

Jan 30, 2016

## Matthew 5:38-48

*Meeting Jesus in Matthew: That's Not Normal*

Jonathan M. Romig

CornerstoneWestford.com

### Introduction:

1. Today's passage touches on the topics of revenge, retaliation, and feuds.
2. A feud is when one person offends another person's rights, and the person retaliates, and back and forth.
3. Maybe you've heard of the Hatfields and McCoys and their feud that escalated into a small-war.
4. More recently you might have heard of the Bundy family versus the state of Oregon.
5. A serious feud took place between Kanye West and Taylor Swift over who was better, Beyoncé or her.
6. Jimmy Kimmel and John Krasinski are two funny guys who are in a Christmas prank feud.
7. What started with a simple Christmas decorations joke has turned into a studio-produced war.
8. It just so happens that we're in the midst of an election year, so political feuds are all over the news.
9. Bernie Sanders and Hilary Clinton are fighting over gun control and how to treat corporate giants.
10. Donald Trump is in a disagreement with Fox News over how Megyn Kelly interviewed him.
11. Trump boycotted this week's debate, "When your treated badly, you have to stick up for your rights."
12. Is that true? When you and I are mistreated, should we stand up for ourselves?
13. Jesus lived in a time when he and his fellow Jews were consistently mistreated by the Romans.
14. Instead of riling the Jews to overthrow the Romans, he teaches them to lay down their rights.
15. What's normal, is when someone hurts us, we try and hurt them back.

### I. Jesus disagrees with what's normal. (v. 38-39b)

#### A. It's normal to want revenge against those who mistreat us. (**Read v. 38-39a**)

1. Jesus is quoting Old Testament law that set forth a system of justice and protection for all.

Exodus 21:22–25 (NIV) If people are fighting and hit a pregnant woman and she gives birth prematurely but there is no serious injury, the offender must be fined whatever the woman's husband demands and the court allows. But if there is serious injury, **you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth**, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

2. This law was used by the court system to determine fair punishment for offenses.
3. This is different than ancient law, like the Code of Hammurabi, which was a class-based system.

#### B. Mohatma Gandhi is quoted as saying "An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind."

1. He protested civil rights abuses through non-violent civil disobedience, or passive resistance.
2. It's good to overthrow evil regimes, corrupt politicians, and oppressive systems without violence.
3. But Jesus actually called his followers to do this first, when he said "do not resist an evil person."
4. His advice goes one step further than non-violent protest; he says to care for and love evil people.
5. We love it when the bad guy get's it at the end of a story (Sauron, Voldemort, etc.)
6. Jesus isn't saying state-granted justice is bad, but that we're not to seek individual retribution.
7. It's not normal to say, "Instead of getting back at you I'm going to trust God."

(Jesus disagrees with what's normal)

## II. Jesus insists we return good for evil (v. 39b-42)

### A. Jesus insists we return good for evil. (**Read v. 39**)

1. The Greek word for “resist” is “anthistemi”(ἀνθίστημι).
2. According to WebMD, "When your body comes into contact with whatever your allergic trigger is -- pollen, ragweed, pet dander, dust mites... it makes chemicals called histamines" which cause swelling and runny noses, puffy eyes, and itchiness.
3. Antihistamines “resist” or “oppose” those uncomfortable chemicals.
4. Jesus insists we do not oppose what makes us uncomfortable.

(Jesus insists we return good for evil, and he gives us for examples:)

### B. Example 1: When others shame us, we honor them. (**Read v. 39b**)

1. Matthew says the “right cheek” because that implies a backhand strike.
2. Have you ever seen on TV when a guy insults a girl and she backhands him?
3. Jesus isn’t talking about not stopping abuse or defending another person.
4. We live in a guilt and innocence culture; Jesus lived in a shame and honor culture.
5. To let them strike you with the back of the hand is to let them insult you.
6. Let your coworkers speak poorly of you for not cutting corners.
7. Let your unbelieving family members mock you for trusting in Jesus.
8. Let popular culture look down on you for not enjoying all of life's pleasures.

(When others shame us, we honor them.)

### C. Example 2: When others want what’s ours, we give them more. (**Read v. 40**)

1. The shirt was a “tunic” or light “undergarment” that went to the knees (travel with two).
2. The coat was a thick upper garment or cloak meant for travel and sleep.
3. A tunic was like a long T-shirt and a coat was like what you or I would wear skiing.
4. If you give someone your tunic and your cloak, you end up naked with nothing.
5. I read the story of a man who was mistreated by his company, specifically his boss.
6. He decided to sue and was going to settle for about \$5,000.
7. But he was a believer and God convicted him to see how he’d contributed to the problem.
8. He was convicted to walk away from the lawsuit, so he did.
9. He told his boss why and he shared about how much Christ had forgiven him.
10. People began to ask questions and a Bible study formed in his office.
11. His only regret was that he didn't do it sooner.
12. (\*Section revised after sermon when found story in Peacemaker by Ken Sande, pages 96-98)

(When others want what’s ours, we give them our more.)

### D. Example 3: When others bully us, we model true strength. (**Read v. 41**)

1. Roman soldiers could force a person to carry their gear for one Roman mile (4,854ft vs. 5,280ft).
2. To volunteer was not only unpleasant, but seen as unpatriotic and helping the enemy.
3. True strength is not bullying the bullies, but serving without complaint.
4. Maybe some of you have gotten bullied by coworkers or at school.
5. There’s the boy or girl in the playground that likes to call you names.

6. Instead of pushing them back, why not offer to be their friend?
7. If have an over-aggressive co-worker, why not try and help them succeed?

(When others bully us, we model true strength.)

E. Example 4: When others need us, we don't turn them away. (**Read v. 42**)

1. The ESV says, "Give to the one who **begs** from you..."
2. The word for "give" is a one-time command—it's not saying to impoverish ourselves.
3. I recently read the book *When Helping Hurts*, and I recommend it to any who care for the poor.
4. I struggle with this because I like to help the homeless, but don't always feel right about it.
5. I personally think we can help by giving food, a Bible, or just talking with them.
6. Someone called CCC this week asking for rent help and I sent her to her local social services.
7. We as a church are going to need to decide how we can help and not hurt people like this (Haiti).
8. I have a friend who lived in Chicago and would give his socks to a barefooted homeless man.
9. Another time he ran a mile home in the frigid night to grab a homeless man warm clothes.

(When others need us, we don't turn them away.)

(Jesus insists we return good for evil.)

III. Jesus insists we love our enemies instead of hating them (**Read v. 43**)

- 1) The thought in Jesus' day was to rebel against the Roman authorities.
- 2) In the last two-hundred years the Maccabean Jews had overthrown the Greeks, so why not them?
- 3) But Jesus tells his followers to do two things for their enemies: love & pray!
- 4) He gives **two reasons** for why they should love their enemies:

E. Reason 1: God gives good things to all kinds of people. (**Read v. 44-45**)

1. Jesus uses his own father as an illustration.
2. He tells us God gives rain and sunshine, wealth and fame, to good and bad people.
3. We can act like our Heavenly Father by showing compassion and grace to bad people.
4. What does that mean to you? Who do you need to show compassion to?
5. Liberals? Conservatives? Illegal aliens? Planned Parenthood? Bill Maher? Media?
6. How should we feel about ISIS? We should pray Jesus appears in dreams to them.

F. Reason 2: There's nothing special about normal people. (**Read v. 46-47**)

1. Jesus point is simple... normal people are nice to people who treat them well.
2. When we extend kindness in the face of meanness, it's unnatural, but good.

(Jesus insists we love our enemies instead of hating them.)

IV. Christianity isn't normal, because grace isn't normal. (**Read v. 48**)

A. Grace isn't normal.

1. Verse 48 says, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect."
2. Jesus expects absolute perfection from us, but we can't give it, so what's the solution?
3. This is not only a command, but a promise, the Greek literally says, "You will be perfect."
4. Jesus promises that if you trust and follow him, one day you will be perfect like him.

5. There's another reward here; Jesus says, "your heavenly Father."
6. Grace is receiving a **gift we don't deserve**: perfection and a Father.

(What did Jesus do in order to give us perfection and a Father?)

B. Jesus lived out this passage on our behalf.

1. The Bible tells us that when Jesus was crucified, he was slapped in his face.
2. *Then they spit in his face and struck him with their fists. **Others slapped him*** (Matt 26:67)
3. The rulers, soldiers, people, and even a criminal mocked him. (Luke 23:35-39)
4. Soldiers stole Jesus' cloak and undergarments, leaving him naked and exposed.
5. *23 When the soldiers crucified Jesus, **they took his clothes**, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with **the undergarment remaining**. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. 24 "Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "**Let's decide by lot who will get it...**"* (John 19:23-24a NIV)
6. Jesus prayed "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)
7. Jesus did all of this so he could pour out his righteousness on you and me, the unrighteousness.
8. We who are evil can now become good through his death and resurrection.
9. Jesus is the only one who deserves a reward for living a good life, and he wants to share.
10. If you confess your sins and put your faith in him, you receive eternal life.
11. In Jesus, we have already obeyed God's perfect standard.
12. Now in this lifted we can "begin to obey" him perfectly.
13. Grace isn't normal.

Conclusion:

1. The first Americans infected with the Ebola virus were helping the sick in Monrovia, Liberia.
2. They were both Christian missionaries, Dr. Kent Brantly (Samaritans) and Nancy Writebol (SIM).
3. That's not normal... Grace isn't normal.
4. In 1994, the Hutu majority in Rwanda committed mass genocide against the Tutsi minority (1M dead).
5. Today Christians work to bring reconciliation to these peoples and it's slowly working.
6. That's not normal... Grace isn't normal.
7. When people mistreat you and say all sorts of hurtful things against you, how are you going to respond?
8. Are you going to start your own feud or show the kindness of Christ Jesus?
9. It's not normal to forgive... Grace isn't normal.

Benediction: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen." Philippians 4:23 NIV