

The Quest of Love & Being Ourselves

Thomas Robinson, *Shaped by Jesus for Life 4*, March 10, 2019

Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³ “You’ve heard that it was said, ‘You’ll **love your neighbor** and **hate your enemy.**’

⁴⁴ But I myself am telling you, **Love** (*agapan*) **your enemies** and **pray** for those who **oppress (pursue) you**, ⁴⁵ so that you may be **children of your Father who’s in heaven**, because he makes **his sun rise on evil** people and **good**, and **sends rain on righteous** people and **unrighteous**.

⁴⁶ For if you **love those who love you**, what wages are due you? Aren’t even the tax collectors doing the same? ⁴⁷ And if you **greet only your brothers and sisters**, what are you doing that’s **something more**? Don’t even foreign peoples do the same?

⁴⁸ **You therefore shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect** (*teleios*).

Matthew 7:1-12

¹ “Don’t **judge**, so that you’re not **judged**.

² For with the **judgment** you **judge**, you will be **judged**, and with the **measure** you **measure**, it’ll be **measured** to you.

³ Why do you see **the speck** that’s in the eye of your brother or sister? But **the log** in your own eye, you don’t notice! ⁴ Or how can you say to **your brother or sister**, ‘Let me pick the speck out of your eye,’ and look, there’s the log in your own eye!?

⁵ Play-actor! First take **the log** out of **your own eye**, and then you’ll see clearly to pick **the speck** from the eye of your brother or sister.

⁶ Don’t give what’s really **holy** to **dogs**, and don’t throw your **pearls** in front of **pigs**, otherwise they’ll trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

⁷ **Ask**, and it will be **given** to you;
seek, and you’ll **find**;

knock, and it will be **opened** to you.

⁸ For everyone **asking, receives**, and the one **seeking, finds**, and to the one **knocking**, it’s going to be **opened**. ⁹ Or what person among you, if **their child** asks them for **bread**, will hand them a **stone**? ¹⁰ Or they’ll ask for a **fish**. Would you give them a **snake**? ¹¹ If you then, even with all your evil, **know** to give **good gifts** to your children, oh how much more **your Father** in the heavens will give **good things to those asking him!**

¹² **Everything, then, that you want for people to do for you, just so you also do for them!** This, you see, is the **Law** and the **Prophets.**”

Matthew 22:35-40

³⁵ And one of them, a man skilled in the Law, asked him a question to test him. ³⁶ “Teacher, what sort of commandment is really important in the Law?”

³⁷ And he said to him, “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ [Deut. 6:4-5] ³⁸ This is the most important and first commandment.

³⁹ But a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ [Lev. 19:18] ⁴⁰ On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

John 13:34-35

³⁴ "I'm giving a new command to you, that you love each other! Just as I loved you, that you also love each other. ³⁵ In this, all will realize that you are disciples learning from me, if you have love for one another."

1 John 4:7-9

⁷ Loved Ones! We've got to love each other, because this love is from God, and whoever practices love has been born from God and knows God. ⁸ One who doesn't practice love never really knew God, because God is love (agapé). ⁹ God's love was made clearly visible among us in this event: God has sent his unique Son into the world, in order that we may have life through him.

Jesus' Focus on Love. Enemies? Really?

Jesus: "Change your way of thinking, for the kingdom of heaven has come near!" [Mt 4:17]
Central and distinctive to this change/repentance is Jesus' emphatic teaching on love.

The climax of Jesus' six distinctives ("You've heard...") is most striking. It starts with "Love your enemies" and ends with being "perfect." Radical repentance, counter-cultural. It assumes good human love and pushes toward something more, being God's children.

Healing – Transforming Love

Jesus stresses healthy self-love. I want my life! 2nd command – "as yourself" [Mt 22:35-40].

But he's very realistic. Self-love often distorted. We're masters, victims, self-hating / glorifying. 1. Assume we're broken & need healing. 2. Value God's work / pearls.

3. Actively ask, seek, knock. 4. God loves us as a true Father his children: Gives Life.

God becomes central—God! I love myself as God's beloved child. Center of ethical life.

Love as Empathy with God and People

Jesus actually challenges us to think like God. God's wide-ranging, inclusive love, like sunshine and rain! Really? Image of a loving, self-giving Father. He gives freedom to act, judge, measure. We set our own judgment. But God wants healing, forgiveness.

"You shall be perfect...!" Really?! A command and a promise. You are more than you imagine. God's image, God's child. Don't settle for broken love-hate life. God knows & Jesus shows that real life is in self-giving love that encompasses even enemies!

Start close, go far! Love each other. Love neighbor. Pray for your oppressor. Love enemies.

Learn God's freedom & joy in forgiveness, and make healing, reconciliation possible.

Love as Passionate, Thoughtful, Active

We begin by growing in passionate Love for God – heart, soul, mind. Creator of life, beauty. Loves us when we make ourselves enemies! Comes to give Life. God is Love. A vision that holds everything together, centered in God, active in our daily living.

Jesus' Golden Rule is his expression of the 2nd Command. Start from your healing self. At your best, what do you want from people? Think! Respect? Help? Honesty? Love? Community? Justice? ... Don't wait. Go out and do that for them. Seek God's Life!