



**Sermon on the Mount**  
**Wk.17 "How to Turn the Other Cheek"**  
**By Pastor Jody May 12/15/2024**

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**[CALL TO HEAR]**

**Matthew 5:38-42 ESV**

**Retaliation**

<sup>38</sup>"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' <sup>39</sup>But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup>And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup>And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup>Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

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**Pastor - "People of God, this is the Word of God."**  
**People - "Thanks be to God."**

**Pray**

**Introduction**

Well, we have arrived just in time this morning focusing on the theme of **LOVE** this 3rd Sunday of Advent. **Love as it is portrayed in scripture is to be devoted to someone else's good.** That is what love is you know, it is more than a feeling, more than words, it is a focus of the heart towards a person that says *contrary to what you do and how you act I am for your good!* It is a dedication of *all in you, for all the good* in someone else.

That is what makes **John 3:16** so beautiful especially this time of year!

**John 3:6-7 ESV**

<sup>16</sup>"For God so **loved** the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. <sup>17</sup>For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

**Father God** so loved the world that those that will look upon the Son, those that will put faith in Him, those, have been allowed to see His suffering on the cross as an earned condemnation for their sin. Our Father so loved the world



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that God would not retaliate against His people for the evil that they committed.

**God the Son** so loved the world that He absorbed the effect of our sin, that He drank the cup of God's wrath down to the dregs, and amid His suffering asked that we would be forgiven. The Son so loved the world that He did not retaliate against us at any time during that great exchange, our sin for His righteousness.

**God the Holy Spirit** so loved the world that whomever He is sent to, as Jesus said in the first part of John 3, grants the gift of faith as an act of Grace. The Spirit so loved the world that He does not retaliate by withholding regeneration but selflessly grants pardon even before our repentance.

That love shows us how committed God is to His glory and our good! That is how God portrays His love, **He turns the other cheek to our offense because the Son will pick up the tab.** This is the message of Christmas family, not something we pick up from another viewing of *Elf*, *The Polar Express*, the *Grinch*, or even *The Christmas Story*. All those stories teach that you are rewarded for good behavior, but none one of them teach about forgiveness when you are wronged. None of them teach that it is a blessing to endure persecution for Christ's name, there is no shame in it. AND none of them teach that it is through our mistreatment that God's name is high and lifted up! That's the love story we need to hear today, how does God take the bad behavior of others and turn it into opportunities to change those people! Yep, you are in the right place to learn this truth today family because our cultural leaders have no idea what it means to be forgiving.

The world, our country especially, is a little warped today when it comes to the idea of payback. We have folks in Washington writing out blanket pardons for people because they fear **political retaliation** for how they have behaved towards the incoming administration, they don't trust the other side to offer forgiveness, so they justify their unethical behavior. We have people, social influencers, validating the assassination of an Insurance CEO and praising a depraved man (Luigi Mangione), because they believe that was **justified retaliation** for a crisis in healthcare that the government actually



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caused, in mandating the Affordable Care Act. We have men threatening violence and protests when a man (Daniel Penny) was not convicted of manslaughter by a jury of his peers, but his actions they said still required **retaliation for the ideology of racism** that again our leaders fueled. All that to say we have a lot of people that want to lash out at others for things they have been told are worthy of violence. No, we can't go looking for HOPE in our nation's leaders and influencers right now, they have no idea how to portray the LOVE of Christ this year, there is nothing but retaliation on their minds for angst of their own contriving.

This is where it gets challenging family because I am going to ask you to listen with an open heart to what Jesus wants from us today. He knows the world is angry right now for it was angry when He arrived 2,000 years ago. It literally took Him and killed Him, it made Him a scapegoat for their angst, when all He deserved was their loyalty for His love. He is going to ask us to observe again the intent of the law not the backwards teaching of it. Again, He is going to give the command of a very hard thing, that is only capable of being done by people who have been changed by Him, people that have learned that they too were deserving not of love but of God's wrath. To sum up these verses today, it shows us the kind of love that the world needs right now.

**MP:**

**Overcome the Evil in People with the good that has been done in/for us.**

The first thing we want to do today is **recognize opportunities for Mercy** instead of thinking it's open season for retaliation. Next, we want to **Choose the Kingdom way for handling offenses** instead of modeling our responses after the world, of act quick and harshly. Lastly, we will sum it up with the truth in the Gospel that we **overcome Evil with Good**, that is we follow the plan for reconciliation not retaliation. This is a tough teaching today I know, just keep in your mind family, you and I deserved retaliation not love, so listen as someone that has received these mercies through Christ.

**1. Recognize the Opportunities for Mercy (38-39a)**



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<sup>38</sup>“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup>But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil.

Right at the beginning here you can see that the time in which our Lord incarnated was not a time known for Mercy. Again, he starts off with an admonition that, “*you have heard that it was said.*” That’s code that you have been taught wrong. In case you are joining us for the first time today this is the fifth time that Jesus has corrected the teaching of the religious leaders of the day. He had to do so because they had discarded the intent of the law, which was to be loving and merciful, and instead had chosen to be self-righteous by making up traditions by which people could see their law keeping. In other words, practicing the *tit for tat* scales of justice, being precise in the administration of payback, retaliation, reparations, was what made you look good, not mercy and forgiveness.

Now again the things that the Pharisees are using are not made-up laws they come right out of the Torah, it is just their take on the laws, how to use them, this is what got them in hot water with God.

**Exodus 21:23-25 ESV**

<sup>23</sup>But if there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, <sup>24</sup>eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, <sup>25</sup>burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe.

The intent of the law here is found between causing a woman to have a miscarriage and harm to her ability to have children (22) and when a slave is damaged by striking them (26). A judge is to use good judgement for when cases are brought to the communities attention, **that MAJOR livelihood has been disrupted**, and a cost needs to be attributed to the loss.

**Leviticus 24:17-21 ESV (see also [Deuteronomy 19:17-21](#))**

<sup>17</sup>“Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death. <sup>18</sup>Whoever takes an animal's life shall make it good, life for life. <sup>19</sup>If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, <sup>20</sup>fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; whatever injury he has given a person shall be given to



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him.<sup>21</sup>Whoever kills an animal shall make it good, and whoever kills a person shall be put to death.

The intent of the giving of this law was to develop "**lex talionis**" which is Latin that means the law of retribution. It is a law in which **the form of the punishment is found in the crime itself**. It was a good practice then and still is today. It had the double effect of defining justice and restraining revenge. Back in those days it kept people from taking the law in their own hands negating the effect of having mass family feuds like the Hatfields and the McCoy's.

The Pharisees of Jesus' day loved this because they could drag their neighbors and people in their community to court. While there, even if it was for a miniscule thing, onlookers would see someone was wronged, that a judge weighed rightly, punishment was doled out, and as we said last week someone's **righteous reputation or credit score** was added to. Then of course if a common man could not pay for a perceived slight, they could be jailed with no way to make up for their wages. Thus, putting themselves under the mercy of the Pharisee as 'if' or 'when' they wanted to drop the charges. But again, in their desire to seem better than everyone else here's what they overlooked and where in lies the condemnation.

**Leviticus 19:18 ESV**

You shall **not take vengeance or bear a grudge** against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

Here again we learn the intent of the law, it was to show mercy and forgiveness instead of holding vengeance or a grudge. God's people are not to retaliate, out of hate, but rather consider carefully how to extend mercy, for that is the evidence of love. That's what Jesus reminds them with His next breath. <sup>39</sup>But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil.

This is not a plea from Jesus btw for people to become pacifists, that would not coincide with scripture. James 4:7 and 1 Peter 5:9 Christians are called to *resist the devil.*, Rom 13:4 the government is given to punish the evil doers, and Jesus Himself drove money changers twice, with a whip, out of the



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temple (John 2 & Mark 11). So, what does Jesus mean when He says *do not resist the one who is evil*? The clue is in the language. **Anthistēmi**<sup>1</sup> – to set oneself against, to oppose. Then the evil here is not a general evil it is **to ponēros**<sup>2</sup> an evil person, so the charge by Christ is don't start a fight, feud, a war with an evil person, an unsaved person, just because you can. You don't open a can of Revenge on them, that would be coming against someone, that's practicing tit for tat. Next week we will see this opened and explained more but choosing vengeance is not how you get one over on evil.

My daughter out of the blue this past week, I had not even talked about this sermon topic with her or anything yet, sent Heather and I this video from our past. Amber Guyger, a former Dallas police officer was sentenced to 10 years in jail for killing an innocent man, Botham Jean back in 2018. Brandt Jean, the brother of the victim, told her face to face in court that he didn't want anything from her, no "**lex talionis**" but that what he wanted for her was for her to give her life to Christ, to know His forgiveness because he had been forgiven and he wanted the same for her. He said, "I love you just like I love everyone else", asked the judge if he could hug her whereby, she broke down in his arms. That is someone stating by their actions that, *I am all for your good because Christ was all for mine.* <sup>3 4</sup>

You see our young people are tired of vengeance guys, they are tired of people trolling each other on the internet, they are tired of identity politics, they just want to see people get along again in our community. We need to recognize opportunities to give Mercy for they are God ordained opportunities, and they are given in front of the eyes of the next generation. What's more important to us, the thought of seeking revenge, or the idea that

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<sup>1</sup> ἀνθίστημι **anthistēmi**, anth-is'-tay-mee; from [G473](#) and [G2476](#); to stand against, i.e. oppose:—resist, withstand.

<sup>2</sup> πονηρός **ponēros**, pon-ay-ros'; from a derivative of [G4192](#); hurtful, i.e. evil (properly, in effect or influence, and thus differing from [G2556](#), which refers rather to essential character, as well as from [G4550](#), which indicates degeneracy from original virtue); figuratively, calamitous; also (passively) ill, i.e. diseased; but especially (morally) culpable, i.e. derelict, vicious, facinorous; neuter (singular) mischief, malice, or (plural) guilt; masculine (singular) the devil, or (plural) sinners:—bad, evil, grievous, harm, lewd, malicious, wicked(-ness). See also [G4191](#).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8c83JzTStfc>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/amber-guyger-testifies-dallas-murder-trial-neighbor-botham-jean-n1059511>



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we may have an opportunity to change the world by our example, **to overturn the evil in people with the good that has been done for us**. I am glad Jesus chose the latter. Now let's learn how we do the same.

## **2. Choose the Kingdom Way for Handling Offenses (39b-42)**

<sup>39</sup>...But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. <sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. <sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

There are 4 phrases here and we are going to just take them one at a time because each instance represents another situation from which not to rise up against someone. Pastor MacArthur nailed it this week, by defining what each instance of insult was about. He saw each scenario as an attack against a unique human right. The type of things we see in our constitution, so I am going to take his observation here and tease it out some.

This first instance we have something that looks like it came from a scene from an old movie with people getting slapped as in a form of insult. That is an attack against someone's **dignity**, or *respect*. That slap on the right cheek back in Jesus' day meant it would come from a backhand from someone's right hand. This slap was like the mother of all insults, you would rather be attacked in public than have someone slap you like this. It meant a total disdain for who you thought you were and what you thought you deserved! That's why in the movies if you saw that it was usually a throwdown to a duel to the death because if you were a man, you couldn't let that go!

And yet that is exactly what Jesus did.

### **Isaiah 50:6-8a ESV**

I gave my back to those who strike,  
and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard;  
I hid not my face  
from disgrace and spitting.



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- <sup>7</sup> But the Lord God helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;  
therefore I have set my face like a flint,  
and I know that I shall not be put to shame.
- <sup>8</sup> He who vindicates me is near.

Dignity is something given by God, man may try to remove it by their disdain from you, but they cannot take it away. Loved one, there may come a day where you may need to lay aside your right to be respected, **remember Christ did that first**. He did that so He may be raised up by His Father, He did that so that men may look upon Him, it brought Him attention, so that *how He would respond* is what people would remember.

<sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. This one represents **security**, to feel safe and protected. Tunic is another name for shirt, in which case this literally means if someone is trying to sue the shirt off of you, give him your jacket as well. Jews in that day were protected from this in law in Exodus 22:26 where a jacket could only be given as a pledge but had to be given at night for protection from the elements. Jesus is telling us here you offer up that protection, use the opportunity to be magnanimous to others, **don't be bitter**, show them you are willing to go above and beyond to ensure repayment. Because it shows the teaching of Matthew 6:25-34 that God provides for all you need we don't worry over our security. Losing our right to security places you in the best hands you can be in, Gods, and let that be your testimony.

It needs to be said that the reverse of this scenario is true as well. Christians should **not be known at litigious**, or quick to sue. It shows that you are overly concerned about your security, that you are quick to ensure your own right at the costs of someone else. We are not saying there isn't a time and place to seek help through the courts for loss of income, but just like in Jesus' day, they are many Christians that think just because they can, they should!





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What Jesus is teaching is that if you have truly wronged someone and it requires payment you make sure you go above and beyond what is owed, does the person have all they need? In this way we testify that God blesses all through His common grace, through His people, the church.

<sup>41</sup>And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. This instance attacks one's **freedom** to choose. You see back in those days Roman military personal were known to grab Jewish people and make them haul their gear on a march whereby law they had to at least go a mile. **Angareuō** (*ang-ar-yew'-o*) is the word used for 'forces' in the text and it is the word which means to conscript or to force into service. Yet another thing that strips the dignity from someone, when the opposing force, those that keep your land by threat of violence, you have to haul their gear for conquest on your own back!? Jesus says that guy, ask him if he needs you to go further. Our freedom is so hard to give up, and yet sometimes that is one of our greatest things you can do for another. Let me ask you family how many of us right now are willing to give up our routines and patterns because someone in this room may need you to? That's the right way to view your freedoms, easy come and easy go, especially when it pertains to testifying for Christ.

Family let us not miss an opportunity to bear someone's cross. On the path to Golgotha there was a Jew named Simon the Cyrene (Luke 23), he was conscripted by the Romans on the day of Christ's crucifixion. That man's dignity was taken down a notch stumbling through the streets with a beam on his back, among the thieves that were to hang at Jesus' side, in front of Jeering crowds. That man was ordained by the Father before creation to be in the place and time when His Son would need Him to get to calvary. My friends, my family, may it be said of all of us in this room that on our day of persecution we were available, we were willing, and we were glad to help carry a burden for those in this room, so that in their lifting up they were able to point to Christ on their day. Your freedoms as an American are owned by our King to do His work of drawing men unto Himself, let us not forget.

<sup>42</sup>Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. This last one here represents **property** as in are you willing



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to let other people use as their own, what is yours. A lot of us have no problem giving some change out of our pocket to someone that really needs food or clothing because we have been there ourselves. But what if someone needed to borrow that thing you rely on, like your car, or that favorite tool, or this time of year a functional generator, or a chainsaw. That's hard because many times people don't view the things you value like you do. Back then people didn't own a lot to lend out like we do now, so to compare this to now, what you're lending out you may not get back to you and you may not be able to afford another one. Are we viewing that the reason you may have something is for the very reason that you are to give it away? As we are told in [Acts 2:44-45](#) everyone gave to each other as they had need.

Brothers and sisters, I call us to examine how we view our dignity, our security, our freedom and our property not as something owed to us but given to be used for God because slaves of Christ really don't own anything. You see what we do by the laying down of our rights to be respected, laying down the urge to retaliate, we are drawing people's attention to our testimony for Christ in how He laid it all down for us first.

### **3. Overcome Evil with Good**

#### **Romans 12:17-21 ESV**

<sup>17</sup>Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is **honorable** in the sight of all. <sup>18</sup>If possible, so far as it depends on you, live **peaceably** with all. <sup>19</sup>Beloved, **never avenge yourselves**, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." <sup>20</sup>To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." <sup>21</sup>Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Briefly I want to touch base on something that we will unpack more next week, because the challenge gets bigger with Jesus' last reteaching on the law and that is to actually, **love your enemies**. What a great way to sum up the Advent season except to look on with JOY to how Jesus loved us that while we were sinners Christ died for us.



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**[CALL TO OBEY]**

Apostle Paul calls us to live honorably, peaceably, seeking no vengeance.

**Choose the Kingdom way of response; live honorably in front of all.**

True honor does not come from within, it is not something you earned, it is something bestowed upon you. Our honor does not come from our sense of dignity and self-respect. Our honor was **imputed** to us when we received the righteousness of Christ, so live as He did, look as He looked, and turn your cheek before retaliating. In this way we will honor Christ by being conformed into His image, letting the world know He alone is worthy of praise. (Rom. 12:17). **Choose this day to live as Christ, and let God determine when and if vengeance is necessary.**

**Recognize offense as an opportunity to show mercy; seek to live peaceably with all.**

Family remember our nature is to take things personally when God may be setting us up to take things for Him. As Jesus allowed Himself to be humiliated and mistreated it was always for the cause of displaying the mercy of God. Is there someone you have been feeling embittered towards, is there someone you avoid, all because of how they treated you. Then today I call on you to forgive them, release the bitterness within you, and if the prayer fits, ask God to forgive them for perhaps they too did not know what they do. **So far as it depends on you seek to live peaceably with all (Rom 12:18)**

**Overcome Evil with Good; don't run from perceived conflict.**

Family it would be easy after today's sermon to seek a way out of confrontation, to evade the world and in that way, you won't have to worry about being mistreated. But that is not the call of the Christian. We have already stated that Blessed are the Peacemakers (Mat 5:9), those that walk into a conflict, those that take risks of offending people with the truth, they shall be **called sons of God**. Those are the people that look like Christ, willing to be ridiculed for the Kingdom's sake. Don't back down from debates, from ridicule, and from angry taunts instead embrace it for through it lies your sanctification and His glory.



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Let's pray together now and ask for God's help in living with honor, peaceably, seeking not our vengeance in light of what we learned today.

**MP:**

**Overcome the Evil in People with the good that has been done for us.**

**Prayer**

**Communion**

**Matthew 26:26-29 ESV**

<sup>26</sup> Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." <sup>27</sup> And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink of it, all of you, <sup>28</sup> for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. <sup>29</sup> I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom."

Today when you eat of the bread remember the life of Jesus. It needs to be said again, that He turned His cheek multiple times, endured the insults, endured the pain of torture, all the while praying and asking the Father to forgive us. This is something we could have never done. Praise be to Him for His wonderful love.

Today when you drink the juice remember the cost of our sin displayed by His blood. It was the perfect blood of an honorable man, it was the precious blood that bought us all peace, and it was the blood shed so we would be spared the vengeance of God. Praise be to Him for His wonderful Love.

**[CONFESSION OF FAITH]**

\* The Congregation will stand

**Elder – "Christians, what do we believe?"**



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**1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ESV**

Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

**[OFFERING+LAST SONG]**

**[BENEDICTION]**

Go in the name of the Father, that so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son.

Go in the name of the Son, that so loved the world that instead of retaliation chose imputation, His righteousness for our sin.

Go in the name of and power of the HS, that so loves the world that He chooses to use us our times of degradation to bring people to Him, go and be the salt and light.



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