

27“*But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29“Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. 30“Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back. 31“And just as you want people to treat you, treat them in the same way. 32“And if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33“And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34“And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same amount. 35“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men. 36“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37“And do not judge and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned. 38“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”*

Last week we explored the dynamic where the words of Jesus to His disciples make perfect sense. There is a scenario, a dynamic where everything Jesus says here makes sense and the lightbulbs come on and you say, of course. Of course it's this way.

Last week we challenged you with a series of what it questions to set up the scene. Let's build a scenario, a world order where everything Jesus tells His disciples here makes perfect sense.

What if the whole world is condemned and removed from God as far as personal relationship with Him is concerned because the whole world is born into and exists in sin. What if when Adam and Eve sinned the

ownership of this world that God had given to them defaulted to Satan.

What if Satan is the prince of this dark world where sin reigns and men cannot know the God who loves them and created them but who will not allow sin and rebellion against Him into His presence.

What if God, then, sends His own Son to pay the penalty for sin and He chooses men out of this world to belong to Him. Their sin is removed. Fellowship is restored. A group of people who no longer belong to the ruler of this world, who now belong to God.

Their citizenship is in heaven. The Son has gone to prepare a place for them there. But here is where the dynamic that Jesus is speaking to in this sermon for His disciples, His learners, the ones who belong to Him, the separated out of this world ones makes sense.

It has pleased God and the Lord Jesus, to take a people for His name from every nation, he has purchased them out of this world, with His blood, their sins are forgiven, they now belong to Him and no longer are subject to the prison of sin and Satan, but it has pleased Him to leave them here in this world where sin reigns and Satan rules, in order to go tell the good news that redemption from the condemnation of this world is possible in Christ Jesus who has risen from the dead.

So what then is the dynamic of two kingdoms, two authorities to reign, two rulers who own two groups of people that are then diametrically opposed to each other.

You've got a very large group of people who belong to one king, and then you have a tiny group of people who once belonged to that king, but have now defected from his evil condemned kingdom and joined the King of kings in His kingdom. They have come under His authority. But these two groups dwell together in this world. What does that look like.

Last week we said that perhaps the most understandable way to make sense of that situation is to compare us to something we do understand these days. Enemy combatants. We are like navy seals that have parachuted into a war zone.

There is a war between Satan and God Almighty. A huge cataclysmic battle that our eyes do not yet see. Satan is banished to this world, and rules here for a short time. But the Son of God will soon return to this world, and He will banish Satan to a prison some place, lock him up, and then He will judge the condemned enemies, the rebellious sinners of this world and He will rule here on David's throne in Jerusalem.

That war is going on behind the scenes. How is it then for a little group of people who belong to Jesus, who will ultimately win that war, but right now, He has left them in this world to spread the news that His blood has purchased freedom and redemption from the sin that holds them in bondage to Satan who will soon be deposed and later punished forever?

How do you think Satan feels about Christians, living in his world, calling people to defect from sin and condemnation and accept the free gift of salvation with forgiveness and eternal life.

To Satan, and by extension then to his dupes who belong to him in this world, we are enemy combatants engaged in a global war calling people to defect from his kingdom.

We are enemy combatants calling people to come out of this world, and to come into the Kingdom of the King of kings. Leave sin and its captivity behind and belong instead to a kind benevolent and gentle King who created you and loves you and who is preparing incomprehensible glory for you to dwell in with Him.

He will remove the defilements of sin and clothe you in garments white and clean. He gives you free of charge a righteousness, not your own, but in fact it is the righteousness of His Son. Instead of being clothed in soiled putred garments, we are clothed in the righteousness of Jesus.

That's the scenario that Jesus is speaking to in this sermon. How do you think it will bode for those folks then who belong to Jesus but remain here in Satan's world? Everything Jesus says here makes perfect sense in that scenario.

20 And turning His gaze on His disciples, He began to say, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 "Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracize you, and cast insults at you, and spurn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. 23 "Be glad in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven; for in the same way their fathers used to treat the prophets. 24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you are receiving your comfort in full. 25 "Woe to you who are well-fed now, for you shall be hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 "Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for in the same way their fathers used to treat the false prophets.

If we belong to Him; If we have left this world's king and this world's authority to reign behind; And if we now belong to Jesus instead of this world that is still under the rule and reign of satan, these words of Jesus make perfect sense.

Of course you're poor now, you don't belong to this world, but you will be unfathomably rich later in the new realm. Poor in this world, rich in heaven.

Of course you're hungry in Satan's world. Of course you're sad in this sad world. Of course this world hates you. What'd you expect? Of

course this world mis-treats you. You're an enemy combatant in this place. You don't fit here because you no longer belong here. Your home, your citizenship is in heaven.

In fact, Jesus says, if you get treated that way, because you belong to Him, leap for joy! You've got a jackpot waiting for you in heaven. But for now, look out, expect sorrow, expect to be hungry, expect mistreatment. You are an enemy of this world. All of that is normative.

That's the scenario Jesus is speaking to in our verses this morning. That's the dynamic that Jesus is speaking to as He engages candidates who have committed themselves to learning from Him, candidates who will hopefully, follow Him wherever He leads them to.

27“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

27“But I say to you who hear, And that is where we begin. That little half sentence sets in motion a demarcation of two groups of people.

Within the range of Jesus voice and by extension all other voices who preach God's words in this world, as the sound waves of the logos, the words of God go out from the speaker, there is a phenomenon that is a spiritual dimension.

Jesus must have had a magnificent voice. 20,000 people could hear Him when He spoke. Wouldn't you love to hear that voice! We will, we will, but my point is that physically 20,000 people present that day could physically hear His voice, but something happens after the words, the sound waves depart the speaker. Most of them will hear physically, but not really hear. There's no spiritual connection. He says; *“But I say to you who hear* spiritually hear.

Matthew 13 is the classic example that explains the phenomenon we are

speaking of. The sower sows seeds. The seed is the word of God. But most of the seed doesn't produce fruit. There's rocky ground, cement pathway ground, weedy ground, and good ground.

Only the seed that falls on the good ground takes root and reproduces itself in kind. Only a percentage takes root and grows to completion. And that's exactly who Jesus is speaking to. *But I say to you who hear.* These words that 20000 heard physically will have the same effect as the seed in the parable of the sower.

Most will not hear and then respond. These are spiritual words that will be spiritually heard and discerned and acted on by only some of the physical hearers. Most will hear and move on.

There will be some who get all fired up and excited by the words, but when the cost becomes real, they'll fall away. Or they'll hear the words and think, I'd love to get on board with that cause, but . . . I've got other stuff that's more pressing, more important in this world, now.

Still others will have heard that day and the words just make them angry. Radical mad man! Who would leave all and do that. Idiotic. Others will hear His words and say, this mad man is a menace to religious society and should be crucified.

All of those scenarios were present then, and they are present today. Jesus is talking to those whose ears have been quickened from the dead and they can hear and understand Him. Hopefully, that is us. That's the group we want to be in. At any cost! All the other choices end in destruction and separation.

27 "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

Where is this coming from? Why will I have enemies? Why would

anyone hate me? Why will someone, anyone, curse me and mistreat me?

Well, if your ears are alive, we've covered that scenario in some depth this morning. There's a war on in this world, and we are massively outnumbered, and we are the enemy because we belong to the enemy King. The King of kings.

Well then. Why don't we take up arms and fight! Do like Peter and whack off Malchus ear. If we're the enemy and this world wants to kill us, perhaps we should engage.

We do want to engage. That's exactly what we're supposed to do. But we are to engage on a spiritual level. It's a spiritual war. And moreso, these folks who hate you and mistreat you can curse you and punish and persecute you;

They aren't the enemy. They are dumb dupes of the enemy, but they aren't the enemy. Our King loves those folks. They are the mission field. So, again, listen to our King, our commander who owns us;

27“But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

That is exactly how God treated you while you were yet His enemy. Now we are His friends, and He sends us back into the world to treat the world in the same way that He treated us when we were in the world.

Love them. Do good to them. Bless them. Pray for them. Even as they are hating us, cursing us and mis-treating us, we are to respond in the same love that our King responded to us with when we hated Him.

Now then, we could just read right through the rest and it all makes perfect sense. But you know we're not going to do that, right??

Our Master, our King, who purchased us out of this world and who owns us, our Commander in the great spiritual battle that is this world, says; Here are the rules of engagement.

Since it's a spiritual war, and the people who hate you are loved by our King, here is how we'll engage the battle;

29 "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. 30 "Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.

Property. Ownership. We live in America. And foundational to our freedoms that have been written down and defined is the right to own property. We have a right that says we are to be able, in this land, to live free from the fear that someone can come and take away our stuff.

Our system, our current culture, if we can keep it, revolves around the idea that we are free to work at providing some service or product that others need, that if we do that better and cheaper than our competitors, we will be able to keep the rewards of the sales of goods and services, and then we can buy stuff.

That's a gross over-simplification, but that's how our system works. Work for money. Buy stuff. It's yours. Other people can't take it away from you.

We've been trained since christmas morning when we were 2 yrs old that the only thing better than stuff is more stuff. Greed motivates. I like my stuff. I get up on workday mornings, sober, and I go provide my service, better I hope and strive for, than anyone else could do it, and the benevolent folks I work for reward me for that with a generous pay check.

It's an excellent, excellent system. And it's based solidly in this book. We have guys these days saying *we need to get unhitched from the old testament*. Those are dangerous folks. I repeat, if you hear that, an alarm should go off in your head. Danger.

Our system of property and ownership rewarded from work is based in God's law in the old testament. It's very simple. Incredibly simple, the foundation that property and ownership stands on.

Any time an entire world order can be based in so few simple words as I am going to say now, my mind immediately says, that has to be inspired by God. Man writes millions of words and it only confuses what God can say in 8 words. Listen carefully, you capitalists.

You shall not steal. You shall not covet. Those words are the basis that our freedoms to own property and be free from the fear of takings, are based on. God says I can own that and you can't take it away from me. And God likewise tells me to be satisfied with what He has allowed me to have, and not wish to take your stuff away from you.

It's a pretty good system. With those simple truths I have thrived. I've taken me one wife, and we have worked together as a team, every day, we get up sober and work, and we are terrifically blessed. Incredibly blessed.

I not only have everything I need, I've got a semi mountain of stuff I don't need, but God has just blessed me with it to enjoy. Amazing what happens when a culture is built on God's simple truths.

If someone takes my stuff away there are policemen who will go find it and punish the person who took it. It's my stuff. God has empowered me and blessed me to be able to work and provide a service that has value, and over time, all this neat stuff has accumulated. It's a blessing.

All of what I just said is under threat, even as we speak. Communism and socialism break all of those underlying rules. The government takes the place of God and decides what I need, how much I can have, and they dictate to me what my work will be.

Providing a service better and cheaper than anyone else becomes broken. There is no more service. There is no motivation to serve and excel. That's all broken. I can't work hard for a better life because government decides, so why would I serve? What motivation to excel? It breaks everything that God put in place to make this broken world sort of habitable.

Communism and socialism is man saying we can do better than God. We can distribute the wealth better than God did. Look at all the disparities when God is in charge. We can fix it.

Trust me, it's been proven over and over that God's system gives the motivation to work and causes thriving. Let me keep the rewards of my work and I'm just silly enough to get up sober and go to work.

Now then, back to what Jesus is going to tell those of us who have ears and can hear Him. Are you ready? Back to our model where we are enemies of this world that hates us. How do the people who belong to Jesus react to the world taking their stuff away, even though God's laws say that should not happen?

29 "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. 30 "Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.

You shall not steal. You shall not covet. Jesus goes way beyond the norms. You shall not cling to your stuff in this perishing world. Give it away.

The model Jesus is painting is one of people who have come out of this world, and who are living in the tension of having become enemies of the king of this world. Jesus says; that may cost you your stuff. Jesus says, don't cling to the stuff of this world. If the world comes and takes your stuff away, because you belong to me and that has made you the enemies of this world; let it go. Let it go.

That's a hard saying for us in 2019 America. How many christians have you met lately who have heard this taught this way. Belonging to Jesus trumps, if necessary, even your stuff that you thought you would never have to worry about in America, the land of the free.

We need to wake up people. Last week! Last week a small earthquake in California went un-noticed. Dignity Health Services, a catholic owned hospital group that is governed by the Conference of Catholic Bishops was forced to sever it's ties with the University of California San Francisco over dis-agreements about 3 areas.

Twenty-four of Dignity's 39 hospitals prohibit contraception services (translated; abortions) and gender-confirming care for transgender people, such as hormone therapy and surgical procedures. They also refuse to perform end-of-life health care services. In other words they won't euthanize old people who want death on demand.

The bottom line is that jobs and income will be lost because of the truths of this book. Last week. And it wasn't Dignity Health walking away from University of California, it is the other way around. UCSF is walking away from Dignity for the sake of virtue.

To the folks in California, refusing to murder babies and refusing to mangle people with sex change operations and refusing to murder old people who no longer wish to live, that's just evil. And UCSF is walking away from Dignity Health because they are more virtuous. That's how

twisted the world's standards of virtue have become.

Last week a whole bunch of motion picture studios, massive amounts of money and jobs at stake, have said they will exit the state of Georgia if the newly passed law about not murdering unborn children that have a detectable heart beat is enforced there.

Millions of dollars are at stake over 4 words. Billions actually. *You shall not kill.* These are realities folks. Just because the war hasn't gotten to Tonopah, fasten your seat belts. It's coming. There's more than one way to get at christians stuff. Take away their money by taking away their jobs.

Jesus says, if you need to let it go, let it go. In this war, if holding onto Jesus and God's authoritative laws written in this book actually cost you your property; let it go. That's what He's saying to the people who's ears are open and can hear Him on a spiritual level.

The war is real. So far, no one's come to take my things away from me. But what if that day comes. What if I have to decide to give up my stuff, in order to hold onto the truths of this book? Jesus says, let it go.

When this war gets to your house, here are your rules of engagement;
29 "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also;

Notice what the first thing that gets taken away is; your dignity. Getting slapped in the face removes your dignity. In this sequence of Jesus, it's your pride, your dignity that gets removed from you first of all.

If they come to take your stuff and they begin by slapping your face, let them take all of your dignity. Offer the other cheek too.

*29 "Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also;
and whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him*

either. 30 "Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what is yours, do not demand it back.

We'll not finish this section this morning. But we aren't quite finished with what we need to say about these things.

I don't know about anyone else, but within these words of Jesus, and especially within understanding what He's addressing and the conditions that bring about the warfare that is the root cause that makes the words necessary there is a rebuke to me.

The war hasn't gotten to my house. Not really. I'm highly interested in watching the cultural trends. It's gotten to some folks in Georgia and California's houses within the past few days and weeks, but not me.

I'm not threatened. But the rebuke is this. I know very well that if I was going from door to door on the block where I live, telling people that they are sinners, that they were born condemned, that they are born enemies of God and they currently stand in rebellion against the creator of the universe, but that there is a way to flee to safety in Jesus;

If I was doing that, the war *would* be at my house, and that's exactly why God has left me in this world. I'm here to engage the enemy by warning people who belong to him that they need to flee this condemned world and find safety and forgiveness in Jesus.

That's what I'm supposed to be doing. I talk real big up here in this pulpit in the safety of like minded people inside these four safe walls. But I stop well short of engaging this world like an enemy combatant is supposed to be doing. I haven't been making anybody mad.

There's a war outside but I'm busily working inside the safety of headquarters instead of being out on the front lines.

Jesus was calling the ones who had ears to hear what He was saying to engage this world and to consider the resulting battle scars as trophies.

We need to do some soul searching and ask ourselves, are we engaged in the battle? Somehow? Nothing has changed since Jesus spoke these rules of engagement with this world.

What's different is that Satan has gotten a whole lot smarter about his methods of neutralizing christians. Comfort and societal acceptance are big ticket items for christians in America. It's our tradition, our birthright.

America was designed by christians to be user friendly to christians. It was a place where christians could dwell in peace and work and thrive. We could live quietly and the governing officials were working under basic rules that were based in God's moral laws. The ten commandments can still be seen in front of a few courthouses in this land.

So it was totally possible to be a quiet christian and that was even a respected thing. In that scenario that we enjoyed for over 200 years, the battle that this book pictures seemed to have been muted. No need for battle. Christians are the norm. No one's at war with christians here.

I was born into that very scenario. many many many years ago. But in my lifetime, everything has changed. Hollywood and elite higher education are literally going to war with christians and it is because they believe the new virtue, the new righteousness defined by sexual freedom and the god of human autonomy demands a war with christians.

The war is against the logos, the words of this ancient book that is crystal clear. And people who stubbornly hold to the morality so perfectly defined in this book are targets of the new virtue.

When that battle comes knocking on your door, where are you going to

go? The book is clear, and Jesus has laid out for us the rules of engagement.

Luther understood what Jesus is saying when he writes the famous lines in his song;

*Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still,
His kingdom is forever.*

We'll get to the story eventually where Jesus says, you need to calculate the cost. I expect that to be true for every one of us before very long. We need to consider two areas from Jesus words this morning.

What will I pay to have Him, if the note comes due? And secondly, what am I doing right now that is advancing the Authority to Reign of God in Satan's kingdom. Am I an irritation to Satan and his realms? Am I causing any problems for the opposing world in this ongoing war that really hasn't changed since Jesus said these things.