

"....Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."
(Matthew 5:44)
"....Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you."
(Luke 6:27)

Context: Sermon on the Mount/Plain (The Beatitudes)
Specific type of verse: advice/instruction

"'The Sermon on the Mount' is not law, but gospel [good news]. Jesus did not intend to make legal demands on us or to say that salvation depends on conformity to his ethical standards. He is not presenting an impossible ideal or an interim ethic for the end of time....Those words are more than a beautiful message, they demand the response of a life transformed by his grace." (Leary)

"Love for enemies is not an emotional love. It is agape love, a love for the undeserving and the unlovely. Love is seeing that all people receive justice. It is helping those in need. Why do this? Again, we do it because of the nature of God. He loves his enemies - he allows the sun to shine on both the good and the bad and sends rain on the just and the unjust." (Brokhoff)

"God's love is offered to all. It is characterized by a fullness that is neither petty nor punitive. And this fullness ought to characterize us as well as God. God's love has a fullness that embraces all people. We also are to have a love that is full, that is freely offered to the world." (Stookey)

"We are not yet perfectly full [of love], as God is perfectly full. That is what makes the Christian life so annoying. We never quite arrive at the goal, but are always on the way." (Stookey)

A quality of Christian Love:

Other persons are always "subjects" (persons), never "objects" (things). ["Equal regard"]

"Levels" of Loving Relationships [limit-setting]:

Significant Other

Family

Friends

Communities (groups)

Humanity

Anguished or sad love (not hate or revenge) includes enemies (unjust aggressors):

a. personal enemies

b. social enemies:

an extreme example: Goliath who had to be killed

less extreme: Jesus in the Temple

Loving one's enemies involves anguish and sadness. No matter what limit-setting response is necessary to one's enemies, they must always be regarded as fellow persons.