

ST JOHNS BUCKLANDS BEACH
SERMON FOR SUNDAY 23 FEBRUARY 2014
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CONGREGATIONAL MEMBER

Theme: Love Disarms
Focus Text: Matthew 5: 38-48

Summary of Delivery:

- Part of the Sermon on the Mount
- Matthew's Gospel – the teaching gospel, written by a Jew for the Jews, who believed they were the preferred race.
- Matthew's aim was to convince them that Jesus was the Messiah, and that the Old Testament (OT) prophecies received their fulfilment in Jesus.
- Jesus did not come to destroy the OT laws but he was extremely critical of the extent to which the Scribes and Pharisees had fallen short of their own teaching and the ideal of what they should be. They thought they only had to act "correctly".
- Jesus gave a series of illustrations often beginning with "you have heard it said" to show that God is concerned with our hearts, not just our actions. The rabbis approached the OT as if its purpose was to regulate behaviour.
- Jesus believed the purpose of the OT regulations and principles was to reveal God's moral character and to call men and women to be like Him. "You shall be perfect (Greek word *teleios*) just as your Father in heaven is perfect." – Matthew 5: 48.
- Therefore, the issue in the "eye for eye", or "tit for tat" principle was not what repayment for injury one has the right to demand, rather the inappropriateness or revenge when forgiveness is called for.
- The issue in the call to "love one's neighbour" was not distinguishing whom one might lawfully hate but was rather, being like God and seeking to love, even one's enemies. Non resentment and non retaliation is to be the conduct which distinguishes the Christian in their personal lives.
- It's not the dos and don'ts that the Scribes and Pharisees developed to distort the message of the OT and its commandments; it's the inner transformation which only God can work through the Holy Spirit – the love that truly disarms.
- Jesus teachings do not constitute a new or even expanded law. His point is that His listeners must decide whether to commit themselves to Him and His interpretation of God's law, or to follow the lead of the Scribes and Pharisees. They must choose and act!
- The call to love was not an innovation introduced by Jesus. In Leviticus 19: 18 we read "love your neighbour as yourself". The "new" commandment of Jesus added that you love one another "as I have loved you".
- It is true that we are to love all human beings, even our enemies, but that the love that Jesus commands goes beyond this because all in Christ are brothers and sisters, members of God's own family. Any person who through faith in Christ has God as his Father is our brother.
- As a result "by this all men will know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another".
- This love – "agape" requires us to become Godlike, reflecting God and constantly seeking the highest good. "Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect". The love that never ceases to care for others no matter what they may do – the love that disarms!