

# The Way of Jesus: A Better Way to Be Human

## Part 3: Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:17-48

### Summary:

In a world fueled by outrage and division, Jesus invites us into a radically different way of living—one where love, not being right, has the final word.

### Main Ideas:

We've accepted hostility as ordinary.

A love-shaped heart doesn't fuel conflict... it heals it.

The Law of the Kingdom of Heaven is LOVE.

Kingdom People care more about reconciliation than being right.

Kingdom People see others as sacred, not objects

The Kingdom of Heaven is not behavior modification. It's heart transformation.

In the Kingdom of Heaven, the question isn't "Is it legal?" The question is "Is it loving?"

Kingdom People don't look for escape clauses. They look for ways to remain faithful.

Kingdom People surrender the right to get even.

Kingdom People surrender to the Spirit who forms the love of Jesus within them.

In the Kingdom of Heaven, people are never obstacles... they're the point.

### Invitation:

Pray for the person you resent.

And maybe... Have the conversation you've been avoiding.

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### Transcript:

**IN:** I'm going to do something you're not supposed to do in a sermon.

- Instead of building agreement, I'm going to start with what's dividing us.
- The president. Immigration. Abortion. War. Israel and Palestine. Russia and Ukraine. Public health. Race. Education.

**WE:** And what does our culture train us to do?

- Fight. Win. Own the other side. Prove you're right... at any cost.
- Because we're told everything is at stake... our country, our identity, our children's future.

### We've accepted hostility as ordinary.

But what if the way we've been taught to engage conflict... isn't the only way?

- What if you could stand for truth and still love someone who completely disagrees with you?
- What if you became the kind of person who doesn't just argue well... but loves well?

Jesus offers another way.

- Not the way of outrage, retreat, or domination.

Not a new list of rules... but a new way to be human.

- A new kind of heart.
- Life under the rule of God in the Kingdom of Heaven... right here, right now.
- A kingdom of love and healing

But... How do you love someone who voted differently from you, hurt you deeply, or thinks you're the problem with the world?

And yes, Jesus says, "Love your enemies."

- But that sounds beautiful until you actually have one.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows us what love actually looks like when the stakes feel high and the gap feels impossible.

A love-shaped heart doesn't fuel conflict... it heals it.

**GOD:** Jesus has just described the kind of people who belong in his Kingdom

- The poor in spirit, the meek, the merciful, the peacemakers.

Then he tells them: You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.

- Preserve what's good.
- Push back decay.
- Shine so people see your life... and see your Heavenly Father.

But before He shows what this life looks like, he tells us what's at the core of it.

**Matthew 5:17 NLT** *Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets.* [What we call the Old Testament] *No, I came to accomplish their purpose.*

**Matthew 5:20** *But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!*

Most of us hear that and think, "So this is about stricter rule-keeping. Be better than the religious professionals."

- And if that's the standard... we're in trouble.

And let's be honest, focusing just on rule-keeping has never helped humanity.

- Rules become scorecards.
- They tell us who's in and who's out.
- And somehow... we're always on the inside.

The Pharisees were masters of external righteousness.

- They debated commandments.
- Ranked them.

- Found technical loopholes.
- And looked impressive doing it.

And Jesus dismantles that entire system.

Jesus says the Law was never the problem.

- The Law is good.
- It reveals what life with God looks like
- At its core, the Law was always about... LOVE.
- The very heart of God.
- The Law of the Kingdom of Heaven is LOVE.

Jesus came to fulfill the... to embody it, to complete it, to bring it to its intended goal.

And this was the plan all along. 100's of years earlier, God promised through the prophet Ezekiel...

**Ezekiel 36:26-27 NLT** *"And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take out your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart. And I will put my Spirit in you so that you will follow my decrees and be careful to obey my regulations."*

See, the Law of Moses and the Prophets were never aiming at behavior modification.

- They were aiming at heart transformation.
- A change that can only happen through God's love.

Jesus fulfills the Law... not by lowering the bar, but by changing our hearts.

And until our hearts change, we will keep fighting the same battles with the same anger and the same division.

He says your righteousness needs to exceed that of the Pharisees...

- The Pharisees had external righteousness.
- Jesus demands internal righteousness.
- A righteousness that begins in the heart and spills into action.

And then Jesus gives examples.

- He says, "You've heard it said..." - The external command.
- "But I say..." - The heart-level command.

**Matthew 5:21-22** *"You have heard that our ancestors were told, 'You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.' But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell."*

Did you feel that shift?

- The command was "Don't murder."
- Jesus says, "Let's talk about your anger."

In the Kingdom of Heaven, the issue isn't just violence.

- It's contempt.
- It's the quiet hatred we justify.
- It's the anger we rehearse.
- It's that kind of heart that will eventually lead to murder.

Jesus is saying: You can technically avoid murder and still be destroying people with your words.

God's focus is people.

- The Law was never about scorekeeping.
- It was about showing love

Then he says if you're at the altar, in the middle of worship, and you remember someone has something against you... Leave and go reconcile with them.

In other words: God would rather you repair a relationship than sing another song.

- Loving each other is true worship.

Kingdom people care more about reconciliation than being right.

Then Jesus goes deeper.

**Matthew 5:27** *"You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."*

For some of us, this passage was used to create a lot of teenage guilt.

But the real point is... The command was external. "Don't commit adultery."

- Jesus says, "Let's talk about what's happening in your heart."

Lust is reducing a person to a body.

- It's consuming someone in your imagination without honoring them as an image-bearer of God.
- It's turning a person into a product

Kingdom People see others as sacred, not objects

Jesus is showing the root.

Do you see the pattern?

- Anger dehumanizes people through contempt.
- Lust dehumanizes people through consumption.

In both cases, the other person stops being a person.

And what God cares about most is people.

He goes on and says, if your eye or your hand is causing you to sin like this, cut them off and throw them away.

Jesus isn't advocating self-mutilation.

He's using shocking language to say:

- Take this stuff seriously.
- Don't explain it away or justify it.
- Cut it off at the root.

**The Kingdom of Heaven is not behavior modification. It's heart transformation.**

And this is why division feels so inevitable.

- Because the real problem isn't policy or politics... It's the human heart.

And then Jesus steps into one of the most painful subjects imaginable... marriage and divorce.

In that culture, men held nearly all the power in divorce.

- A husband could dismiss his wife with a certificate.
- They were following the law while destroying the woman's life.

So Jesus says...

**Matthew 5:31-32** *"You have heard the law that says, 'A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.' But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery."*

Jesus exposes what's underneath...

- The issue isn't technical legality.
- It's the hardness of heart.
- It's treating the most intimate relationship like a contract you can cancel.

And before we go further... some of you carry deep pain around this topic.

- Divorce is never simple.
- Sometimes it involves betrayal. Sometimes abuse. Sometimes survival.

Jesus isn't shaming people who are divorced.

- He's confronting a culture that discarded people and said it was fine because it was legal and following the law.

**In the Kingdom of Heaven, the question isn't "Is it legal?" The question is "Is it loving?"**

And they did this with so many aspects of life... just like with divorce, religious leaders had developed complicated systems around vows.

- Certain phrases made it binding.

- Others gave you wiggle room.

So Jesus says, stop it.

- Don't make up fancy swears that give you the ability to trick people and weasel out of your promises
- Like... I didn't "promise" or "my fingers were crossed."

He says let your yes be yes and your no be no.

Do you see what Jesus is doing?

- He's dismantling the divided heart
- The heart that speaks one way in public and calculates differently in private.

Kingdom people don't look for escape clauses. They look for ways to remain faithful.

This kind of life defies common sense, but it reflects the heart of God.

And then Jesus says something that seems impossible.

**Matthew 5:38-41** *"You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: 'An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow."*

Jesus is saying... Even when it is your legal right to retaliate, Kingdom people surrender the right to get even.

- They would rather reflect the heart of God than defend their pride.

He is talking to people who are under the thumb of the Roman Empire.

- This situation had probably happened to these people.

Under Roman imperial law, soldiers were legally permitted to force civilians to carry their equipment for up to a mile.

- For the civilian, this wasn't just inconvenient. It was humiliating.
- It was a reminder: You are not in charge.

So when Jesus says, "Go two miles," He's calling for a radical, non-retaliatory response to oppression.

- Instead of: Resisting violently. Seething resentfully. Doing the bare minimum
- He teaches unexpected, voluntary generosity that exposes the corrupt system without sinking to its level

Jesus is redefining strength... not passive submission, but deliberate, surprising freedom.

Which answers the question... How do we love without letting ourselves get walked all over.

- It's because you're not allowing anything... You're in control of your choice to go further.
- Just picture if you actually did this in the moments where your pride says: "I shouldn't be treated like this."

This does not mean staying in abuse.

- It does not mean enabling harm.

- It means refusing to let evil dictate the condition of your heart.

### Daily Life

- The airline messes up your seat.
- The internet company overcharges you.
- The barista gets your order wrong.

The usual response: Sharp tone. Cold politeness. Social media rant.

The “two mile” kingdom response: Calm, patient, human. Treat the worker like a person, not a problem.

- In a culture of outrage, gentleness stands out.

### Cultural / Political Tension

- Someone posts something you strongly disagree with.
- A coworker makes a comment that irritates you.

The usual response: Snap back. Post more. Escalate.

The “two mile” kingdom response: Ask questions. Listen. Refuse to become what you oppose.

You can go the extra mile because you are secure in a love that cannot be taken from you.

But then Jesus goes even further...

**Matthew 5:43-47** *“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that.”*

So... What does real love look like when differences feel irreconcilable?

- It looks like loving anyway.

Jesus calls us beyond tribal love into transforming love.

Earlier in this sermon, Jesus called us salt and light. This is what that looks like.

- To be the new kind of human, means choosing love and leaving the results to God.

So can you disagree? Yes... with love.

- Can you speak truth? Yes... from love and for love.
- Can you have strong convictions? Yes... expressed with humility and holy timing.
- Do we resist injustice? Yes... without surrendering love.

The goal is not winning arguments. The goal is to reflect Jesus.

Then Jesus closes this section with an amazing statement...

**Matthew 5:48** *But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.*

Sounds like a lot of pressure... But Jesus doesn't mean flawless.

- The word "perfect" means complete. Whole. Undivided.
- Fully the new type of human.
- Becoming like Jesus.

If this feels impossible, that's because it is... without a transformed heart.

The Sermon on the Mount is not a ladder to climb... It is a life to receive.

This perfection/completeness doesn't come from just trying harder to be better.

- It comes from what Ezekiel promised... allowing the Spirit of God to change our hearts.

Asking him to guide you and listening to his voice when he does.

- What does Jesus' love look like right now?

**Kingdom people surrender to the Spirit who forms the love of Jesus within them.**

**YOU:** So what do we do with all of this?

Loving your enemy is not avoiding conflict. It is engaging conflict without surrendering love.

Passivity says, "I just don't want drama." Kingdom love says, "I care enough to move toward you."

So this week...

**Pray for the person you resent.**

- Jesus didn't say feel warm toward them.
- He said pray.
- You cannot consistently pray blessing over someone and keep feeding bitterness.

**And maybe... Have the conversation you've been avoiding.**

- Who do you need to call?
- What tension have you buried?
- What apology have you delayed?

A divided heart either explodes in anger or hides in avoidance.

- A whole heart loves with courage.

And the reason we can move toward difficult people is that God moved toward us when we were difficult.

- The One who told us to love our enemies loved His enemies.
- He prayed for those who crucified him. "Father, forgive them."
- While we were still enemies, Jesus loved us.

So this week, don't just avoid retaliation. Don't just stay quiet.

- Initiate love.
- Pray first.
- Speak truth gently.
- Move toward the tension.

That's what sons and daughters of the Father do. Because that's what he did for us.

**WE:** The urge to say... well, that's a nice idea, but it'll never work in the real world is strong.

- And you're right... if this world is all there is, it won't work.

But if we want the world to change, if we want to live the lives we long for... then The Jesus Way is the only way to get there.

Let's be Kingdom People who speak, act, and react with the love of Jesus.

Let's love first... and let God take care of the rest.

Let's see what happens when we refuse to give in to the outrage, the division, and the fear.

We might just see the Kingdom of Heaven in our lives right here and now.

Because... In the Kingdom of Heaven, people are never obstacles... they're the point.