

Children in general tend to be picky eaters compared to adults. If it's green or if they can't identify what is in a casserole, they'll turn up their noses. Some don't like their food touching. Some see huge differences between grilled chicken and a chicken nugget; no matter the long discussions that they are both chicken. Debates that a chicken nugget is the same as a chicken tender...it's just a bigger chicken nugget...won't budge their thinking. Some won't eat mac & cheese because in their mind, they don't like melted cheese, and there's no changing their minds. Picky eaters know what they like and typically aren't open to listening to discussions on the things they should eat nor are they open to trying new things. But, we tell the picky eaters in our house that you can't say that you don't like it, if you don't try it.

Well, this morning, you may be a "picky eater" or a "picky listener" to this sermon. I'm sure you didn't wake up this morning and say, "You know, I can't wait to get to church and hear a sermon about loving my enemies." When we hear this scripture about loving those who hurt, steal, and betray us, we turn up our noses as if a plate of cooked spinach or sauerkraut was put in front of us. Jesus knew this. That's why he prefaced this scripture by saying, "To you who are willing to listen" (NLT) or in another translation, "To you who are ready for the truth" (Message). If we are to really get what Jesus is teaching "to love our enemies," we have to be open and willing to listen. We have to be open and willing to try something different.

Loving our enemies is something different. It's human nature to want to repay evil with evil. But, Christ teaches that it's time to try living a different way. To be a follower of Christ, we extend Christ's radical grace. God's extravagant grace that is poured

onto us gets poured onto others. We're just the conduit that allows the grace to flow through us onto others.

This is easy when people are loving and deserving, but when people aren't, when they hurt, steal, or betray us, a dam is formed within us. We withhold God's love and it stagnates inside us, forming a cesspool that eventually spills out, polluting everything around us.

The dish that Jesus serves us today tells us to be "kind to the ungrateful and the wicked, be merciful, just as our Father is merciful" (v.35). If someone strikes you on the cheek, give them the other one as well. If someone steals your coat, give them your shirt as well. If someone takes your things, don't ask for them back. Do good to those who hate you and pray for those who abuse you (v. 27-30). This is radical stuff.

To our human ears, this sounds like a recipe for disaster. People will think that we're an easy target, that we're a pushover, that we're their whipping boy. We have to teach people how to treat us. We have to show them not to mess with us. We have to make them pay for their poor choices. We can rationalize our behavior all we want, but Jesus will continue to say, "Love your enemies. Pray for them. Give to them generously."

Jesus is not suggesting that we allow others to continue to abuse us. We should leave toxic situations and relationships. Go to a safe place to heal. Jesus is saying, Don't remain in those situations in our hearts. Don't hold on to that hate and anger. If we are harboring all the ills in our hearts and haven't done the work to move on, it's like we're still in that same toxic place. We cannot be who God calls us to be if we're still in that toxic place. We cannot be who God calls us to be if we withhold love and forgiveness, even to our enemies.

Jesus gives us a recipe for living generously that is the way to transformation. Many of us get to a point in life that we realize how we're living isn't working for us. We've been abused, hurt, betrayed, accused, and judged. We nurse all of those wounds. Our brokenness is just too deep. But, Jesus says there's another way to live. It's not easy; we will still be persecuted, maybe even more so, and it requires us to do something different, something radical. But there IS a way forward: live generously.

Be generous with your love, with your forgiveness, your acceptance and affirmation. Be generous with your prayers, your blessings, your material possessions. Be generous with your time and your money. Live by a spirit of giving to everyone. This keeps God's grace flowing through us, and this grace is what transforms us. When we start putting conditions and stipulations on who is deserving of our love, forgiveness, or prayers, then the dam within begins to form. When we only give certain portions of our lives, the dam gets built up until none of the grace flows.

Jesus calls us to live generously in all areas of our lives – “to love, do good, and lend without expecting anything in return” (v. 35). When we live out God's extravagant generosity, “our reward will be great” (v. 35). The great reward won't be more money, a bigger house, or success defined by the world. The reward won't be just a ticket to heaven. The reward is our transformation, who we become in the process of loving, forgiving, and giving. This transformation reconciles us with Christ, restores us to Christ, which is the ultimate reward.

Jesus knows full well that we will never love our enemies without an amazing grace that transforms us and makes us different than we are. Our generosity is

modeled after the mercy of God and comes out of the same abundance.

No matter how much the nutritional value is explained in this dish, none of us around the table really wants to dig in. None of us really wants to love our enemies. But, Jesus knows the difference between what we want and what we need. This teaching may not be a tasty morsel, and it is certainly difficult to digest, but it is a healthy, nutritious meal that nourishes us.

I pray that you heard what Jesus wanted you to hear this morning. Take it and chew on it all week. I am glad you are willing to listen and ready for the truth. I invite you to try it, try living generously through the radical grace of God. You may like it after all!

God of love, we call to mind our enemies. We summon up our love for them and offer it humbly. We call to mind those who are hurtful. We pray for them, that their hearts may be healed, for only wounded people wound others. We call to mind those who abuse us or oppose us. We pray for them, that they may know your blessing. We call to mind those who do what we see as evil. We pray for them, that their hearts may be brought back to life. May we remember always the mystery that we are one with our enemy; for all are one in you. When we split ourselves from them we are no different than when they split themselves from those they reject or condemn. In our condemning we betray our oneness; we wound our own humanity. Therefore, even as we oppose them, may we remember their wound, and honor our oneness. May we see them, even those who are cruel, as your beloved children. Even as we must oppose people for the sake of justice, may we stand against their injustice, but not against them; may we stand beside them in your love, even as we struggle to love them. We pray grateful and trusting that even when we fail, you do not curse us,

Live Generously
Rev. Kristie Grimaud
Luke 6:27-38
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but love us and bless us. By your spirit in us,
help us, O God, to love kindly, to do justice, to
walk humbly with you, in the spirit and
company of Jesus. Amen.¹

¹Steve Garnaas-Holmes, *Love My
Enemies, Unfolding Light*
www.unfoldinglight.net