



**Red Letter City
Retaliation
June 5, 2016
Courage Church, Detroit,
MI**

Today we find ourselves at what many would consider to be Jesus' most controversial teaching. One that for centuries has been questioned... people ask things all the time of this passage, like: "do we actually take this literally?"

and "did he actually mean that?"

which leads to many other questions... such as:

if I don't do THAT, am I still a Christian? Because most people that I know will tell you that if someone slaps them on the right cheek... then they deserve what they have coming... and it is coming.

You slap me, I slap you. Or I tackle you to the ground and pummel you.

But what do we do with that?

Jesus talks in this passage about the way we defend ourselves... or perhaps a better way to say it, is "the way that we don't defend ourselves." but how does that fit into our modern culture that so clearly knows that if you let people walk on you your whole life then you are never going to get anywhere.

and how does that fit into the families that we have vowed to defend, and the way that we instinctively know we are supposed to, at times fight for what is right and to defend justice.

Is it even possible to do that, and still follow Jesus?

and how does this fit into a teaching by the same man that in another place that “don’t think that I have come to bring peace... I have not come to bring peace, but a sword...”

So we have come to a place in Jesus’ most famous sermon that is filled with questions.

and we may not be able to reconcile all of our questions in these next couple of weeks but we are going to dive into the context, what was going on at that time, and into what we believe was the heart of Jesus with these very hard sayings.

Because like everything else Jesus does here in the sermon on the mount, I believe that ultimately it all lands on the heart.

We are going to take two weeks on the next eleven verses... if you are reading out of a modern translation of the bible, this set of scriptures is broken into two sections...

1. Retaliation
2. Love your enemies.

So we will break it up that way, covering them over a two week span. Today we are on “Retaliation.”

So if you would open up your bibles with me to Matthew 5:38-42

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.”

On Friday Dawn and I drove down to Ann Arbor to visit Matt and Chavonne in the hospital. I am guessing that by now, most of you know, that baby Charlotte was born. And she is just the sweetest thing. She was born, I think a whole two months early, so she is just absolutely tiny and so so precious.

And I just need to say this about Matt and Chavonne. I have never in my *life* seen two people glow the way that they were glowing that day. The peace. The excitement, and the love in their eyes toward this absolutely precious child was just amazing.

And I can't explain it. I know that, their pregnancy was very difficult. They went through some really hard circumstances, things that I could not even begin to imagine... and I know that the whole pregnancy was to a degree plagued with some fear and so to at the end of it all be holding this amazing child obviously was such a sign of the grace of God and an amazing hope for the future.

Jesus says something a little later in the sermon on the mount, and we will get to it in a couple of months, but he says this:

“if you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him.”

and I thought about that when I saw the way that Matt held his daughter. and the look on his face, and the way everything toward Charlie was unconditional love... and as strange as this sounds... it made me realize something about violence. and the way that we treat each other.

The same way that Matt looks at his daughter, God looks at all of his children.

and I think that for most of us, we want to always know that we can come to God knowing that no matter what we have done, he still looks at us with that same twinkle in his eye. That same unconditional love.

and not *only* that... but there are millions of other Matt's in the world. People who think the world of their children. Who would do anything for them. And in every situation that you find yourself in, in which you are paired AGAINST another person... that person is someone's child. That person has a world of people that he has touched merely by being born....

and that person is a child of the living God.

and if we approach every situation and every confrontation that we are faced with from that perspective, perhaps it would be easier than you think to do what Jesus asks of us here in this revolutionary sermon.

Jesus begins by saying: "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil."

What Jesus covers here in this set of scriptures is something called "lex talionis" - which means "the law of retaliation."

it is found three times in the Torah.

the first is Exodus 21:23-25 -

"if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, ²⁴ eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, ²⁵ burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe."

the next comes in Leviticus 24:20, which says: "If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to him."

and the last time is Deuteronomy 19:21 which says "It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

Now, here is the issue with an eye for an eye. And I hope that you are seeing a pattern here about the law... because everyone always seems to

think that the law is bad... that it is evil and that it is bondage and that even on its best day, it commands things that are awful.

Like this command... an eye for an eye. A tooth for a tooth.

We think, WHY WOULD THEY TEACH THAT? That is retaliation. This seems like the absence of grace.

But the problem in Moses day was that retaliation had run rampant. It was out of control. Vengeance was everyone's solution for everything, and the problem was that they were all in the business of one-upping the last one.

So someone would take someone else's goat...

and then that person would retaliate by taking their goat, and burning down their house.

then, the person who just lost their house, would kill the other person.

It just got out of control.

but the law comes in, and regulates it.

and that is why they came up with "lex talionis"

and this is the law: "a punishment inflicted should correspond in degree and kind to the offense of the wrongdoer, as an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth;"

it says, you can't keep one-upping each other or everyone is going to kill each other and there will be nothing left.

Because there is always one step further you can go.

Most of you who are married in this place know that you could be having a very small bickering match with your spouse...it could feel totally innocent... but the moment that someone one-ups the other, everything

goes to a new level very quickly. and things can get out of control and people can get hurt very very quickly.

and in relationships, that type of “one-upping” kills your connection because you begin to feel like you can’t go to the other person with anything. We tend to naturally take correction as criticism and typically respond in kind.

But if we can’t even hand ourselves in even those small conversations, what becomes of us when someone actually does something that really hurts us?

When I was in 11th grade, I went to this tiny private school. Patrick Simpson went there for a while too, and in fact him and I were talking about this exact story last week... I mentioned it to him and he said “I remember hearing about that.”

people talk.

Anyway, the class I was apart of, was, unfortunately, the epitome of “cliques.” It was really weird because there were only like 25 of us in our entire grade and yet we separated into our little worlds. Which is really a shame because now it is obvious that we have so much in common.

But believe it or not, even though I was convinced that I was way cooler than them... I was more on the side of the outcasts... and we were a bit outnumbered... and even though I am sure that I had plenty of blame in making people not like me, primarily that year, I *felt* like the one who was persecuted.

and throughout that year the few people in my little group, one by one, transferred out of the school and into the public school. Mostly because they discovered that we could graduate early because of the amount of credits that the private school earned us.

Anyway, instead of “prom,” this school had what was called a “Junior/ Senior Banquet.” and by that point in the year, probably around early May... only one other person besides me in our little group was still in the class. So I was wicked outnumbered.

and all the guys were in the bathroom at this banquet getting ready for our dance, and I wish I could remember what I said but I can't... but I know that I said something that made another person very mad... I probably teased him or something. I don't know.

and suddenly he just attacked me.

Which... whatever. Not that big of a deal. He is a private school kid so he didn't hit that hard.

but then another of them joined, and another. and nobody broke it up, instead they all just gained up on me.

I had one guy on my team, and he didn't know what to do. So he did nothing. I think eventually he got them off of me, but that was about it. He wasn't throwing down in the bathroom and smashing heads into the walls like I had foreseen him doing. And this is the kid who eventually went to the Marines, so if anything I thought for sure I could count on him. But he stayed relatively out of it that day.

and I walked away not really hurt... in fact I finished putting on the suit and I went to the dance... because ALL OF THEM were punches from private school kids... I was fine. but more than hurt I was just really really mad.

On Thursday I was talking to Patrick and Kathryn and telling them the story... because Patrick and I actually went to the same school and were one year apart, and he remembered the little stupid feuds that my class had... and Kathryn was so shocked... she was like "wait, people actually did that? that is actually a thing?"

Here is the problem with small private schools... things like that were a thing there, because we thought that things like that are actually a thing other places and we just wanted to be like other places. We wanted to convince ourselves that we were normal, and not sheltered, and in tune with the world. It is a really weird cycle of being stuck in a bubble where we actually did things just to feel like we were normal... not realizing that those things are not actually normal.

But from that moment in the bathroom, a feud that had previously been mostly in good fun, started to become a little physical. And a lot of my friends who were not there that day were not happy about what happened. And it went on and on. I remember one night, I think their class was having a graduation party and we rang the door bell and ran... then did it again, and again... and then they came out and chased us and one of them came out and threw a punch.

Then one of our guys went back and through a lot of punches.

Everything became about getting them worse than they got us.

and it just began to get out of hand.

Because in the one-up game, everyone ends up losing.

So “lex talionis” says, no. This has to have an end.

It gives us a law that says that the punishment has to fit the crime, it can't be excessive of it, because otherwise there will be nothing left.

But Jesus comes in and ratifies the constitution yet again, when he says “But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil.”

Now, in plenty of other places in the bible, it says that we should resist the devil... who is evil. So it seems like maybe this is a contradiction but of course, it is NOT. This is talking about how we deal with people, not how we deal with the devil. Now, of course, there are all sorts of things in life that are works of the devil that we should resist... but Jesus here is talking specifically about when one person does something to another person...

The word is “*ponēros*” and it means “full of labours, annoyances, hardships”

This is the same word Jesus uses when he says “if you, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children...” so Jesus already categorizes EVERYONE in this category.

So Jesus is not saying we should just give in to evil all the time... that we should let evil win and stand by when someone is hurting our family or when we are witnessing something that, our intervention could make all of the difference in the world on.

What He is saying, is that things will come against you.

He is saying that people are going to place burdens on you... they are going to annoy you, which is the lightest of the offenses, and beyond that, they are going to make your life hard. They will say things about you, and do things to you that defame you and hurt your reputation and belittle your character... But IT IS IN those moments that you are closest to him because that is exactly how they treated Jesus.

and here is the difference. and the end of the day, it is a *person* on the other side of whatever is happening to you.

The devil is lost. He has no future. He is the one who has no hope.

but people, no matter how wicked they may seem and no matter how unfairly they may treat you in a moment, as long as there is breath in them there is hope for them.

I believe Jesus is saying here, by saying don't resist evil,

“don't give up on people.”

No matter what.

Because there are a million ways to burn a bridge and only a couple ways to build one.

and sometimes you are going to say, you know what? I don't want a relationship with that person... they are all kinds of evil, they are all kinds of trouble... they are mean to me. They are jerks.

So for everything that they did to me, I will do it back to them because they deserve it and I deserve the opportunity for retribution.

and I get that. and sometimes in some seasons of your life, people need to be cut off from you. But there are ways to do it that will leave the possibility for a relationship open,

and there are other ways in which become very hard to undo, later in life.

Jesus continues by saying **“But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”**

Now...

There is more to this than just letting someone slap you on both of your cheeks.

Everything in that culture when it came to your hands, was about the right hand. You shake hands with the right hand. You eat with the right hand.

You even hear about the right hand of God in the bible.... Where is Jesus seated? At the right hand of the throne of God.

Paul talks in Galatians 2:9 about how James and John extended to him the “right hand of fellowship.”

even in generosity... what does Jesus say? “When giving to the poor, do not let the left hand know what the right is doing.”

The right is the hand being used for generosity.

Think about this, if someone were to slap you on your right cheek, what hand would they be slapping you with?

The left hand.

The opposite hand.

Not a lot is said about the left hand... why?

Because in their culture, the left hand was considered unclean. We put our wedding rings on our left hand, they would never do that. Why?

In that culture, the left hand was primarily used for hygiene.

We could put it another way...

there was no such thing as toilet paper back then.

So everybody who had two hands, did everything dirty with one hand, and everything clean and good with the other hand.

So when someone hits you with their left hand, and you turn to them your left cheek, in order for them to hit you again, they would have to do it with their right hand.

You are not asking them to hit you again, you are neutralizing the situation rather than retaliating in it.

Am I saying that they would never use their right hand to hit? No. But there is a calculated risk with using the right hand for something like that. It is the only clean hand that they have.

This was a neutralizer.

and again... why? Why not just neutralize the situation by taking down the adversary?

Because one way burns a bridge, and another leaves it open.

Jesus says this, in verse 41: And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

and this is the hardest saying of them all.

Another translation says “if a soldier asks you to go a mile, go with him two miles. And this is where that comes from.

As we have talked about a few times in this series, basically the entire world had been taken over by Rome. The Roman empire controlled everything, so when Jesus gives this sermon on a mountain in Israel, he was giving it to a group of people who had been conquered by another group of people... treated like nobodies... many of them with family who had been killed in this takeover... it is just a bad situation.

And a Roman soldier had the rights to ask anything of the Hebrew people. And what they would often do, was when they were tired, they would grab a Hebrew person and they would make them carry their pack... and they could make them carry it for a whole mile which would give the soldier an opportunity to walk without carrying anything for a mile and get refreshed.

But you have to understand this... this soldier is part of an army that did whatever they wanted to do to whoever they wanted. Many people witnessed horrible things happening to their families... to their sisters, to their wives, to their parents, to their children, at the hands of this empire and its dirty, disgusting, violent military.

This may put it into a bit more perspective... Imagine you are a Jew during World War II, and a Nazi soldier asks you carry his pack for him a mile.

What do you do?

Of course, you understand the circumstance. You have to do what he says. You have to carry his pack a mile.

But do you really offer to go two? Do you offer to bless him when he is heaping up a heavy burden onto you?

Do you do that?

A friend of mine.... He is an atheist... but he considers himself to be Jewish at the same time. And he posted something online yesterday, it was so timely... it was a picture of him and his sister, in Italy, with this sweet

looking very very old lady. and the post explained that he felt so lucky to have run into this woman, and to hear her story... and he briefly shared it with us... She was, many years ago, as a child, scheduled to get on a train that was called the "Kinder Transport" and it would take her from Prague to London... I looked up the Kinder transport, and found a whole bunch of these black and white photos of kids being loaded onto these trains.

It was an effort during the war to bring Jewish refugee children to England.

and right before the train was suppose to depart, the war struck where they were and the train couldn't make it out. and so this child was forced into hiding for four years... and he explained how, she hid in the darkest places for years.... she ate out of dog bowls... and she said that every other child who was supposed to be on that train but missed it, was killed.

But somehow she stayed hidden.

And his post was just so full of compassion, for the humanity and dignity of someone that it was taken away from...

and all these years later, those stories still touch our heart because we know how evil it was, what happened to them.

and we know that it really happened. Because there is still flesh and blood here walking this earth that can attest to it.

and the reason I even mention that he is an atheist is because even with no working belief in, or understanding of our belief in Jesus Christ, compassion is written into the hearts of man... enough to know, that that is not the way that you treat other humans.

People should not go through that.

BUT - when in the end, when that era came to an end and bondage was lifted and people were freed...

there were still all these other people... enemies... people on the other side, who were still around. The war was over, but it wasn't like every single

soldier who ever fought on the losing side just ceased to exist, they were still around. In fact, several years after World War II thousands of German soldiers immigrated to the United States and started new lives here.

And we took them in.

Some of them were probably so full of hatred... and others, not really sure what to do with what they had done.

Because they had bought into a lie. And it was a terrible one. And the things that they have done will haunt them. I saw these pictures online, of how one day they put all of these soldiers in a theater and they made them watch footage of the things that their army had done to people.

And most of them were wrecked by it.

Now could you imagine if, four years later when the Nazi's could no longer get away with killing any Jew that they found, one of them asked her to carry his pack?

Most likely, everything in you wants to get as far away from him as quickly as possible. Most likely, everything in you wants to dig into his pack and see which of his weapons you can use against him because as far as you are concerned you are in a war and he is the enemy.

and he and his friends, they never treated you or your family with the dignity you deserve so why would you honor him by lifting a weight from his back?

What do you do?

Really? What do I do? I can't imagine for even a moment being okay with that.

But that is exactly what Jesus is talking about here. That is exactly the environment and the tension that the Hebrew people were facing against the Roman empire and its soldiers.

and he is telling us... show love.

Don't give up on this person who has made a mess of their life because they bought into a lie.

That soldier is someones child... granted, they haven't treated anybody else like they are someone's child... but is it an eye for an eye? Or do we not resist the one who is evil? You have probably heard it said, an eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind. AND IF FOR every evil done another evil is done, then we will have a world of hurt without end... and somewhere it needs to stop. And that is exactly what Jesus is saying.

Guys, right now... all these many years after that awful war... if an old frail man walked into our church and wanted to be a part of our community and wanted to know about Jesus...

would we stop showing him the love of Jesus if we later found out that he fought for Germans in World War II?

No. I can't imagine any of us would do that.

We get so excited when we hear stories of radical muslims being converted to Christianity, which should show us all that there is hope for everyone.

and I say that understanding civility.

Does evil need to get dealt with? Yes.

Are their consequences for your actions here on earth? Yes.

Has the government been ordained by God to bring about some of those consequences here on earth? Yes. That is a hard one. We can't get to into it today, but yes.

But at the end of the day, Jesus is not saying peace on earth.

Jesus is saying,

What is in your heart?

Is it anger?

Is it hatred?

Do you want to hurt people?

There are people who just want to hurt other people. Their anger fuels everything in them.

Sometimes you have to hurt people, to help people. I definitely understand that and I believe Jesus does too. I don't believe that Jesus is a pacifist. and we will touch on that next week. There are times when very hard decisions have to be made... and sometimes they may hurt people.

But do you want to hurt people?

Because some of us do. and I know that the example I just gave you is the absolute most extreme example, but that is the example that Jesus gave when he told the Hebrews to carry the Roman soldiers pack an extra mile.

For most of us we get mad because someone cuts us off on the road. Or when someone cheats us out of what is rightfully ours... or when someone slanders us in front of people we care about.

But if the gospel of Jesus Christ is living in your heart, then you know that it is a broken person who is hurting you, just like it was broken people who hurt Jesus, and at the end of the day Jesus did not go to war with the system, instead, he died for it.

Jesus says in Matthew 7:12 "do unto others that which YOU WISH they would do unto you."

It does not say "Do unto others that which they DO UNTO YOU."

you have to be able to remove yourself from your immediate circumstances enough to see who is standing opposite to you in that moment.

Because it is not your enemy.

Your enemy may be at work in them. But they are not your enemy.

So When you read this entire thing... Jesus says: don't resist evil, he says turn the other cheek, he says go two miles, and in between those he says if anyone wants to take your tunic, give him your coat as well... what is that saying? For times sake I will just give you the practical answer. If I gave someone my coat, it would be with this thought "It doesn't hurt me to lose the clothes on my back, it is just stuff. and if they are that important to you, then you need them more than I do."

and lastly He says,"give to the one one who begs, and don't refuse the one who would borrow from you." it is the same thing... if they ask of you, there is probably a need. and it may be masqueraded as some weird tension or violence or persecution, but underneath all of that anger, there is a need.

A need you can tangibly meet.

What it seems like Jesus is doing is he is saying, even when people seem like they are against you, you still have a chance to be FOR THEM.

and even when they are mean spirited and acting evil and doing all sorts of weird things that you don't deserve, we don't close the door on that person, and on the possibilities of their future or even of your future together.

Because you can retaliate... and one up, and then they one up, and it is only going to get worse and worse and worse until someone gets hurt so badly that it will seem like there is just no going back on where that relationship went.

But if you always play the card that says, no matter what you do to me, I am going to make sure that this bridge never burns... then you just may find yourself ten years later with a friend you never thought that you would have.

See I burnt a lot of bridges when I was younger.

and even now... sometimes I get a little sad because I hear about things that people are doing, and are apart of... good things, not bad things.

exciting things.

and I see the stuff that some of these people write about in their blogs and on their Facebook pages and I realized not long ago, that even though we were so different, then...

we aren't all that different, now.

In fact we probably would have some amazing conversations, and be great friends, and accomplish more for the Kingdom but in so many ways some of these relationships just feel gone.

Burned.

And there was one in particular... one kid... and he wasn't innocent in any of it, it was kind of an ongoing tension... but I was mean to him. and there was a constant tension there for years and years... and a few years ago he was diagnosed with cancer... it was a tumor of some sort in his brain.

and I remember just praying for him. And watching him battle, and beat cancer...

but just a couple of years ago, it came back. and again, I followed it all from a distance because I wasn't in any way a part of his life... but his wife started posting blogs and I read the blogs, and different things people were posting, that implied that they weren't getting very good reports.

and I realized something...

There is this person... this person who was made in the image of almighty God... who for years I had treated in such a way that looked nothing like I would treat someone knowing they are a child of God.

and he may not have a lot of time left.

and because we had built up these walls higher and higher and higher through the competitive nature of our egos... I realized that in the end, this was not something that I wanted to live with for the rest of my life. People matter. They matter more than egos and more than grudges and all that junk.

So I wrote him and I tried my best to reconcile what was between us. I didn't say a lot... but I said a little.

and he thanked me.

and that was the last time I ever talked to him.

Jesus says "don't resist the evil one."

but let me ask you a question...

a real question. It is one that I wrestled with a lot this weekend. Like we said, the bible says that we ARE to resist the devil... we even talked about that last week.. and we know that he is evil... but when a person does something evil against us, we don't resist them... because they are human, they have the power and ability *to reason*, and the ability to change.

But I think that in all of our super religious mumbo jumbo we can find ourselves thinking that we are right all the time and everyone who is against us is wrong all the time...

but what happens in hindsight when you realize that the way that YOU treated someone else, was evil?

and the whole time you thought you were not resisting the evil one, when maybe, really it was them who was not resisting the evil one.

or maybe it is even bigger than that.

or maybe the whole thing is evil.

The way my little class treated each other in high school, the whole thing was evil. It was just high school drama, but it was evil. It was “*ponēros*”

we put burdens on each other.
we annoyed each other.
we treated each other harshly.

I wasn't any less guilty than anyone... I may have been more. But at that time I thought for sure I was right.

How many times in your life, in hindsight do you realize that you were wrong?

and when you can acknowledge that, it becomes so much easier to accept the teaching of Jesus here on retaliation.

And when we realize that even when you are right, they are still a child of God... it becomes much easier to accept the teaching of Jesus here on retaliation.

I looked at that little baby in the hospital on Friday, and I was filled with so much joy for how perfect she was even though that situation seemed so crazy. And how much joy she brought to so many people already.

but it made me think, as I studied this this weekend:

“My God, what we have done with your creation?”

We have taken something so beautiful and we have warped it so much that we can't even look at each other and see good.

We don't see the way people struggle, we only see the affect that it has on us... and it sets us against people having no real idea of what is going on.

and so we take sides and it breaks Jesus' heart.

and we will close with this.

I briefly mentioned this story at Equip a couple of weeks ago. But there is this moment in the book of Joshua, it is so powerful.

Joshua is by Jericho... and as we all know he and his army eventually took Jericho. But this moment is not about that.

See what happens is, all of the sudden Joshua looks up, and he sees a man standing there, with a drawn sword.

and Joshua approaches him, and he asks him this question:

“are you for us, or are you for our adversaries?”

and this is what the angel tells him:

Neither.

He says, “I am on neither side. I am the commander of the Lord’s army.”

but what he tells Joshua next is what hit me the hardest. Because this angel is talking to Joshua. The same Joshua who was able to ask God to let the sun stand still until he finished his battle and won his victory... the same Joshua who would march an army around Jericho for seven days only to see the wall supernaturally just come tumbling down...

it was obvious that God was with this guy. But here, the commander of the Lord’s army says “I am on neither side... **AND YOU ARE STANDING ON HOLY GROUND... TAKE OFF YOUR SHOES.**”

put your war behind you for a moment and realize that in this moment God is moving, you are in his presence, and **HE CAN DO** something amazing in you no matter which side you are on.

Sometimes the line is so obvious. When massive amounts of people are being killed for no reason, it becomes obvious who the evil one is in that moment.

But most of our lives do not find us in places like that. Most of us find ourselves on one side or another of a very blurred line.

And What if we are standing on Holy Ground the whole time? What if we are hurting each other, on Holy Ground?

I am so sick and tired of watching people wreck each others lives over nothing...

I am so sick to the reality that I have been a part of the problem instead of the solution. That I have retaliated instead of loved. That I have hurt in the times when I have been hurt. Its the old adage... hurt people hurt people.

and it makes me even sicker when I look back and I can't tell if I was on the right side or the wrong side of the line. But sometimes, its not about the line.

its about the presence of whom you are standing in.

and in that presence God wants to fill all of his children.

and what a way to represent Christ... than to turn the other cheek. than going the extra mile... than saying "Here is the coat right off of my back..."

What an upside down, gospel filled way to live.

Let that be your heart... because that is pure heart toward people, and if you have that, I believe that the Holy Spirit will guide you through the times when you have to figure out what is the best way to handle a situation, or to defuse a problem.

So may your life be one that opens doors with people, instead of rushing to close them.

May you build bridges that are fireproof, between you and everyone who you do life with... even those who may call themselves your enemies.

And may the love of Jesus shine so brightly in your life that nobody around you thinks it makes any sense.

Because when I read the red letters, I don't think they make that much sense. But man, is it the best way to live.