



22: SINGING TO THE TUNE OF OUR ENEMIES (Luke 6:27-36)

Charles Lindbergh, a stunt and airmail pilot, flew his single-engine plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, from New York to Paris in 33 and a half hours. The plane was designed to carry the pilot, a lot of gas, and not much else. To accommodate the extra fuel, the radio, navigation lights, brakes, and a parachute were left behind. Lindbergh navigated by magnetic compass. He was a hero but also, as his nickname "Lucky Lindy" suggested, quite fortunate.¹

Lindbergh was the first pilot to ever pull off the feat of flying in a plane, nonstop, across the Atlantic Ocean. In January of 2024, each day, roughly over 2000 aircraft travel across the Atlantic ocean bound for North America or Europe on the North Atlantic Organized Track System.² It's commonplace to us now, but at one point it seemed impossible, and pioneers would die trying to pull off this transatlantic flight.

If we take a look at human history, we discover that many human beings have tried to love their enemies. Joseph, who lived sometime between 2000 and 1500 BC, lived out extraordinary love for His enemies, inspired by the God of the Universe. However, no

¹ <https://www.mensjournal.com/adventure/the-most-extreme-feats-in-human-history-20140214>

² <https://aerosavvy.com/north-atlantic-tracks/#>

one was a pioneer of love for enemies on earth like the God man Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ's teaching on loving enemies, pointing to the true heart of God the Father, was earth shattering and revolutionary. It has inspired millions since to reflect His love and impact individuals, cultures, and nations! Once, humans thought flying over the ocean was impossible. What we once thought impossible in the realm of forgiveness has been made possible by Christ!

Love for enemies is incredible love — not a love like the world's, but a unique love that endures. Jesus exhorted His disciples with reference to how to treat enemies in Luke 6, verses 27 - 28, from a human perspective in verse 31, and as a divine standard in verse 35. Two sets of illustrations supported the exhortation (vv. 29 - 30, 32 - 34). Love evidenced mercy, just like the Father (v. 36)³

Let's dig into this life changing, radical teaching of Luke 6:27-36 and ask Jesus to absolutely transform us! Ready, set, go!

27 "But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies, do what is good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. (Luke 6:27-28)

Four exhortations in verses 27 and 28 made the key point. The special objects of love were one's enemies. The love Jesus commanded was not an abstract love tucked away in a person's inner recesses, but a love that demonstrated itself in concrete action. The disciple should do good to those who hate them, bless those who curse them, and pray for those who abuse them. The exhortations expected action, not just a private expression to God. In the context of rejection, Jesus called for extraordinary trust in God. Disciples should reflect such love constantly.⁴

Jesus tells us to love our enemies. To seek God's perfect agape love for them. This includes **all** enemies by the way. This includes people who have spiritually, psychologically, physically, emotionally, mentally, and sexually abused us. This includes people we hate politically. This includes people who have done awful things to us. This includes people who have judged us. God loves them with His perfect love and His perfect love is to radiate out of us as well.

We are to do good to those that hate us. This is tangible. Every time I meditate on this teaching of Jesus, I want to buy anonymous presents for people who have been mean to me, not forgiven me, shunned me, judged me, threatened me, slandered me, gossiped about me, and more, and most important of all- to not even have them know it

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was me that did it. So if you got a gift from me this week, now you know that you've hurt my feelings at some point ;)

Think about it for a minute- are you willing to allow the perfect love of the Father fill your heart and mind so much that you'll do good to someone who hates you?

I know a pastor in Green, Ohio, that worked for a pastor in Akron, Ohio in a large Church, and this Akron pastor was awful to this Green pastor. This Akron pastor falsely accused the Green pastor of many things, he reprimanded him and scolded him every chance that he got. He threatened his job, bullied him, said unkind things to him, and exerted control over him. This pastor in Green looked at these words of Jesus, and knew that this Akron pastor liked pipe tobacco, so he went to a tobacco store, bought the Akron pastor some pipe tobacco, went to the Akron pastor's house, knocked on his door, and gave him the tobacco as a gift.

That's what I'm talking about right there! **Nothing** in this Green pastor's being **wanted** to do this deed for the Akron pastor. It **had** to be God putting it inside of Him!

We are to bless those that curse us. The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary states that the primary factor of blessing is the statement of relationship between parties. God blesses with a benefit on the basis of the relationship. The blessing makes known the positive relationship between the parties, whether a single individual (Gen 12:1–3) or a group (Deut 7:14–16).⁵ The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary states that to curse is to “predict, wish, pray for, or cause trouble or disaster on a person or thing”.⁶ If we really are sons of the most High God, if we really are disciples of Jesus Christ, and if we really have the Holy Spirit living in us, we will respond to hatred with divine agape love. We will bless people, and treat them as beloved friends, even when they predict, wish, pray for, or cause trouble or disaster on us.

Buckle up buttercups. You're gonna need **major** divine help in allowing the Holy Spirit to do this through you. God is gonna have to **break** you first. And we have to be open and honest in all admitting, that in this area of loving our enemies, He really can never break us enough!

We are also to pray for those that mistreat us. This quite literally means that those who have slandered us, maligned us, cursed us, prayed destruction on us, hoped for disaster on us, tried to take us out, tried to take us down, and abused us- need to be

⁵ Richards, K. H. (1992). [Bless/Blessing](#). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 1, p. 754). New York: Doubleday.

⁶ Stuart, D. (1992). [Curse](#). In D. N. Freedman (Ed.), *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary* (Vol. 1, p. 1218). New York: Doubleday.

lifted up in prayer to our heavenly Father. So when we're alone, brooding and boiling with the pain that these people have caused in our lives, we need to utter their names on our lips to the Lord of Heaven and Earth, asking for good things for them. Easy, right? **No it's not!**

This is the teaching of Jesus Christ! And He keeps going...

29 If anyone hits you on the cheek, offer the other also. And if anyone takes away your coat, don't hold back your shirt either. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and from someone who takes your things, don't ask for them back. (Luke 6:29-30)

Lest there be any doubt that Jesus called His followers to active, visible love for their enemies, four illustrations guaranteed that this was his focus. Turning the cheek pictured a person slapped on the cheek in rejection. The action involved an insult that may well be associated with removal from the synagogue. Numerous examples of this kind of use of violence appeared in Acts (18:17; 21:32; 23:2). Yet the early church consistently turned the other cheek by continuing to share the gospel with those who rejected them. They never fought back in kind, but attempted to overcome evil with good.⁷

Whitney Houston sang it well. "No matter what they take from me, they can't take away my dignity." People can smack you in the face, and mistreat you, and turning the other cheek to allow them to hit you again shows that you have a poise in your faith that can't be shaken. You are made in the image of and serve a God who is stronger than their hatred. Have I mentioned that **this will go against everything inside of you?** It requires faith and trust!

I can't help but think of Martin Luther King and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference marchers who marched in Selma. They marched for fair and equal laws for black folks in a town where that wasn't practiced at all. I think of the racist police who set up fire hoses and unleashed them on the protesters while they responded peacefully. I think of the cops breaking out billy clubs and beating old black ladies. Many of these protesters had the Spirit of God leading them the whole time, and didn't retaliate. Will you retaliate when you have the chance? Or will you honor Jesus?

The second illustration Jesus gave continued the picture of being vulnerable. Those who took the outer garment should also be allowed to have the undershirt. Jesus' point here was not to stand on a street corner and allow oneself to be robbed, but that ministry in the context of rejection, which included economic isolation, required being

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vulnerable again and again. Missionary work could expose one to danger, but that should not stop us from making multiple efforts to win people.⁸

We need to see that the whole point of being radically generous and giving to evil, nasty people is to win them over to Jesus. Again, Whitney Houston sang it, “No matter what they take from me, they can’t take away my dignity!” People can demand material things from us but they can’t take their soul. If someone tries to take something from you or be unfair to you, and you respond with generosity, then that person’s attempt to shake you hasn’t worked.

And this is why Jesus said the poor, hungry, mourning, and mistreated in Him and for Him are blessed! Why? Because they have nothing to lose! No one can take enough economically, tangibly, and emotionally from them to shake their faith in the One who holds all of eternity in His hands!

Friends, what if we allowed the Lord to truly lead us? What if we decided that our jobs, our paychecks, our homes, our clothes, our possessions, our cars, and all our other privileges simply didn’t matter? What if Christ was *really*, not just *theoretically* our everything? How do you think we would then live?

Jesus also said *Give to everyone who asks you, and from someone who takes your things, don’t ask for them back*. He’s definitely calling us to radical generosity, but we need to remember that in His context, this was in the face of enemies who would persecute, mistreat, and rob the disciples, and they were to win them over with unshakable agape love.

Christ followers have wrongly thought that we are supposed to “give to everyone who asks us” as a general rule. So anytime someone asks us for money, we should give. Anytime someone asks us for a favor, we should do it.

The disciple should absolutely be compassionate and generous and should thus give to the needy. The giving of alms to the poor was an important part of Jewish piety. Jesus’ words here fit into that background, as do numerous Old Testament texts (Deut. 15:7 - 8; Ps. 37:21, 26; Prov. 19:17; 21:26b). Such compassion represented a fundamental expression of love.⁹

However, people, looking to take advantage of others have picked up on the willing gullibility of many Christ followers. They know that many Christ followers believe they’re

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supposed to always help people in need, no matter what, so they'll hit Christ followers up, one by one, over and over again, for every need they have, and then repeat the cycle over and over again. This is called **freeloading**.

We gotta remember that Paul also wrote to the Thessalonian Christians, infamous for their laziness, that: "In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: "If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat." (2 Thess. 3:10)

Take a look at the bulk of the chapter that Paul wrote to get a feel for the context;

6 Now we command you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from every brother or sister who is idle and does not live according to the tradition received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you should imitate us: We were not idle among you; 8 we did not eat anyone's food free of charge; instead, we labored and toiled, working night and day, so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 It is not that we don't have the right to support, but we did it to make ourselves an example to you so that you would imitate us. 10 In fact, when we were with you, this is what we commanded you: "If anyone isn't willing to work, he should not eat." 11 For we hear that there are some among you who are idle. They are not busy but busybodies. 12 Now we command and exhort such people by the Lord Jesus Christ to work quietly and provide for themselves. 13 But as for you, brothers and sisters, do not grow weary in doing good. 14 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take note of that person; don't associate with him, so that he may be ashamed. 15 Yet don't consider him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother. (2 Thess. 3:6-15)

So obviously, with all this in mind, Jesus' words to "give to everyone who asks you" in the context of being persecuted and mistreated don't apply to Christ followers giving endless charity to freeloaders!

Is there a place to just be generous to people who are down and out? Absolutely! But is it good, or even right, to keep giving handouts to people that are constantly asking for them while contributing nothing? No. That's enabling a freeloader.

The final illustration Jesus gave involved retribution for wrong done. Jesus did not want a disciple to seek to get back what had been taken from him. This exhortation involved amazing restraint. Paul seems to be aware of this in his remarks in 1 Corinthians 6:1 - 8. It is better to be defrauded than to bring reproach on Jesus' name. Those who strike against the disciples should be treated differently by the disciples.¹⁰

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Again, in the context of first century Middle Eastern culture, Jesus was saying that people would unfairly take things from those associated with Him. They would be robbed of social status, finances, possessions, and more. Jesus was saying to go ahead and let people just take things away because they had a greater reward in heaven, and might even, by their radical response to unfairness, win their enemies to Jesus.

All of these exhortations assumed the disciple understood that God was watching over him or her. Any vindication should be left in his hands. The greatest vindication of all was to transform the enemy into a friend of God through the example of love. Saul was perhaps the most prominent biblical example. A supporter of Stephen's stoning, he was transformed by God in answer to Stephen's prayer that those who were stoning him should be forgiven (Acts 7, esp. v. 60; 9:1 - 19), and consequently ended up becoming the largest contributing author to the New Testament!¹¹

Big point? In all of our actions, we should lean into Jesus to win over our enemies to Him. As Tony Evans articulated, Christ's followers have different values and are thus distinguishable from the rest of the world. All they do is done with a view toward bringing detractors to the knowledge of God's love in Jesus Christ.¹²

Jesus goes on to drop the golden rule into this teaching. He says;

31 Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them. (Luke 6:31)

The exhortation was repeated, only now a human standard of expectation served as the basis for the ethical call. This remark, again commonly known as "the Golden Rule," was often seen as one of the pinnacle points in Jesus' ethical teaching, though it reflected a common ethical theme in the culture. Jesus stated no ulterior motive here. The essence of love was a sensitivity to the needs of others, deferring to how they preferred to be treated. Such love took great sensitivity and a spirit that desired to hear what others had to say. It was another way of showing respect for others.¹³

The "Golden Rule" is a very popular concept in our culture. I worked at Progressive Insurance, and it was one of their core values. I googled the phrase "Golden Rule in business", and found that many companies practice the golden rule. Why? Because they know that if they ask their employees to treat others as they would want to be treated, they will get a good reputation and make more money!

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But is the golden rule about getting ahead in life, being successful, and making friends?

Many think that the Golden Rule is merely reciprocal, that we should act based on how we want to be treated. But other parts of this section of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain downplayed this focus on reciprocity, and, in fact, reversed it (vv. 27–30, 32–35). At the end of the section, Jesus gave a different basis for our actions: that we should imitate God the Father (v. 36).¹⁴

That's right y'all- God literally wants us to treat others like He treats them. That's the most **golden** rule of all! Maybe you're annoyed with humanity so you're telling yourself, "Sure, I'll treat people like God does- I'll send a flood on the earth to destroy humanity that will show em!"

But in all seriousness, the golden rule is not merely that we treat others like we want to be treated. It's that we treat others as God treats them. This is a supernatural task, and we need the Holy Spirit to do it through us. We need Christ living in us to do it through us. The point isn't being nice to people. It's agape love flowing through us into others. It requires faith and abiding in Christ.

Christ goes on into tangible elements of what it means to love enemies with agape love;

32 If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. 33 If you do what is good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners to be repaid in full. (Luke 6:32-34)

Jesus drove home the point with a series of questions (vv. 32 - 34), radicalizing the positive exhortations of verses 29 - 30. The fundamental point is that if we love only those who are kind to us, that takes no special effort (2 Clement 13:4). Even "sinners" love that way. The call of the disciple is to a greater love, a distinct love, a love that is unique in the world.¹⁵

It's easy to love those that love us. It's difficult to love those that dislike or hate us. Everybody, except psychopaths and sociopaths, love those who love them. It's easy to do that. It's very hard, if not impossible, to love those who hate us.

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It's easy to do good to those who do good to us. When someone is kind, encouraging, helpful, generous, and patient to us, we easily reciprocate it. However, when someone is unkind, discouraging, hurtful, stingy, and impatient with us, we even more easily desire to reciprocate it!

It's also easier to lend to those whom we trust, and expect to be paid back. It's much harder to give or lend to people whom we're not sure can pay us back.

But God's agape love involves using our resources to meet the needs of others. We should not lend in such a way as to expect a return. Jesus was drawing on Old Testament principles here (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35 - 37; Deut. 15:7 - 11): As the year of release from debt approached (Jubilee), one was not to become more hesitant to lend because that year was approaching. One was not to be tightfisted or hardhearted, but open handed to the needy. Failure to respond meant that the one needing the money could cry out to God against the lender. So Jesus argued in kind: No one should give a loan simply because he or she expected to ask for a loan in return some day in the future. Rather, one should simply be generous and seek to meet human needs. To lend in any other way was to lend as a "sinner" lends.¹⁶

Jesus closed the teaching on loving enemies powerfully with divine emphasis;

35 But love your enemies, do what is good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High. For he is gracious to the ungrateful and evil. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. (Luke 6:35-36)

Jesus restated the exhortation: Love your enemies, do good, lend while expecting nothing back, and expect a reward from the God who lives in heaven (v. 35). Jesus' disciples should love with an exceptional love, a love so different that the world can see it. Such love is rewarded because it marks out the presence of the children of God, who reflect the character of God. God himself is kind to the ungrateful and selfish. To be his child is to reveal the Father's character (cf. Ps. 112:4 - 5).¹⁷

In other words, the standard of the disciple's behavior is the merciful character of God (v. 36). Again Jesus echoes Old Testament descriptions of God (Ex. 34:6; Isa. 63:15; Jonah 4:2). To be his child is not only to be brought into a relationship where God has forgiven us; it is the beginning of a process of reflecting God's gracious, merciful, and

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forgiving character to the world. As we do so, we live out our call to be like him, and reflect his image. “Moral likeness proves parentage.”¹⁸

The advent of auto tuning on vocals has allowed many many people to be able to sing into a microphone, and while not really having a good voice, they can fool a crowd of people and make it sound like they can actually sing. Now I love auto tune as a production tool to make things sound a certain way, but I don't love that auto tune has allowed people who can't sing to “fake sing”.

But when it comes down to real singing, people like Aretha Franklin, Chris Cornell, Stevie Wonder, Tori Kelly, and Christina Aguilera will never be outdone by autotune! They are **authentic** singers!

The supernatural quality of love for enemies is a trait in **authentic** disciples of Jesus! I talked before about how 63% of Americans call themselves Christians, and only 4% of Americans actually desire to be disciples of Jesus. That's the equivalent of having 63 singers singing into microphones for a choir with auto tune on them, and then all of a sudden turning the auto tune off, and realizing that only 4 of the 63 are actually singing well and on pitch!

Let me tell you something man, we **have** to have intimacy with God to have Him love our enemies through us. There's simply no other way. This is much too hard of a task to do without crazy, unearthly help!

Can I challenge you to really love your enemies tangibly? I'm not saying open yourself up to abuse of any kind. I am saying to do something, led by the Spirit, out of kindness towards them, and to make it tangible, not theoretical!

And if all of us in this community practiced loving our enemies by the power of Christ in us- do you know what would happen? None of us would be enemies! We'd all become friends! That's how the Body of Christ is supposed to look. Anything less isn't of Christ. This is the way of Christ.

And biggest of all, we were God's enemies, and yet He sent His only Son to die in our place to forgive us of **all** our sins! Why wouldn't we, fueled by His goodness, pour out this love on **everybody**, not just those we hand pick?

6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For rarely will someone die for a just person—though for a good person perhaps someone

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might even dare to die. 8 But God proves his own love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 How much more then, since we have now been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from wrath. 10 For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, then how much more, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. 11 And not only that, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received this reconciliation. (Romans 5:6-11)