

XXV. Matthew in Biblical Perspective  
A Royal Manifesto of the Kingdom from the King  
The Fifth Commandment: Loving Your Enemies  
Matthew 5:43-48  
By: Dr. Harry Reeder  
August 8, 2010 – Morning Sermon

Let's look at our text for this study. This is our Lord's fifth commandment that He gives on this mount from the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew 5:43-48 says **43** *"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 and pray for those who persecute you,* **45** *so that you may be sons of your Father who is 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 do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?* **47** *And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?* **48** *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* The grass withers and the flower fades. This is the Word of our God and it abides forever. By His grace and mercy may it be preached for you.

It's not too long after this that Jesus is going to encounter a man who is going to come up to Him with a purpose to test Him as to His view of the Law. The man will make an inquiry of Him and in the inquiry there is something about this man that has been revealed. The account is found in Luke 10 and the man says to Jesus, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" In that moment you know the man is thinking about eternal life but you also know in the arrogance of his heart he is absolutely convinced he doesn't need a Savior, he just needs some direction as to what he needs to do and he'll do it and gain it. Jesus realizing what he has said, says to him, (I'll paraphrase) "As it were if you want to earn your way to heaven just go get the Law. What does the Law say?" The man obviously has been taught and he sums up the Law by saying, "If you sum up the Law it says you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind and your neighbor as yourself." Jesus says, "Then go do it." Then it says, "Wishing to justify himself he then furthers the test on Jesus." In this question the man reveals something about those whom he has listened to as his teachers and says to Jesus, "Who is my neighbor?"

You know the story. Then to teach the man further Jesus tells him about the parable of the Good Samaritan. There are two key people in this parable. One is a Jewish man who is on a trip and he is waylaid and as he is waylaid he is left for dead. He is there on the side of the road dying and along beside him comes a religious man, a priest first. This priest is one of the man's own because he is a Jewish priest yet he just keeps going right by the man. Then another one of his own comes by him and this one is a Levite. He also walks on by him. Then one who is not his own yet his sworn enemy, a Samaritan, the one whom he hated, the one between this Jewish man and this Samaritan would have been religious bigotry and racial hatred, absolutely despising each other, it's that Samaritan that stops and bandages him up. That Samaritan takes care of him, deposits him in a hospitality center, gives enough money to cover his expenses and then signs his name to the bill and says, "If you need more I'll take care of it."

Jesus has very clearly done two things. One He has attacked what had been at work which is a people who had given lip service to loving your neighbor as yourself but to get out of it had totally redefined neighbor. The second thing is Jesus is really challenging the man that everybody is his neighbor and the bigger question for the man is 'are you a neighbor?' Jesus teaches the man about neighborly love. That will be an illustration that Jesus is building off of in this text that we are looking at in this study.

In this study on the Sermon on the Mount we have first of all heard from Jesus about the enormous blessing of being in the Kingdom. You are in the Kingdom because God transferred you from the kingdom of darkness into the Kingdom of the Son and you were saved. When you were saved you not only received a new heart and a new record but you received a new life. Jesus describes that life in something called the beatitudes. Now that you have this new heart, new life and new record before Him because you have been saved by the King and the Kingdom is now at work within you living it out in this world in the midst of this kingdom of darkness, He then says here is your Kingdom ministry in which you are salt and light. As salt you restrain corruption, you make it tasty to draw them to the saving grace of Christ and as light you shine the light of the Gospel so that darkness has to flee and people will be drawn through the Light who is Christ Himself. Now He says the way you do this is because I'm doing something in you from the inside out and Jesus now from the mount where He is giving this sermon is giving them the Gospel and the Law.

There had been another mount called Mount Sinai where Jesus had come down and met Moses and given him the Ten Commandments. The glory of the Lord met Moses and gave him the Ten Commandments and now Jesus is taking that Law that brings you to an end of yourself and brings you to Christ and says "Now let Me show you that when you love Me this is how you keep these commandments and this is where these commandments really take you. It gives you a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees." Then Jesus starts ten commandments in which the first five give us the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees.

When you become a Christian your sins are forgiven and you receive a perfect righteousness from Christ and then because you have received that righteousness you then begin to pursue a righteousness not to be saved but to honor Christ. He shows us how the Law can give direction but how the Gospel takes you to a depth that you have never seen before. Jesus shows us where that depth is and so He takes the Old Testament commandment 'you shall not murder' and He teaches us the sanctity of life and what it means to pursue life. He shows us what it means to pursue life not only by what you do but it's not simply I restrain from killing people but it's I lift people up to the life that is found in the Gospel with my words in the way that I talk and what I do. He also says you have heard them say 'don't commit adultery' but commit marriage and commit Biblical sexuality within marriage. Don't look at the addictions of sexual perversions, sexual immorality and all those things where you think there is happiness there and there's not but there's happiness in Me. When you have Me you can build a marriage and enjoy each other. You can commit marriage instead of adultery with the glories and blessings of Biblical sexuality out of the One who has given you intimacy with Him.

Then He says "You're living in a world that speaks lies but you speak the truth. There are reasons we have oaths and covenants because we're in a broken world but My people live with such truth and truthfulness that My people don't need oaths and

covenants. You can trust them. They say what they mean and mean what they say and they're never mean when they say it. Because they are not mean when they say it they don't engage in vigilante justice. When somebody does something wrong against them they don't hold people accountable to them but they bless them. They pursue them. Yes, here is the woman in the marriage that has been abused and yes there is a place for the courts to deal with that. Yes there is the issue of divorce but personally I will love you and forgive you. I won't set up my own court system. Yes there is a partner that has embezzled things and the court systems are there to handle that but personally I don't have my own vigilante system of justice. No, personally I'm going to love you, forgive you and pursue you."

Now He brings this to a fifth commandment. This fifth commandment sums up these first five. In the next study we'll start into the next five commandments which deal with how you practice this exceeding righteousness in a way that honors the Lord and doesn't draw attention to yourself but draws people to Christ. The fifth commandment here is I want you to love and pray for your enemies. Jesus opens this up by recounting the Law that they have been taught which is in Matthew 5:43; **43** "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'*" Jesus is quoting what they would have been taught from Leviticus 19:18 and what He later will repeat Himself that you shall love your neighbor as yourself but here this is very important. Here is the origin, the seed bed, of every false teaching. Every false teaching that distracts or deceives God's people always does one or two or perhaps both things. False teaching can use God's Word. One, it will add or subtract to the Word. Who was the first human author of the Bible? It was Moses. Moses said in the Pentateuch not to add or subtract. Who is the last human author of your Bible? It was John and he says in Revelation 22, do not add or subtract. That's what the Rabbis had done.

First of all they had subtracted and they did this by redefining 'neighbor' and that's why that man had the question to Jesus of 'who's my neighbor?' When Jesus teaches about neighbor everybody is your neighbor. That's what the Law is telling you, everybody is your neighbor. They had redefined neighbor as being those who they liked and those who liked them and those who are likeable. My neighbors are my friends. Then they not only subtracted from what the Law was teaching but they then added. Matthew 5:43 says **43** "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'*" Can you find that phrase 'hate your enemy' in the Old Testament? Can you find 'hate sin'? Yes you can find that one but you cannot find hate your enemy. They had subtracted what 'neighbor' meant and added that those who you don't like you can now hate in the name of our religion. So now you are free to hate them. So that's what they had been taught.

Let me show you this. Do you remember David? Was there anybody that hated David simply because God had called him to be king? Saul hated David. Did Saul pursue him, persecute him, want to do evil against him or want to kill him? He tried to throw his spear at him time and time again. What did David do with Saul five times? You will not touch the Lord's anointed and David pleaded with Saul saying, "Why do you do this? I am not your enemy" and David blessed him.

Now let me show you this through one of the great patriarchs in Job. People are asking Job "Why are these things happening to you?" and he says "Let me try and figure this out. Why are all these things happening to me? One of the reasons it's not

happening is that I've been loving my neighbor" and he does it with a rhetorical question. I love the book of Job because when I first became a Christian I thought it was pronounced 'job' as in occupation. Let's look at Job 31:29-31 which says **29** *"If I have rejoiced at the ruin of him who hated me, or exulted when evil overtook him* **30** *(I have not let my mouth sin by asking for his life with a curse),* **31** *if the men of my tent have not said, 'Who is there that has not been filled with his meat?'* Job is saying, "I have enemies and people have tried to persecute me but I haven't cursed them or asked God to curse them because God told me to love my neighbor, which includes my enemies."

So what we have here is false teaching that have been brought to the people and has redefined neighbor through subtraction and then added a commandment as if it's a commandment that is not found that you shall hate your enemy. Now Jesus corrects this back in Matthew 5. He expands the Law and reclaims it with the Gospel. Matthew 5:43-44 says **43** *"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 and pray for those who persecute you.* Jesus is reclaiming the whole commandment and purpose of your neighbor. He wants us to do two things. One, to love your neighbor, I know you love your family and friends but now I want you to love your enemy because they're your neighbor. Secondly, I want you to pray for those who persecute you.

Who are my enemies? Matthew 5:44-48 says **44** *But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,* **45** *so that you may be sons of your Father who is 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 do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?* **47** *And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?* **48** *You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.* I know Matthew 5:48 is a challenging verse but I want to back up for a minute. There are people who persecute you. There are people who do evil, sinful, horrific, heinous things. There are people who do things that are unjust and what does Jesus want you to do with those people? Jesus says, "I want you to love them and pray for them. I don't want you to love sin so you are free to hate sin but I want you to love them and I want you to pray for them." That's very interesting isn't it?

If you love somebody you'll pray for them. Prayer is not all you do when you love people but it is the first thing you do and the best thing you can do. It's not the last thing you do. If someone is thirsty you pray for them to have water and you give them a cup of water. So it's not the last thing you do or the only thing you do but it is the first thing you do and the best thing you do unlike us when we usually say, "I can't help you but at least I can pray for you." We just gave away our view of prayer, didn't we? That's not the least you can do. It is the best you can do but not the only thing you can do, so you pray for them. Here's another blessing. When you love people and bless them with intercessory prayer you'll start loving them more. It is hard not to love people you are praying for.

So Jesus says He wants us to love them and pray for them and Jesus is not giving us another commandment of love your enemies. Jesus is reclaiming the old commandment where neighbors include enemies. He is not adding a commandment of love your enemies as if that is what they were supposed to do in the Old Testament. Job did it. David did it. We are taught time and time again in the Bible that neighbor

includes Samaritans or those who are not Christians or those who are manufacturing pornography. I'll hate the pornography but I'll love the pornographer. I'm going to hate abortion and there's a place in the courts to deal with murder. We are going to keep challenging it but I'm going to love an abortionist. That is what God has called me to do. Here in this fifth commandment He has just taken this sword and searched my heart one more step.

Then He says to embrace this with the Gospel. The beginning of Matthew 5:45 says **45** *so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.* Who is this Father? He is the One who makes the sun shine on the just and the unjust. He is the One who gives the rain to the evil and the good that you may be as your Father and so show that you are sons of your Father. Jesus is not teaching us that if you love your enemies you can get to be in God's family. He is teaching us that the person brought to the Son of God, apart of His family, call God their Father, who are Mine, belong to My Father, are His children, show it as He has shown it. Yesterday the sun came up and did it shine on you? Did it shine on an atheist? Did it shine on a pornographer? The rain that came down on Saturday, did it water the ground that planted a garden who is also embezzling from their business? Did God's rain and sun fall in common grace in kindness and mercy on the just and the unjust? Are you living and moving and having your being getting the next breath from Him? Is the atheist? Is the blasphemer? Yes, He is upholding them too. Now if that is what your Father has done and you're His child then show the Father.

Jesus has just drawn the loop back for us where He started back in Matthew 5. Remember when Jesus talked about being salt and light and we live this different life in this world? Look back in Matthew 5:16. What does this different life in this world look like? Matthew 5:16 says *"In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."* When you not just simply do not murder people but you pursue life, not simply don't lie but pursue truth, not simply honor the courts but you don't set up your own vigilante justice, when My people live differently in this world they are showing that God is their Father. You are not making God your Father but you're showing your Father by what you are doing. It is not your works that are saving you but it is your works that are letting people see who you believe and whom you have trusted. If you trusted His Son then you are showing the Father. That is what you're doing and where does that end up?

If I'm following Jesus then Jesus is the perfect representation of God the Father. So if I'm following Jesus then that leads me to be perfect as my Father is perfect. It is to live in the pursuit of holiness with grace, mercy, justice and kindness. It is to bear the fruit of the Spirit and there is something that is different. This isn't what I'm doing to be saved. This is what I'm doing for my Father who sent His Son who is my Savior who perfectly represents Him, so now that I trust in Him and follow Him I am now pursuing the perfections of the Father.

What does this mean? Here are a couple of takeaways on this text. The first takeaway is like Father, like Son. We are either going to live like the world or we're going to live like our Father. Those are our two choices. I have the privilege to counsel people for marriage and in my first counseling session I talk about leaving and cleaving. One of the challenges of leaving is that when you go into a marriage you're supposed to be focused on Jesus and men are supposed to love their wives like Christ loves the church and ladies are supposed to relate to their husbands with submission and respect the way

His Bride, the church, does to Him but that's not what we start off with. We start off with daddy and mommy. What do I mean? I look to the guy and say "Imagine your daddy married to her mother." Then I look at the lady and say "Imagine your mother married to his daddy." Why? It is because in my case for 20 plus years I learned how to deal with women and a wife by watching my daddy. So I didn't enter into marriage neutral. I have my daddy all over me. I'm 62 years old and periodically I'll do something and say "Good gracious that sounds like my daddy." I'm doing and saying just like my daddy used to do.

If you have been born again with a new record, a new heart and a new family, you now have a new Father. Do you know who your other father was? He was a murdered, liar and you did his works and that was Satan. You now have a new Father – like Father, like son. I know this is a challenge but what I'm saying right now if you're a Christian is resonating within you right now. You want to love your neighbor including your enemies but you are also struggling with the same thing I struggle with and I have an old man within me that keeps wanting to live like the world instead of like my Father. Thankfully I have a Father who has within me this readiness to take this step. I also have this old man that says "I would rather hate my enemies because I feel a whole lot better when I can put people down because I think that lifts me up." So I am fighting this thing within me but if you're saved here's what is happening. Intentionally you want to be like your Father which includes sending rain and sun meaning kindness and grace and mercy on your enemies. There's a place for court systems to do their work and political systems but in my life I want to love that enemy and reach out to that enemy that's inside of me even though also inside of me is warring against that. But my Father who hates evil and sin who is continually gracious and kind to sinners sends rain and sunshine continually. Father, I want to be like that so people see You as I follow Your Son in my life.

I like everybody else love this issue of son-ship. It's very big in our circles today of teaching son-ship all the time where son-ship is that we're adopted into the family of God. It's wonderful! I'm not an orphan to sin anymore and I don't have to perform like I'm in an orphanage anymore to get God to be my Father. I love that. I have the Holy Spirit who has sealed me with the spirit of adoption. I like you love the blessings of adoption. I am a son of God by His grace and mercy, sealed by His blood and His Spirit in Him. He's my Father but there are also responsibilities of son-ship. If He is your Father then live like His Son. We love the blessings of son-ship but you hear very little of the responsibilities of son-ship. Let people see the Father as you follow His Son.

What is it that is going to drawing people? What is it that makes a difference in the people around us? The second takeaway is a different difference. Right now we believe that we want to be Christians and we want people to be Christians yet we somehow in the Evangelical church today think people will become Christians if I love what they love for entertainment, if I talk the way they talk, if I live they way they live. I won't really talk the way they talk by using those curse words, I'll just change two vowels and I won't really go to the hard core stuff. I'm not a prude because look at what I went to watch. What draws people to Jesus is not how much like the world we are but how different we are with a difference. What do I mean by that? I'm not talking about a difference that's legalistic, arrogant and promoted by religion and ritual. I'm talking about a difference that flows from the heart. We don't love idolatry. We love Him. So whether we eat or drink or whatsoever we do, we don't glorify that and worship it. We

glorify Him with what He has given us. So this is where we are. We are different with a difference. It is not a difference with an arrogance of self righteousness with religion but it is a difference that has been made by Jesus in our life. It is a difference in that God has changed our heart so that when it comes to loving we not only love Jesus because He first loved us or love His people because He loves them but we love lost people, His enemies, because He loves them.

There was a difference the way Stephen died. As the stones were coming he said, "Forgive them because they know not what they do." Why did he say that? It was because Jesus was his vision who had gone to a cross and He said, "Father, forgive them." Jesus loved the mockers, the persecutors, the unjust and the evil all the way to the cross. It's that brokenness and humility of difference. It is not just being different. It's different with a difference of courage and compassion, of conviction and kindness, of triumph and brokenness for it is that which makes a difference.

Here is a third and final takeaway. When He says "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" we talk a lot at Briarwood about discipling and making disciples. Discipleship is imitation. With the instruction of God's Word we imitate. You have pastors, parents, friends and disciplers whom you are imitating as they follow Jesus and it's because you want to imitate Jesus. If you are imitating Jesus then by following Jesus who is the perfect representation of His Father you are seeking the perfections of the glory of God. Now we know we're not going to get there in this world but as we're following Jesus, while we're not going to be sinless, we want to sin less. We want to embrace the character and actions of God the Father as revealed in His Son whom we have trusted and whom we are following. So be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

So when you see sinners you'll see them as enemies if you're behind the wall and the gate of religion of self righteousness and arrogance but if God's grace has laid hold of you in Christ and your eyes are fixed on Jesus then when you see sinners you see yourself. That's who you see. That's where I was but He saved me. He loved me. He didn't just send sun and rain upon me. He sent His Son for me. Whoever lives to pray for me therefore O Lord, my enemies are my neighbors and I will love them as You have loved me. Would you make them yours even as you have made Me yours? Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together. Thank You for the Lord Jesus who comes in His Word to teach us and work upon us. Friend, would you let the Holy Spirit speak to your heart now? You may say, "Pastor I don't know Jesus." For the love of God has been poured out for while we were yet enemies (sinners) Christ died for us, while we were helpless He called us and because He did that for us and you, we now love you and want you to know Him. Come to Him. He is death on sin but He is life for sinners. Jesus would You help us not to just love the lovely, the people who love us, and who are loveable but would You help us to love those who persecute us, are evil and unjust and pray for them, for that's what we were and yet You have saved us. Ride on in triumph and bring again the days of Elijah and Ezekiel through us. Father, I thank You for this, in Jesus' Name, Amen.