



The Enemy

“The Unknown”

“But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.” Luke 6:35

The Scripture for this devotional comes immediately after Christ has given the Beatitudes to the disciples. Basically, he had told them that it’s all right when things go wrong, they will get better! That is not easy to accept sometimes. And it doesn’t make it any better when you see someone else doing well that you are sure isn’t your friend. Actually sometimes people are even jealous of their friends doing well. Why? Have you ever crossed the street to get to the other side because you saw someone coming, and you just didn’t want to speak to him? Maybe it was a friend you wanted to avoid or a stranger. Maybe you just wanted to avoid conversation. Or, maybe you were trying to avoid them because they were your friend and you didn’t want to confront them because something was bothering you either about yourself or them.

Is our enemy always someone we know? I think sometimes we think of the stranger as an enemy because we don’t know them, or we are jealous of them for some reason. We all know who these people are for us, and unlike the one mentioned in the Scripture, we know their names. Edwin Markham wrote a short poem “Outwitted” in his book called The Shoes of Happiness. I think he says much. It is a short poem that I learned in High School and it has never left me.

“He drew a circle that shut me out—
Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.
But Love and I had the wit to win:
We drew a circle that took him in.”

I think it is ironic that the book is called The Shoes of Happiness, but can we have happiness if we keep shutting people out? Weather the enemy is a person or something like a habit, or weakness, the only way we can help ourselves is to face it and try through prayer and love to overcome it. I’m not saying it is easy, or that we as an individual can ever accomplish it.

This entire series of devotional has been focused on the people who are often unknown by name, but known to all of us by actions. We all know the enemy, and he/she can have many forms, some personal, some not. Edwin Markham in that short poem had a way of capturing an entire picture in a few words.

These “unknown” or “nameless” people have all had one thing in common. We are they! Many authorities have indicated that we have enemies when we are insecure. If we apply that to our faith, we can, through love and prayer, learn to love the enemy, and give without wanting return. What a perfect world to not have an enemy. Is it possible on this earth?

There are other portions of Scripture where we are told to love the enemy, and the stranger. There must be something to it! In Hebrews 13:2 we are told “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” I think we all often forget that we are all Children of God. That’s pretty awesome stuff when you consider it.

Perhaps one of the best known is Matt 25 when Christ is trying to explain the reward that is available to all of us. “I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me.’ Then they are going to say, ‘Master, what are you talking about? When did we ever see you hungry and feed you, thirsty and give you a drink? And when did we ever see you sick or in prison and come to you?’ Then the King will say, ‘I’m telling the solemn truth: Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.’” From THE MESSAGE

It is easy to just give a little money and have someone else do the work of giving to the poor and homeless. And it is easier yet to say “Let the government handle it. We pay enough in taxes.” But it is a much different thing to be the one to actually go and visit. We have a woman in our church who visits constantly and prays with the people. That has been her mission, not just in hospitals, but in prisons, and to the homeless. She has received many rewards of satisfaction over the years, not in monetary ways, but through knowing she was doing the Lord’s will, and feeling that people really appreciated her kindness.

Prayer: Dear Lord, You have told us to love our enemies, but we don’t want to do that. It is easier to just avoid them. We know that sometimes the enemy isn’t a person, it is a thing, like a habit we can’t

break, or a sin we keep committing. And sometimes, Dear Lord, it is a person that we just don't like for some reason. Help us to show our faith in You by going the extra mile because Your Word has promised if love as you would have us love we can then be children of Your Kingdom. Amen

1. After reading Luke 6:27-36, does God really want us to take the shirt off our back for others? Turn the other cheek? Go a second mile?
2. How can we love the unlovely?
3. Who is our neighbor? Do you avoid strangers, and perhaps lose the opportunity to entertain "angels unawares."

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