

SERMON ON LOVE - Luke 6:31-36, Oct. 1, 2017

What is the greatest power in the world? Is it a nuclear bomb or the most sophisticated weapons? Is it wealth? Is it political office? Is it your position at work or in society? All of these things can certainly have a major influence, to say the least. They can be used to intimidate and force people to behave a certain way, they can induce fear, they can even cause massive destruction of life and property. The largest empire in the world, the Roman empire, was conquered without a single arrow being shot or a single spear being hurled. This mighty empire was conquered by people who lived humbly and simply and who were scorned and hated by society. The Roman eagle was replaced by the Christian Cross. How is this possible, and how did this happen? The greatest power in the world is within the grasp of everyone, no matter who you are, and it costs nothing, except perhaps your ego and your pride. The power I am speaking about is love.

What is love? Love is forgiveness. Love is the giving of self in order to serve and help the other. We human beings cannot have peace in our hearts unless we express sympathy and love. Hatred consumes us like a fire and sickens our bodies, our minds and our souls. All love and all truth have their origin in God. If one loves, everything is easy; if one does not – everything is hard. We all know the expressions, “kill them with kindness,” and “love makes the world go round”. These expressions should not be taken lightly. They are profound truths, for love conquers and love has a universal and cosmic significance. Love, indeed, makes the world go round, and it takes it back to its ultimate source, which is God.

Why do people hate or dislike us? Why do people try to make us miserable or abuse us? Sometimes people won't like you because of something you have done to them. But sometimes people won't like you just because they are jealous of you, or don't like the way you look, or the way you talk, or even the way you walk. and other reactions that are so prevalent in human nature. But after looking at these things and admitting these things, we must face the fact that an individual might dislike us because of something that we've done deep down in the past, some personality attribute that we possess, something that we've done deep down in the past and we've forgotten about it; but it was that something that aroused the hate response within the individual. Therefore, the first step we must take in order to love and to make peace with our brother or sister is to identify if there is something within us that arouses the tragic hate response in the other individual. Loving and forgiving others begins with looking at ourselves. Jesus said: "How is it that you can see the mote in your brother's eye and not see the beam in your own eye?" This is one of the tragedies of human nature. Within all of us is an eternal struggle between good and evil. When we come to see this, we take a different attitude toward individuals. So we begin to love those persons that hate us by looking at ourselves. A second thing we must do is to find the good in the other person. Every time we begin to think about hating that person, realize that there is some good there and look at those good points which will over-balance the bad points. The time may come when you have the opportunity to either take revenge or help the person who has misused you, gossiped about you and spread false rumors about you. That is the time when you should not take revenge but instead to help the person and conquer him or her with your love. You don't want to defeat your enemy. You want to be reconciled with your enemy and you can only do this by loving and forgiving your enemy. Remember that God loves everyone, even the worst person that you have ever seen, and no one, no matter how heinous the sin, is outside of the sphere of God's forgiveness, if that person would repent. And only love and forgiveness can lead a person to repentance. Answering hatred with hatred will only drive a deeper wedge and both of you will perish in your hatred and ill-will.

Another reason you should love your enemies is because hatred will make you sick and destroy you, physically and spiritually.

It is very tragic to see a person whose heart is filled with hate. The person who hates will see a person that can be beautiful and call that person ugly. The person who hates will call that which is good bad, and that which is bad good. Everything becomes distorted and upside down. The true becomes false and the false becomes true. Martin Luther King Jr. said that "hate at any point is a cancer that gnaws away at the very vital center of your life and your existence. It is like eroding acid that eats away the best and the objective center of your life. So Jesus says love, because hate destroys the hater as well as the hated." Only love can transform individuals. Just keep loving and being friendly to the person who is mistreating you. Don't do anything to embarrass them. Just keep loving them, and they can't stand it too long. They react in many ways in the beginning. They may be angry with you because you love them like that, they may react with guilt feelings, and they may even hate you a little more during that transition period, but just keep loving them. And by the power of your love they will break down under the load. Hate tears down and destroys, love builds up and creates. So that is why Jesus says to love.

Picture Jesus walking around the hills and valleys of Palestine and looking out at the Roman Empire and all of her intricate and fascinating military machinery. And in the midst of that, we can hear Jesus saying, "I will not conquer them with armies or weapons. I will conquer them with love." Centuries ago Jesus knew and taught the power of love. O Lord, help us in our lives and in all of our attitudes to work out this power of love that can solve every problem and bring peace between all mankind. May love heal all grudges and disagreements that we have with anyone. May love join us all in fellowship and harmony as we humbly bow down at the feet of our Lord. This we ask in the name of Christ our Lord, through the power of the Holy Spirit, and the love of God the Father, Amen.