Good morning, Pine Ridge Family!

*“But I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be like your Father in heaven, since he causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”* *Matthew 5:44 & 45*

In our last two lessons, we have looked at hatred and lust. Here in Matt. 5:38-48, it looks like we are returning to the idea of hate, but Jesus is driving on to the ultimate comparison in verse 48, “Be perfect just as you Heavenly Father is perfect.” If we are to be considered the children of God, then we are to think and act like our Father.

“An eye for and eye and a tooth for a tooth,” is a fundamental principle of justice. You need to understand that rarely did someone lose either eye or tooth. This meant that justice must be absolutely fair. You neither take *two* *eyes* for an eye nor let someone go unpunished for a crime. This goes against our natural tendencies to want revenge on our enemies, but being willing to forgive the sins of our friends and family. Justice is to be blind.

However, Jesus is calling His followers to a greater standard than justice. It is mercy based on a love for the un-lovable. Your enemy is, by your own definition, un-lovable. Jesus is calling us to do just what He was about to do for us – to love us when our sin was unforgivable. Without the cross, our sins would require an eye of an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

“Be perfect just as your Heavenly Father is perfect” has a parallel passage in the Leviticus 19:2b, “You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.” Both the perfection which is God and the holiness which is God are far above us, but God has some definite intentions for us to seek these two ideals. The holiness of God in the Old Testament meant that you were a different people than everyone else. You followed the Lord; you became like Him in your thoughts and actions. Obviously, you did not create worlds nor split oceans, but you displayed a righteousness like His righteousness. The perfection of God is completeness, a finished product. Michelangelo started with a block of marble. He had a statue in his mind and when he finished, everyone saw what he had intended, the David. We are to be a finished product of the mind of our Savior.

In particular, here in Jesus’ admonition, we are to love those who don’t yet love us. We are to allow them to strike us on the right cheek and then offer our left. If they force us to go one mile, we are to offer to go another for them. We are to love and to pray for those who actively persecute us. If God was not the God He is, He would have required of us all an eye for an eye. But He loved us while we were still enemies of His (Rom. 5:6, 8 & 10). He provided redemption to people who hated him.

So Jesus calls us to have the same attitude and love towards the world that He has for us. So the world would see that we were different (holy) as He is different from anything that they know and that we love as He loves - as they cannot love. In this we will draw people to Christ.

In Christ, our Lord…

Pastor EA