

True sons of the Father

⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Even the tax collectors, do they not do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Even the Gentiles, do they not do the same? ⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Last week, we looked at Matthew 5:43-45 and Jesus' correction of the Pharisees mixing truth with error by teaching 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' We found out that the Pharisees commandment to hate your enemies is found nowhere in the Old Testament. We learned that Jesus tells us not only to love just one enemy, but to love _____ our enemies, even those who make it the most _____ to love them. Self-interest cannot be our _____ motivation, if we are to love our enemies, and one of the pinnacles of what it _____ to die to self, and follow Jesus. God does His work through us when we love our enemies, and conforms us to His image, while Glorifying His name on Earth.

45 **45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven;**

Jesus is saying that in loving even those who hate us, _____ are acting how God acts. Our treatment of people is based on the _____ that they have, as persons created in the image of God, and on the _____ that they have that we can fill. And today, in our materialistically wealthy society, these needs are going to often go beyond just giving someone some _____. And the _____ that we show when our enemy is in need may be the one opportunity that we have to point them to Christ. If God has put someone in our lives with a great need, He is trusting you with an _____ task. As James 1:27 puts it **27 Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.** And that means that even if the particular widow happens to be an _____, the fact that they are in distress means God wants you to show _____ for them and help them.

This idea of our sonship, our family resemblance to God being tied together with the _____ and depth of the love that we show toward one another is echoed throughout the scriptures. And it begins with God. In Romans 8:14, Paul speaks of this sonship saying **14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons and daughters of God.** So, the _____ of the Holy Spirit within us, shows us how to follow God's will for our lives. And He gives us power. **15 For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons and daughters by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"** So, the Holy Spirit gives us power not to be _____, because we have the confidence of being Children of God. And, we have the power to _____ and make petitions to God, and we know that we will be heard, and answered by God. Not only that, **16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,** so we have both the 100% _____ that we are saved. Follow His _____ you to follow Christ, and you will be assured that you are saved! Jesus ties all of this into having love for _____, even our enemies.

⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have?

In other words, loving people who love you in return is just _____ human behavior. It's a good thing, and even a great thing, but by itself it's not a witness that you are in Christ, and does not demonstrate God's love in such a way that anyone would _____. Now, contrast this with Jesus' words in in Mathew 10:42 **42 And whoever gives one of these little ones just a cup of cold water to drink in the name of a disciple, truly I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward."** Notice the _____ here. Jesus' example of giving only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple is about being concerned that God is _____. And that's what loving our _____ is all about.

Even the tax collectors, do they not do the same?

Matthew, as we recall, was a former tax collector. In first century Israel, they were not only disliked, they were _____. They gathered taxes for the hated Romans, who used the money to fund the _____ of the Jews. There was a kind of brotherly love, one tax collector to another, but it lacked the genuine generosity, warmth and self-sacrifice that Jesus was talking about. We've all experienced the kind of _____, limited love that the world offers. Matthew had probably experienced the _____ of most of his tax collector friends, who probably thought he was putting on airs by following Jesus as a disciple. Matthew had seen the limitations of their kind of love, but He wanted something more—real, unending agape love that cared about him because he was loved and valued in God's eyes—not for what he could do for someone else, but just for the beautiful person God had _____ him to be.

⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?

By, brothers and sisters here, Jesus likely meant other _____ people, since they also called each other "brother" or "sister", just like Christians often do today. This is what the lawyer in Luke 10:25-29 is getting at, by asking whether he really has to love foreigners and Samaritans in order to please God. Jesus _____ by relating the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10:30-37. Isn't it interesting that the lawyer's question related to what He must do in his flesh to inherit eternal life. The man _____ that he may have had a chance to make it on his own, without believing in Jesus by keeping all of the commandments. And the man thought, well, I treat my Jewish brethren neighbors as myself, I think, so I may still have a shot. But when Jesus called him to love even those he regarded as his enemies as himself, he knew that he could _____ accomplish this on his own. He _____ God's help, and that's what Jesus was trying to tell him.

⁴⁸ Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

During the Last Supper, when Jesus spoke of His having to leave them, He gives them a commandment. It was the _____ new commandment Jesus ever gave, and He gave it to these same disciples that the Sermon on the Mount is directed to, these same Citizens of Heaven. He said in John 13:34-5 **34 I am giving you a new commandment, that you love one another; just as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all people will know that you are My disciples: if you have love for one another."**

Truly loving even our enemies with the graceful, caring, providing, self-sacrificing love that God has shown us, is one of the _____ outward expressions of a close relationship with God.