

Rethink  
Part 5: Enemies  
Luke 9:51-56

**WE:** Problem: Polarization... **We've chosen to be defined by what we are against.**

Christians add to and even create the polarizations... not new but seems to have exploded in the last few years.

"JF's" belittling/demonizing those that disagree with them or just see things from a different angle.

Being a Xian seems to mean picking a side and fighting/resisting the other side...

For Example:

People have started seeing themselves as "Soldiers for Christ."

Taken it upon themselves to defend the **faith**/Jesus/God

Others see themselves as Social Justice Warriors; anyone who disagrees doesn't truly love their neighbor, etc.

And then add on top of that loud voices in the media and on social media getting viewers/listeners/clicks by trying to create conflict and push people to the extreme sides of an issue...

There's always an enemy (them/they) that has to be resisted, fought, and subdued or defeated.

**Defining ourselves by what we are against forces us to continually fight against others.**

When Xians do it... makes a lot of people both in the church and those simply watching ask, "Wait, is this Xianity? Is this what following Jesus is about?"

But Jesus showed a better way... Need to rethink what it means to follow Jesus in 21st century

**Jesus frees us to define ourselves by who we are FOR.**

Disciples had to rethink too... Book of Luke, ch 9

**GOD:**

**V. 51**- Time to do this.

- Knows he's going to go and die to save humanity
- Right here we clearly see the "Jesus way." Self-sacrifice for the good of all. "I didn't come to judge the world but to save the world." "I have come to seek and save the lost."
- When we choose to judge, fight, condemn others what does that say about which "way" we are following?

**V. 52**- History of Samaritans/Jews

- Temples
- Samaritans would attack Jewish pilgrims
- First revealed himself to samaritan women

**When we define ourselves by what we are against, we define others as either allies or enemies.**

- Most “others” become enemies. People from “other” places, backgrounds, etc. This is the definition of “prejudice”, btw. Being against someone else before knowing a single thing about them.

**V. 53** - Racism/Opposition to most important mission of life

- How would you respond if Jesus?
- You’re on your way to give your life for these people...
- How would you respond if you were one of Jesus’ followers

**V. 54** - That escalated quickly

But they have every right to be angry. Don’t they?

These prejudiced racists refuse to believe who Jesus is. Actively resisting his mission.

“Don’t you know who this is? How dare you! You filthy samaritans.”

“Jesus let’s show them how much power you have... let’s show them who you really are...

You’re greater than Elijah (2 Kings 1) so let us call down fire from heaven in your name and burn up your enemies.”

Wow! Look at the faith of James and John... they wholeheartedly believe that if Jesus just gives them permission they can call down fire from heaven.

So in their minds they are defending/ standing up for Jesus... and showing great faith!

Does this sound familiar at all?

We think the same way...

**Examples-**

So many people using the “flipped tables over” thing to say we should angrily, antagonistically fight those who disagree with us...

I have to stand against what society is doing... if you don't, you don't actually have faith in Jesus. You've given in to fear and care what people think, not God.

Celebrate when someone on the other side fails or slips or even says something that could be taken slightly the wrong way.

Xians- “Come quickly Lord” yes we want Jesus to come back, make everything right, end suffering and death... BUT the connotation for many is... “Jesus come back to show I’m right and those who disagree will burn.”

**When we define ourselves by what we are against we respond to “enemies” with judgement not mercy... and expect Jesus to do the same.**

But Jesus came to bring something completely different/better/more powerful... a new way.

**V. 55-56** Rebuked. Why? "Jesus, we are standing up for what we believe in- YOU!"

Didn't understand THE most important thing about following Jesus... **John 15:12** "My command is this... FIGHT. The ends justify the means. I must be defended at ALL costs"

Think about this... Jesus is God. All authority... every right to do whatever he wants and these little racist peasants are trying to stop him as he is on his way to die for them.

But chooses to walk away and die for them anyway.

Jesus didn't need J&J to stand up for him... could've said the word and would drop dead.

They didn't have to fight... could trust that Jesus knew what he was doing. Trust that Jesus' way was better.

They were free to just follow Him, move on, and continue with the mission.

**YOU:**

**JF: We don't have to fight for Jesus**... Don't "have to make a stand for Jesus" or "hold the line" or "defend the faith"

**Jesus can handle himself** and usually (last episode) has a different purpose than our agenda

When we face disagreements/opposition, we can trust that he has us covered, he knows what he's doing, he'll handle it...

We are free to focus on following him, move on, and continue the mission Jesus has for us... Inviting our neighbors to D, E, S the life Jesus offers... together. Free to love one another, INCLUDING our enemies.

**YEAH BUT's... "But we need to make a stand and show our faith!"**

**Love is greater than faith. 1 Cor 13:1-3; 13**

**But what about Jesus flipping tables? Aren't we supposed to be like Jesus and show righteous anger?**

Why J flip tables? Keeping others from discovering love of God. Defending those who couldn't do it for themselves.

Still died for those whose tables he flipped.

Good rule: You can flip over any table you want as long as you are the Son of God.. otherwise you should take it slowly, prayerfully, and lovingly.

**If you are more excited about showing righteous anger than merciful love... you're not righteous you're just angry.**

## **But what about evils we see in society? Like what we see here RACISM.**

Racism is stupid/evil/and a blight on the human condition for all of history... one of the beauties of Xianity is the promise that Jesus will come back and end it forever.

I often feel unqualified to speak to race issues... in some ways I am... Not qualified to speak to causes and political solutions... of course have opinions... but not my place in this role to tell you what our country SHOULD do...

But I can speak to JF's and what a JF should personally do when experiencing injustice...

What was Jesus' response when confronted with racism? Gave himself to die for them.

How do we confront racism? Including the judgement, anger, hatred it brings w/ it?

- Education? Awareness? Sure... Dialogue- Great. Listen. Fantastic.
- Speak for those who can't speak for themselves
- When it's aimed at us... Love (easy to say... especially for me)

## **Reconciliation is greater than retribution.**

Might seem too simplistic... sometimes the most powerful tools are the simplest.

Forgiving and "Love your enemies" is not an unattainable ideal, it's a doable action step...

## **Jesus frees us and empowers us to genuinely forgive and love our enemy.**

We can only love if we will forgive. You can't love someone you are holding bitterness toward.

How forgive? "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they are doing."

Jesus was able to see the blindness and deception that blinded people's hearts to the love of God.

Those who carry hatred toward others are still "of this world" can't see or understand the love of God (no matter what religion they say they follow.)

Forgive them and you will move from anger to compassion, from retaliation to mercy...

**Bernice King** (youngest daughter of MLK) tweeted recently...

"I struggled with hate and bitterness for many years. I mean... my father was assassinated, my paternal grandmother was assassinated, my uncle died mysteriously. But I had to get well or I would have been consumed. I'm grateful that I learned that love makes justice happen."

Not something that happens over night... how practice?

**Read Luke 6:27-36**

Great reward? Peace with God, others, yourself

**Pray FOR your enemies and LOVE them** (by name... Trump/Biden-Harris/Neighbor/Boss/Ex/In-law/classmate) (Do something loving towards them... buy them a coffee or gift card, write a kind note)

- Even if not sure anyone is listening... try it.

- Even if think they won't care if you're kind, do it.

## **WE:**

Jesus offers to free us from having to define ourselves by what we are against...

We can say we are against hatred, but isn't better to be FOR love?

We can say we are against\_\_\_\_\_, but isn't it better to be FOR\_\_\_\_\_?

He offers Freedom from having to see everyone as either an ally or an enemy

Freedom to not have to retaliate.

Freedom to trust him with outcome.

Freedom to simply love and trust.

John eventually understood. When old man wrote... **John 3:16-17**

**Defining ourselves by who we are FOR allows us to freely love others.**

## Questions

1. How have you seen God working in your life and sphere of influence this past week?
2. What do you tend to be AGAINST? What would change if you chose to define yourself by who you are FOR instead?
3. Read Luke 6:27-36. How does this contrast with other codes of conduct in the world?
4. What enemy/enemies do you need to pray for and love this week? How can your group support you in this endeavor?