

28. What Would Jesus Have Us Do?

May 8, 2016

One evening after WWII, Sir Winston Churchill had a few drinks with his friends. He and his buddies got into the elevator of a hotel in London to get down to the lobby. A few floors down, a noble lady Nancy Astor walked into the loud elevator and recognized the prime minister. She was disgusted with his drunkenness and blurted out, "Sir, you are drunk." Churchill with a grin on his lips, he shouted back, "Madam, you are ugly." Her jaw dropped. Before she could respond, he continued with a twinkling in his eyes, "But tomorrow morning, I will be sober....."

When someone hurts our feelings, or hurts those whom we love and care about, we'd like to get back at that person in revenge. I am sure that you've heard these phrases:

Do unto others BEFORE they do unto you.

Don't get mad, GET EVEN.

We are living in a selfish and volatile world. We find the evidences of selfishness and violence from inside of homes to the streets, to the workplaces, to shopping malls, across nations. We have developed a dog-eat-dog mentality, and instead of domesticating the wild dog that is in our carnal heart, we've unleashed this pit bull from our heart to the society.

Many of us know about W.W.J.D. and have seen it in many places. It stands for "What Would Jesus Do?" We already know what Jesus would do. He would do everything perfect. But what about us? The Sermon on the Mount is not about "What would Jesus do?" rather "What Would Jesus Have Us Do?" Jesus shows us what and how to do. Now it is up to us to do what we've learned.

A. CHRIST'S COUNTERCULTURAL COUNSEL

Matthew 5:38-41 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. 40 If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. 41 And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. 42 Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

If we are ever to make an impact on our culture, we must not let ourselves become conformed to it. To avoid being squeezed into its mold, we must live counter to our culture.

Romans 12:1-2 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

This important OT law from Exodus 21:24-25, Leviticus 24:20, and Deuteronomy 19:21 is known as "Lex Talionis" which means the law of retaliation. It covers what type of proper punishment should be sentenced out to transgressors by the judges, not by individuals contrary to many people's opinions. In other words, God was not condoning vigilante attitude. It was punishment by law and God was telling the judges how to deal with those who committed crimes.

In v38, Jesus set His code of conduct over the Pharisee's self-made conduct codes:

1) Release our rights to retaliate

When our rights to dignity, comfort, privacy, and possessions become threatened, we hire the best legal fists money can buy and litigate our way to winning them back. But Jesus' advice is that we take off our gloves and refuse to fight in the first place. To be able to do that, it takes the courage and complete dependency to God's sovereignty.

2) Release our right to personal dignity

Note in v39 how carefully Christ chooses His words. He says, "slaps you on your right cheek," not "punches you in the mouth." A "slap in the face" is not to be understood literally, but figuratively. It's a colloquialism for a backhand insult. And when we get insulted, the natural tendency is to strike with a backhanded insult in return.

But does it mean that we are never to defend ourselves? Absolutely not. This is regarding insult, not self-defense.

Romans 12:17-19 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.

The outer cloak at that time doubled as a warm blanket. Under Mosaic law, it was a protected possession. For the benefit of Christ's kingdom and for the good of others, we should be willing to give up all our possessions, because everything we have belongs to the Lord from the first place.

These scriptures cause a lot of confusion because they are easy to misinterpret so as to make them ridiculous and impractical. Jesus never said anything ridiculous or impractical. What He is seeking to point out here is our attitude towards our possessions. So many people are very possessive and nothing is good enough, because they are bound by their possessions and their greed. Jesus wants us to hold everything with loose grips.

In v41, we see the word 'compel.' The Greek word for this is 'aggareuo.' It means 'to employ a courier, dispatch a mounted messenger, press into public service.' The Roman government gave the authority to their soldiers to order any of their colonial population to carry their shields or bags up to one mile. The people must obey the orders, otherwise they can be killed. The Israelites despised this Roman order over them. We find a good example in Matt 27:32:

Matthew 27:32 Now as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name. Him they compelled to bear His cross.

Jesus is teaching us to go that extra mile to win the heart of those who oppose our belief. By the way, this is where we get the word "Going extra miles."

B. LOVE INSTEAD OF HATE

Matthew 5:43-48 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, 45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what

reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? 48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

The first half of v43 about 'loving your neighbor' is taken from Leviticus 19:18. But the portion about 'hating your enemy' is not found in the Scripture. It was a gross distortion of the Law, twisted by the manipulative and self-serving hands of the rabbis and Pharisees, because even in the OT, the Lord teaches us not to be vengeful.

Proverbs 25:21 If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat; And if he is thirsty, give him water to drink

Obviously, the religious leaders of Jesus' day allowed their emotions to get the better of them when it came to their enemies, choosing to hate them rather than show love.

Our God never tells us to do something He doesn't do and we cannot do. He tells us to love, bless, be good, and pray for those who are against us. So let's put this important lesson in practical situations:

- Does it mean we have to love, bless, be nice, and pray for ACLU lawyers who try everything to destroy Christianity in the United States? Yes.
- Does it mean we have to love, bless, be nice, and pray for a coworker who dumps his foul language whenever you are near him? Yes.
- Does it mean we have to love, bless, be nice, and pray for those people who come to our door on Saturday morning to share their cult belief? Yes.
- Does it mean we have to love, bless, be nice, and pray for those jerks who cut us off and slow down right in front of us on I-19? Yes.

The list can go on.

Did I say it is easy? No, but I said it is what the Lord wants us to do. That's the bottom line. It's the grace of God and through it we all came to know Christ as our Savior and Lord. Shouldn't those unbelievers have the same chance like we do?

Jesus tells us that the Father in heaven pours out His blessings to believers and unbelievers alike. When Jesus was on the cross, He prayed for His enemies and asked God to forgive them. Can you love and pray for someone who hates the Lord or who willingly inflicts suffering to you spiritually and emotionally? Love doesn't mean that you accept their acts of hatred and evil, but love requires that you pray for those most in need of salvation. God's love knows no boundary. And if we are to become like Him, we need to love the unlovable, too.

A man who used to attend our church was upset with me because I pray for president Obama's salvation. Contrary to his opinion, I am doing what the Bible tells us to do:

1 Timothy 2:1-2 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men, 2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence.

In v46, Jesus is nailing us for our favoritism or cliques in the church. The church is a gathering of a bunch of sinners who are forgiven by the Lord through His grace, mercy, and love. His forgiveness has absolutely nothing to do with us or our social and economic status. But unfortunately, many Christians start to form their own favoritism and cliques according to what they think about themselves in comparison with others who are not at the same level of social, financial, and educational status. Our God doesn't see them, but God sees our hearts. In His heart, there is no racial prejudice and no financial preferential treatment.

If any of you think that you are better than others in this room for whatever the reasons, you are allowing your pride to get in the way and being used by Satan to divide the body of Christ.

I have seen enough church cliques that gag me since I got saved. Grant that church clique is not a few friends getting together for meals, or doing like-minded things. But when the people in that group start to reject or look down on others because of the differences in their social and financial status, then, it becomes cliques and it is ugly. As you can tell, I am anti-church clique.

Let's see what the Bible says about church cliques:

Romans 12:16 Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion.

James 2:1 My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality.

Before you complain that I don't hang around with you. Remember, I have over 120 adults and children to minister to. So you come and hang with me and introduce yourself to me. If you do that, I will get to know you and we'll be tight.

Now I am going to talk to those who are rather "invisible" in our church. All of the people who come to church want other people to remember them and acknowledge them, if the truth be known. But some people don't want to make themselves known to others. Then, how are we going to know you, unless you make yourselves known to us? You come in late in the service without talking to anyone and as soon as the service is over, you make a beeline to the exit door. Do something different today. Before you leave, talk with someone you've never met before. They won't bite you.

Let's go back to v48:

Matthew 5:48 Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Let's face it. You know it and I know it, we are NOT perfect. But Jesus tells us to be perfect as the Father in heaven is perfect. How? While we do what He tells us to do, we will walk closer with Him and get to know His heart. That is when we start to be less like ourselves, but more like Him and becoming perfect like Him, not sinless while we are on earth, but sin less. Of course, we will never be gods, but being identified with Him as His children.

Hebrews 7:19 for the law made nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.

James 4:8a Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

C. APPLICATIONS

1) Let's be unselfish and love the unlovable.

Start living for the good of the rest of our God's family instead of just for our own well-being.

2) Let's turn the other cheek to the insulting remark.

Instead of keeping a running retaliation tab on them, let's look beyond their wrongs.

3) Let's be a blessing in their lives instead of a curse.

Let's fulfill our roles by extending the love of God to them.

When we do these things, we will probably encounter all kinds of misunderstanding and mistreatment. Will loving our enemies be easy? History teaches us, "No." Will it be worth the effort? You bet, it will. It may be a struggle, but that struggle will transform us. And when the angels look down from above, they will smile wistfully and say to one another, "He's the spitting image of his Father in heaven, isn't he?" What a compliment! And what a way to make the Father in heaven proud of us!