

# ***BYOBible:***

## ***The Scary Stuff of Scripture***

October 31, 2021

**Overarching Theme:** In 2021, FUMC will be SENT with the peace of Christ!

### **Instructions:**

When using this material as teacher, feel free to pick and choose the point you want to emphasize in the lesson. *The format of the curriculum is designed to have an abundance of information in which to refer as desired.*

### **Core Point:**

On Easter evening, the Risen Christ appears to his gathered disciples for the first time since Good Friday and speaks these words: "*Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you*" (John 20:21). Just as Jesus sent his disciples into a divided, conflicted 1<sup>st</sup> Century with his peace, so he sends us into a divided, conflicted 2021 with his peace.

### **Reflect on this Scripture:**

Matthew 5:43-48 NRSV <sup>43</sup> "*You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'*" <sup>44</sup> "*But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,*" <sup>45</sup> "*so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.*" <sup>46</sup> "*For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?*" <sup>47</sup> "*And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?*" <sup>48</sup> "*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*"

### **This Week: Matthew 5:43-48**

Jesus makes love of God and neighbor the fundamental command on which all else depends and makes the command to love enemies specific and concrete. In its absoluteness and concreteness, it is without parallel in paganism or Judaism. In these few short verses, Jesus offers a course correction for any possible misunderstandings of God's will or similar abuses in the past. In the unfolding drama of Scripture, the direction of the plot is now abundantly clear and it is Christ-like. "But I say to you..." becomes the way forward for Christ-followers.

Further, the command should not be understood abstractly, "love all people, including even enemies." In Jesus' situation it referred particularly to the occupying Roman forces, and thus to national enemies as well as to competing religious groups and personal enemies. For Matthew the focal instance was the concrete situation of the persecuted Matthean community. But such a concrete point of orientation then has the effect of making love universal.

Jesus bases the command not on a humanitarian ideal, a doctrine of human rights, or a strategy or utilitarian purpose (to win the enemy over) but (a) only on his authority to set his own command in juxtaposition to the Law (5:43), (b) on the nature of God who loves all impartially (5:45), and (c) on the promise of ultimate, heavenly reward (5:46). The idea of reward is not mere selfishness, but a dimension of Jesus' fundamental proclamation of the present and coming kingdom as the basis for the radical life-style to which he calls his disciples in the great, unfolding story of God's gracious plan revealed in Scripture.

-- Adapted from New Interpreters Commentary, Vol VIII, p. 195

### **Questions to Ponder for Accountability in the Group:**

1. Think of some instances in which '*hate your enemy*' was a major part of any biblical story, particularly in the first parts of the Biblical narrative (for example, Cain and Abel, Samson and the Philistines, Saul and David, Psalm 137, etc.). Is there anything that can we learn from these stories?
2. What does Jesus' repeated statements from Matthew 5 (The Sermon on the Mount... "you have heard it said... but I say to you" underscore mine) reveal about how Jesus saw himself in relation to the Scriptures of the Old Testament?
3. Does his 'course correction' for the people of God ("Love your enemies...') help you make sense of some of the 'scary stuff' of Scripture? How does it help you see the overall plot development of the Bible?
4. How would you rate the followers of Jesus through the centuries regarding Jesus' command to *love one's enemies*? How about the church today? How about you?

### **Activity for the Life of a Disciple:**

1. Remember to find encouragement for the day by reading the daily devotional from FUMCC and/or to journal in the "*Morning by Morning*" gratitude resource.
2. Take the "Chapter Challenge" to read or listen to a chapter a day from one of the Gospels each day this week.

3. Check out a study Bible or two from the resource table near the Ministry Center coffee area. Consider some of these resources for your continued study.
4. Ponder and pray on this scripture this week: Matthew 5:43-44 NRSV  
*<sup>43</sup> "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you..."*