

# CITY CHURCH-EASTSIDE WEEKLY WORSHIP GUIDE

October 25, 2009



## Sermon on the Mount: Surprising the Enemy

*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy'...."*

Due to the 2,000 year gap we often strain to understand the context of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Just as the Old Testament Law had given Israel an identity that was wholly other, so too the Sermon on the Mount was designed to give God's people a fresh, kingdom culture and identity. In this way he was ultimately calling Jews to something more than the former glory of Solomon's Temple and Gentiles to something beyond the power brokerage of Rome. Consonant with God's work throughout history this kingdom, Christ's kingdom, is wholly other. The text this week lays the question before us "How should we respond to the wound of an enemy, especially when you hate them?"

The place to begin is in understanding the priority of peace found in these verses. "an eye for eye and tooth for tooth" has been the poster child for vengeful action, but it was not originally so. In its original context, this law was to be governed by the

courtroom and was designed to restrain the escalation of violence. The religious leaders of course created mutated forms of this law that bred violence in everyday life. Through the Sermon on the Mount Jesus calls us to even more, to sow seeds of peace in place of violence.

There are four illustrations that Jesus gives to explain the peace of kingdom life. The one highlighted in the sermon is "going the extra mile" found in verse 41. In Jesus' day Jew and Gentile relationships were filled with tension and hatred. Gentiles enjoyed the role of oppressor while Jews hoped for the day when their long-awaited messiah would crush the enemy. Well, their messiah was now on the scene, but directing the troops along radically different lines. By law Roman soliders could require Jewish people to carry their bags a mile's distance, but not any further. Jesus exhorts his original audience to not only obey this law, but to go beyond it. In a brilliant stroke of genius such a posture would force the enemy to see the reality of this dehumanizing injustice and at the same force him to see the servant as an

equal. In this way, Jesus calls us, not to be doormats, but to subvert the dominant paradigm of retribution.

At the end of this passage Jesus calls us to make peace by loving and forgiving our enemy. How is this possible? For many of us this seems absurd! Religion and secular culture often call upon the Golden Rule to address our enemies, but upon further examination this fails us. It's easy to love those who love us, but the challenge comes in loving our enemy! The work of Christ offers us a unique ability in this regard. First, if you know Christ as Lord, then you'll understand that this happened because God first loved us. We were once his enemies, but in great love through the work of Christ he overcame us and drew us to himself (Ro 5:10). Additionally, because of Christ we can be confident in God's ability to accomplish justice in this age and the one to come. As these things become the meditation of our heart this enables us to love our enemies with a life-giving freedom that is not of this world. Walk in peace this week. *Amen.*

# Sermon Application

The questions and thoughts below can be used for further reflection this week. Seek to use a journal or discuss with a friend. Most of all use this to consider how the gospel of Christ can be transforming. Enjoy!

## *Intersect: Spiritual Dynamics Part III*

1. Now that we've been studying the Sermon on the Mount for several weeks, how would you describe its purpose? How does Jesus' original intent offer us hope for transformation?
2. The passage for this week calls us to examine how we deal with injustice. What are the typical responses of our broader culture?
3. What are your naturally tendencies when you feel wounded? Do you find yourself content with such proclivities? Why or why not?
4. What is the meaning of Jesus' teaching in verse 41 in regards to "going the extra mile". Reflect on the contextual information when answering. What was his ultimate point? How could this response transform your own response to injustice?
5. How is the Golden Rule in direct conflict with Jesus teaching here? Why does this principle fail to govern relationships in God's kingdom?
6. Consider someone who has wounded you. How does the work of Christ uniquely enable us to move towards such a person in love? Consider:
  - a. God's love (Read Ro 5:10)
  - b. The economy of justice with God.
  - c. The power of prayer



Eugene Delacroix  
*The Good Samaritan*  
1852

For several weeks now this column has been dedicated to the nuts and bolts of gospel change. Part one introduced this series and highlighted our need to break-away from the idols to which we are addicted. Part two introduced the means by which we break away from idolatry; identify it, starve it out, cut it out, and crowd it out. Last week we began to look at what it means to identify our idols, unmask them, and see them for what they truly are. Idols are curiously powerful, yet in and of themselves they are mute and ignorant. Beyond identification we begin defeating our idols and thus mortifying our sin by starving it and cutting it out. Said another way, we must deny this idol nourishment and move against it with radical action. So what does this look like? Going back to the "check-engine light" illustration we must identify not only what's going on at the surface level but even more importantly what's going on under the hood.

- **Change at the Surface:** Often times in Christian circles this can become the focus of attention. Someone is dealing with some sort of controlling influence and that influence becomes the focal point for change. When it comes to playing defense against these influences such an approach can be very helpful. These influences can be defined as 'near idols' which are more concrete and specific such as your spouse or career. These are always good things that your 'far idols' (see below) are using. Thus, what things can you change on the surface to begin an assault? Do you need to avoid the former lover, have your internet usage monitored, or take a walk when your anger is on the rise? Change on the surface is necessary, but it can't be alone.
- **Change Under the Hood:** Change at the surface is not enough. A sole focus on the surface is like mowing over a weed, it will come back next week. In order to address the root you'll need to examine the 'far idols' of your life. They are the ones who are really running the show, such as power, approval, comfort, and control. These are motivational and spiritual drives that are to be satisfied in Christ and thus yield good fruit, but we often push them through 'near idols' in an attempt to quench their thirst. Whatever is going at the surface, ask yourself "What drive am I trying to fulfill outside of Christ? How did the early years of my life shape this inordinate desire? How can I be more aware that of my 'far idol' proclivities and how they manifest themselves in 'near idols'?"

May we move against our idolatries for our freedom and Christ's glory!\*

"Maybe the deepest tragedy of the Rwandan genocide is that Christianity didn't seem to make any difference. Rwandans performed a script that had shaped them more deeply than the biblical story had. Behind the silences of the genocide, Hutus and Tutsis alike were shaped by a story that held their imagination captive...Paying attention to history helps us to see that this was not just Rwanda's problem. The story that made Rwanda is the story of the West. When we look at Rwanda as a mirror to the church, it helps us realize what little consequence the biblical story has on the way Christians live their lives in the West. As Christians, we cannot remember the Rwandan genocide without admitting that the gospel did not seem to have a real impact on most Rwandan's lives. Seeing this, we have to ask: does Christianity make any real difference in the West?"

Emmanuel Katongole, *Mirror to the Church: Resurrecting Faith After Genocide in Rwanda*

\*This material is taken from Steve Childers "Spiritual Dynamics for Leaders: Applying the Gospel" & Tim Keller's "Preaching the Gospel".