

**RCC in the Word**  
**Week of March 5**  
**Luke 6:27-36**

In this passage we find one of the more difficult to fully comprehend, much less to put into practice, teachings of Jesus. The command to love was central to Jesus' teaching as we find in all of the Gospel accounts. But Luke, more so than any of the other gospel writers, goes out of his way to stress this teaching. In Luke, the believer is to love the outcasts, sinners, and Samaritans. Only in Luke do we read that at his crucifixion Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (23:34). This prayer is then paralleled in Acts 7:59-60, where "while they were stoning him, Stephen prayed ... 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'"

Luke's readers, just as Jesus' disciples, are to love their neighbors regardless of whether they are friends or enemies. In the passage before us, the focus is on loving our enemies and how we can do that, whether we feel like it or not. Whereas feeling positively toward one's enemies and "liking" them are indeed impossible at times, Luke helps us to understand that we can love our enemies by willing good toward them, by doing good in return for evil, by blessing instead of cursing, and by praying for them.

Why are we to do good to our enemies? The first answer is summarized in verse 36, because we are to be like our Heavenly Father, who is full of mercy. When we show love to our enemies (Luke uses this in very broad terms, not just related to persecution) we show something of what God is like. When we do good to those who hate us, when we bless those who curse us, when we pray for those who abuse us, when we give to those who steal from us, when we lend to them freely, when we do this and expect nothing in return, we show that we truly are sons and daughters of the Most High God.

A second answer as to why we should, and can, do good to our enemies is because Christians are satisfied in God alone, and not in gaining revenge, storing up possessions, finding earthly security, or in self-exaltation. And so whether we keep our cloak or not, whether we earn interest on loans or not, whether we have fewer possessions because we have given them away, or whether we have achieved earthly safety are not our primary concern. Our primary concern is not for ourselves, but for others and for God.

The demands in these verses are significant. This is not comfortable. But these are defining characteristics of our God, and they must be defining characteristics of his people. Often even the ability to will good for one's enemies may seem impossible, but Luke believed that the same Spirit who empowered Jesus dwells in believers and can empower them to choose love for enemies. Thus Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit to all of God's children keeps this from being simply an impossible ideal. The Christian can love his enemies and in doing so he will show that he truly is a child of God.

-Written by Nathan Renfro