

'On earth as it is in heaven'

Churchdown Parish Weekend

Session 3: Unexpected welcome – love your enemies

'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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. 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 and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.' Matt 5.43-48.

The last of the six 'You have heard' sayings

'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy"

'Love your neighbour' is Lev 19.18 but 'hate your enemy' is not in OT at all!
and the law fulfilled?

'but I tell you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'

Not just love your enemies – but earnestly desire their greatest good!

Divine love is revealed as impartial, unbounded

1. Grace as spaciousness

'to be saved'- Hebrew root = 'to be brought into a spacious place'.

'To be saved is to be so enlarged as to have the space and spaciousness to fight lovingly with our enemies, that they may be embraced in friendship.'
Beloved enemy. Be generously angry. Jim Cotter

'Love is the space
we make for that
which is not me'
Rabbi Jonathan Sacks

2. Loving yourself?

In Matt 19.19 and 22.37 Jesus completes this Leviticus text - 'as you love yourself'.

Christians - self love or self denial?

Not preferential, self absorbed love.

Love is love wherever and to whoever is receiving it. It is gift.

'If you do not
transform your
pain, you will
always
transmit it'.
Richard Rohr

But if you do not love yourself how will you have love to give others – let alone receive the love of others?

Only give out what you have first received.

Our greatest struggle – is not to deal with our sinfulness and capacity for wrong. but to accept the love with which God chooses to love us.

This is the way of grace.

It wounds us.

3. Hospitality – indiscriminate as the sun and rain.

.... 'that you may be children of your Father in heaven'. Divine likeness again.

Not only do not hate your enemy – you are to *hate your family*. Luke 14.26

Overturning the closed world of neighbourly love.

Nepotism destroys community.

Thoughts on sharing the Peace

Living beyond the 'exchange economy'
Let there be such a thing as a free lunch.

4. Hospitality as intercession

Inter-cede = Living at the point of intersection. Standing between.

a. Hospitality as loving curiosity.

'Should it ever befall me, and it could happen today, to be a victim of the terrorism swallowing up all foreigners here, I would like my community, my church, my family, to remember that my life was given to God and to this country. ... My death, of course, will quickly vindicate those who call me naïve or idealistic, but they must know that I will be freed of a burning curiosity and, God willing, will immerse my gaze in the Father's and contemplate with him his children of Islam as he sees them ... This thank you which encompasses my entire life [and friendships] includes you too, friend of last minute, who knew not what you were doing. Yes, to you as well I address this thank you and this farewell which you envisaged.' May we meet again, happy thieves in Paradise, if it pleases God the Father of us both. Amen. Insha'Allah.'

Bro Christian's farewell letter, anticipating his violent death in *Of God's and Men*.

b. Living with a heart close to cracking. Meeting across divisions. 'It is precisely times like these that the beautiful teachings of the faith become either real or mere sentiment. More than ever the goal of a spiritual life in the Holy Land is to live with an open heart at the centre of unbearable tension.' *At the entrance to the Garden of Eden*. Yossi Halevi Klein.
cf James Allison - 'living with a heart close to cracking'.

5. Concluding the section - 'Be perfect, therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect.' **vs48**

Be imitators of God's perfection?

In Luke – 'be merciful'.

What likeness are we called to bear?

6. Grace, forgiveness and hospitality – a story from South Africa

Source: June 1999 newsletter of the Mennonite Church Peace and Justice Committee

[http://grace4life.com/SONSHIP for Africa FILES/S-12 A4.pdf](http://grace4life.com/SONSHIP_for_Africa_FILES/S-12_A4.pdf)

'How then should we live?'

Sources

Sarah Coakley. See handout 2

Yossi Kelin Halevi, *At the entrance to the Garden of Eden: A Jew's Search for Hope with Christians and Muslims in the Holy Land*, Perennial, San Francisco, 2002.

Of Gods and Men DVD

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