



**Red Letter City**  
**Love Your Enemies**  
**June 12, 2016**  
**Courage Church, Detroit, MI**

On the Sunday morning that I had already intended on giving this message about enemy love, I woke up to the news that a man had gone into a gay night club in Orlando and attacked it. The reports before church were that 20 people were killed. By the time we got out of church that day, the report was that 50 were killed, and another 50

were injured. To date, it was the biggest mass shooting in American history.

So going into this day, a lot of people were able to put a face to their enemy. They knew what he looked like. They knew what he had done. They knew what he had done to them.

They had a place to direct their anger.

For the man who committed the murders, his enemy appeared to be the homosexual community. Others of course argued that he merely was looking for a crowded room, and that his hatred was at Americans. We never will know that for sure.

For the responding world right after the attack, the enemy was radical Islam. It was Isis, and the hateful worldview that had infiltrated even people whom they didn't even know. It was an influence that had grown by the hateful example that they had set.

and to others the enemy was guns. The tools that were used to bring about the destruction of so many.

Everyone pointed their finger somewhere.

But it is in moments like these that where you pointing doesn't really make much difference.

One girl in our church, her cousin was in that night club that night. She posted a video on Sunday night of her aunt on TV crying and crying and crying because he had not yet been found.

It was terrible to watch.

They later discovered that he had been killed.

And you can tell people all day long that our battle is not against flesh and blood but it doesn't always translate when the battle that is coming against *us* so obviously *is* being waged against *our* flesh and blood. And it is hitting closer and closer to home every time.

and then we look at the words of Jesus like in Matthew 5:43. And in moments like these, everything in our spirit, and in our hearts, and all the way to the core of who we are WANTS TO IGNORE THEM.

Because we are human. And if there is any sense of compassion left in our bones then it is reserved solely for the victims and their families, and the ones who will never see the ones that they loved again.

So that is what we do.

We mourn with those who mourn.

As we long for justice. For the wrongs to be made right.

Like we said last week, today is a continuation of last week, because the two sections that Jesus taught at this moment in the sermon on the mount go hand in hand together... they kind of bleed together.

and those subjects are “retaliation” and “loving your enemies.”

We know that we must not retaliate. We know that we must never seek revenge against someone else for what they did to us...

But what do you do with those ongoing feuds? What do you do with the ones who, not only come against us once, but over, and over, and over.

What do you do with your enemy?

And that is where Jesus goes with this passage today. It is our final section in Matthew chapter 5, and it is found in verse 43-48.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,<sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.<sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?<sup>48</sup> You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

There is one word in here that just cuts people to the core.

The word is enemy.

Jesus makes it very very clear in this passage that as followers of the way... as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ...

we are going to have enemies.

But what do we do with your enemies?

Well lets look at what they did in that culture.

Two weeks ago we learned about binding and loosing. It was a principle that you must understand moving forward through the sermon on the mount or else you will have a hard time understanding a lot of what Jesus is saying.

In that day, certain rabbi's, the highest ranking ones with the most authority, had the ability to bind and loose things over their community. It was part of their yoke... so they would interpret a scripture... something that maybe seems a little gray, and probably is, and the rabbi would determine "this is what this means, and this is the way that our community will apply this scripture."

Dawn gave an awesome example of how in modern day New York (and of course other places, but the example comes from New York), certain practicing Jews follow an incredibly strict yoke on the sabbath day that says that they can't do anything that takes *any* effort...

so there is this elevator on the lower east side of the city, and there are probably lots of these in other places but there is one for sure... and on the sabbath day each week, the elevator stops at every single floor, making it so its riders do not have to even reach up and push the button signifying the floor that they want to go to.

They will still get to the floor they desire. They just have to be patient.

But patience is a small price to pay for keeping the Sabbath Holy.

That is a yoke. It is an interpretation of the scriptures, and a very strict one at that. But Jesus in Matthew 16 says that he has given the church the KEYS to the Kingdom, and the ability to bind and loose things here on earth and whatever you bind and loose here, are ratified in heaven, and then in Matthew 18 he says that it to everyone. He has given all of those who consider themselves followers of Jesus the ability to bind and loose things over their lives. But before Jesus, only rabbi's with the highest authority had the authority to do this.

So here, when Jesus says “You have heard that it was said” he is not talking about the old testament, like some of the other times when he says this. This is not in the bible, anywhere. This was an oral tradition, and a yoke that the rabbi’s were spreading. It is an *interpretation* of Leviticus 19:18 which says:

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

So the oral tradition... the yoke that was being spread in regards to this verse, was that you are never supposed to take vengeance or bear a grudge against your own people... and you shall love your neighbor...

**but you shall hate your enemy.**

It just made sense to them, that if you love one, you hate the other. So that is what was being taught.

Can you see from this, just, how important a yoke was?

One interpretation lead an entire group of people to buy into a lie... a lie that said “it was okay to hate.”

but the problem with this particular lie, is that in the end it always comes back on you, and here is why: in order to hate your enemy, you have to be able to justify that hatred in your heart. It can’t just be there. Nothing rests in your heart unanswered for very long. In order to hate someone, there has to be something that causes you to see them differently.

You can’t just hate someone for nothing, you have to have a reason.

Something they did to you. Some reason why they deserve something different than what you think you deserve.

and ultimately if you have a reason to hate someone and you let that hate live, then you have unforgiveness in your heart, and thus you are the one who is living in sin.

I think that is pretty basic, and we can all agree on that.

So Jesus brings the whole thing back to the heart. and he tells us that if you have unforgiveness in your heart, it is you who will pay for it.

He says a few verses earlier, and we already studied this: don't even let your anger last... because what happens when you let anger last is that you begin to dehumanize the other person... you begin to convince yourself of all the reasons why they are evil, while you are good. And suddenly you have convinced yourself that you are worth more than someone else, and Jesus says that when that happens, you better be careful, because that leads to murder. It is the only way to murder someone.

The man who killed all of those people in the night club, he thought that the homosexual community was his enemy.

His Father claimed the next day, that even though the man called and declared his loyalty to Isis during the attack, that he was motivated by seeing two men kissing... and he was so angered by it. So there was a slow burn like Paul talks about in Ephesians 4. It burns and burns and burns and it turns into something worse and worse until eventually it consumes you.

And you start to see someone as if they aren't even human. As if they don't even bleed red.

It is impossible to murder someone that you think deserves to live. You have to first play God. You first have to judge them, and determine...

no.

The world is better off without you.

Now, we know that that is wrong. We know it. We know that we have to value human life. That is just natural, you don't have to be a christian to understand that people's lives have value.

But we often tend to live in such a way where we think that it is okay to set ourselves apart from others as if we are better than them... but Jesus says, "wait a second... does the same sun *not* rise on them? Do I not send my rain on the just and the unjust?"

Jesus says to us that everything that we are *entitled* to, our "so called enemy" is entitled to it, too.

But we don't like to think that way do we?

An even playing field totally goes against our natural inclination toward being the greatest. But equality dates back all the way to the way Jesus blesses even our enemies. So he says, I bless them. and you should be like me. So you must bless them.

In fact, he says "you should be perfect, like me.

And its easy to read *that*, and want to cry.

Because we know that we will never be perfect like Christ, who actually did live perfectly. But the word there literally means "complete." Jesus is telling us that there is a whole big picture to our world here, and you can't treat some of the people one way and others another way, because then you are only living a piece of what I have called you to be. I have called you to be a "complete" picture of the gospel on my behalf.

and the gospel is for everyone.

Even your enemies.

So as you live your lives, *live that!*

Because we represent Jesus, don't we?

Thus it is very important that we are careful in which ways we represent him.

Now,

there are two enormous perspectives... which I consider both to be misconceptions, about Jesus that we need to address before we really get into enemies.

Two different views of Jesus that people tend to associate themselves to, both of which I believe ultimately distorts who is really is.

The first is Pacifist Jesus.

The second is War Monger Jesus.

And people use all sorts of verses to back up both of these ideas so I want to look at them both today.

First, Pacifist Jesus.

Pacifism is the belief that “any type of violence is **unjustifiable** under any circumstances”

But most of us can agree that revenge, or retaliation, like we learned about last week, is not permitted, ever, under any circumstance, therefore:

The heart of this ongoing debate seems to be self-defense and defending ones home. There is an extreme view that says that if a stranger comes into your home, Jesus wants you to do nothing.

In fact the argument is that Jesus doesn't want you even to own weapons so there is nothing you could do anyway if someone entered your home.

Let me try and explain this as simply as possible. I understand why people take this view, much more than I understand the other extreme, But as complex of an issue as it is, I don't believe that it lines up with scripture.

First of all, and we will cover this more in a moment when we talk about “war monger Jesus” but Jesus *did* tell the disciples to arm themselves. If there were literally no circumstances in which being armed would have even been justifiable, then they would be better off staying warm with the coats that they had instead of considering selling the coats to buy swords, as Jesus commanded. I will say more about that in a minute.



Jesus taught CLEARLY that we never take vengeance... but Jesus himself knew how to be aggressive when that was what was needed. Jesus had no problem confronting the Pharisees, using very bold words against them, chasing them out of the temple with a whip, it goes on and on.

Jesus also is a rabbi who taught the Torah, and his interpretation of it. In Exodus there is a scripture that Jesus *never* mentioned, and never *ratified*, because it did not need ratifying... that says "if someone enters your home, and you kill them, you are not guilty of murder." (Exodus 22:2)

The consistent yoke of rabbi's in that day was "if someone comes to murder you... anticipate him and kill him first."

that was what they taught. It was consistently taught that *all people* have a moral obligation to preserve life. You mustn't stand by idly while evil is done to you and your family.

Now, that may be surprising to you.

Jesus didn't ratify this verse, or that yoke specifically, but he did say and do several things that *could* change **even this** and this is so important.

Here is the deal with Jesus.

Everything was bigger than *actions*. Even justifiable actions.

Jesus ultimately showed us something so much more powerful than pacifism.

And its the same word we keep hearing, we just keep coming back to it... and we are going to hear it a whole bunch in the next three weeks too.

the word is "intent."

When someone breaks into your house, what becomes the objective? Are you home with all the kids? With your wife? With your family?

Or are you home alone?

Are you willing to fight to defend your family?

Or are you looking for a fight to defend your stuff?

Because according to the bible, you could be completely justified even if you went so far as to kill someone who broke into your home. It is in the law. It is in Exodus. It is not even considered murder.

and I don't believe that Jesus would consider it murder either. Unless in your heart... it is what you wanted.

Unless when it is over, in your heart you justify the fact that something bad has happened to someone. And maybe they deserved it by the position that they put themselves in... but at the end of the day, if someone is hurt, or someone has been killed, and if you can have a hand in something like that and then walk away completely unscathed then you better take a close look at what is going on in your heart.

And this is the trap that we easily fall into.

How many times have we rejoiced when someone that we considered to be evil was killed? A terrorist. A dictator. Whoever it may be?

Even all the way back in Proverbs (24:17), it says "Don't rejoice when your enemy falls."

I think that when we do that, if we are able to step away for a moment and look deep enough into our hearts we will realize that in our hearts we have dehumanized that person the same way that they dehumanized so many. But the bible tells us to not repay evil with evil but to overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

Man, that verse throws a huge wrench into what I consider to be one of the worst representations of Jesus ever created by man to fulfill his evil purposes, and that is:

War Monger Jesus.

and you all already know how I feel about this.

This is the misrepresentation that I have the hardest time with. Like, for me, I can see how someone could see Jesus as a pacifist, because Jesus literally let the broken world murder him so that he could save it. He always taught to never retaliate. He always said things like he says in today's passage... pray for those who persecute you. Don't hate people. Love people. Give people another chance.

Everything that the bible tells us about Jesus describes him as a guy who loves even the hardest to love people and about a guy who never hurt anyone.

I can see that side.

But I don't really see how we can use Jesus to justify our wars, or our hatred for people, or the ways that we take revenge. It just doesn't line up.

Often people of this persuasion talk about the verse I referenced earlier... when Jesus tells the disciples to arm themselves with swords... He tells them, "if you don't have a sword, sell your coat, and buy a sword." (Luke 22:36) but they rarely mention the second part, when the disciples tell him that between all of them, there are only two swords... so they are asking if they need more and instead he tells them "It is enough."

He wasn't building an army.

and you don't hear them talking about the only moment that they ever used one of the swords, in the garden of Gethsemane, and how Jesus immediately rebuked Peter for doing it, and he fixed the damage that Peter had caused with the sword after telling Peter "Those who live by the sword, will die by the sword." (Matt. 26:52) - What he says here must not be overlooked.

Because you can live according to your *rights*. You can do that. So many of us need to hear this, because so much of what I see in Christian culture

seems to be about MY RIGHTS. And “THEY CAN’T TAKE AWAY MY RIGHTS.”

See, this is crucial that you hear this:

Jesus did not come here to take away your rights.  
But He did show us what it means to lay down your rights... willingly.

He showed us what it means to not use your sword even when you would be justified using it.

He then tells Peter “Do you not think that I could call on my Father and he would send more than twelve LEGIONS of angels (to rescue me?)” (Matt. 26:53) - A legion was a word Rome used to describe their armies that were as many as 6,000 troops.

Jesus had the power to call on more than 72,000 angels to come and fight on his behalf and rescue him from the injustice being done to him, but instead he let the broken world lead him to the cross to be murdered...

and while he hung on that tree and people mocked him and told him to show his power and call on the angels, instead he cried out on THEIR BEHALF.

On behalf of the people who were murdering him.

FATHER. Forgive them. For they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)

Jesus is not the epitome of pacifism Jesus is the epitome of laying down your rights. He knew every right that he had, and he called on none of them.

But in our society everything is about our rights!

and truthfully I think that the church would begin to look a little more like Jesus if it stopped focusing on all of the things that it is entitled to, and instead started focusing on the stuff that Jesus calls us to.

I want to show you something that Jesus says. I know, we are looking at a lot of words of Jesus this series and will look at quite a bit more in this message, but look at what he says in Luke 6:46:

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and **not do** what I tell you?”

And I look at the things that Christians seem to be talking about, and the many crosses that Christians seem to be picking up, and then I read the red letters, and I can’t help but feel like a lot of us are ignoring the things that Jesus talks about most so that we can champion the things that matter most to *us*.

and I can think of no quicker way for someone to, unbeknownst to them, turn away from Jesus...

while thinking that they are following him...

than to champion the issues that make them feel good instead of the ones that Jesus tells us to focus on.

Jesus says this (Luke 6:46) for a reason. People think they are following him, but they aren’t doing what he says. He says it even more boldly in Matthew 7 on the sermon on the mount... he says “many of you will say to me Lord Lord! We did all these amazing things in your name” and he is going to say to them “dude... I never knew you... you didn’t do what I say!”

What are the constant commands in Jesus’ teachings?

love.

love for one another.

love for your brother.

love for your neighbor.

love for your enemy.

What did Jesus declare to be the greatest commandment? That we Love God with all of our heart soul and mind, and that we LOVE our neighbor as much as we love ourselves. (Matthew 22:34-40)

Love is the centerpiece of the entire gospel. God so LOVED the world.

and then, remember what happened when the lawyer asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life? (Luke 10:25) - Jesus asked the lawyer "how do you read the scriptures?"

What do you think you need to do?"

and the lawyer shoots back at Jesus by giving him the greatest commandment. He says "you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself."

Those are not red letters. That is what the lawyer tells Jesus. So people knew the words... but they didn't get it.

Because then it says that the lawyer, trying to justify himself, asks Jesus, "who is my neighbor?"

and what does Jesus do?

He gives the man a parable. It is a very famous parable about a man who gets beaten up and left for dead on the side of the road. And a priest comes by, but he crosses to the other side of the road, showing no compassion. and a Levite comes by, and he does the same, and then a Samaritan comes, and the Samaritan does the unthinkable. The Samaritan helps the man. and its a beautiful story... but what people so often miss is that Samaritans and Jews were bitter enemies.

So much so, that when Jesus asks the Jewish lawyer "which of these was a neighbor" - the lawyer couldn't even utter "the Samaritan Man" - He couldn't even say it. Instead, he just said "the one who showed him mercy."

and to us, there are a thousand morals to that story and every one of them is powerful and we could teach an entire sermon on and we have...

but to that lawyer, there was really only one answer:

“My enemy is my neighbor.”

and this is where we will turn our focus today... because **Before you can understand enemy love, first you must understand enemies.**

And why we have them.

and when you understand why we, as Christians, have enemies... it gives us a much better understanding of why we are supposed to treat them so well.

The verse that I am going to read to you in a moment is an incredibly important one for many reasons. First of all, people have misunderstood it and have used it as a way to cause all sorts of chaos in Jesus' name, so we need to get some clarity on it...

second of all, at its heart, IT EXPLAINS WHY WE HAVE ENEMIES.

Because when Jesus says what he says in the sermon on the mount, he is speaking with the assumption that we do have enemies.

Matthew 10:34-36

<sup>34</sup> **“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.** <sup>35</sup> For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. <sup>36</sup> **And a person's enemies will be those of his own household.**

Now, right away this gives us every reason to think that Jesus is going to come in swinging swords at people and chopping off limbs and reeking all sorts of havoc on the world... This is one of those images, where we think... of “War Monger Jesus.”

But that is just ridiculous.

Now, I am going to take you on a pathway through the scriptures for a moment, so hang with me.

Revelation 19 talks about how Jesus is going to come back, and he is going to be riding on a white horse, and he has a sword (v. 15) sticking out of his mouth, and with that sword he is going to strike down nations and is going to rule them with a rod of iron.

The reality is, that idea is pretty intense. And it leaves the angry Christians, the ones with a complex that says that God hates the same things that they hate... thinking that Jesus is going to take the sword and start chopping people with it.

But often, people read Revelation 19 and they don't realize that it will be a fulfillment of what the prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 49:2, which says:

He made my *mouth* like a sharp sword;

and Isaiah 11:4 which says that "he shall strike the earth with the rod of his *mouth*"

The rod of his mouth literally means: "The word of his mouth."

The word.

The sword is the word.

God's spoken word... the literal word of God.

Here is another verse, Look at Ephesians 6 - if you grew up going to Sunday school you sang songs and did dances about this... but sometimes we can take these concepts that make cute children's songs and forget that this is actually the way that the bible describes these items. Paul tells us to put on "The Armor of God."

and part of that armor is found in verse 17:

"and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, **which is the word of God.**"



The sword of the spirit is the written word of God. (in Ephesians it is the word *rhema*, but the same phrase is used in Hebrews, using *logos*.)

Now, how does the gospel writer John begin his gospel?

In the beginning was the word.

and the word was with God, and the word was God.

verse 14: “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us.”

Every word of God ever written... ever spoken... everything, it is all manifest through Jesus, so everything that he speaks has the same kind of power. His very words are the literal words of God, and when we hear about Jesus coming to bring a sword, and we hear about him coming back with a sword in his mouth, that is what it means.

Now, I am sure the ones on the pacifist side are rejoicing. Because God is coming back with a word. Which sounds a lot more passive than with a sword. Except, its not.

Jesus is going to judge the world based on his word. We mentioned Matthew 7 earlier... many will say to me “Lord Lord... did we not cast out demons in your name, and prophecy...”

and he will tell them to leave. Because they didn't do what he said.

The bible is a scale on which everything in life is weighed. and IF YOU DON'T HAVE JESUS, you are not going to be able to stand next to what the word requires of you.

You just won't.

and *that is* the gospel. The gospel is that you are not sufficient in and of yourself, and most people do not want to hear that message. It offends them. It upsets them. It causes them to push back.

Jesus says that he is going to set families against families. In fact, he says, “a persons enemies will be his own household.”

Why?

Hebrews 4:12 “For the *word* of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”

Look at what the word does! It divides. It divides peoples very souls. It convicts. It literally discerns the intentions of your heart. Do you understand what that means?

The word of God will show you not only “if you are doing the right thing,” but if you are doing it for the right reason. It will show you if your motives are right. But ultimately, the word of God has the divisive power to divide a person even from himself.

Not only that, but the word is a sword that separates family from family. It sets house against house. It sets friends against friends.

And most of us have a problem with this. Because we think that Jesus is saying that we can't have our family *and* him... that “it is Jesus or it is family” and that Jesus is making us choose.

and sometimes it does come down to that, but it is not because Jesus is making you choose. Jesus just tells us that we may have to choose. He is saying, “for some of you, it may come down to this.”

We have such a hard time understanding that Jesus has come dividing families... because in our mind all we can think about is how great the news is that he is bringing...

but not everybody receives it as such.

In many nations even today, if you were to go home and tell your Mother and your Father that you have become a Christian, they would completely disown you on the spot, if not worse.

The moment most people find Jesus... the moment they make him Lord of their life and they realize how good he is, and how amazing his grace is that has pulled them out of darkness and into the light... you want to go and tell your family.

If you believe that you have been saved... that you once were lost and now you are found... and you know that the people you care about are just as lost as you were before you found Jesus, then the first thing that you are going to want to do is go and tell them!

But if you were raised Muslim and grew up in the middle east... you would know going into that conversation that the news you were about to bring was going to be incredibly divisive.

Merely by sharing with them the decision you have made runs the risk and possibility that you will never, ever talk to them again... and in some cultures it is even more extreme than that, and you run the risk of being killed, even in your own house.

That is the type of division that Jesus brings, but it is not him bringing it.

It is the way that people react to the gospel of the upside down Kingdom.

We don't have to worry about being killed in our culture just because we love Jesus... but even in America, a kid is raised atheist... or Buddhist, or is raised to be anti-Christian...

the moment Jesus has taken a hold of your life, it will cause you all sorts of problems the moment that you reveal what has happened.

you may lose friends. you may disappoint family.

and that is why Jesus says in that passage, A PERSON'S ENEMIES will be his own household.

The word enemy is a very powerful word. but Jesus makes it very clear that we are going to have them. We are going to have enemies.

Some of them are going to be people who used to be our friends.

and when we have them. We love them.

and when we have them, we Pray for them.

Jesus says that we are supposed to “pray for those who persecute you”

again, it is not a matter of IF you are going to have enemies... these are instructions for how you treat them, because you will have them. They are not instructions about what to do IF you are persecuted... because if you are a Christian, you will be persecuted.

I talked about some of this on the last “Equip” message on the beatitudes. but I am sharing it again because I think it is so important, and like we have said from the beginning, “The beatitudes” are like the text to the sermon on the mount, and everything we are studying now is the way that Jesus made that text tangible and applicable in his hearers life.

But the last beatitude says “blessed are those persecuted for righteousness sake...” and then it goes on to say “blessed are you when you are persecuted for my names sake.” and there is a lot to that, we went in depth on that verse at Equip and you can listen to the whole message on our app or website... but I want to share something with you that I shared that night.

and that is this... it is possible to find yourself on the wrong side of persecution. and in a Kingdom that is completely upside down, the wrong side of persecution is the side that is doing the persecuting.

See, the bible says that you are going to be persecuted for Jesus, because the Jesus message is offensive. It is one that pronounces a new Kingdom... a world that is upside down... it is the proclamation that all have sinned and apart from the grace of Jesus are without hope...

but that Jesus has come and wants to restore everything in your life. And he has the power and the ability and is willing to restore you from the broken state that we all find ourselves in.

that alone is enough to make people mad. People will come against you.

but that is very different than *you* speaking out against someone else, and then them pushing back on you because of it.

### **It is not persecution when you start it!**

The gospel in and of itself is offensive and divisive enough without Christians going and looking for ways to be persecuted.

We can very easily make enemies, but don't think that you are going to be blessed when you are persecuted by enemies that you created by persecuting them first.

I said something in EQUIP along the lines of, "Jesus didn't say blessed are you when you post something hateful on Facebook and then you get 400 responses of angry people calling you a bigot and a religious freak"

that is not what he says.

It says blessed are you when you are persecuted FOR MY NAMES SAKE.

The reason that I put such an emphasis on this today is simple.

When Jesus says to pray for our enemies, we have to see that we have those enemies *because of him*.

That is the only reason.

The bible tells us that our battle is NOT against flesh and blood (Ephesians 6:12)... If you can put a face to someone that you would consider to be your enemy, then it is time to re-evaluate what is happening in the deeper places of your heart because something is harboring there that is causing that, and it is dangerous!

If we have enemies because of us and what WE DID... then we need to repent.

We need to ask for forgiveness. From God and from them.

If we have enemies because of something someone has done *to us...* then **we need to forgive.**

If you have enemies and have made others to be enemies of the gospel because of the way you misrepresent Christ... you need to repent.

The only type of enemy that at the end of the day it is *okay* if you have... is the enemy who has pitted themselves *against you*, because you stand for Jesus.

If there is another reason... you need to figure it out. You need to work it out, because it will grow into something has the potential to destroy you.

and when the only enemy that you have is the one who stands against you because you stand FOR JESUS, of course you would pray for them. Because who, knowing how good Jesus treated you in your mess, wouldn't want that for everyone?

Paul, in Romans 12 urges us that our love must be genuine. We don't fake it. We don't love our enemies and mask the way that we truly feel. No, Jesus doesn't say "**Show love** to your enemy" he says LOVE your enemies.

We love our enemies because we genuinely want what is best for them, and we genuinely want reconciliation with them... and we genuinely want to see them be reconciled to Jesus.

and a couple verses later, Paul says that if your enemy is hungry, give him something to eat. And I thought about that for a while... Why do you need to feed him? What is the deal with that? And it occurred to me, if you give him something to eat, you are probably going to be right there when he is eating. You may even be eating with him.

David, in Psalm 23 says something that seems very strange. He begins by saying “The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me besides still waters. He restores my soul.”

Then he goes into a section saying: “though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I fear no evil because the Lord is with me.”

David is telling God, you have done so many amazing things in my life. You have restored me in the moments that I least deserved it, and I know that you are with me. but then he says this, in verse 5:

You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies;  
you anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

and that doesn't seem like something that you would praise God for, until you understand something about Hebrew culture.

What the Hebrew people believed was that when God prepares a table for us and our enemies, he is making a way for there to be reconciliation between us.

In fact, in Hebrew, the word reconciliation is the same word, as the word table.

Because this is what would happen.

There would be a dispute among families... someone would hurt someone else, whatever it may be... and the feud may be ongoing... just like we talked about last week, one person always one-upping the next. Making it worse and worse and before long these rivalries would lead to people getting hurt or worse, killed. and the only way to put an end to the fighting officially, once and for all, was to have what was called a “*sulha*”

It was a giant meal that the two families would share, together. And in this meal one would apologize, and they would then come to terms together on

what it would take to make it right... and the entire thing was over an amazing meal that would continue throughout the day as they went back and forth and back and forth until both families agreed. In the end, they would make it right, and when they left that table, (sometimes days later), they could never bring it up again.

When David is praising God in Psalm 23:5, he is thanking him that even after everything that had happened in Davids life... God has prepared a way for reconciliation not only with himself but also with others.

and as I thought about this this week I realized, "what an amazing picture of the gospel."

Jesus had so many enemies, and he died for every single one of them so that he could reconcile with every single one of them as our example of the way that we treat our enemies.

and then what does Paul say about our ministry of reconciliation? We don't count others trespasses against them!

Just like the "sulha" meal, when that table is left, the offense is never visited again.

You shouldn't have enemies, if not for Jesus. So why not love them like Jesus, and see if maybe, just maybe, you can show them Jesus.

That is what Jesus did. so be like Him.

Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.