

## **Commentary on the Gospel for Tue, Jun 17th 2014**

“But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...” Matthew 5:44

This is one of the hardest commands to follow. Is this even possible? Practical? Reasonable? Difficult? I sometimes have a hard time loving my family!

Who is my enemy? It could be a difficult co-worker, spouse, neighbor, church committee member or anyone we come in contact with. The world today is busy, over programmed, and more reliant on technology. This can take away the human touch and the caring, thoughtful touch.

Some of the ways to love your enemy include:

Greet people by their name, say hello and smile: A smile is a simple way to demonstrate love and cheerfulness. Say the store clerk's name, smile and say thank you especially if it's apparent that he/she is having a stressful day. It can make a big difference.

Get to really know the people in your neighborhood, work place, church and other organizations. The world is a busy place but it can be made smaller. For instance, do you know your neighbors names? Do you know them well enough to be able to offer help when needed?

Pray for the person who irritates you by including them by name in your daily prayer time. Try to see this person as Jesus does. Pray God will bless this person with faith and healing if necessary.

In a challenging work situation, think of a positive thing about the difficult person before a meeting. Focus on strengths the person brings to the gathering. Consider something positive the person offers, especially if it makes the meeting more reasonable and productive. If there is an opportunity for a personal thank you, take it. Note what a difference that effort makes.

Talk to your enemy and get to know them. Put yourself in their shoes. Learn more about them, what

they like, and their challenges and find a common interest.

Assume positive intent in dealing with people: assume that they are trying their best have good intentions at heart and they are operating at their best ability. Many situations are negative because we may assume the negative.

We remember Martin Luther King Jr's words "Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into friend."

Remember with God all things are possible. Matthew 19:26 is a favorite verse and should be remembered in difficult situations or any tense situations with your enemy. With God's grace and help we can love our enemies.

Gracious God, I pray for the grace to see Jesus Christ in every person that I meet. Grant me the capacity and open up my heart to love my neighbors and enemies. Let me remember what the Bible says on love:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, and it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. (1 Corinthians 13:4-8)

We ask this in your name. Amen.

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