

## **LOVING OUR ENEMIES**

*"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."*

*Luke 6:27, 28*

### **REFLECTION**

Have you been a Christian a long time? I suppose, if you are reading this prayer bulletin, the answer is likely to be "yes".

If so, you are probably familiar with the Greatest Commandment: *love God and love neighbour*. You probably know this well, and you are probably already seeking to do all you can to worship God in and through every situation and activity, and to show love, care, and concern for the people God brings across your path. That is certainly excellent, and may the Holy Spirit continue to empower you to do so, more and more!

But notice what Jesus says here. He begins, *"to those who are listening"*. God calls us to be alert, to pay attention, for he is saying something that can easily slip us by.

Here in this passage, Jesus called his audience to go beyond "loving our neighbour". He called them to love their enemies, to love those who hated them and sought to harm them. This was a mind-blowing and counter-cultural statement in Jesus' time as it is in ours today. This commandment goes against very deep-seated, visceral instincts to defend ourselves against danger, detriment and damage.

But so it is in Holy Scripture. No wonder Jesus bids us to listen with attention – we would much rather ignore this commandment! I know I certainly would.

Yet, Jesus did not simply pontificate or theorise from an ivory tower. The One who gave this command was the very One who enacted it, who suffered horribly and died painfully for wrongdoings not his own. Jesus blessed those who cursed him, and for those who crucified him, he prayed "Father, forgive them".

Jesus first loved us human beings, we who were his enemies because of our rebellion and sin. Loving his enemies certainly caused suffering for Jesus. But in the process, he won over some of those enemies. In the process, he won the final victory.

Looking to Jesus will you follow Him, your Lord and Master, in loving your enemies and in praying for those who mistreat you?

### **PRAYER**

*Lord Jesus, thank You for your great love toward us who were once Your enemies. Thank You for showing us goodness, kindness, and mercy, though we despised Your ways and rebelled against You. Thank You for Your love which is greater than human anger and hatred. O Divine Master, help us to follow in Your footsteps, to live out such a love. Amen.*

### **SUPPLICATION**

- Have you been hurt or mistreated by people you know or even by strangers? Pray for God's strength to enable you to forgive them and also to know how to release them to God. Pray also for them. Ask that the Lord would touch them and turn their hearts towards Him.
- Do you know of any fellow Christians who have been hurt by a fellow believer? Present these people before God. Pray for cessation of hostilities between these people and for God's work of healing and reconciliation to begin, so that God's community may be restored.
- Pray for Christians who are at the receiving end of unjust persecution. Pray for a swift end to maltreatment and social injustice. Pray for loving perseverance to rest upon those facing suffering. Pray also that our good God will turn even such evil acts toward His good purposes. *(See the quote below.)*
- Pray for various countries that are mired in conflict. It might be physical warfare as in Afghanistan, Ethiopia, or Myanmar. It might be racial conflict, xenophobia, class struggles, or political tensions taking place even in various developed countries. Pray that God would intervene and set free both the oppressed and the oppressor.

*To our most bitter opponents we will say:*

*"Throw us in jail and we will still love you.*

*Bomb our houses and threaten our children  
and we will still love you.*

*Beat us and leave us half dead  
and we will still love you.*

*But be ye assured that we will wear you down  
by our capacity to suffer.*

*One day we shall so appeal to your heart and conscience  
that we shall win you in the process,  
and our victory will be a double victory."*

*- Rev Dr Martin Luther King, Jr*

***If you need any prayer or pastoral care support, kindly  
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