

## SERMON - Love Your Enemies - Luke 6:31-36, Sunday, September 30, 2018

One of the most radical things that Jesus said that caused the Jews to hate Him was when He said that we should love our enemies. There was no room for love in their concept of who and what the Messiah should be. They expected a warrior King who would deliver them and free Israel from Roman captivity. Love our enemies? They must have thought that Jesus was out of His mind. But Jesus spoke the truth and our Savior led by example. Jesus loved His enemies right up until the end, even as He hung upon the Cross. With His dying breath He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." Ironically, the Christians conquered the Roman empire not with swords and military might but with love. Is there a way that we can come to love our enemies? Father Andrew Harmon, Pastor of St. Matthew Antiochian Orthodox Church, North Royalton, Ohio suggests the following:

- **Pray** –I wonder how often we think to pray for our enemies. Why pray for them? Mainly because only God can heal the wounds of the heart. In praying for our enemies, it may be our hearts that are healed.
- **Thank God for something good about your enemy**– We tend to think of our enemies as being devoid of anything good. The fact is that they are no more evil than we are, and we believe that there is some good in ourselves. Dwelling on what is good rather than what is evil may result in realizing that like our enemy, we are a mix of good and evil. Maybe it was my evil that contributed to the conflict. Maybe, in the remembrance of wrongs, I have forgotten the part that I played and have made my enemy to be more of a villain than they deserve.
- **Shift your anger** – One of the great roadblocks to creating peace is anger. Because of anger, we will not listen to any suggestion that reconciliation is possible. What does it mean to shift anger? It means to turn the power of anger against the root of habitual sin in our own hearts instead of outward against people who offend us. If we did this, we would soon be saints. Ask St. Moses the Black.
- **Treat them kindly** – Finally, Jesus tells us that it is not enough to be good to people we like. We must do something good for our enemies, such as turn the other cheek or walk the extra mile. We are to be like our Father who is good to the evil as well as to the just; who causes the rain to fall on the fields of the righteous and the unrighteous. So, Jesus said that we should be like our heavenly Father. In doing good things, we may find that we will change a heart and gain a friend. We might discover the treasure of true humility.

In conclusion, let us listen to St. Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich: "Bless my enemies, O Lord. Even I bless them and do not curse them. Enemies have driven me into Your embrace more than friends have. Friends have bound me to earth, enemies have loosed me from earth and have demolished all my aspirations in the world. Enemies have taught me to know what hardly anyone knows, that a person has no enemies in the world except himself. One hates his enemies only when he fails to realize that they are not enemies, but cruel friends. It is truly difficult for me to say who has done me more good and who has done me more evil in the world: friends or enemies." (an excerpt)

Do good to your enemies. Be like your Father in heaven. Loving your enemy will change your life, and save your soul.