

Radical Discipleship

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[0 : 0 0] I have entitled my sermon. My sermon title tonight is the radical discipleship. And I'm going to begin with giving you an illustration. I read about a Christian missionary who went to a country where communism was flourishing. God recently blessed his work and many were converted under his ministry. He not only shared Christ but also did extraordinary social works which touched many people's heart. However, the communists greatly fear him because many people were becoming Christians rather than communists. They plotted to kill him, however, because of his wonderful social works. They spared his life but they poured their anger on his son. They took and buried his son alive. This is a true story. Later the United Nations troops arrested the leader of the communist group because he was absolutely evil and shed much innocent blood in the past. The UN troops prepared to hang him on the spot. But there appeared the missionary pleading for the life of his enemy who just killed his son. Everyone was greatly startled because of his love towards his cruelest enemy. They set him free and eventually he was converted and became a pastor in a local church. We have to read Jesus' word in the light of the act of the missionary. Jesus said, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your fathers who is in heaven. I've got three points here. We shall read this in three points. The first is the cost of the radical discipleship and the second is the cross is the heart of the radical discipleship and the third is the consequence of the radical discipleship.

So the cost, the cross and the consequence of the radical discipleship. We are doing a series sermon on the sermon on the mount and these words are called the heart of the sermon on the mount.

The sermon on the mount is about Jesus undermining, undercutting the theology of Jewish rabbis on the one hand and the other on the other hand Jesus is interpreting the mosaic law in its fullness or if you like Jesus is perfecting the Torah, the mosaic law. Like earlier Jesus continued to expose the Jewish rabbis gross perversion of the law and they were twisting the teaching of the Torah. They taught people that their neighbor was only their fellow people, their own kit and kin who belong to their race and their religion. They were guilty of two things according to Jesus. The first one is they omitted yourself and just thought love your neighbor while mosaic law thought love your neighbor as yourself. So they omitted yourself from that and we see in Leviticus chapter 8, in Leviticus chapter 19 verse 18 like this, do not seek revenge or bear a curse against anyone among your people but love your neighbor as yourself. But love your neighbor as yourself I am the Lord. Secondly, they added the clause hate your enemies but mosaic law never thought about hating enemies rather it thought about assisting and loving the enemies. The rabbi omitted the good bit and added the worse bit and both are against the holy law of God. Loving enemies is explicit in Old Testament for instance in Proverbs 25 verse 11 which Paul quotes in Romans 12 20 says if your enemy is hungry give him bread to eat and if he is thirsty give him water to drink. Likewise in Exodus 23 verse 4 and 5 talks about assisting the enemy if you meet your enemies ox or his donkey going astray you shall bring it back to him. If you see the donkey of one who hates you lying down under his burden you shall refrain from leaving him with it you shall rescue it with him. So the Jewish rabbis were responsible for killing the spirit and original intention of the Torah. This is why Jesus said you have heard that it was said that is to say you have heard the rabbi said not the Old Testament.

This suggests that Jesus was not questioning or rejecting mosaic law but a wrong interpretation of Jewish rabbi that was prevalent in those days. They were perverting the mind of the people. They were teaching not what the law said but they added and they removed it from the law and some rabbi believe some rabbi build their theology on their teaching and argue the Samaritans and Gentiles were not their neighbors of the Jews but enemies so hating them was okay and you know the parable of the good Samaritan was an attack on that and Jesus said Samaritans are your neighbors and this is what attacked and undermining the theology of Jewish rabbi and this is why the Jewish rabbi regarded they build the theology one upon another and regard the Gentiles as dogs and also believe to be fuel of hell. They believe Gentiles as dogs and also believe to be fuel of hell. In stark contrast to Jewish teaching Jesus taught to love not only love the enemies but pray for those who persecute. Jesus saw the heart of the Torah is true intention however this word of Jesus would greatly offend the Jewish rabbis as Jesus exposed their perversion of the law. Jesus said love your enemies and please bear in mind that Jesus is not saying love the devil our greatest enemy. Devil is always to be hated. Jesus is talking about the evil people not the Satan so don't get wrong here. A word Jesus used for love in this verb is very interesting the verb agape the love and you know that there are four Greek words for love. Eros which is sexual love. Storghe family love filia strong affection or brotherly love and agape divine love. So Jesus used agape when he questioned to Peter after his resurrection two times you know that you know that where Jesus said Simon son of Jonah do you love me and that's agape and

Jesus used in John 3:16 for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son that whosoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. So the significance of the noun agape in this verse is this Jesus is commanding to love your enemy as God loves you and you love God. Not only we love our enemies as ourselves but we must love them as God loves you and you love God. Not only we love our enemies as our friends and our brothers or sister but we must love them with this divine love and I'm not say I'm say I know that this is a challenge is a great challenge for me and for you. I know it is definitely not easy it is terribly hard to love our enemies who hate us to the utmost level and who seek to destroy us. We know that ISIS and the radical Islamic group are the greatest enemies to the world. They had crucified many Christians and beheaded many hundreds. We all know what happened in Paris in around 129 innocent people were killed by them and it is absolutely terrible thing to imagine about loving enemies like ISIS.

[10:03] Despite they and their ways were absolutely evil Jesus commanded to love them and it is also interesting that Jesus used imperative verb and imperative in Greek and in English is command. So Jesus is here not suggesting to love them not urging to love them not advising to love them nor convincing you to love them but commanding you to love them and not only that pray for them pray for their salvation who hate us and who want to destroy us God is willing to so mercy on them and desires to save ISIS and radical group from the fire of hell because our Lord doesn't take delight and pleasure in the death of the wicked. Our Lord doesn't take delight and pleasure in the death of the wicked. That's why we have to love them and we have to pray for their salvation.

Let me quote Bonhoeffer here. It is highly relevant. He said like this, this command that we should love our enemies and forego revenge will grow even more urgent in the holy struggle which lies before us. The Christian will be hounded from place to place subjected to physical assault, maltreatment and death of every kind. We are approaching an age of widespread persecution.

Soon the time will come when we shall pray. It will be a prayer of earnest love for these very sons of perdition who stand around and gaze at us with eyes aflame, with hatred and who have perhaps already raised their hands to kill us. Yes, the church which is really waiting for its Lord and which discerns the sign of the time of decision must flint itself which is utmost power and with the pen-apply of its holy life into this prayer of love. Secondly, the cross is the heart of the radical discipleship. We cannot bear the teaching, we cannot bear the radical teaching of Jesus until we see it through the prism of the cross. I like Derek using this term all the time, prism of the cross. We have to see the suffering and this radical teaching of Jesus through the prism of the cross. We know Jesus suffered the horrible trauma all the way to Golgotha where he was crucified. He tolerated every evil done to him despite he was absolute innocent. He was flogged, beaten, mocked and eventually nailed to the cross the utmost form of torture and brutality. I have read about many martyrs who curse those who killed them before they died. I have read about people who call divine wrath upon those who killed them before they took their last breath. But Jesus who could call two-elf legion of angels at one command tolerated horrendous pain and trauma of crucifixion to the very utmost level. Instead of cursing those who put him on the cross, he forgave them and prayed for them saying, Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing. If you know the Greek, Jesus used imperfect verb in that instant, imperfect meaning praying continuously over and over again. Father forgive them for they don't know what they are doing. Jesus is here commanding his follower to reflect the very nature of the Father in heaven. How are they to do this? It is by imitating the Father in heaven. The Father gave his one and only son, Jesus Christ, and on the cross the greatest love of the Father is revealed to the world. And the world in Jones Gospel is always, the world is always in absolute enmity, enmity with God. So notice the same pattern Jesus is stressing here with regard to love. Just as the Father loved this hostile world in giving his son, in the same way we must love our enemies. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son. Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have everlasting life. And remember the powerful words of Paul in Roman chapter five verse eight. He says like this, but God demonstrates his own love. And again the word is agape here for us in this way. When we were still sinners, Christ died for us. When we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Most of you know my story. I was raised as a gangster and was imprisoned twice. I was an instrument

of evil and sin. I was so angry when a Christian tried to evangelize me because I hated Jesus and I hated Christians. I'm telling this because I was converted by this very verse of Jesus who said love your enemies. At first I hated Jesus' word because as a gangster I would never imagine loving my enemies. I have beaten up people who just watched me. I would never imagine to love my enemies. Despite I hated Jesus and his word, he loved me. Despite I was disgraced to my family, to my society, he pardoned all my sins because God did not send his son to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him.

God did not send his son to condemn me but he sent his son so that the world might be saved through him. Did God love me when I was friendly to him? Did God love me when I was nice and good to him? No. He loved me when I hated him and hated him and his church and his words. He loved me when I was a terrible enemy, a rebel, a sinner. And Bible says that all people are hellish sinners who deserve God's condemnation. There would have been no injustice if he had sent us all to hell. We are like ISIS in his sight that deserve hell but he loved us because he is love and love is his very nature. God loved his enemy not just in words but in action for he did not spare his one and only son but gave him up for his all. Jesus, the righteous, was condemned in our place, the unrighteous.

[17 : 55] Notice Agape love is always unconditional. God did not put any condition. He just gave his son. We did not meet God's standard. God saw no goodness in us but he gave his son no condition and we are to love our enemies unconditionally and that's the meaning, that's the full significance of the noun Agape, unconditional love, like God loved us. We should not say to our enemies, if my enemy does this, then I will love him. We should not say that my enemy says sorry, then I will love him. Our love to our enemies must be absolutely unconditional without any condition. Remember this is what Jesus taught in Lord's prayer.

Forgive our sins as we also forgive everyone who sins against us. There is no condition. Forgive how you receive forgiveness from God. One scholar famously once said like this, to return evil for good is devilish. To return good for good is human and to return good for evil is divine.

Let me read this to you again. To return evil for good is devilish. To return good for good is human. To return good for evil is divine. Let us love our enemies with this divine love which is in you and in me.

Another reason Jesus gave to imitate the Father with regard to loving the enemies is because God is generous, is merciful and kind to all. Notice Jesus said, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven, for he makes his son rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and the unjust.

So Jesus commanded us to imitate God, the Father who hates evil but still brings many blessings in people's life, even to his enemies by means of common grace. This is here teaching the doctrine of common grace.

[20 : 26] And common grace is for everyone without distinction regardless of religion, tribes and nation. Because we know there are many moral and good people outside Christ and because God is the fountain and the source of goodness and blessing and he gave to all by the means of common grace. And this is why God is the Father to all people and creation in a general way but God is our Father to Christian, but he is the Father to Christian in a special way.

Common grace and special grace. What Jesus is teaching here is this, we must hate evil like God does, but at the same time we must love our neighbors and enemies alike. Just as God does not show distinction between good and evil people with regard to the common grace, we must not show distinction between friends and foes because they hate us to the utmost level. We are called to be radical disciples.

It is ordinary to love someone who loves you and nice to you and greet to your brothers and sisters as Jesus said, even the tax collector and Gentiles do this works. Tax collector were regarded as a great sinner and tax collector because they work for government, Roman government and they took tax with their own people which they thought was sinful act. And you remember in the Gospel tax collectors and sinners were spelled in one breath.

And the Jews regard as I said that Gentiles as unclean people. So what Jesus is saying is these are ordinary pattern of the world and the tradition of the rabbis. By nature people do these things, but Christians are called to live extraordinary life, radical life.

Our conduct of life must be way more than the world's pattern. And this is what Jesus meant when he said, unless your righteousness exit that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

[23 : 04] Loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us would not only make us distinct and unique, but they exit our righteousness way beyond than the scribes and Pharisees.

And this is the perfect example to be Jesus' disciple and his followers. These God pleasing action mirror the work of the Father in heaven who loved the world.

That was in enmity with him because he gave his one and only son. We must imitate God in every way and seek to do the work he does and thereby growing in perfection as our heavenly Father is perfect.

Thirdly and finally, I would like to... Finally, the final point is the consequence of the radical discipleship. So we have looked the cause of the radical discipleship and we have looked the cross as the heart of the radical discipleship and now the consequence of the radical discipleship.

Why bother loving our enemies? What do we get if we love our enemies and pray for them?

[24 : 26] What is the outcome of the radical discipleship? And Jesus' word gave answer to this question, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. When we imitate the Father who loved the hostile enemies, our identity as God's children is revealed to the world.

When we mirror the work of the Father, our identity is revealed to the world. And here Jesus is talking about our identity as God's children.

What was the outcome of Jesus when he forgave his enemy and prayed for those who nailed him on the cross? What was the outcome? What was the result of that?

The result was it revealed Jesus' very identity as the Son of God. It made known to the world that his very nature, who he is and what he is like.

[25 : 46] Who knows that he who was crucified with Jesus might have professed faith because he heard this extraordinary word of Jesus.

I have watched many Muslims who shared their testimony. They were especially fascinated by the sermon on the Mount. Love for your enemies and prayers. Pray for them who persecute you.

And they don't find this in Quran. As a result, the word of Jesus rarely touched your heart and became alive to them. And it is interesting that whenever the Muslims are converted through the wonderful message of the Gospel, they do not only think that Jesus is the greatest prophet.

Jesus is greater than Muhammad, but those words would reveal to them his very nature and identity of God's Son.

What God is like is revealed on the cross because he came down to touch the untouchable. And they see and they see what Jesus is like.

[26 : 58] It showed the very heart of Jesus and that radically changed their lives. And the missionary is another wonderful example of this, isn't it?

He did precisely what Jesus did on the cross. The missionary pleaded for the life of the guilty Communists who buried his son alive, which showed that the very identity of the missionary are Christian to the world.

It spread the message to the world that the power of love can transform force into a frame. And most importantly, the Communist leader was converted because he saw Christ in the life of the missionary.

And this is probably, I think, what happened in Paul's life. Remember, Paul was there when Stephen was stoned to death in Acts 7 verse 60. I'm sure Stephen, prayer touched Paul's heart when he prayed loudly before he died saying, Lord, do not hold this sin against them.

Stephen was crying to the Lord that Paul and others might not be guilty of this sin. Let us follow in the footsteps of Jesus and his disciples.

[28 : 23] Let us deny ourselves and take up Jesus's cross and follow him. Let us strive to imitate God in our action and let us love our enemies unconditionally.

I know it is hard, it is terrible, but remember, it is not you, but it is God's love that dwells in you, enable you and me to be Jesus's disciples.

Let us reveal our identity and nature to the world who is watching us all the time. Let people see our conduct and our good works so that they may praise the Father who is in heaven.

It is from the loving conduct that the Gospel of Christ is communicated to the unsafe world. One Christian rightly said, God has given us five Gospels.

There is the Gospel of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and there is a Gospel according to you. The people in the world come to know Jesus as the world see him in scriptures and in your conduct of life and that is the Gospel according to you.

[29 : 47] If they do not see Christ's love in you, they might never see it. Let us love our enemies unconditionally and pray for their salvation.

May God bless these words to you. Let us pray. Lord, we really thank you for these words that you have given us in your holy scriptures.

They reveal the very identity and nature who you are and what you are. We know that our heavenly Father is merciful, is kind and generous.

Lord, help us to reflect that nature in us. We also, Lord, help us that we may love our enemies, not as we love ourselves, but as you have loved us and we love you unconditionally with the divine love.

Lord, help us to be that Lord. But we know that we often fail. We are often weak. Lord, forgive us and renew us that love in our heart, Lord, that we may always pursue you and always seek guidance from you.

[31 : 16] Lord, bless this time to us and Lord, use all this word and print in our heart that we may always remember what you said on the Sarmann and the Mount.

Go before us, Lord. We ask all this in Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.