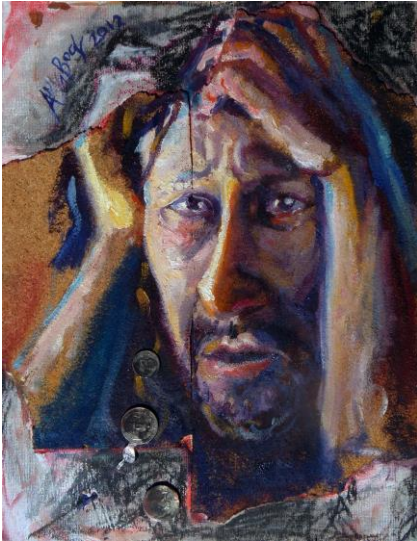


Love Your Enemy

First Series – Sermon Eleven

Original by George MacDonald

Paraphrase by Dale R. Howie



Two steps must precede and empower your ability to Love Your Enemy, both mentioned at the close of *Love Your Neighbor*: "But we may have only begun to love our neighbor, with the hope of loving him more in the future. When, as if starting over, we receive another word from the Lord. One that seems harder than the first, although it is not, for only with obeying the former, loving our neighbor, can it be attained. If we have not learned to love our neighbor **as ourselves**, our hearts will sink within us at the words, *"I say to you, love your enemies."*

"Love your neighbor as you love yourself." Matthew 12:39 GNT.

Loving yourself is the third commandment implied here in the verse. It is, in fact, the starting point for any love-giving at all! In order to love God or your neighbor, you must receive Divine Love first. Freedom to Love requires deliverance from the prison of self! The Trinity can love Their enemies, for They need nothing for Themselves. They love you. They do not need you! We do not fill a lack that They have. We participate in the Love and Life that They give.

Outline

God Loves His Enemies - We have no excuse!

We Share One Humanity - We are of one nature, even the divine nature.

Love the Real Man - Seeing the true self beneath the hatred and evil.

No Justice without Love - Our justice without love, a mere fiction of honest judgment.

I am the Enemy – The awful truth is, living from our hurts makes us the enemy of our neighbor.

Everyone must Repent – Change is seeing God, ourselves, and others through the eyes of love and forgiveness.

Perfect in Love – God is perfect, perfection being love expressed!

Matthew 5:43-48 GNT

"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your friends, hate your enemies.' But now I tell you: love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may become the children of your Father in heaven. For he makes his sun to shine on bad and good people alike and gives rain to those who do good and to those who do evil. Why should God reward you if you love only the people who love you? Even the tax collectors do that! And if you speak only to your friends, have you done anything out of the ordinary? Even the pagans do that! You must be perfect—just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

John 17:21 NASB

"That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us,"

God Loves His Enemies

Is this too much to expect? Is it even possible to love our enemies? On a good day, we might be kind to them, but could we ever pray for them that oppose or use us? When? Will we become children of our Father, being like Him? One day with God's help, we will love our neighbor as ourselves even if they are our enemies. In the Leviticus passage, *"Do not take revenge on others or continue to hate them, but love your neighbors as you love yourself. I am the Lord."* Here we find the uncomfortable truth, our neighbor and our enemies are the same, both worthy of love!

Look at the beauty of Jesus' interpretation of this passage in Matthew. *"...You must be perfect – just as your Father in heaven is perfect. "God is love, all love, nothing other than love."* Perfection is love expressed! Not moral or legal righteousness, but freedom to love! Is God then reasonable to expect us to love our enemies? HE DOES! He is the highest possible example and reason. Can we love like this? Yes, because of His divine energy present in us, empowering us to be what we are, lovers like God! Their energy and presence are what Jesus asked for when He prayed, *"That they may be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us."* This kind of oneness is unimaginable to us. But this was their intention for us all along!

We Share One Humanity

So, why should we love our enemies? In the very nature of our being, the answer is found, for we are one with them, even in the divine nature that we share. Into this revelation, we see very little. What we do see, through the sharing of the same essential nature, we call humanity. This humanity unites us with our enemy in our single origin in God! We are called to love everyone, something altogether different from the anger, fear, and hate that we feel.

It is in this common humanity where the claim of neighborhood originates, not in our response. Then do all of our neighbors, both good and evil, share in this common humanity? Yes. If not, there would be nothing there to love. There in the universal soul is the very root of all our activities. So, we ought to love, cherish all our brothers and sisters no matter what would come between us!

Loving the Real Man

So how can we love someone unjust and cruel to us? The one who burns with contempt, who cuts off every attempt we make to embrace? Who is unlovely, mean, and critical, self-righteous, self-seeking, and self-centered? Who can mockingly smile while looking down on and hating us? This kind of treatment is more painful than murder. These characteristics are unloveable. The best of us hate them; the worst of us hate them even more. But is the real person what we see? Even in this silhouette, there is a participation with the divine, something lovely and loveable. Even though the beautiful is slowly disappearing from them, dying under the heat of evil passions, or worse, stone-cold selfishness. But when the divine nature in them awakens, it bears the fruit of their true self. They would become hateful of the unlovely pattern, even more than we do now. Oh, that only we could see this precious life in them?

In this silhouette, in the fading of their humanity is what awakens hate in us, hatred against that which divides. If the offenders were just animals and not men and women who hurt us, we would not hate: we would kill! We hate the evil that prevents us from loving them. When pushed to the end of our patience – we damn - because we cannot embrace. We withdraw into hate that shackles us, leaving them to die. Frustrated, we hate! **But, to embrace is the driving force of the divine Life.**

The person beneath all their offenses and lies, the true self revealed, would compel us, from our hearts, to commit to them in love. It's not the unfriendly and unlovely, as if this were their real person, who we are to love, but our brothers and sisters, who are unkind and unlovely. Will we abandon them to a loveless future? Or will we say, "You at least, with my love, will be encircled, because you do not have your own to surround you; my love will come as close to you as it can, and when your's blossoms, we will be one in love with God!"

Let no one say that I am just making comparisons, even though I am using one here. Many ideas are better understood within images and comparisons than in logic or reason alone. My comparisons reveal a truth, a hidden one. But you might say, "don't bother with these comparisons; there is a real person here, an unlovable person! How can I love him?" My answer, "That person, free from evil, will be more himself, for he will be his true self." This unfriendly and unlovable person is not who he is, not an expression of his true nature. He is clouded and degraded by the wrongs that lie on the surface. The true person is not reached by the evil or fatally injured by it. In the end, all this evil will be destroyed. These feelings make him less than he is, in danger of losing himself. When he is in his right mind, he will be fully himself. We cannot continue hating him! We must let go and begin loving him now, helping him find the lover he is.

No Justice without Love

Those of you who have not yet acknowledged love's claim on everyone but may accept justice's. The ones who shrink in horror from the idea of committing injustices but who would equally shrink back from the idea of loving them. I say to you; it is impossible without love to be just and even more impossible for the just to live at peace with hatred. Seeing clearly and understanding another's condition becomes possible only from a loving heart. Those who hate can hardly administer fair justice or see another's loves, bias, or peculiarities rightly. Justice is hard enough with those we love. Is justice even possible with our enemies who we do not claim to love? Justice demands fairness as certainly as it

expects us not to steal or lie about them. **I am not created to do justice, but love! Love is more excellent than justice, and by its inclusion and power exceeds justice.**

Justice alone is an impossibility, a mere fiction of honest judgment. It does not exist between men, except in human law. For it to become true justice, it must be more than mere justice. Love is the law of our being; without it, we can no more administer justice than we can walk a straight line drawn in the dark. Our eye is not single, and our bodies are not full of light! No man, even indifferent to his brother, can recognize the claim his humanity places upon him. Instead, his indifference becomes an injustice!

I Am the Enemy

I have assumed the wrongs lay with my enemy, and that is the foundation of my argument. **The real question is, is my neighbor, the enemy or am I the enemy of my neighbor and conveniently take him as mine? An awful thought for sure! If he is my enemy, does not that make me his? Am I refusing to acknowledge the child in him while killing the child in me? Let us claim no more grace for ourselves than we are willing to give to others. Such honesty will produce serious introspection within and forgiveness outward!** We are accountable for the wrongs we commit as well as the removal of them. We must cherish the good in our neighbor. He alone, with God's help, can remove the wrongs in himself. We can encourage him by nurturing the good, by being good ourselves. We can show him love by crossing the distance that comes between us, from our love to his goodness.

Let's not forget that this distance is often the result of simple mistakes or offenses taken, giving place in us for anger, resentment, and regrets. Almost nothing about us is just as it seems. However, at our center, there is Truth. One big enough to dispel all the lies and reveal life as unimaginatively divine. Brothers and sisters, let us cross this distance, the space so dimly lit by the faint light of our limited seeing, to call out to the divine in them. Not to criticize them in anger, or accuse them with, "Why do you hate me?" but to encourage them, "I love you; as a child of God, I say, I love you!" and I will patiently wait until your true self looks out through your eyes and recognizes the true self in mine!

In the end, through the work of Divine Love, my enemy is destined to be my friend. Liberation is achieved with just one flash of this divine love. Our divisions are removed, revealing the brother or sister within each of us who was present there all along. One sincere confession of wrong and our hostility is gone. Liberation is the goal for which the truth is at work in us. Therefore, trusting in this work, let us love one another now, accepting and encouraging God's work of restoration. Let us believe as if seeing His yet unseen victory by holding our brother close, in defiance of what we see. Not seeing the wicked façade only, which would persuade our hearts he is not our brother, but instead some horrible, hateful, and angry person!

Everyone must Repent

Again, what if we are the ones in the wrong, doing the wrong, hating others because we are hurt? What then? Will we cry to God from our self-imposed hell, asking that He would have mercy on us, the chief of sinners, helping us by lifting us from the pit, out of the miry clay? No one can free us, but the Spirit sent from the Father and the Son. The very Spirit of our Father and Brother, who reveals, casts out and removes the hurts and offenses. This deliverance will come as a tearing away, a breaking, a

humbling of us, causing terrible crying and feelings of dying. Through this deliverance, will such demons of anger, fear, and hatred go out, and these mighty strongholds brought down.

"Some say a time will come when the Unchangeable One will stop forgiving. God's perfection will no longer love His enemies. Together we will look calmly on the rising smoke of the eternal torment of our strong brothers and beautiful sisters!" No! Our brothers are weak, and our sisters are ugly now! Don't believe this lie. The forgiven will cry, "Jesus! Where are you, our strong brother, our great savior? Deliver those who are suffering and tormented! Come, Lord of Life! King of Suffering! Deliver them for us! Let us go down into hell carrying cool water ourselves to relieve their thirst."

Don't believe this lie because it will stifle love in you, causing you to become unforgiving. Go down to your brothers, in the place they would never come out if God were not greater than the ghost they believe Him to be. They cannot leave this place until they have paid the last penny, where they would learn of God in hell what they did not discover on earth. God's goodness, found in the sunshine and rain of creation, or the human face divine. Images will arise from the depths of this delivered soul, glorious visions of union and unity!

Perfect in Love

Let us tell the stories of Him who is mighty to save because He is perfect in love! Father, you are the All in all, beyond all the expectations of your children. We know now that we are all yours! You will make us pure, loving, and free!

Therefore, we must be perfect, be free, as our heavenly Father is free! Loving our enemies is living as children of the Highest! It is the nature of the divine to forgive! Lord Jesus, let the heart of the child rise in us so that we may be resurrected from the grave of bitterness and unforgiveness and die no more! Seeing, face to face, The God of the Living!

CLIFFNOTES WITH ORIGINAL MACDONALD QUOTES

God Loves His Enemies

God is love, all love, nothing other than love.

We Share One Humanity

Why should we love our enemies? The deepest reason for this we cannot put in words, for it lies in the absolute reality of their being, where our enemies are of one nature with us, even of the divine nature.

Love the Real Man

It is the very presence of this fading humanity that makes it possible for us to hate. If it were an animal only, and not a man or a woman that did us hurt, we should not hate: we should only kill. We hate the man just because we are prevented from loving him. . . .For to embrace is the necessity of our deepest being.

No Justice without Love

Man is not made for justice from his fellow, but for love, which is greater than justice, and by including supersedes justice.

Mere justice is an impossibility, a fiction of analysis.

I am the Enemy

But the question must be put to each man by himself, "Is my neighbour indeed my enemy, or am I my neighbour's enemy, and so take him to be mine?—awful thought! Or, if he be mine, am not I his? Am I not refusing to acknowledge the child of the kingdom within his bosom, so killing the child of the kingdom within my own?" Let us claim for ourselves no more indulgence than we give to him. Such honesty will end in severity at home and clemency abroad.

But in the working of the Divine Love upon the race, my enemy is doomed to cease to be my enemy, and to become my friend. One flash of truth towards me would destroy my enmity at once; one hearty confession of wrong, and our enmity passes away; from each comes forth the brother who was inside the enemy all the time.

Everyone must Repent

But again I must ask, What if we are in the wrong and do the wrong, and hate because we have injured? What then? Why, then, let us cry to God as from the throat of hell; struggle, as under the weight of a spiritual incubus; cry, as knowing the vile disease that cleaveth fast unto us; cry, as possessed of an evil spirit; cry, as one buried alive, from the sepulchre of our evil consciousness, that He would take pity upon us the chief of sinners, the most wretched and vile of men, and send some help to lift us from the fearful pit and the miry clay.

Perfect in Love

The story of Him who was mighty to save, because he was perfect in love. O Father, thou art All-in-all, perfect beyond the longing of thy children, and we are all and altogether thine. Thou wilt make us pure and loving and free. We shall stand fearless in thy presence, because perfect in thy love. Then shall thy children be of good cheer, infinite in the love of each other, and eternal in thy love.