

HOPE IN AN UPSIDE DOWN WORLD, PART 8: A WORLD CHANGING SECRET

Scripture used: [Matthew 5:43-48 \(NLT\)](#)

OVERVIEW

Pastor Hurmon concluded this 3 part teaching within our larger series about how followers of Jesus can especially be salt and light in the world in this season of divided, partisan politics. Jesus addresses this question in the Sermon on the Mount when He commands us to love our enemies. Our “enemies” are the people who oppose us, who radically disagree with us, and work against us. Pastor Hurmon examined the unique foundation of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., whose work for civil rights was motivated not just by seeking justice for African-Americans, but also by a desire to love and liberate his opponents from the evil power of racism and white supremacy. This path of changing the world through radical love is not easy; we need God’s strength and Spirit in order to be salt and light in this way.

KEY POINTS

- 1) Dr King’s world-changing secret was that he loved his enemies. His enemies had subjected him to physical, moral, political, and legal brutality. But Dr. King knew that love has tremendous redemptive power and can transform individuals - not only those who fight for justice, but also those who resist justice and those who hate! If you hate your enemies, you have no way to change them. If you love your enemies, you have a chance at bringing them to your side.
- 2) Pastor Hurmon used the chilling metaphor of the Eskimo knife blade trap to show the raw appeal of violence and how it leads to self-destruction. Part of us enjoys violence, the pleasure of outrage, and the madness of the mob. Yet this only leads to irrevocable division in our families, communities, and our nation. We live as brothers and sisters or we perish as fools, as Dr. King said.
- 3) We must ask for the eyes and heart of God. We must remember that nothing can separate us from the faithful love of God. [Matthew 5:45-48](#) reminds us of what makes the unjust who they are, highlights their brokenness. We must strive for perfect love - loving when it is easy and when it is hard; loving in harmony and conflict. This is different than the feeling of “liking” someone, but rather working for the other’s good and best interest no matter what.
- 4) We must commit to Jesus above all. The parable of the Good Samaritan ([Luke 10:30-37](#)) is multi-layered. The hero of the story is an outsider - a man from a despised group. Yet he’s the only one who experiences compassion and acts on it. This is a public critique against Jesus’ own people and their self-righteous ways. To follow Jesus means that we must be more faithful to Jesus than any other allegiance, even when it means speaking difficult words of truth to those closest to us. Dr. King became unpopular with both conservatives and radical progressives before his assassination. His opposition to the Vietnam War estranged him from the political and business elites. His opposition to violent agitation alienated him from the Black Liberation movement. Yet Dr. King consistently followed the path of principle and empathy, and being able to understand the motivations of his opponents helped to confirm for him that the path of nonviolent resistance motivated by love was the only truly redemptive path.

DISCUSSION

- 1) **HEAR** - What is your initial reaction when you hear Jesus’ teaching to “Love your enemies”? Does it provoke an emotional response? This is a hard teaching for everyone, but what are the specific challenges for you to live this out?
- 2) **UNDERSTAND** - Consider [Romans 5:1-11](#). How does God’s love for us through Jesus express that “Love your enemies” is the essence of the Gospel (good news) of Jesus Christ and at the very core of God’s love for each of us. How have you individually experienced this love from God and received it into your own life? When God calls us to love others, to love our enemies, with this same love, He is asking us to pass on what we have already received. This is only possible with God’s strength and empowerment. Who are the “enemies” or opponents in your life that you could engage with an act of love?
- 3) **DO** - Ask God for empathy for those who feel like enemies. Pray for them, that God would bless them and guide them. Ask God to change your heart as well, so you are able to do the difficult work of loving your enemies. Together, let’s express God’s redemptive love in a world that desperately needs it.