

Weaving the Word

Choosing to Love

November 3, 2019

Welcome to where we're learning to love to the fullest extent!



Are you fulfilling your end of the bargain?

Jesus laid out the deal at the Last Supper:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. – John 15:12 NIV [And, how is *that*? Well ...]



While we were still weak, [which was] at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person— though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die— but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. – Romans 5:6-8 ESV



God died for us weak, ungodly, sinners. Know why?

Because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. – Luke 6:35b NIV

[So] Love your enemies, do good to them ... without expecting to get anything back ... and you will be sons of the Most High, – Luke 6:35a NIV

Imagine young Yeshua (Jesus' Hebrew name) on the playground; and, an ungodly bully is harassing a weak child. **Young Yeshua, the boy with the conscience of God**, is immediately between them, His angry fist reflexively drawn back. **But, the closer He comes to striking the bully, the further away He can feel He's retreating from the actual enemy:** the opponent, the adversary, **the counter of God's love that compels the bully.**

And, **striking the bully will empower God's enemy.**

Now *He's* the victim of the bully's abuse. **But**, there's something oddly satisfying in His suffering: **He's accomplishing His goal!**

His heart drove Him to save the weak. **And He has, by taking his place.**

Yet, even as He's bullied, **His heart aches to save the other, even weaker, child – the bully – from the real enemy.** And, on the cross He finally crushes the bully of bullies.

The real enemy – ours and God's – is only conquered by love.

This isn't weakness; it's Godliness.

And, it's the only power that defeats our only enemy: *hate*.



Hate is deceptive. It loves to hide.

Hate uses those outside to worm its way inside.

Because, **the battleground is in our heart.** But, how can Jesus get those on the battleground to fully grasp what He has deeply sensed since His days on the *playground*? Only one way: show 'em.



We left Jesus in Capernaum, teaching us to learn from the Father, to believe in the Son, to “feed” on His flesh and “drink” His blood.



And sadly, but not surprisingly ...

From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. “You do not want to leave too, do you?” Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go?” – John 6:66-68a NIV



No one teaches like Jesus! While other Rabbis offer life lessons, take-home points, and religious rules, **Jesus offers absolute answers and unqualified understanding of the mostly mysterious and sealed OT.** (Is 29:11-12; Rev 5:1-9)

And all who come to the Father *with questions* are daily enabled to increase in understanding and appreciation of Jesus' NT teaching.

You have the words of eternal life. We believe [because of His miracles (Jn 14:11)] and know [because of His teachings] that you are the **Holy One of God.** [Whenever we come to something like this in the NT, we're supposed to go to the OT and seek and find and learn and grow in understanding and appreciation] Then Jesus replied, “Have I not **chosen you**, the Twelve? Yet **one of you is a devil!**” (He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray him.) – John 6:68b-71 NIV

Why did Jesus choose a devil to be a disciple?

There's a certain “beloved disciple” at the Last Supper. Like many, I assumed it was John.

But, I had a lot of trouble weaving that portion of the Gospels, until I (once again) got out of my own way, and let the verses go wherever they demanded.

If you host a dinner, and learn that a certain guest has betrayed you, yet you treat them with the same sincere kindness as the rest, **they unknowingly receive the greatest extent of your love.**

Well, **Jesus didn't love to receive love, but to shine a light on love.**

That's why He had to be rejected by *everyone* (whether ignored, denied, betrayed, persecuted, or executed). **It's the only way He could show the world the full extent of His sincere love.**

And, *that's* why He chose Judas as one of His closest friends. God doesn't *play favorites*. But, **there was one devil at dinner that night who undeniably received more grace than anyone else.**

Having loved his own ... he now showed them the full extent of his love. [By loving one who *wasn't*] The evening meal was being served, and the devil had already prompted Judas to betray Jesus ... [But, Jesus] began to wash his disciples' feet ... "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." ... For he knew who was going to betray him ... I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. ... I am not referring to all of you; I know those I have chosen. But this is to fulfill the scripture: 'He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.' [Psalm 41: "Even my close friend, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. But ... my enemy does not triumph over me." Because, when he lifted his heel, Jesus washed it! (Ps 41:5-12)] After he had said this, While they were reclining at the table eating, Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified ... "one of you is going to betray me. the hand of him who is going to betray me is with mine on the table. His disciples stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, "Surely not I?" "It is one of the Twelve, For who is greater, the one who is at the table [in the very process of betraying] or the one who serves [this beloved betrayer]? Is it not the one who is *at* the table? [Who'll gain the upper hand ... *for now*] But I am among you as one who serves. [So, choose your team: **the winning side that loses; or, the losing side that triumphs?**] One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved [and just identified as the beloved betrayer of Psalm 41], was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means." Then Judas, the one who would betray him, said, "Surely not I, Rabbi?" Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, "Lord, who is it?" Jesus answered, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. "Yes, it is you." ["It is you, (says Psalm 55) a man like myself, my companion, my close friend ... His speech is smooth as butter, yet war is in his heart" (Ps 55:13, 20-21)] As soon as Judas took the bread, Satan entered into him. [And he jumped up and headed for the door without responding to Peter (Jn 13:30)] "What you are about to do, do quickly," Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. [Because the *only one* Jesus had told was the *beloved disciple leaning against Him*] ... As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. ... When he was gone, Jesus said, You are those who have stood by me ... I confer on you a kingdom ... you may eat and drink at my table Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, and they all drank from it. – Mt 26:21-29; Mk 14:18-24; Lk 20:21-27; Jn 13:2-31 NIV

Are you standing with Him, or leaning against Him? Everyone gets His love; but only those who receive it will stand. The day Jesus chose 'em He told 'em:

Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you ... If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? [Their love] Are not even the tax collectors doing that? [Right, Matthew? "It's true. We do."] – Matthew 5:44-46 NIV

After Judas left, Jesus said:

Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. [Well that's too bad. But true. "One will scarcely die for a righteous person ... perhaps for a good person one would dare." (Rom 5:7) And that's where Jesus' love starts!] You are my friends if you do what I command. ["Loving each other as I have loved you": while they're weak, ungodly, sinners] ... You did not choose me, [and it wasn't easy getting you to receive My love] but I chose you [to love] and appointed you [as apprentices] to go and bear fruit [of love]—fruit that will last. ... [Just don't forgot the deal; it wasn't a suggestion] This is my command: Love each other. – John 15:13-17 NIV

Now, it's impossible to love your enemy for no reason.

So, do it for your Friend; and hold up your end of the bargain.

It's on faith that Jesus will one day reward you; because, He doesn't want to corrupt the motivation of an altruistic heart.



It's a lot like saving raccoons from a forest fire.

You don't expect any cooperation during the effort, let alone appreciation after.

Your motive is salvation, and rescue your reward.



Though you know going in, that it's gonna bite and claw and treat you terribly unfairly, you won't retaliate; you'll simply continue to try to gently convince 'em of your love.

And, even if you fail, the attempt is worth it.



Either way, you gladly display any wounds of honor you receive in process. Like Jesus did.

The only difference between bullies and raccoons is that raccoons are easier to love! But that's only because you're not a raccoon!

If you love those who love you, [what reward will you get?](#) (Mt 5:46)

A sure thing.

Don't limit your reward by only loving when there's a guaranteed return, or you'll cheat yourself out of the actual greatest love: Jesus' selfless love, in and through you.

Being God, Jesus had everything to lose and nothing to gain ... except the reward of loving all of us weak, ungodly, raccoons. So, which way are you leaning?