**Loving Them**



**Matthew 5:43–48**

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I want you to think about your first enemy. Who was the first person who got under your skin, the first person that did something to you and they became your enemy? Maybe you were on the playground, maybe it was in grade school. As I racked my brain, I went back to a gymnasium in Buchanan, Tennessee we went to for my granddad’s class reunion. Me and my sister found a basketball, found a gym, and two other guys who wanted to play. Now, I’m a pretty easy-going guy. I don’t have a lot of enemies, so it was kind of strange when this guy started coming at me. He started calling me names, saying stuff I haven’t heard before. He was just not a nice kid. When two kids from Kentucky, a boy and a girl, beat two guys from Tennessee who are bigger than them, things don’t go well. So as we win the game, all of a sudden I feel myself get shoved onto the floor. I looked up and there was this guy who was twice my size and I’m like what’s about to happen next? Before I even react, I see a basketball fly through the air, hit the kid straight in the nose, and blood just gushes out. I track where the ball came from and I see my sister standing there with that ‘you don’t mess with my little brother’ look on her face. That was my first real encounter with there being people who don’t like me. Maybe you have encountered that at some point in your life. Maybe this week you ran into an enemy––somebody who didn’t like you, somebody who said something. They maligned you, they made a comment about you, or they said something they hurt you. Maybe it was little, maybe it was big, or maybe you have like an archenemy. Every time you go to work, that guy is just there. Every time you go to that place, that girl is just there. She’s always saying that thing that gets under your skin. You just know she doesn’t like you and you don’t really like her either. You know that person, right? Enemies are pretty common. Think about all the movies that you watch. There is always a villain. There is always an enemy. Batman would be weird without the Joker, right? Star Wars would be weird without Darth Vader. Imagine watching Jaws without the shark­­––it would be a weird movie, right? It would just be a guy driving around in a boat because the shark makes the movie. The Lion King without Scar would be weird. Disney even tried to do a movie without a villain, Encanto, but then there’s that Bruno guy that you can’t talk about who is supposed to be the villain, but he doesn’t end up being the villain. So, we just can’t get away from there being villains or enemies––there are bad people in our cultures everywhere. It’s just a natural part life.

Jesus is going to stand in front of a group of people who knew enemies. They had enemies. They faced enemies. Jesus is going to say here is what you do to your enemies––you love them, and you pray for them. And not prayers like, “God rain down fire on them.” You pray good prayers, prayers of goodness for their sake. So, what do you do with your enemy? What do you do to those people that are absolutely against you? Well, you love them, and that’s what we are going to see today through this Scripture. It’s not going to be easy but it’s what Christ commands us to do.

**Scripture**

***“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”***

Earlier in chapter 5, Jesus told us when it comes to the Kingdom of God you have to have a righteousness that is greater than the scribes and the Pharisees. So what is a greater righteousness than the scribes and the Pharisees? Well, the scribes and the Pharisees were really good at keeping the Law. Those outward laws were easily conformed to, but the problem was that the scribes and the Pharisees didn’t obey it from their hearts. So, Jesus gave several commands, several laws––you have heard do not murder, you have heard do not commit adultery, but then He says it’s not enough to just not to break those laws. When it comes to do not murder, the root of that is anger, so don’t even be angry at your brother, don’t even call your brother a fool. When it comes to adultery, it’s not just don’t step out on your spouse, it’s don’t even have lust in your heart. Jesus is going to the inside of us. He wants a greater righteousness. He wants to us to be perfect like the heavenly Father is perfect, which means whole. From the inside out, we worship God. We have a devotion to God that is not just our performance, but it is inward conformity because the Holy Spirit is doing something in us to make us into the type of people that God wants us to be. So, that’s the pattern. He quotes the law and then goes underneath to tell us how we really should respond to that law.

So, Jesus is going to do that again but a little bit differently. He’s going to quote the Old Testament, but He is only going to quote part of a law and then He is going to quote something that is not even a law at all. Why does Jesus break the pattern? So, here is what Jesus says, “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’” Now, you have to understand that this is a people, the Jewish people, who have the Torah. They have the Old Testament. They have the laws, but they also had teachers of the laws. They had the scribes and the Pharisees who would tell them what the law said. Sometimes, the scribes and the Pharisees would tell them only part of the law, or sometimes misinterpret and tell them things that weren’t even laws at all, and that would be an example right here. So Jesus is reaching out to this group of people and says here is what you have heard, here is what your teachers are telling you, “You shall love your neighbor…” For them, here is the rule: you need to love your neighbor. Now, we know that’s not the end of the law, right? That’s not the full commandment. In fact, we as Jesus’ people, probably know how to end that commandment––“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” This makes it a lot harder because if you are going to love somebody, you are like okay, I will love them, I’m just not going to do mean things to them. But when you say love them like yourself…whoa, that’s a deeper love because I know how much I love me, and I have to love you like I love me. That brings a lot of freight to it. I have really got to love you well if I’m going to love you like I love myself.

So, the scribes and the Pharisees would have taught only part of it. Look at the last part of verse 43, “You have heard it said, ‘You shall love your neighbor **and hate your enemy**.” Now, this is not an Old Testament law. The 11th commandment is not thou shalt hate thou enemy. God never said to hate your enemy, but this was a common teaching among the Jews to love your neighbor, hate your enemy. So, if you were a little kid growing up in a Jewish household, you would just know that you love your neighbor and you hate your enemy. Now, we can understand where the scribes and the Pharisees would have got some Bible to teach this, because when you look at the Old Testament there are plenty of places to go that would *seem* like we should hate our enemy. For instance, Psalm 97:10 says this, “O you who love the Lord, hate evil! He preserves the life of the saints; He delivers them from the hand of the wicked.” So, if we love the Lord, we have to hate evil. Well, it was really easy if you were a scribe or a Pharisee to start teaching what that means is you need to hate evil people––those people are against God so you need to hate them, they are the enemies, they are the wicked; therefore, love your neighbor and hate those evil people who are against the Lord. But even in this text, it is not commanding us to hate evil people; it’s commanding us to hate evil. Jesus is going to argue that you can actually hate evil and also love the person who is acting evil, and that is what Jesus is going to command us to do.

So, here is the normal thing: love your neighbor. Now for the Jew, the question is who is my neighbor? They actually asked Jesus this in Luke’s account, and Jesus tells a whole story about a Samaritan. What Jesus reveals in that story is your neighbor is anybody near you. Your neighbor is actually everyone, which was different than what the Jews understood. The Jews understood their neighbor was their fellow Jew. They are the ones who look like them, think like them, act like them, share the same worldview as them, have the same history as them, and have the same celebrations as them. They go to temple together––these are their neighbors––this is the family. Therefore, as a Jewish boy or girl, you are called to love the other Jewish boys and girls. So, this is what you taught in your family, love your fellow people, those who are like you. So then, if you kind of spell that out, what does that mean for everybody else? What does that mean for the people that are not like us? What about those Gentiles? What about those Romans? Well, those are enemies; therefore, you should hate them. That is the normal way to do life for the first century group of people Jesus is talking to. He is swimming in that culture.

As we think about bridging this command to love our enemies, we can understand that we swim in a very similar culture, because we also have us, and we have them. We have that category of what about us? Well, us are the people who think like us, believe like us, have a worldview like us, often look like us, and do life like us. That is us, and then you have them. Who are them? They are the ones that think differently, who act differently, and have a different worldview. That is them. We are us. So what is normal in our culture is to love us and hate them. What’s the problem with the world? Them. Who is messing everything up? Them. So we create categories of us and them, and then we swim in a culture that celebrates, love us, hate them. So Jesus is talking to a group of people who are not much different than us. Just go on social media and pick a side and you will see it’s us and them. That’s how we do life, and that is how they did life in the first century. But now, Jesus is going to come in that moment and speak a new word, a different word. Here is what you are called to do as a follower of Jesus, as someone who comes into the Kingdom of God––there is a new way to love and that is don’t just love us, also love them. And the reason you love them, whatever that category is in your mind, whoever the ‘them’ are, the enemy––you love them because you know Him.

Jesus goes on to say in verse 44, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.” So I think first He goes very personal, “I say to you”…and I know what you say to each other––love neighbor, love fellow Jews who think like you act like you believe like you, love you, welcome you to their house, you welcome them back.That’s normal love. And then, you have those enemies, those Romans, those Gentiles, those pagan worshiping Ephesians, who are the crazy ones, and you are saying they are enemies…we are not going to love them, welcome them, serve them, befriend them, We are going to push them aside. If we bump in them, we are going to wash ourselves off. It’s us versus them. Jesus said I want you to love them. I want you to love your enemies. Now, these are the group people who had some enemies. They have probably been maligned that very day. They have probably been beaten by a Roman soldier that very day. There are some things that happened to them in court that very day where they got wronged just because they are a Jew living in a place that is occupied by Roman rulers. They had enemies, they knew enemies, and Jesus says put the enemy in your mind and this is what I am commanding you to do––love them. Love them. That’s tough, right? Somebody who is not loving you, who is not kind to you, you are to return evil with good, as Jesus has just spoken.

Then Jesus says not only to love your enemies, but pray for those who persecute you. Now, this is an audience that knew persecution. They felt persecution. They have suffered persecution, and Jesus is saying when somebody persecutes you, when they harm you, your reaction is to pray for them. What is prayer? It is going to God on their behalf, praying that God would intervene for their good, for their redemption, to love them. You are calling God to also love your enemy like you are loving your enemy. I know it sounds bizarre and we are not used to this because it’s not common. This is uncommon. This is abnormal. This is gospel type of love; love that loves our enemies. But I want to call your attention to say this is exactly what Jesus did. This is how Jesus loved. For instance, Romans 5:8 tells us, “…but God shows His love for us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.” Verse 10, “For while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son…” Jesus loved His enemies. Who were His enemies? You and I. We were enemies of God. We didn’t obey Him. We didn’t love Him. We didn’t live life His way. We committed high treason against the God of Heaven. We loved ourselves. We lived our own ways. We broke every law we could imagine. We were His enemies. God looked at His enemies, Christ looked at you as His enemy, and while you were still a sinner, while you were still an enemy, while you weren’t loving Him, you weren’t liking Him, you weren’t coming to Him, He loved you and died for you. So when Jesus says love your enemies, He is not giving you an idea that He did not live out. He loved His enemies.

Not only did Jesus love His enemies but He also prayed for those who persecuted Him. Luke 23 says, “And Jesus said, ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.’ And they cast lots to divide His garments.” These are the soldiers who just nailed spikes in His hands. These are the soldiers who going to pierce His side. These are the soldiers who are killing Him. I don’t know how much more of an enemy and a persecutor you can get than the people putting you on the cross. What is Jesus’ reaction? He looks at guys who could care less about Him, so much so that they are asking who is going to get His clothing. They are playing a game to get His clothes, and Jesus looks at them and has compassion on them and He prays for them. He doesn’t say Father go get them. No, what does He say? “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” Forgive them! I mean, can you imagine that moment? Jesus is going through torture, beaten, crowns of thorn on His head, about to be nailed to a cross, and He looked at the guys doing this and says forgive them because I love them. So Christ calls us to do something that He Himself did.

So when Jesus says love your enemies, what kind of love is He talking about? Well, there are four different types of love in the Bible that you probably know. There’s friendship love, there’s family love, there’s romantic love, and then there’s that that one category of love that we know is the Greek word, **agapē**. Agapē is that unconditional God-like love. It loves something that is often unlovable, that doesn’t deserve love, but it picks an object and says I’ am going to love you, despite you, and I am going to give everything to love you well. James Montgomery Boyce says this about agapē love, “It loves even when the object of the love is hateful or unlovely.” Try loving somebody who is hateful towards you. Have you ever tried to do that? That’s hard. It’s hard to say I love you, let’s hug, when someone is yelling at you, right? But that’s what agapē love does. Boyce continues to say, “You might say that it is love for no reason at all, or love even when there are ample reasons to discourage it. It is a Godlike love.” That’s how Jesus calls us to love our enemies––not because they are family, not because they are friends, not because there’s an attraction there. No, there’s probably nothing in you that says you love this person, but you see them as an image bearer of God. You see them as someone with value, dignity, and worth, and you have compassion so you extend a Godlike love to them. While they are doing everything they can not to be loved by you, you go and love them. That’s what Jesus says to do to your enemies, “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute.”

Not only Jesus does this, but He tells us that His Father also does this. Verse 45 tells us the reason you love your enemies, the reason you pray for those who persecute you. For this grand purpose, “…so that you may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven.” In other words, that is what God does––and as you do that, you are going to show yourself to be a son or a daughter of God. You are going to show how your Dad loves, not only loving those people who deserve it, but loving the people who absolutely don’t deserve it. Those who are against me, who malign me, who ridicule me, who seek my ill; I am going to seek their good. Why? Because that’s what God did with me and I am going to show them how my Dad loves. I’m going to be called a son or daughter of God. Jesus continues in verse 45, “…for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and since rain on the just and on the unjust.” Why does Jesus call us to love all people, not just our friends, not just our kind, not just our ‘us,’ but all people? Because God loves all people, the just and the unjust, the good and the bad. Jesus is telling us how we know God loves all people––it is because God is kind, He is good to all people because He showers what theologians call His common grace on all people.

This morning, it finally rained. It’s been a long time. We have been praying for rain. It’s finally trickling some rain down, which is really good, but do you know what’s really neat about the rain? You can’t drive down the road and see who are believers and who are unbelievers. In other words, it’s not like there’s a shower on those who love God and then it’s drought on those who don’t love God. God isn’t like, no rain for you, no sun for you because you don’t love me. It’s not like all the Jesus followers have tans and everybody else doesn’t because the sun doesn’t shine on them. No, God says, I shine my sun on all people. I let it rain on all people. I bring goodness. I bring common grace to all people. God gives good gifts not just to the people who love and follow Him, but He gives the enjoyments of life in a lot of ways to all people…”For God so loved the **world** that He gave His only **Son**…” So, even though people are God’s enemies, God loves even His enemies. Now, of course, there is difference in covenantal love and it’s love towards those who are His, but in a real way, God has a love for the world and He is showering His common grace on the world. That’s why Jesus said He is making the sunrise and the rainfall on all people. He is doing good to all people, which defines in a way exactly what kind of love we are talking about. The love is that we do good to all people, that we seek the wellbeing for all people. We want the best for all people no matter if they are in the ‘us’ category or the ‘them’ category. Why? Because we are sons after our Father, and our Father makes the rain fall on the good and the bad, the just and the unjust, those who are His kids and those who are His enemies, God does good to all.

So, if we are talking about loving everyone, loving our enemies, what does it mean to love? That is a question we have to ask. If Jesus doesn’t love our enemies, what does that mean to love? So, we have what the Bible says about love and what culture says about love. But we need to go to our culture for a moment so that we don’t misunderstand what Jesus saying. When it comes to our culture, what does it mean to love our enemy? What does it mean to love people who are different than us, who don’t agree with us? Well, our culture would say to be loving is to be affirming. What that means is if somebody has a different view than you, a different lifestyle that you might actually believe is wrong, what you have to do is affirm that person and say, “Whatever you want to do, however you want to live your life, that’s good for you. I’m great with it. Let’s just settle that everyone’s right, no one’s wrong, do whatever you want.” That’s being affirming. That’s what culture would say is love. So then, what would hate be in our culture? Well, it would be non-affirming. It would be actually telling someone no, I disagree with this lifestyle choice, or I disagree with your position on this thing. To be non-affirming would actually be hate, and actually, if you are not-affirming, that hate, those words you might speak, is actually violence against other people. So, we have a cultural view where if you want to be loving, affirm everyone, and if you want to hate, then be non-affirming, and non-affirming is actually violence.

That is the culture we are in. So, is Jesus asking us, when we say love our enemies, to affirm all people in whatever they want to do? Well, let’s think about how God loves, even in this text. We see God’s love is being kind and good and seeking the good for all people regardless if they are his children or if they are enemies. He is giving rain, He is giving sun, He is giving goodness to everyone. He is loving them in that way. God is not loving everyone by affirming every lifestyle or action. In fact, Jesus, who tends to be a little offensive at times, when He came to Earth the very first thing He said is the Kingdom of God is at hand, repent, and believe in the gospel. Repent means to turn because you are wrong. He didn’t say to a certain group of people, you are wrong; He said, everybody, everywhere is wrong in a lot of ways. Everybody needs to repent…everybody needs to turn and come to me because I am the way, the truth, and the life. So, God’s love is not to just saying you are cool with whatever, do whatever you want. No, God actually calls people to repent, to turn from sin. So, we can be loving towards people while disagreeing with them. Culture would say you can’t do that, so as Christians we have to show that we can.

Now, what does that look like? It’s not necessarily on Facebook; it’s in real relationships with real people. Those we disagree with, we are befriending, loving, having over and spending time with, sharing meals with, and welcoming, and we are actually saying I disagree with you, but guess what? You are an image bearer of God. You have value, dignity, and worth, and I love you. God made you. Christ died for you. I am going to come and love and serve, and I want your good. I want good for you even though we might disagree, even though you might come at me, I want good and I’m here to serve and love you. That is what Christ is calling us to do.

Again, normal life, normal love is we have an ‘us’ category and a ‘them’ category––love us, love your neighbor, hate them. They are the enemies. Hate the other people. And Jesus saying no, if you want to come to the Kingdom of God, you have to love your enemies. Love those people who would disagree. Love those people who would come at you because that’s how Christ loves, that’s how the Father loves, and if you know Him, you have to love them. That’s a connection. If you don’t love them, then you probably don’t really know Him, because that verse we read of Romans 5:8 about Christ dying for his enemies, in verse 6 it says that God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. If you are a Christian, the love of God has been poured into your heart; therefore, it leaks out in the way you love not just your friends, not just your people, not just the ones who think like you and act like you, but you have love towards everyone just like Christ did and just like His Father does. So, we love everyone, not just us, we love them.

Now, I think Jesus has been talking personally about your enemy––the people who come at you, the people who don’t like you, the people who are going to malign you, talk bad about you, and harm you. Love and pray for those people. But then, I think Jesus going to broaden the category a little bit to not just those personal enemies you have, but about those groups of people that you see as enemies. What about those groups of people that you see as the problem? What do you do against those people? How do you relate to those groups of people? Now, why do I say that Jesus broadens out a little bit? Because He is going to use two buzzwords: tax collector and Gentile. Now, when we hear that we are thinking is it bad to be on the IRS? Like, I mean, I don’t like taxes either. But when the Jews who are hearing the Sermon on the Mount hear this term ‘tax collector’ in this next verse, they are going to get angry and mad because they hated tax collectors because often tax collectors were fellow Jews. Like, your uncle wanted to make a little money, so he turned to the dark side. He joined Rome and now he’s a Roman employer, or he is employed by Rome, so his job is to come to your house and take taxes from your dad. And he’s not just getting what he’s supposed to; he’s getting more. So now, your dad is broke and your uncle is rich. Why? Because he abandoned God and joined Rome. They could not stand tax collectors. They were the enemy. They were the worst of the worst. Well, almost…there was this other category called Gentiles. They were the worst of the worst. I mean, these Gentiles ate pig flesh and they worshiped in temples of sexual morality! They were not pure. If you ran into them, it would defile you.

So, you grew up as a kid there were two groups of people that you hate: tax collectors and Gentiles. In Jesus’ sermon, He is going to use both those categories and He is basically going to say you are no better than them––those who you think are the enemy? You are just like them. You, too, are the enemy. Let’s see how Jesus does this. It’s not going to shock us like it would them, but we are going to have to kind of put ourselves in their shoes and feel the shock for just a little bit. Here’s what Jesus says, verse 46, “For, if you love those who love you, what reward do have?” (Again, that is common love, love your neighbor and hate your enemy) and then with a sting, Jesus says, “Do not even the tax collectors do the same?” People are mad now. We aren’t that mad, but these people are mad, because what He said, the way you love your neighbor and hate your enemy, you are doing just as good as the tax collectors. The tax collectors were the enemy. The tax collectors were the ones who were what was wrong with the world. The tax collectors were to be blamed for everything. And Jesus saying you are just like them in the way you love. You are like the enemy in the way you love. The ones who you think are the enemy? You are actually acting just like them. See, Jesus to get under their skin, make them angry so that their hearts will be exposed so they will see their need for true gospel love. And it’s not just loving those who love you; it’s loving your enemies.

Jesus goes on. He doesn’t stop there. Verse 47 says, “And if you greet only your brothers, [the Jews––those who go to temple with you, who worship like you, same worldview, worship the same God––if you just welcome and share meals, and go to church with all the people that are just like you] what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?” So, He is basically saying when it comes to love, you are loving like tax collectors and Gentiles do. That would have been extremely offensive because they would have thought they were way above the Gentiles and the tax collectors. They were the ones getting it right. Jesus says no, you are actually getting it wrong. If you only love the ‘us’ category, then you are no different than everybody else. His question is what more are you doing than others? The application is you should be doing more. Why should you be doing more than others? Because you know Jesus. Because you have a relationship with Him, you should be doing more than others, which is you don’t just love us, you love them. You love those who are unlike you.

Now, this doesn’t sting us, and I think we need to be stung just a little bit, so it’s going to get a little awkward. I’m just going to tell you that’s how Jesus wants it to be. The sermon is supposed to be awkward. Just know you might feel a little bit of tension because when we see our culture, I think we also have this tension. We have us versus them, and I think one of the places this plays out the most is in politics, because politics has kind of filled that void of where religion used to be. We were all sort of religious, but now we are less. Politics has become the supreme thing that we all have to really, really be passionate about. That’s not necessarily a bad thing to be passionate about politics, but what happens is we separate categories in us versus them. If you are on the right, who is the enemy? It’s the left. If you are on the left, who is the enemy? It’s the right. If you are conservative, the enemy is the progressive, or the liberal. If you are progressive or liberal, the enemy is the conservatives. Whatever side of the aisle you are on, whatever your beliefs are, the other side is the enemies. It is not us anymore; it’s us versus them. So, Jesus would probably say something like this to us, “If you only welcome Republicans to your table, then, you are no different than the Democrats.” Or, He would turn the tables, “If you only welcome Democrats to your table, you are no different than the Republicans.” “If you only love conservatives, you are no different than the progressives.” “If you only love progressives, you are no different than the conservatives.” You see, He is trying to get us to see that we identify in some way within an ‘us’ group. And when we identify with an ‘us’ group, we make up this narrative that every problem we have in our life is ‘them.’ So if you are on the right, what’s wrong with the world? It’s really easy, the left. Everything that is wrong with the world is the left. Every problem in my life, I can blame it on the left; therefore, I hate them. I absolutely hate the left. If you are on the left, every problem in your life is the right. So you hate the right because the right is what is wrong with the world. They are crazy! And the right says no, they are crazy!

See, to the Jew, the tax collectors and the Gentiles, they are the problem. What is the common law among the Jews? Love us; hate them. What is common in our culture? Love us; hate them. And we have all sorts of different ‘us’ groups and tribal groups, and we get together and then we make the narrative that says that’s them, and you have to hate them if you are going to be with us. This is how we live life and it’s normal, it’s common. It’s just what we do. Jesus saying this should not be in the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of God, there should be believers who are both donkeys and elephants who come together and disagree about fundamental things but also love one another, who care for another, who share meals together, who share friendship with one another. Why? Because there is something deeper than just these things that divide us. It’s called our humanity. We are image bearers of God with value, dignity, and worth. Therefore, we should love not just us but also them. That’s what Jesus trying to get us to do. Have a love that is deeper, a love that is greater than the scribes and the Pharisees. It’s a greater righteousness. It’s a perfect love like the Father’s love, a love that doesn’t just love us and hate them, but a love that loves them too. Why? Because we know Him.

Now, this doesn’t mean we don’t disagree with people. This doesn’t mean we don’t have heated conversations. But through that, we love the people we disagree with. I will give you real practical example. If you are prolife, what do you do in a post-Dobbs world? We just had a ruling, Roe V Wade, overturned because the Dobbs case where now abortion goes back to the states to decide. So, what do you do if you are prolife? Well for one, you should celebrate because that’s a really good thing. That was a great victory, so you should be happy and thankful to God. You should be celebrating if you are prolife. And, you should now go to your state level and work at it so that abortion will become unimaginable. And then, you should go to your local pregnancy care centers and seek to help those women who might be seeking that choice. You are loving people on the ground level. So in one sense, that’s what you do. But in another sense, do you know what you also do? You love people who are pro-choice. You love them. You seek their good, you befriend them, you share meals with them, and you celebrate the things that happen in their family. You want good for them. You want the sun to rise and the rain to fall on them. You want good to be done to them. You want them to become your friend. And guess what? You can disagree with them. You can have heated conversations with them, but through that difference you love them as an image bearer of God who has value, dignity, and worth because Christ loves them. God loves them. Jesus died for them and He calls to extend the same love to them. It’s not us versus them; it’s I love them. Why? Because they are my neighbor too. They are not my enemy; they are my neighbor. That is what Jesus trying to get us to see. It’s not just love your enemy; it’s get rid of the category enemy. Go love your neighbor, and every person is your neighbor, no matter how they believe, no matter what they do, love them well, do good to them. That’s what we are called to do.

See, in our different areas of life, we all have an ‘us’ category in that we think this certain way, we have this worldview. So we gather people that also share that worldview, that belief, and that lifestyle. And then, we make a ‘them’ category, and often we hate them and we love us. Jesus says it can’t be in the Kingdom of God. In the Kingdom of God, we are the people who love us and we also love them. Why? Because we know Him. And because we know Him, we love them. I will give just one example that I saw play out as we close. There’s a book that we read on audio on our trip and it’s called Seeking Allah and Finding Jesus. I highly recommend it to you. There’s this guy named Nabeel from a Muslim family, and they immigrated here. He grew up in the States and ended up going to a university where he meets this guy named David, and David is a Christian. Nabeel is a Muslim, and this is right when 911 happened. This is the heat of like, if these two groups shouldn’t get along it’s right now. Well, David met Nabeel and David loved Nabeel. They became fast friends. They begin to do everything together, share class together, and even been roommates. All through the book, they are having serious disagreements, heated disagreements. They are pleading their case––Nabeel on why Allah is true, and David on why Jesus is true. I mean, they are debating heatedly, but also, all throughout it both are loving the other. Why? It was because David didn’t seem to Nabeel as a different person, as some other in a ‘them’ category and himself as an ‘us’ category. He didn’t see it like I can’t love ‘them’ because I’m ‘us.’ No, he saw him as his neighbor and he loved him and befriended him, and they became best friends. Over the course of about four years, as you can probably guess, (the book is Seeking All Finding Jesus) Nabeel does find Jesus, but it wasn’t because of some lock-tight argument. There were a lot of arguments all throughout. It was because David loved him well. A guy that to some would be like those two people, a Muslim and Christian, surely can’t be best friends. I mean, that’s us and them. That’s them and us. Do you know what David did? He did what Jesus did. He loved Nabeel. Why? Because Nabeel is an image bearer of God. Nabeel has value, dignity, and worth, no matter what he believes, no matter how he behaves. We have to see that all these categories that we make; it’s not us and them, we are all ‘we.’ We are all neighbors, we are all humanity, and God commands us to love everyone well. That doesn’t mean conceding our points. That doesn’t mean we are not speaking the truth. No, we speak the truth in love. We speak the truth, but it’s met with real relationship, real hugs, real meals, real friendship, real celebrations, real trips, real time together. Why? Because we don’t see us and them, we see we, and we love even our enemies, even those who do bad to us because Jesus commands us to do so. So Christians, we can’t just love us, we have to love them, because when we love them, we testify that we know Him.