

**God Has No Enemies**  
**Sunday, February 20, 2022, 11:30 a.m., All Saints Church, Pasadena**  
**The Rev. Alfredo Feregrino**

I have to confess that before writing on this specific passage of the gospel , I thought that I had all the right pieces in place to craft my sermon,

But then, I realized that to write this sermon was more complicated. It reminds me of the video game Tetris where you have to accommodate a wide selection of pieces and fit them together.

Fitting all the pieces together was more of a challenge than I thought.

I learned in one of my preaching classes at seminary, that we as preachers must find the place in the text where the shoe pinches our foot. In other words, our professor told us that if we are not preaching to ourselves, we are not preaching to anyone.

So, here I go, bear with me :

The gospel that we heard today, clearly tells us ...

“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you”.

Wow... really?

I have to confess that this instruction is so challenging to accomplish since this passage encapsulates one of the most... if not the most demanding teachings that Jesus would ever teach.

No one ever said that following Jesus was supposed to be easy right...

Love your enemies and pray for those who hate you. Bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you”.

Really?

Love my enemies? Love the people that do not treat me well? Love the people that make my life impossible? Love the people who speak ill of me behind my back?

Really? Who really prays for those who hate you, curse you or mistreat you?

This is a difficult task right?

And in our own logic, this doesn't make sense at all.

You know, the meaning of the root of the Greek word for "enemy" is "to hate".

Our enemy is in essence, anyone or anything whom we don't want to love. Period.

The proposed response to these Jesus' teachings contradicts our common human inclinations and predispositions.

Our normal social interactions tend to be reciprocal. Right?

We normally tread others the way they treat us.

If someone buys me a coffee, I may want to buy one in return,

But , If someone harms us, the normal human response for many is to try to get even.

If someone hits us, we hit back.

In fact, this is what probably many of us learned as children.

This is what I learned in the concrete jungle in Mexico City as I was growing up.

When I was in elementary school every time I told my mother that someone was bullying me or hitting me, my mom told me, son, you need to learn to defend yourself.

And then, after a while, my mom took me to karate lessons and let me tell you... those lessons made all the difference.

But this advice does not apply to this gospel today.

So parents, do not take my advice literally. I was living in a totally different time and context.

So, in our society we are trained to react to aggression and hostility , and for many of us our inclination is to fight back.

'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

If someone does not talk to us, we'll stop talking to them. If someone yells at us, we yell in return. If someone tries to cut in into our lane on the freeway, sometimes we do not let them in or maybe we even speed up.

Yes, we tend to respond like this, it may not be good, or the right thing to do but it's a common human inclination for many. And we do this without even thinking about it.

And it is here where the difficulty lies. It is here where the real problem remains.

Who can really love their enemies and pray for those who hate them or mistreat them?

Our common human inclinations are just normal... right?

But Jesus asks us to actually do the opposite.

Jesus is inviting us to expand our consciousness, our awareness our understanding.

Jesus is inviting us to change our paradigms and see the world with different lenses.

Jesus is inviting us to imagine a different reality full of possibilities where the dream of God for us is manifested in our time, in the here and now.

A reality full of possibilities that requires us to abandon the cycle of violence and retribution rejecting the self-defeating logic of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"

Love your enemies. That includes those who hate, curse, and mistreat you. No exceptions.

But what is the reason for this teaching?

Why is this so challenging?

How can we love our enemies ... if we do not know how to do that?

The truth is that we cannot love our enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you just by ourselves.

These teachings of Jesus are not meant to be a do- it- yourself kit (Like putting together furniture from Ikea).

We cannot do this on our own.

But we can love our enemies and the people that mistreat us when we ask God to help us.

This is when we realize that the spirit of God can do it through us.

God as an infinitive source of love and light can do it through us.

Because God's love extends to all people. God loves everybody good and bad alike with the same tremendous intensity. God has no enemies.

This is the Good News that this Gospel proclaims. We are not alone in this difficult task. We are not alone.

When you love, when you pray, you are going to the source of love?

Richard Rohr a Franciscan priest and spiritual writer, said that Jesus teaching on loving ones enemies is just enlightened self- awareness.

When you do not love, eventually it harms you. Simple.

But, what is perhaps more important, He says, that Enlightened self- awareness means that basically loving your enemy is actually good for you.

When we love, when pray for our enemies, for the people who mistreats us, we are going to the source of this infinite love. The love that heals everything. God's pure love.

In a way when we are surrounded by this infinite love, we become a channel for God's love coming through us.

Because in the beginning this is, what we all were created for... to give love. That is our most divine our purpose.

You know,

Everybody can use more love. We all can use more love.

So, try not to be offended if people are rude or unkind to you, or seem like they are trying to hurt your feelings. We cannot know what has happened to them.

This is a principle of compassion.

Send love no matter how they act. This is enlightened self- awareness.

I want to tell you as short story,

Once upon a time, a woman went to her local hardware store and one clerk was very rude to her. She was tempted to wish him all the worst and more, but instead, her response was to send him love and more love. Several weeks later, she went to the same hardware store and the clerk acted in a very different way. Not only was he friendly but also told her that several week ago, he had found out that his wife had a very serious life threatening illness. So, the woman in the story was glad that she had sent him love instead of negativity.

You see, many times we cannot know what is going on with the people who have mistreated you.

In loving anyone whom we don't want to love, we all have our own personal stories to tell right?

There is usually someone in our family, in our workplace or in our community whom we cannot tolerate, someone who has the ability to bring out the worst in us, someone who pushes our buttons.

Can you think of anyone?

If you feel comfortable, I invite you to close your eyes and imagine that person that may have harm you. The person whom you don't want to love.

Imagine God's infinite love surrounding you like a bubble of light.

Now ask God to send love through you to that person, to send that infinite love that heals everything.

Can you do that?

Yes, loving ones enemies is just enlightened self- awareness. This does not mean that you have to tolerate abuse.

Loving ones enemies liberates us from the heavy burden of our own negativity.

If we can just understand this then when we hate, curse or mistreat the other, we can see that we are basically hating, cursing and mistreating ourselves.

So, I invite you to be this source of love and light.

But remember, we cannot do this on our own.

When you experience this divine love coming through you, the power of that love surrounds you like a shield, as if you are in a bubble of light and nothing and no one can harm you.

And in this process of prayer you will be surprised.

Be open to be surprised by the power of God's presence. God will be with us pouring God's immense love into us and through us, because in the end we all are created to be instruments of God's divine love.

**AMEN**