



October 25, 2026

Sermon on the Mount

Reject Retribution & Love Your Enemies

Matthew 5:38-48

1. Sermon Outline:

- a. Reject Your Instinct for Retribution Because of What Jesus Did for You
 - i. Set aside your natural instincts when others treat you badly.
 - ii. This is what Jesus did for you!
 - iii. Only the Gospel can change a world trapped in an endless cycle of violence and retribution.
- b. Love Your Enemies Because God Loves You
 - i. Love your enemies and pray for them.
 - ii. God loved us even when we were His enemies!
 - iii. Be perfect in Christ.

2. *Sunday* – As soon as possible after the sermon, consider:

- a. What stood out to you the most in this sermon?
- b. What new truth did you learn, or what truth were you reminded of?
- c. Is there a particular Scripture passage you feel God is leading you to meditate on or commit to memory?
- d. What is one thing God is leading you to do after hearing this message?
- e. Did God convict you of a need to make any changes in your life and walk with Him?

3. *Monday*:

- a. This week we consider the last two (the 5th and 6th) antithesis (“You have heard it said... But I say to you...” format) teachings. Begin by reading Matthew 5:38-42, making note of the main points you think Jesus is teaching and your initial thoughts about how it applies to your life. Then do the same as you read Matthew 5:43-48.
 - i. Of these two passages, which do you feel presents the greatest challenge to you as a Christian trying to live as God commands?
 - ii. If you could obey one fully, which would lead to the greatest change in your lifestyle? Which would most affect and influence others?
 - iii. How are the two antitheses linked?
- b. Why is it reasonable for Jesus to say that those He was talking to had heard the saying “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”?
 - i. Read Exodus 21:22-25, Leviticus 24:17-22, and Deuteronomy 19:15-21.

- ii. After considering these three passages, what two main purposes does the law of retaliation (or the principle of retribution) seem designed to accomplish?
- iii. What do the instructions in Exodus 21:22b and Deuteronomy 19:15-18 teach about who can enact the law of retaliation?
- iv. Who is the “you” in Matthew 5:38-42 (see Matthew 5:1b-2)? How does addressing the disciples with the principle He is teaching show that He is not invalidating the Old Testament law?
- v. Read Leviticus 19:18, Proverbs 20:22, and 24:29. Rather than teaching that individuals could (should) enforce the law of retaliation, what did the Old Testament really teach about an individual’s action in such situations?

4. *Tuesday:*

- a. Read and meditate on Matthew 5:38-42.
- b. Before Jesus gives examples of how to implement the principle, what overarching command does He give (verse 39a)?
 - i. Do you think that by commanding that we “not resist the one who is evil,” Jesus is telling us not to protect ourselves or our families from harm?
 - ii. Is there a difference between retaliating against evil with violent aggression versus self-defense or protecting one’s family (consider Exodus 22:2-3 & Nehemiah 4:14)? How can you distinguish between the two?
 - iii. What would be the outcome if everyone took this command (in a modern English translation) completely literally (consider the eye and hand hyperbole from last week)?
 - iv. If the above is not what Jesus meant, how would you explain this command in a 2026 setting? The word translated resist has a legal or argumentative sense and is just as often translated “oppose” (see Acts 13:8, Galatians 2:11, 2 Timothy 3:8 and 4:15). Does this sense add insight to understanding the command?
- c. Understanding that the command might be difficult to understand, what application examples does Jesus give?
- d. What makes Jesus’ first example more than just a simple physical assault (think about or gently act out how a right-handed person could strike someone on the right cheek)?
 - i. Why would it be more forceful/harmful than a slap with the palm?
 - ii. While not something we would generally know – but the disciples would have – the Jewish Mishnah established a fine of 200 dinars for slapping a person and doubled it for a backhanded slap. How does that influence our understanding of what Jesus was teaching (and no, the idea wasn’t to get an even bigger fine)?

5. *Wednesday:*

- a. Refresh your memory by reading Matthew 5:38-42 again as you start today’s study.

- b. If in His first example Jesus is showing us how “not resisting an evil person” applies to violent and dishonorable insults, what kind of attack is He addressing in the second? Why might this example seem particularly relevant in our litigious society?
 - i. Again, we need to see this example as the disciples would have. What was the tunic (ESV)/shirt (NIV & CSB) (think of what Scrooge would be wearing in A Christmas Carol production)? What was the cloak?
 - ii. What had they been taught about taking or keeping someone’s cloak (see Exodus 22:26-27 and Deuteronomy 24:12)? Instead of demanding their rights under the law, what was Jesus telling the disciples to do?
 - iii. How would you paraphrase this with a common English saying? If you have access to a copy, read how The Message paraphrases it.
- c. If the first two examples were hard, why would the third (verse 41) have been seen as extreme? In Israel during Jesus’ day, who could force you to go a mile (see Mark 15:21)? If you then voluntarily did a second mile, what would your countrymen have seen you doing? Why would the fate have been worse than simply expending physical energy?
- d. Why might we consider the final example (verse 42) to be the most challenging? While the example seems open-ended, begging was a “last resort” for Jews in Jesus’ day, so a beggar had real needs. How does what Jesus teaches in Matthew 25:34-46 apply?

6. *Thursday:*

- a. Read and meditate on Matthew 5:43-47.
- b. In this final antithesis, what are the two things Jesus tells his disciples they have been taught (“heard it said”)?
- c. The first half of the phrase Jesus quotes is based on Leviticus 19:18. What has been left out?
 - i. By omitting these final two words, what have they transformed this command about how we are to love into?
 - ii. Is it possible to obey the first half of the quote in verse 43 while simultaneously disobeying the command from Leviticus?
 - iii. How does Jesus use this command later in His ministry (Matthew 22:36-40)?
 - iv. Why does shifting the focus from “how” we are to love to “who” we are to love then make it necessary to define then who is a “neighbor”? How did Jesus address this (Luke 10:29-36)? Does Jesus’s answer describe the “who” or the “how” we are to love in more detail?
- d. Where is the second half of the quote (“and hate your enemy”) found? Instead of telling us to “hate our enemies,” what does the Old Testament teach (see Exodus 23:4-5, 2 Kings 6:22, and Psalm 25:21)?
 - i. Sometimes passages like Psalm 139:21-22 are used to justify saying we can hate those whom God hates because they are evil. What does Jesus say in this passage

(verse 45) that shows that such a claim is not valid? As Christians, what do Romans 5:8-10 and Colossians 1:21 remind us of that should rule out such an attitude?

- ii. While we may not like (should hate) things they do, what do these verses teach us about how we should relate to those who are not part of the Body of Believers?

7. *Friday:*

- a. Read and meditate on Matthew 5:48.
 - i. Based on a casual reading, do you think it would be appropriate to say this is one of the most difficult (impossible) commands we are given in the Bible? Why or why not?
 - ii. How often have you heard someone say something like “Well, I’m not perfect” (or “I’m only human”) to justify or rationalize a sin? In what way are they right? Wrong? (Consider Romans 7:14-20, 8:7-8, & Ephesians 2:1-3).
- b. What tense does Jesus use when He tells us to “be perfect”? Since Jesus is the exact image (representation) of God (John 14:9 and Hebrews 1:2), how do Ephesians 4:13-15, 2 Corinthians 3:18, and Romans 8:29 show us what Jesus commanded is taking place? What does 1 John 3:2 tell us about when it will be completed?

8. *Saturday:*

- a. Read and meditate on the focal passage, Matthew 5:38-48.
- b. How do the verses about loving your enemies (43-47) support and reinforce the teaching about Retaliation (38-42)? Would it be possible to do one and ignore the other?
- c. What areas in your life do you see that need to change based on these verses?

9. **Application:** Fair has become a dangerous word, especially for Christians. We hear “It’s not fair” too often, and most often it is self-directed. The least “fair” thing that has ever happened is that the perfect, sinless Son of God was executed on a Roman cross. As we study the six antitheses in Matthew 5 and see Jesus teaching us, giving us real-world examples of what we are required to “be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect,” fairness should be the last thing on our mind. To the world, turning the other cheek seems unfair, even downright stupid, but our Savior was struck on the cheek as he went to the cross and did not retaliate. Loving enemies and praying for those who persecute you doesn’t seem fair, but our Savior prayed for the forgiveness of those who were crucifying Him. If we are going to grow to be like Christ, we must set aside fairness and accept that being a Christian has a price.

10. **Pray:** This week, please pray for these unreached people groups from Vietnam:

- a. **Chut:** Often called “Yellow-leaf People” because they sometimes live in temporary shelters made of banana leaves and move on when the leaves have yellowed. They live in central Vietnam on the border with Laos. They practice an ethnic religion, and there are no known Christians in the tribe.
- b. **Tay:** The Tay migrated from China to Vietnam in the 1300s to avoid the Mongol hordes. Today, almost 2 million live in the north near the Chinese border. They have their own animistic religion called Then, which is focused on ancestor worship. Less than 0.01% are known Christians.