

Overcome Evil with Good!

A few years ago, the Miller family of North Carolina went on a vacation to Utah. The family had two young sons. The oldest was 8-years-old and named Perryn. Perryn was complaining about headaches. When they got to Utah, the headaches became worse. When he threw up during a particularly painful headache, his parents drove him to the Emergency Room. A scan revealed a large tumor in his head. He underwent a 7-hour surgery to remove the tumor. As news spread on social media about Perryn's troubles, he happened to mention how much he missed his dog – a 9-month-old German shepherd. A former truck driver named Bob Reynolds, heard about little Perryn's sad situation. Bob made contact with the parents and got their permission to pick up the dog. Bob drove 300 miles to get to the dog in North Carolina and then drove to Utah. All total, Bob drove 52 hours and covered 2,300 miles. Bob did it all so a little boy in the hospital could be with his dog. Would you volunteer all that time and gas money in order to get a dog across the country?

Here in Luke 6, Jesus says that if we are going to be his people, then we need to do kind and helpful things like that. Jesus is giving directions for his believers (:27), **“you who are listening.”** He tells us to love our enemies and do good to those who hate us. We are to bless those who curse us, and pray for those who mistreat us. Worldly logic says that's a good way to get taken advantage of. Such things are not easy to do. But what really stops me short are Jesus' directions in verses 29 and 30. If someone slaps me on the cheek, I'm just supposed to offer my other cheek for another slap. If someone takes my coat, I should offer him my shirt as well. If someone steals something from me, I should just let him have it. That doesn't sound fair. If someone slaps me, don't I have a right to slap him back? If someone takes something from me, don't I have a right to take it back? Then Jesus summarizes things with we know now as the Golden Rule (:31), **“Do to others as you would have them do to you.”** In other words, “Treat other people the way that you would like to be treated.”

As if we didn't get the point, Jesus continued in verses 32-34 by explaining that if you do good only to those who are good to you, you're behaving just like a “sinner,” that is an unbeliever. Jesus is teaching us that we need to look at life from a completely different perspective. We are to

treat others the opposite of how the world thinks they should be treated. If we do all this, Jesus says (:35), **“your reward will be great.”** We don't earn a reward from God. We are saved by God's undeserved love. Rather, by showing such unusual kindness, we are acting as God's children and imitating him.

I've pretty much reviewed these verses as if this was a Bible class. There is a lot to understand. We have to look at the world from a spiritual perspective, not an earthly and selfish perspective. I don't know about you, but I honestly can not live the way Jesus describes. If someone slaps me, I really doubt if I'm going to offer him my other cheek. If someone takes something from me, I'll probably call the police. We all have a sinful nature that wants to get even with others – you hurt me, I'm going to hurt you in some way. Instead of Good overcoming Evil, Evil often overcomes Good.

Recently, I was with a guy I know here in Port. A year and a half ago, he and his wife got divorced, which broke my heart. It was his fault. While we were talking, she texted him and asked if he could watch her dog while she was out of town for a few days. It was a simple request. He knew the dog. The dog knew him. He had once pledged lifelong love to this lady, but now, his comments were sadly selfish and cruel. He wasn't going to help at all. So much for sharing love.

Such selfishness infects us and often affects us. If someone does or says something we don't like, we can be very quick to assume the worst – “He was purposefully trying to hurt me.” But we can't see into people's hearts to determine their motives. Then we are tempted to yell at the other person, trying to hurt them the way we think they deserve to be hurt. Or there's the “slow burn.” We don't do or say anything, but anger burns inside of our heart, and the Lord definitely sees that. If someone does something that we don't like, instead of saying, “I'd like to discuss the issue so we can clear the air and be at peace,” we are tempted to hold a grudge against them. Such things are especially sad when they happen within a family, or a marriage.

When Jesus gave us these directions in Luke 6, he knew that we could not keep them perfectly. He also knew that he could and would. Jesus overcame evil with good. As he was betrayed, arrested, abused, unfairly condemned, improperly whipped and mistreated, forced to Golgotha, crucified and mocked, Jesus had every right to get even with those Jewish leaders and Romans soldiers. Just by thinking the thought, he could

have destroyed all of them. Instead, Jesus humbled himself and let their cruel actions slowly squeeze the life out of him. Jesus let that happen because it was the only way to save you and me. We do not always show perfect love. Jesus, however, showed perfect love to the bitter end. Jesus did not give us what we deserved. He gave us grace. As he hung on the cross, your sins and mine got blamed on Jesus. He paid the full penalty for all our guilt as he was forsaken by God and experienced the reality of hell. Because of what Jesus did, your sins are washed away. Your guilt is gone. There is a place being prepared for you in heaven.

Jesus saved us and guaranteed us eternal life in heaven. What more could we want? What more could we need? So what if someone takes your coat. The Lord will somehow provide us with all we need. If someone slaps us, we can show him that we're trusting the Lord to take care of us. We'll turn the other cheek.

Jesus' love and strength went to work for us long ago. Before he came into this world, Jesus saw us in our sinful human weakness. He knew that we did not match up to him. We were not on his level. But rather than ridicule, eliminate, or bully us, he was resolved to help us. Instead of just feeling sorry for us from afar, Jesus used his power to save us. Jesus came into this sinful world to take up our sins, to live a perfect life for us and to die an innocent death in our place. Jesus then demonstrated his power and strength by rising from the dead. Jesus now seeks to use his power through us. And what better way to do that than to love others the way that Jesus loved us. Rather than hold onto selfish revenge, rely on Christ, and his love will shine in your life.

One poor fellow grew up in an abusive house. His mother would physically abuse him and his father consistently insulted him. One night when he was 14-years-old, his mother was in an especially nasty mood. After a few hits, the boy decided to leave. It was January, and it was freezing cold outside. He was just trying to get away from the beating and he forgot to grab his jacket. He went to a nearby park, sat on a bench in his t-shirt, jeans and tennis shoes. He was shivering and expected that he would just freeze to death. A man happened to walk by and asked him why he didn't have a coat. He simply grunted, not wanting to explain his situation. The gentleman commented that he was going to die without a coat. So he took his coat off and put it over the boy's shoulders. Then he gave him some money and told him to get something to eat. Then he left. That man literally saved the boy's life that night. By the time the boy

realized what happened and he wanted to say "Thank You" to him, the man was gone. Maybe we can be that man to someone in need.

Through faith, the love of Jesus lives in our hearts. Jesus was all in, completely committed, no matter what the cost was to save us. Now our natural reaction is to show love to others the way that Jesus showed love to us. There are a million ways to help others besides giving someone your coat or driving to Utah with a dog. Here are a few examples:

- a. Call a friend that you haven't spoken to for a while
- b. Tell your family members how much you love and appreciate them
- c. Host an informal get together and invite your neighbors to get to know each other
- d. Send a motivational text to a friend who is struggling
- e. Sign up to do voluntary work in the community
- f. Reach out to spend time with a friend, family member or neighbor who is experiencing loneliness
- g. Say good morning
- h. Let someone cut in line at the supermarket
- i. Let another driver merge into your lane

In other words, love others as Jesus loved you. Overcome evil with good. Amen.