in God’s eyes, at that moment, we are victors who will inherit the Kingdom of God. —

6. All right, let’s slowly move toward the end of this sermon. **(Luke 6:30–31) Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you.**

6.1. All these verses are closely connected to everything we’ve already discussed. Jesus calls us to constantly examine ourselves, because He knows how naturally self-centered the human heart is. We all know how we want others to treat us, but we struggle to live that out when it comes to how we treat others—especially strangers.

6.2. Jesus is not asking us to love only those who are close and dear to us; He’s calling us to love every human being on this planet—through the fruit our lives produce. He wants us to be like our Heavenly Father, who is merciful toward every person on earth.

6.3. All right, that's it for today. We'll talk more about the Father's love next time.