

Series	Sermon on the Mount
Study	Study 8
Topic	Transforming Love
Reference	Matthew 5:38-47
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Speaker	Dr Peter Ng

Welcome back to another session of Gamma. We are studying through the Sermon on the Mount and today's topic is "Transforming Love", taken from Matthew chapter 5 verses 38 to 47. Now today's study represents, I believe one of the most difficult of Jesus commands and yet the most important. You see the law of Christ is to love God and neighbor, but what does it actually look like on the ground. The Beatitudes tell us it's blessed. Those who are blessed are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, those who are merciful. These provide the principles behind Jesus concept on righteousness. The salt and light are the effects the true disciples will have on the world. In the last few weeks we've seen how the righteousness of the Pharisees, which is the righteousness of the day, you know, obeying the law is only skin-deep and doesn't really get down to the real heart of the law, which is actually love.

All of us have been shocked at the true depth of the law when it is revealed. Do not murder means do not hate, do not commit adultery means do not lust. Today's session is even worse. When Jesus says, "do not retaliate and love your enemies". These are impossible demands by any stretch of the imagination for any of us because all have enemies and people we do not get along with. We put them at a side, we don't want to think about them. This is a bridge too far. But for Jesus this is where the rubber meets the road. The test of a true disciple, which is transforming love. Whether you have been transformed by the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, which is love. And whether our love is human selfish love or a love from above. So much of Jesus's commands have been misunderstood. So we need to gain some insight by looking into the background and the context in which this conversation has taken place.

In order to understand this passage, we need to appreciate the fact that the Jews were not a free people. They were under the administration of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire was the largest empire and kingdom up to that stage and it encompass much of the nations around the Mediterranean. The reigning emperor at that time was Emperor Tiberius, who ruled from Rome and the Roman governor was Pontius Pilate, which you can see here pictured in a statue with Christ, depicting the trial, illustrating the fact that you could not simply put anyone to death unless you had the permission of the Roman governor. For the ordinary people, much of life was involved and revolved around observances of the law, ceremonies and sacrifices around the temple, which played a central part in the people's lives.

There were three prominent groups around who were the leaders, as well as, the religious leaders in Israel and you can find that the preeminent group was the Pharisees. This is comprised about six to seven thousand of people, who were really dedicated to meticulous observances of the law, interpretation of the law and they actually differ from the other group, which is basically the Sadducees. Sadducees also followed the law in meticulous detail but the only difference was they were more politically connected and they didn't believe in any resurrection.

The third group was the Essenes. These are essentially a religious sect or fringe group that led monastic lives, not much of it is mentioned in the New Testament but they cluster around monastic communities, the help property in common and they were also meticulously obedient to the law of Moses, the sabbath, ritual purity. They believe in immortality and divine punishment for sin, but unlike the Pharisees the Essenes denied the resurrection of body.

But whichever group we look at, all of them have one thing in common. They had a meticulous observance, an interpretation of the Torah and its customs and the multitude of casuistic laws that revolve around the Torah as well. So here we have a people who have been steeped in tradition, steeped in the law and now to this situation we have Jesus who enters and then talks about them.

Now into this situation Jesus says,

Matthew 5 :21 You have heard that it was said to those of old, You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council

Here you can see a whole bunch of folk, who basically steep in religion, in the law and its interpretation and keeping the law and we have a young 30-something year old guy or late 20s who comes up to them and says, “this is what the law says, this is what you believe in the past and now but I say to you”, which means Jesus now assumes an authority higher than any rabbi, any professor, any specialist but he assumes a position of God and this alone would have caused, if an average rabbi said that he would immediately be stoned and killed. Jesus assumes an authority that's even higher.

So it is into this situation Jesus steps in and it gives us principles of Kingdom righteousness, as it really should be and they are encapsulated in the Beatitudes. And if you follow the Beatitudes, the people of Israel will be the salt and light of the world as they should have been.

Once this is established Jesus goes on and applies these principles with the law. Jesus Kingdom righteousness is consistent and with the law and actually fulfills the law and gives us a deeper look into what the law was really about. And here comes Jesus to this congregation who have been so used to the holiness and the law keeping precepts of the scribes and Pharisees and now he drops a bombshell on them.

*Matthew 5: 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness **exceeds** that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

It is like coming to the church and trying to tell everybody, ‘unless you are holier than the pastor's you will never enter the kingdom of God’. Imagine the shock and the horror that would be registered in the faces of everybody who listened to this controversial new teacher. And so therefore for the next session Jesus proceeds to layout what it really means to obey God's law. So we come to this final section when Jesus Kingdom righteousness principles in the Beatitudes and how Jesus fulfills law is actually applied to daily life where the rubber meets the road. What does Jesus new kingdom ethic and righteousness look like in daily life, so that the people could really understand.

You see all their lives they're only been used to the meticulous law keeping precepts of the Pharisees and now Jesus introduces a deeper concept. And so therefore he has to apply to illustrate it so that the people have some realization. So he takes their laws, do not murder, do not commit adultery, do

not lie. The Pharisaical religion handled these laws on the outside. So, they don't murder, they don't commit adultery, they do not lie. It is on the surface, but what Jesus is doing is that he links murder to hatred, he links adultery to lust. Jesus is affirming the law. He is not saying what they were believing in or following was wrong. He is just saying you're not even going far enough. There is a true intent of the law, the spirit of the law. The law of Jesus would incorporate the whole of the Old Testament, he fulfills it as well as the underlying principles of the Spirit.

So Jesus Kingdom righteousness is, yes you should love your God with all your heart, your soul and your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself. So these are the two ethics which are incorporated in true understanding of what the law is, rather than the superficial understanding of it, which basically seeks to evade the true intent of law, which is actually to love God.

So in verses 21 to 48 Jesus looks at the six areas in daily life where true righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees. He is not looking for the kind of righteousness that the Pharisees have. He is looking for something deeper and he shows it in all these six areas. In today's passage will deal with the last two areas; retaliation and love for one's enemies.

Verse 38

You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you

Today's passage is actually taken from a law in the Old Testament. This law in Latin refers to Lex talionis, which is basically a law of retribution. Leviticus 24,

*17 Whoever takes a human life shall surely be put to death. 18 Whoever takes an animal's life shall make it good, life for life. 19 If anyone injures his neighbor, as he has done it shall be done to him, 20 fracture for fracture, **eye for eye, tooth for tooth;***

If you look in Deuteronomy 19. Same principle. Verse 21

*Your eye shall not pity. **It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.***

So these are laws and the laws are given for two reasons. One, for required retribution so that order and civility is maintained in society. It is designed to prevent violence and crime. The other one is equitable retribution, because if you look in Genesis chapter 4 verse 23. They were the descendant of Cain, how he boast

Lamech said to his wives: "Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. 24 If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold."

Here you actually have unrestrained retribution, revenge. You kill, you touch Lamech, he's gonna hit you back seventy-seven fold. So Lex talionis is very important principle in law if there is required retribution if there is a crime and yet there's equitable retribution. You cannot escalate it beyond the

actual crime itself. Now if you look at what Jesus said. Matthew 5:39

But I say to you,

In a little bit different of what the law says,

Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

What is Jesus doing? What was Jesus doing? What was he addressing? He wasn't overturning or Old Testament law. What he was doing is unmasking the error of common wisdom. What the people were doing was that they were taking matters out of the law, cause they were settling matters with vengeance, revenge and self administered justice. Jesus is saying there is a righteousness greater and more beautiful than self justice. Let God be the judge and the one who puts everything right.

There's been a lot of misunderstanding in the words of Jesus. Martin Luther describes in his book that of one crazy believer who actually allowed lice to eat up his beard and infect his skin why because he didn't want to kill them because that would be evil and he was not supposed to oppose evil. The misunderstanding applies even to very famous Christians, like the Russian author Leo Tolstoy in 1884. He writes on,

Christ totally forbids the human institution of any law court' because they resist evil and even return evil for evil. The same principle applies, he says, to the police and the army. When Christ's commands are at last obeyed 'all men will be brothers, and everyone will be at peace with others ... Then the Kingdom of God will have come.'

And the reason why this will work Dietrich Bonhoeffer says is that because

"Evil will become powerless when it finds no opposing object, no resistance, but, instead, is willingly borne and suffered. Evil meets an opponent for which it is not a match."

And the reason why this will work according to Dietrich Bonhoeffer is that he reasons that even the so called criminals and robbers love good and hate evil as I do. And when they come and see through the truth Christians teach and exhibit that the nonviolent devote their lives to serving others 'no man will be found so senseless as to deprive of food or kill those who serve Him.

So he is saying there's some common grace in human beings that will prevent them from going overboard. Our human beings truly like that. We've seen ISIS, Boko Haram, group of really evil people who are relentless in the evil and who love to torture, maim and kill. Will this apply?

So in this passage Jesus gives us three examples in daily life. Someone got a slap, someone got slapped with a lawsuit and someone who has been asked by a Roman soldier to carry a load for one mile take it two miles instead. Let's look at it.

Let's take the first example which Jesus gives about hitting one or slapping one in the cheek. From ancient Jewish writings Mishnah Baba Qamma gives some idea. It says,

"Everything is in accord with one's station [status]." This means, "if he smacked him, he pays him two hundred zuz.", "if it is with the back of the hand, he pays him four hundred zuz"

Here we are not talking about the issue of personal injury. He is actually talking about insult. When you slap someone at the back of the hand there's less force but more injury to his dignity and his reputation, so therefore the reparations for that is absolutely much more. So we're talking about someone who's been insulted, not grievously hurt. The best example is given in Jesus himself. Matthew 26:67

Then they spit in his face and struck him. And some slapped him, 68 saying, "Prophecy to us, you Christ! Who is it that struck you?"

And Jesus did not retaliate. The second example is a lawsuit. When someone sues you for your shirt, you give him your outer coat as well. Now the outer coat is basically your absolute right. Even in any law court you could not sue a person to take his outer coat. You could take your shirt and take everything else but the outer coat is used on a cold night, it will keep you alive. So therefore by law it was your absolute right, you couldn't sue someone to take his outer coat and Jesus is saying, "well if someone sues you for your shirt give him your outer coat as well. Then the last example given is a Roman soldier. Now Roman soldiers at a time had the absolute right to mandate false labor. You could take their burden for only certain period of time for a certain distance. Beyond that, you're under no obligation. But Jesus is saying, if he is asking to take you for one mile you take him two miles, which means it is going above and beyond what was required.

So clearly in all these examples Jesus is actually talking about foregoing our personal rights. Not standing on our rights, not standing on our dignity. Jesus is talking about foregoing our rights to personal retaliation. Jesus is talking about personal sacrifice, not standing on our rights all the time.

Now let's have a think about how we apply this message. What if you're confronted by an evil malicious thug like Osama Bin Laden, who actually threatens your family, threatens your society, threatens your nation. Are we going to turn the left cheek and the right cheek and allow him to murder scores or even hundreds of people? Is Jesus language here literal? Do we take it literally or is it a hyperbolic language, which is a kind of exaggeration? Ask yourself the question what happens when I get slapped in the right cheek I turn the left cheek and after that I can give a taekwondo kick, right. What happens if after I take the Roman soldier's baggage for one mile then two miles but not one inch after that. You see that is basically legalism. So, Jesus is not talking about legalism. Jesus using hyperbolic or strong language to jolt us into seeing in a situation in the new light. It is not to be taken literally. His purpose is actually to forbid revenge and not to encourage injustice, dishonesty on vie.

How can those who seek is a first priority, the extension of God's righteous rule in society at the same time contribute to the spread of unrighteousness by not resisting evil people. True carrying love, care for both the individual and society. It takes action to deter evil and promote good. He teaches forbearance, which means renounce revenge. Authentic Christian non-resistance is actually non-retaliation. Now ask yourself a question, why do we retaliate? We often retaliate, why, because my pride is hurt. When you get a backhanded slap my dignity is savage.

If you are a child of God and you're blessed, blessed are those who are poor in spirit, you know your glory doesn't reside in your face when they slap, you are mourning your own sinfulness. So will you have the spirit of retaliation. If you're a peacemaker you want to restore shalom relationships. So therefore would you retaliate. So retaliation is the opposite direction. It escalates the evil into more evil and we get spun into a cycle of evil. A person who is shaped by Jesus righteousness responds to

it justice not with retaliation and vengeance but with grace, compassion and abundant mercy. Personal sacrifice, grace and forgiveness replaces personal retaliation. See the kingdom ethic Jesus teaching here is the ethic of the love of God and of neighbor, and you look at this Jesus himself went to the way the cross to deny himself.

Now there is a reason why Jesus tells us to love and not retaliate. 1-Peter chapter 2 verse 21

*For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued **entrusting himself to him who judges justly***

Here we've been called not to retaliate simply because we've been asked to follow the example of Jesus, because Jesus suffered for us and he leaves us an example. He committed no sin, which means Jesus was totally innocent and yet he was beaten, yet he was insulted but what did Jesus do. Jesus never retaliated. He suffered and the reason he suffered was because he had faith that one day God would judge and he would judge justly. God would balance the scales. He didn't have to take justice in his own hand. So, therefore we are asked not to do retaliate simply because God will one day judge everyone. And we entrust our hurts and suffering to God himself.

We come to the last verse of this particular section, verse 42,

Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

Now this is a difficult verse. Does this mean that you are to give without any conditions to anybody, any beggar, any person? Maybe he wants to come and swindle you, and they comes and ask you for money. Now this is actually taken as a practical application of blessed are those who are merciful. Mercy is a loving response to misery and helplessness. So a person comes to you in need, we are to respond to the need, no matter whether the person actually has deserved your help or not, but there are balancing principles. The balancing principle is if you look in 2-Corinthians chapter 3:10, here is Paul

*For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: **"The one who is unwilling to work shall not eat."***

Why does he say that?

11 We hear that some among you are idle and disruptive. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the food they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good.

So you are supposed to do good. You are never tired of doing good. You are never jaded, you always want to give and love, but if you give to these particular people, you know what, people describes them as they are idle, they are busy bodies, so they refuse to work. They just want sponge of you, take your money and basically enjoy their lives. In doing so, by giving these people free food, free money, you are actually destroying their lives. So there are balancing principles. Sometimes giving to someone will be detrimental. You are not actually loving the person. Suppose you've got someone who is basically, even your son and he comes to you and you know that the money you give him goes to buying drugs, life of crime. Would you continue to give him that out of the

goodness of your heart? Giving him that will actually pave the road for destruction for that person. So that has to be balanced against this particular command. What is Jesus trying to get it? Jesus is trying to get at us being a mercenary tight-fisted penny-pinching scrooge, which is the financial counterpart of the legalistic eye for eye, tooth for tooth kind of guy. Always asking what's in it for me, what are my rights. Jesus is asking us to be generous for needs and not to be penny pinching.

So in this second section Jesus is talking about loving your enemies.

You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Who are the enemies of the Jews? Very simple answer. Everyone who is a non-Jew, who is a gentile considered unclean, considered outside of the Covenant with God, considered not the chosen people, and the worst of the worst were the Roman, because of Romans who were gentiles, who were the inferiors as it were spiritually were now ruling over them with an iron foot and extracting huge toll in money and resources. And worse than the Romans were their own countrymen who were basically Jewish tax collectors to whom the Romans had subcontracted the task of collecting taxes. But on top of the taxes they collected, they collected a whole bunch of other taxes which they basically went in the pockets of these unscrupulous tax collectors. So tax collectors were also very much hatred as a corrupt group of people who were the traitors to their own nation. The chief slogan of the Qumran community who lived near the Dead Sea was love the brothers but hate the outsiders.

So this disdain and hatred for the people who are non-Jews, who were gentiles continued through much of Jewish history and here we have Maimonides who actually is a Jewish philosopher and he writes

As for Gentiles with whom we are not at war...their death must not be caused, but it is forbidden to save them if they are at the point of death; if, for example, one of them is seen falling into the sea, he should not be rescued, for it is written: 'neither shalt thou stand against the blood of thy fellow'—but [a Gentile] is not thy fellow"

So they don't even regard the fellow gentiles as human beings. If they were to fall to the deaths let them be. And here's Mishnah Torah which writes,

one who murders a Jew is subject to the death penalty, one who murders a non-Jew is not

Recently the chief rabbi of Israel said

Immigrants from former Soviet Union are 'religion hating gentiles'.

You see this attitude of hatred and disdain has carried on through centuries. When the Jew reads the command to love their neighbors in Leviticus 19:18, they interpret neighbor as referring only to Jews. So who is my neighbor? When someone asked Jesus this question in Luke chapter 10, he tells

them a story of the Good Samaritan. As you know the story, everybody left the poor Jewish guy at the side of road to die and the person who actually helped him was his enemy. The Samaritan who hated Jews in the first place. So the question is cast in this particular passage, who is my enemy, is who is my neighbor. They are all one and the same. Look at the command. Verse 44

I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.

These are parallel expressions. You are going to God and you're asking God to praying for reconciliation for love. Striving for that person your enemy to be the kind of person God wants them to be. You're not just praying so that you feel better and you don't feel quite as being guilty but you actually pray for them to be touched by the love of God. Now there are two reasons why we are to love our enemies of all people, people whom we should hate actually we should love. Well, it is because, the first reason, verse 45

So that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

You see when we love our enemies, we start behaving and prove ourselves that we are actually sons of God who is in heaven, of the supernatural creator of the entire universe we are actually sons. How do you prove that? Well you prove that because he makes a sun rise on evil and good, sends rain on the just and unjust, so irregardless of whether you're a sinner, whether you're righteous, whether you did good things or your ex-murderer or you are crazy person, God gives you rain, God gives you food. That is what God is like.

So God loves everyone and so therefore if you are his son it would be highly irregular. If you call yourself son of God that you're acting in a way that's completely different in a way your father acts, your father feeds everybody you only feed your friends. So that's the first reason. You need to be consistent with who you actually are. Alright.

If you look at Matthew chapter 5 verse 9,

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.

See the sons of God are the one who restore Shalom. Shalom is peace. Shalom is being rightly related to each other. So blessed are these people who seek to love their enemies and bring them into the right relationship. Now there is a second reason why we are to love our neighbors. Verse 46,

For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

What he is saying that if you look at yourself, there's no difference between you and your enemy. The Jewish attitude, they love their friends, they hate their enemies, they hate the tax collectors, they hate the gentiles. You know, if you go and look at the local triad group in Chowkit Road, the triad leaders will love their own people, the drug dealers will love their own people, what difference is it? We are talking about if you have that kind of narrow love, it is actually prejudicial love. It is called self-love. Loving only your friends and the people who are nice to you or your family is basically loving yourself. Loving your enemies breaks through the self-barrier into divine space, suddenly you are acting like the Son of God. Verse 20 of Matthew 5 says

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

It is a very important issue. If your righteousness is like that of the Pharisees and you only love Jews and everybody else doesn't get your love, you might want a question whether you actually are a child of God. You see, if you look in the gospels Jesus broke through those barriers of race, of caste. Jesus was a friend of tax collectors. In fact he already had one as his disciple. He was concerned with gentiles. He ministered to gentiles. He actually healed gentiles as well. When we are talking about loving others even we are not even talking about loving our enemies, even loving people within our own family, within the church is not easy. The closer I get to someone who is sinful, who is just as sinful as I am, I am going to gonna hurt them, as they're gonna hurt me.

We are like porcupines, the long quills. The closer you get to each other the more you're gonna be poking them. You might have miss saying hello to someone and you walk past and they think they ignored you or you said a joke in that joke actually hurt that person's feelings. You go to a cell group start off lovey-dovey, enjoy your supper and your conversations and after a while somebody said something or did something and then you start to cool off and before long you tell the cell group leader, well I gotta find another group somewhere else or I heard the church spiritualize your reasoning, down the road is better teaching, better Gamma, I'm gonna go there.

So sometimes it's difficult. What about across racial barriers. During Jesus time it was the gentiles, it was the romans. For us it's people of different races; Malays or foreign workers or people in power even homosexuals and we have got all these barriers against love. The whole idea of Jesus new community, the kingdom of God is a Shalom community where all the relationships have been restored by the power of God's love but we don't do that. We want to hang on to ourselves. We want justice. We want to preserve our own rights and our dignity but God looks to the justice for the other person's good. God is prepared to pay the price for justice. He died for someone else and he's asking us today to sacrifice, to pay the price, to establish relationships, not to retaliate but instead look to the other person's good and in that way loving our enemies we forge a new community with the transforming love of Jesus Christ.

Let's look at the final verse Matthew 5 verse 48

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

This verse looks absolutely shocking. We are asked to be perfect but actually if you look this verse actually comes from the Old Testament. It is a parallel of Leviticus 19:2b

Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.

New the word perfect in Greek is 'telios'. It has a range of meanings. It can be whole, complete, mature or perfect, but it does not mean sinless. You know why because in 1 John 1:8 John tells us,

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us.

So obviously it cannot be sinless. You see Pharisaic righteousness was actually a perversion of the

Lord Torah. It was outward. It was legalistic, often done out of fear. Jesus could have used the Leviticus passage and said holy as he was holy but instead he used the word 'telios' complete because he was trying to counter the one-sided superficial legalistic righteousness of the Jews. He is trying to counter that and contrast that with the true righteousness, which is basically inside, as well as outside. You see outside they won't commit adultery in their actions, but they'll commit adultery in their hearts. They would not kill outside but they would have anger and hate inside. Outside doesn't match inside. Their righteousness was incomplete and superficial and hypocritical.

True Christianity is whole and complete like the father's love. It is not a prejudicial superficial love for show. It is a thorough transforming love. So in all these six areas, in integrity, loving your enemies, with non-retaliation and anger, lust and divorce and marriage, Jesus is asking us to be complete, to be perfect, to be complete in and out this as the father is perfect. This sort of righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. This kind of wholesome complete perfect righteousness is the one there's a sign that you are in the kingdom of God and having salvation. This kind of righteousness will enable us to be the salt and light of the world.

There is no finer modern-day example of someone crossing the racial divide and loving their enemies than Dr Martin Luther King, civil rights reformer as well as Baptist minister. This is what they wrote of him

If any man knew the meaning of suffering, King knew. House bombed; living day by day for thirteen years under constant threats of death; maliciously accused of being a Communist; falsely accused of being insincere ...; stabbed by a member of his own race; slugged in a hotel lobby; jailed over twenty times; occasionally deeply hurt because friends betrayed him—and yet this man had no bitterness in his heart, no rancour in his soul, no revenge in his mind; and he went up and down the length and breadth of this world preaching non-violence and the redemptive power of love.'

In our own country we can no further than the courageous Irene Fernandez, who braved her own safety cross racial boundaries and went into camps where illegal immigrants were held and reported much to a consternation of authorities of the abuse and suffering of these poor people. She championed their cause and for her efforts she was hounded by the authorities, had a 13 year civil case and law criminal case against her and finally she was acquitted after 13 years.

And what about Pastor Raymond Koh. Out of the love that Jesus given him in his heart dedicated his life to helping the poor irrespective of race and in the end he disappeared. So today it's a very sober lesson. We have trouble loving our own family, church members, much less enemies and the only way we can do this is when you have a transforming power within our hearts and this power is the Holy Spirit, but we need to allow the Holy Spirit to move in our hearts, to melt our hearts, allow us to see the good in people, to learn to love people rather than to look at all the things that they've done wrong against us. Sometimes we hold that injustices too close to our hearts. We have to learn to let go in order that the spirit can work through us, to allow us to love our enemies. This is a great challenge but this is where the rubber meets the road. This is the sign of a true disciple of Jesus Christ. May God give his spirit to help us love and show that we are his true disciples by the way we love.