



Theme: The Gospel on Broadway


“Wicked – Love Your Enemies for Good”


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Weekly Memory Verse:

27 “But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. 28 Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. – Luke 6


Meditation Moments for Monday, May 4 – Read **1 Kings 8:22-30**. King Solomon followed King David in Israel and built a beautiful Temple in Jerusalem. He offered this prayer as the Temple was dedicated. Solomon knew he and his people would most often come to the Temple to seek God’s mercy and forgiveness. Through their sacrifices and prayers, God’s Old Testament people counted on God’s grace, and trusted in God’s forgiveness. “When you hear,” Solomon asked God humbly, “forgive.”


 What if Solomon had prayed the kind of prayer we are tempted to pray, and sometimes do if we are honest? “Lord, hear us from heaven, your dwelling place. When you hear us, bless us. Reward us for being your people and give us great success.” What different spirit would such a prayer show? Which prayer is more often your prayer, one of a humble spirit or one of begging for greatness? Why do you think you lean one way or the other in your prayers?

 Solomon had built the Temple, and it was a stunning building. But he knew the limits of any physical building, saying, “The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” Do you tend to see God as present mainly in certain places or structures? How can you more fully sense God with you in all places?

Prayer: *Gracious God, I come to you today with a humble heart. Help me to feel your grace and forgiveness every moment and in every place. May I see you at work in all things. Amen.*


Tuesday, May 5 – Read **Psalm 130:1-8**. This Psalm begins: *¹From the depths of despair, O Lord, I call for your help. ²Hear my cry, O Lord. Pay attention to my prayer.* The writer knew how awful it is to sink deeper and deeper in despair. For emphasis, the psalm repeats the image of watchmen waiting in the darkness for the first gleam of morning light, saying “That’s how eagerly I wait for God’s mercy.” And God’s love is unfailing—God will redeem from all sins.


 Verse 3 says, “If you, LORD, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?” Doesn’t God keep a record of sins? Compare Psalm 103:10, 12: “He does not treat us as our sins deserve....as far as the east is from the west (this includes the witches of Oz!), so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” What do these poetic images tell you about God’s passion to forgive? Verse 7 says that with God is “full redemption.”

 Partial forgiveness often never lets the other person forget they blew it. We can hold a small grievance in reserve. Have you ever gotten (or given) “partial” forgiveness, which is the best we broken humans can do at times? What does it mean to you that God offers “full redemption” for any brokenness?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, I don’t like it when people hurt me or people I care about. Neither did you—yet you conquer those evil actions, not by lashing back, but by using the mysterious power of love. Inject that strong, powerful element more fully into my life. Amen.*



Wednesday, May 6 – Read **Luke 7:1-10**. The words of Jesus about loving others are challenging when we realize that we also are called to see good in the other and remember that they also were made in the image of God (just like us!) Today’s passage showed that bridges of understanding are possible even between enemies. Where Jesus lived, Jews and the occupying Romans were the definition of enemies. Yet local Jewish leaders cared enough about the Centurion to advocate for him to Jesus in verse 3. The Centurion loved the Jewish people and helped them build a synagogue in verse 5. The Centurion trusted in Jesus’ healing power in verses 6-8. Jesus was “impressed” with the Centurion’s faith and healed the servant in verses 9-10.

 Love can build bridges of understanding, even and perhaps especially with our “enemies.” But that doesn’t happen on its own. It takes time and intentionality. As you read about the interaction of the Roman centurion (a commander of 100 soldiers), the Jewish leaders in Capernaum, and Jesus, what steps do their story suggest that you might take today to show love for your “enemies”? How could you seek to understand them better? What needs of theirs might you meet?

 Remember that seeing good in others does not require us to say that what happened to us that was hurtful was ok. Human imperfections never excuse injustice or things that have been done to us that cause pain, but how can seeing our own flaws help us look for the good in people who act unjustly or who hurt us?


Prayer: Lord Jesus, there were many reasons for you and your disciples to fear and hate Roman soldiers. Yet you saw the good in this Roman and healed his servant. Give me eyes like yours that look for the good. Amen.


Thursday, May 7 – Read **2 Corinthians 7:8-11**. What's the difference between, "Godly sorrow," and "worldly sorrow"? Counselor Bruce Narramore calls worldly sorrow, "guilt feelings," and godly sorrow "constructive sorrow." He writes, "Guilt feelings are punitive. Constructive sorrow is loving. In psychological guilt we take the initiative to punish ourselves. In constructive sorrow we respond because God has taken the initiative."

-  What positive results does Paul name as coming from "godly sorrow"? In what ways do those steps lead toward a positive outcome and genuine change for the better? When have you seen this process operate in your life or the life of someone close to you?
-  Worldly sorrow means punishing ourselves by hanging onto feelings of guilt and shame. How can these feelings keep us from taking steps toward healing? When is the spiritual discipline of counseling needed to help us recognize and live beyond "worldly sorrow"? In what ways is Paul right in saying that this kind of sorrow brings death?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, help me to hear the Godly sorrow you place on my heart, and give you the worldly sorrows I carry that are leading to a heavy heart. Free me to love and forgive myself and others as you have forgiven us. Amen.

Friday, May 8 – Read **Matthew 5:43-45** and **Luke 6:27-28**. Loving our enemies begins inside of us as this is a love of choice, not feeling. As today's Scripture readings show, Jesus called for a radical love that transcends the boundaries of our own communities and relationships. It's a love that extends to those who have wronged us, challenging the "us vs. them" mentality that so easily and often divides people. It's not about condoning evil, but about defeating it with a more powerful force: love.


 How do Jesus' words in Matthew inspire you to embrace Jesus' radical form of love that reaches beyond your personal comfort? In today's polarized society, how can you actively use love to dismantle the "us vs. them" mentality and build bridges, even with personal or social "enemies"? How would you apply this idea to your personal relationships? What needs to happen inside of you to be able to love those with whom you disagree?

 Jesus said loving enemies makes us more like God, who, "makes the sun rise on both the evil and the good and sends rain on both the righteous and the unrighteous." What kind of growth in character and maturity does it take to love your enemies? Did Jesus mainly mean altering your emotions to feel more affectionate toward enemies, or altering your behavior to act for their good? How can you become more like Jesus as you act for the good of all?

Prayer: God, grant me the strength to embody radical love, trusting that love is a powerful force against division and evil. Guide me to actively seek to build bridges,

challenge personal prejudices, and confront injustices with a living faith that transforms my heart. Amen.

Saturday, May 9 – Read **2 Corinthians 5:14-21**. Paul summed up for the church in Corinth the message he believed with all his heart. “God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them.” The cross, Paul said, made God's eagerness to forgive and accept you, no matter where you've been or what you've done, crystal clear. The question is: can you accept God's gift, and live in the freedom from guilt God offers? Do it, Paul implored: “Be reconciled to God.”

 “If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” In what ways has genuinely trusting in God's forgiveness opened a new world for you? In what parts of your life are you still struggling with guilt, and seeking a new start? Are you open to getting any help you need to move beyond destructive guilt and self-hatred? How will you respond to Paul's plea to “be reconciled to God”?

Prayer: *Lord Jesus, you embodied God's love for me. Now you call me to embody your love as I deal with other people, even people I may not like, may even fear. Grow your love in my heart. Amen.*