

## Living Lent | Day 11

# Love Your Enemy

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*Jesus said, "I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

*Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."*

**Luke 6:27–38 RSV**

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### Encouragement for the Lenten Journey:

One of these days I'm going to write a book. I've already chosen the title: Things I Wish Jesus Hadn't Said. Today's text is going to be the basis for one of the first chapters. Did you read it? Jesus said, "Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." And I haven't even gotten to the part about turning the other cheek.

Doesn't Jesus know how hard it is to love those who love me? Even those who love me disagree with me from time to time, and do things that drive me crazy. I'm giving

all my energy just to loving the ones who actually care about me. How in the world am I supposed to love my enemies?

The fact is that it is an impossible task. I cannot love my enemy. I would rather say with the Psalmist (Psalms 58:6), "Break the teeth in their mouth, O God." And yet there it is right in front of me. "Do good to those who hate you."

How do you obey Jesus when everything within you cries out to do the opposite? How do you bless the curser, or pray for the abuser?

I am reminded of two verses in the New Testament that point out our great need and potential. In John 15:5, Jesus declared, "Without me you can do nothing." And in Philippians 4:13, Paul wrote, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me." There is my answer! As I said before, I cannot love my enemy. I do not have that capacity within me. And recognizing that is the first step I must take. I am not able in my own strength.

But in Christ I have great power to do that which I could not otherwise do. Jesus allows me to love my enemies. He empowers me to do so. He lives within me. That is my only hope.

It's not just that I can't love my enemies. On my own, I don't even want to do so. But in Jesus' name I can do it. And so can you. "Love your enemies." Do good to them and pray for them. Jesus did. He calls you to do the same. And He will be with you to help you as you do.

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### ***Contributor and Contributing Body of Christ***

Shellman Bluff Baptist Church is located in Townsend, Georgia near Blackbeard Creek, and represents a thriving body of believers dedicated to sharing Christ and God's love to their Community and the world. Shellman Bluff Baptist is committed to the support of Morningstar financially and in other ways, ensuring that the mission continues to serve the Children of Georgia. Dr. Bradley S. (Brad) Butler has served as the Pastor at SBBC since December of 2019 and prior to that time, served as Pastor of Churches in Louisiana, Indiana, Michigan, and Georgia. A graduate of Shorter College, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, he is married, has two grown sons and one precious granddaughter. Pastor Brad and his wife are enjoying their time on the Bluff.

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