

Love your enemies

- Near universal agreement that Christianity is at its best when those who profess to be Christians love their enemies

Amish Response to the killing

- Verbally expressed forgiveness
- Refused to talk badly about the killer or degrade his character
- Reached out to the killer's family as fellow victims
- Attended his funeral
- Established a scholarship fund for his children

Love your enemies

- We might pay lip service to it theoretically, might make some token gestures, most Christians (along with the rest of the world) see it as a nice sentiment but mostly impractical.
- Usual objections
 - Power struggles between nations
 - Criminal punishment

Love your Enemies

- Who are my enemies
- Why don't I love my enemies
- Why not loving my enemies destroys the world
- How I can love my enemies

Do I have enemies?

- Many of us might say “I have no enemies...”
- Almost all of us have numerous situational enemies
 - Politics
 - Work
 - Relatives
 - Neighbors

Situational enemies

- People who do things we don't like
- People who believe things we don't agree with
- People who oppose goals and agendas we maintain and embrace
- The vast majority of murder happens between people who know each other, even intimately

Why don't I love my (situational) enemies?

- We experience the absence of shalom (not the way life's supposed to be) and we seek to fix the situation, save ourselves, save those/that we value, save our world
- G.K. Chesterton
 - You cannot love a thing without wanting to fight for it

How we address our (situational) enemies

- First we inform them thinking perhaps they are merely ignorant.
 - Emotional appeals
 - Appeal to authority
- If it matters enough to us we begin to try “correct” their thinking or behavior

Anatomy of a fight

- Inform:
 - “I was here first.” “I had it first”
- Correct:
 - Smack, kick, grab
- Justify:
 - “He made me hit him!”

Correction

- There are always two choices
 - Engage: force, violence, coercion
 - Withdraw: we withhold love, fellowship, eye contact, community,
- Almost every conflict follows these steps.
 - If what we love is sufficiently threatened we will seek to eliminate the enemy: morally, effectively, existentially

Why not loving enemies destroys the world

- At first our enemy is ignorant
- Then we declare our enemy to be evil
- Then we decide that our enemy is incorrigible (not correctable)
- If we believe we cannot live in isolate from our enemy and they are incorrigible, we seek to kill our enemy
- Since our belief gets situational, we destroy each other and all that the other values

In this world Jesus says...

Luke 6:27-31 (NRSV)

“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

What doesn't Jesus say?

- He doesn't say who's right
 - This doesn't mean there isn't truth
- He doesn't say who's good
 - This doesn't mean there isn't good and evil
- He doesn't say who's dangerous
 - This doesn't mean people aren't dangerous
- Jesus isn't telling you how to win a fight. He's telling you about what salvation looks like

Common sense says

- “Instruct your enemy”
 - Jesus doesn’t say “never correct”
- “Correct your enemy”
 - Correction can change behavior, increase performance, bring compliance
 - Correction can’t change the human heart
 - Jesus will use verbal correction at times, but he always refuses to start a violent revolution

Jesus says "love your enemy"

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Love is not a feeling here

- Do good to those who hate you
- Bless those who curse you
- Pray for those who abuse you
- Turn the other cheek
- Give to those who ask
- Don't demand back stolen goods
- Do to others as you would have them do to you

“If I do these things what will become of me?”

- Do good to those who hate you
- Bless those who curse you
- Pray for those who abuse you
- Turn the other cheek
- Give to those who ask
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“If I do these things what will become of me?”

- What about my reputation?
 - You are more than your reputation
 - Whose reputation ultimate counts?
- What about my comfort?
 - You are more than your comfort
 - Who can give you everlasting comfort?
- What about my stuff?
 - You are more than your goods
 - Is this stuff really that important?

How the world works

Luke 6:32-36 (NRSV)

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again.

- I will be good, do good to you, as long as, and to the degree that you do it to me

Jesus says

Luke 6:32-36 (NRSV)

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Why does Jesus tell us this?

- Because it will “work”? How do we define “work”?
 - Getting our enemy to think like us and behave (better) than us
- To give us a moral standard so that we can arrive at peace if we do it?
 - We’ve had it for 2000 years. How are we doing?
- To tell us how to get to heaven?
 - “If you love your enemy you qualify...”

Our problem

- If we are motivated by THIS being our world fixing trick we can never accomplish it because it doesn't "work" well enough
 - 3 points was too meager a reward for all the pain
- Jesus "proved" it doesn't work!
 - How did it turn out for him!

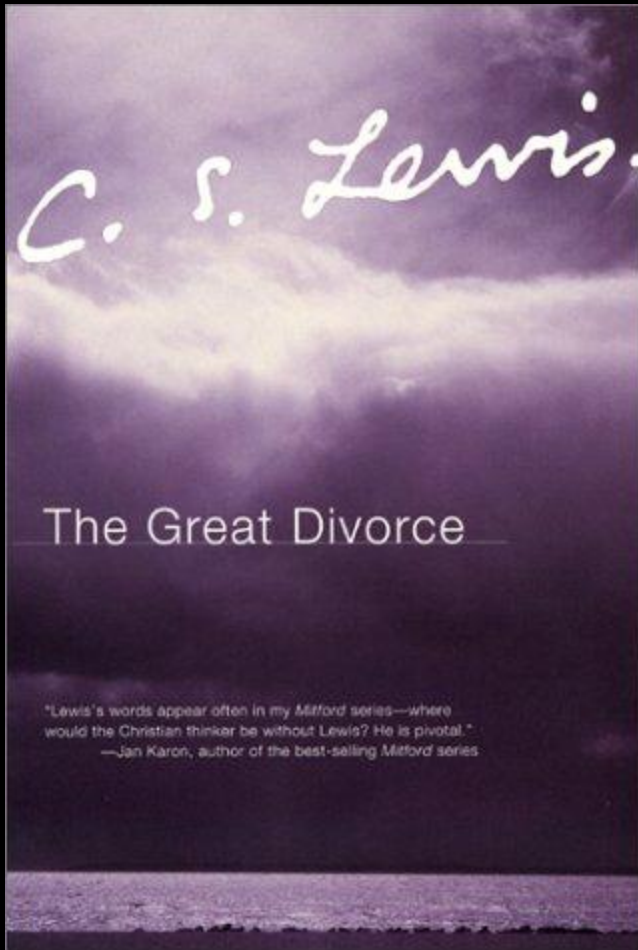
The gospel is not good advice

- This is some of Jesus' worst advice if advice on "being happy" or "making life work" is what you think he's in the habit of giving...
- If you are most interested in your reputation, your comfort, and your stuff, dominate your enemy

Jesus intends to show us the truth at the cost of his life: to “reveal”

- Lovers of enemies are killed
 - This needs no divine revelation
- We are all the killers of enemies
 - This should need no divine revelation but we are in denial of it. We believe ourselves justified by the rightness of our thought and behavior
 - When we see blood on our hands doubt of our self-justification begins to creep in
- We plead “we had no choice!”

Hating our neighbor is an foretaste of hell



Jesus intends to show us the truth at the cost of his life: to “reveal”

- When we begin to see his love for us, his enemies, something else begins to happen. Love begins to change us. We begin to experience a new goodness not on reciprocity but on grace.
- When we see his resurrection, we begin to get a vision of a new freedom.

New Sight

- We can love our enemies not because they are right, but because we are secure, wealthy and can easily afford to be generous
- We can love them because we don't save ourselves or them, God does, just as he saved his son.

Invitation to be like God

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Witness to an invitation

