

Today is March 16, 2019 - Day 11 of the Lenten Season

Thank you for joining me on my Lenten journey of faith. Any journey is an easier one when it is traveled with someone. Life can be lonely, and the way can be difficult at times. But through the Grace of God and wonderful family and friends, we will get there.

Today's suggested readings are:

[The Book of Deuteronomy 26:16-19 \(NKJV\)](#)

[Gospel of Matthew 5:43-49 \(NKJV\)](#)

I have selected the reading from the Gospel of Matthew:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

This is one of the better-known teachings from the Gospel of Matthew. I have always wondered about the poor tax collectors. They are vilified throughout the Gospels and are equated to sinners, etc. The Romans hired disloyal Israelites to tax other Jews for personal profit. So, they were used as symbols for the worst kind of people. Even today, when we talk about the “IRS”, we cringe.

This passage is telling us about the universal love God that manifests itself in the blessings which God bestows on all indiscriminately. How wonderful is His Grace!

If we love our enemies and treat them well, then we are showing that Jesus is Lord of our life. This is only possible if you give yourself completely to God.

Jesus sets an unattainable standard when he says, “Be perfect”. Even though this standard is impossible to meet, God cannot lower it without compromising His own perfection. Christ has met the standard for us. Therefore, it is more important to give justice and mercy than to receive it.

How can we be perfect?

1. In this life we cannot be flawless, but we can aspire to be as much like Christ as possible.
2. We are to separate ourselves from sinful values. We are to be devoted to God's values.
3. We must grow toward maturity and wholeness. God expects different behavior from us, depending on our stage of spiritual development.
4. We can seek to love others as completely as God loves us.

We can be perfect if our behavior is appropriate for our maturity level – with much room to grow. Our tendency is to sin, and Christ calls us to excel, to rise above mediocrity, and to mature in every aspect of our lives, to become like Him.

I pray that during this time of Lent our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, will lift you up and with the grace of the Holy Spirit bring you peace and the sure knowledge that you are loved. Amen.