

Who Practices Enemy-Love?

John 18:1-11

3/15/26

Praise be to God that that you chose to do soul work this morning. You could have chosen all that American culture has to offer, but you chose commitment to training in spiritual strength. You could have chosen all that American culture has to offer, but you chose commitment to having Christ shape your heart. You chose commitment to Christ's Church. I thank you!

We continue the Lenten series on Christ's Costly Compassion. Typically, it costs us something to offer compassion: money, pride, safety.

Who practices Enemy-Love? Christians! So, is Simon Peter a Christian in John 18:1-11? He is defending Jesus! Or is Peter still in the process of becoming a Christian? Maybe you are still in the process of becoming a Christian? You are not alone, so am I. You're not born a Christian. You must actively choose to be in friendship with Jesus Christ. And this is what Jesus wants most for you: gaining spiritual strength from His friendship to change this sinful and broken world that we live. Jesus knows we will be in conflict in this world!

Jesus names a radical way of being in conflict: non-retaliation, generosity, prayer for opponents. This isn't weakness—it's spiritual strength. Spiritual strength takes exercise of the soul. Jesus wants to be your strength training coach. Invite the Lord into your life.

Notice that Jesus' Way is active. Deescalation is active. Generosity is active. Prayer for opponents is active.

Remember, not only does Peter cutoff the ear of Malchus, Peter denies Jesus. Tells folks he never knew Jesus a few verses ahead of our passage today. Peter hasn't trained enough, but Christ has! You would think that Jesus would write Peter off and end the friendship. **Who practices Enemy-Love? Jesus!** Jesus names a radical way of being in conflict: non-retaliation, generosity, prayer for opponents. This isn't weakness—it's spiritual strength.

Compassion costs us something. Christ's costly compassion doesn't destroy enemies-it transforms them. Defeating an enemy is the world's view of strength; transforming an enemy is spiritual strength. Jesus lives to change hearts. **Christ's costly compassion changes hearts through generosity.**

Let's hear Jesus' workout routine in Matthew 5:38-48.

Loving enemies doesn't mean approving harmful behavior. It means refusing to let hatred shape our hearts. Jesus wants to be your spiritual strength training coach!

Hugs are not generally allowed in a court room, but the judge made an exception when inspired by Christ's presence. Before the forgiving embrace, Yolanda Tinajero had waited five

years to look the white nationalist in the eyes who killed her brother and 22 other people at a Walmart in El Paso Texas in 2019. After the 26-year-old pleaded guilty at his last hearing for killing her brother, Yolanda embodied Christ and replied, “I feel in my heart to hug you very tightly so you could feel my forgiveness, especially my loss...” The judge permitted the hug, the white nationalist whispered to his attorney, “Is she going to hug me?” Not much emotion was ever shown from this killer, but when Yolanda approached him with her forgiveness hug, his attorney witnessed tears in his eyes. Her forgiveness hug remains controversial and divisive because the white nationalist was inspired by much of the anti-immigrant rhetoric being spewed by our national leaders.¹ **Loving enemies doesn’t mean approving harmful behavior. It means refusing to let hatred shape our hearts.**

Jesus names a radical way of being in conflict: non-retaliation, generosity, prayer for opponents. This isn’t weakness—it’s spiritual strength. When slapped, turn the other cheek. When forced to walk one mile by an occupying enemy soldier, go the extra mile. When asked for your coat, give the shirt off your back. Jesus’ Way doesn’t mean being a pushover, Jesus’ Way is active: to deescalate a fight, many times, we must step in, generosity overcomes selfishness, praying for opponents transforms our hearts!

Compassion in conflict is a witness to the transforming power of Christ. Paul Murphy, an Irish Army Chaplain, was stabbed seven times with a hunting knife by a 16-year-old on August, 15th 2024. This young man attacked the military in protest as he had been radicalized through Islamic extremist online propaganda. Paul Murphy was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal by the Minister of Defense for fending off the attacker while sustaining such injuries. Chaplain Murphy embodied Christ’s compassion, after the trial ended, he embraced his attacker with a hug forgiving him. The attacker, now 18, will pursue a de-radicalization program.² Compassion in conflict is a witness to the transforming power of Christ.

Christ calls us to cross lines. Christ calls us to costly compassion. What would it look like to pray for, speak about, or treat someone you disagree with in a way that reflects Jesus’ love?

Are you ready to do soul work? Are you ready for Jesus’ spiritual strength training? If so, invite Jesus to be your coach. Accept Jesus as Lord. Jesus lives to live in you.

But maybe you’re like Peter. You are very close to Jesus. You are defending Jesus. And yet, you deny Jesus with how you are practicing Christianity. There is still hope. Christ’s costly compassion is for you!

Love,
Pastor Curtis

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2025/04/24/el-paso-walmart-gunman-victims-forgiveness/>

² <https://www.thesun.ie/news/16526899/irish-army-chaplain-survived-murder-awarded-medal/?utm>

Sermon Notes:

1. Jesus names a radical way of being in conflict: non-retaliation, generosity, prayer for opponents. This isn't weakness—it's spiritual strength.
2. Loving enemies doesn't mean approving harmful behavior. It means refusing to let hatred shape our hearts.
3. Compassion in conflict is a witness to the transforming power of Christ.
4. What would it look like to pray for, speak about, or treat someone you disagree with in a way that reflects Jesus' love?