

Do you love your enemy?

Stefan Christian Mocanu Jensen

Matthew 5:43–48 "43 You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father who is in heaven; For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and makes it rain on the just and the unjust. 46 If you love only those who love you, what reward can you expect? So do the customs officers. 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what special thing do you do? So do the pagans. 48 So be perfect, then, as your heavenly Father is perfect!

Grace be with you and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Savior. Amen.

Jesus speaks to us today about something that is completely familiar, even familiar in the world: Love your enemies. Love your enemies. Love your enemies.

It is so well known that ordinary Danes think it was Jesus' message. But now, 2000 years later, it is natural to ask: How is it going to do it? Yes, do you even have an enemy you need to love?

It may seem quite violent to say that we have enemies. We know people who are annoying, who get on our nerves. People we don't like to be around. But to call them your enemy, isn't that just a little violent enough? Maybe you

have an enemy, but if we were out on the battlefield, we'd probably be more aware of who our enemies are.

Who is your enemy?

That question is actually difficult to answer right off the bat. Sometimes it's not so obvious. Sometimes your enemy is not who you think is your enemy. We may not realize that we have enemies.

Jesus still says that we should love our enemies.

Your enemy may be in your workplace. It could be your boss. Your friend can become your enemy. Your brother can become your enemy. Your church can become your enemy. Yes, your own priest can become your enemy. Those who do not believe in Jesus can become your enemies.

Yes, your enemies can be in many places and be hidden from you. But when they show up, at work, down in the supermarket, on social media or in your thoughts, and they want to, then you must love them, says Jesus. Love them.

Loving them can look different, such as not slandering them but speaking well of them. Not wishing them any harm, but good. No matter who your enemy is, Jesus says, you must love them and pray for them.

LOVE BY PRAYING FOR THEM

Jesus says: **But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.** (Matthew 5:44)

Jesus asks you to pray for your enemies. That is, to bring your atheist family members in front of God and pray for them. The place that was opened to us when Jesus was crucified. A place where we meet mercy and help, as the letter to the Hebrews says: **Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.** (Heb. 4:16)

Jesus asks you to pray for your enemies: For your colleague who gets on your nerves and who thinks you are ridiculous. For your wife or husband, who can bring out the worst in you. We can pray: **Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.** (Luke 23:34)

We do not bring them before Jesus to accuse them or to uphold their claim that they have offended us. No, we pray for them. We pray that God will intervene and help. It's so hard to pray for them. This is not natural to us. We want God to intervene and punish, we want redress, we want revenge. Yes, what if our enemies have done something that we think is unforgivable? How can I pray for such a person?

But Jesus commands us to pray for our enemies. And when we do not do what Jesus commands, we are also saying that our enemies are not worth praying for. They are not worth bringing

before God. They have no value to me or to God. With those words, we also come to condemn ourselves. We condemn ourselves because we forget that others have prayed for us. Others have prayed for us when we were their enemies.

Don't think that no one has ever prayed for you. No, there are many who have. Jesus Himself has prayed for you, and He still does. Just you, you who are sitting right there today. We hear from the letter to the Hebrews: **Therefore, Jesus can also completely save those who come to God through him, because he always lives and will intercede for them. (Heb. 7:25)** What Jesus commands you to do is something He does Himself.

When you pray for your enemy, for your family, and for those you can't stand, you're praying like Jesus himself. You yourself were once an enemy. An enemy of the church and of God. **For while we were yet his enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son; so much more, when we are reconciled to God, we shall be saved by his living. (Rom. 5:10)** Can Paul put it?

Why do we pray for our enemies and for those who persecute us?

Jesus says:

that you may be children of your Heavenly Father; For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and makes it rain on the just and the unjust. (Matt. 5:45)

We are to be children of our Heavenly Father. You are not allowed not to! Perhaps you misheard Jesus' words. Perhaps you heard that you must love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you for the purpose of becoming a child of God. But Jesus does not say that. You do not become a child of God by doing something. No, because Jesus says to us today: **So be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect!** (Matthew 5:48) Jesus says your heavenly Father, this means that God is already your Father.

You have a Heavenly Father who is perfect. If you only look at yourself, you are far from perfect and perfect. But you have become a child of God by believing in Jesus. You have become a child of God when you were baptized. You know that you are clothed with Christ and belong to Him in baptism. That is why Jesus speaks to you as a dear child. The child he loves so much. In Him you are perfect and perfect.

In our own strength, we cannot pray for our enemies. It is impossible, but Jesus has given and is giving us His Holy Spirit so that we can

pray for our enemies. You do not belong to yourself, as we have heard today from the book of Romans:

For none of us lives for himself, and no one dies for himself; for when we live, we live for the Lord, and when we die, we die for the Lord. Whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

With these words, you are set free, you are now free to pray for your enemies. You are set free to pray for your enemy in the workplace. Your boss. Your friend. Your brother. Your church. Yes, your own pastor.

Even when you fail, you know that it doesn't define your relationship with Jesus. Jesus also prays for you, who were his enemy! We do not draw our strength from ourselves or by looking at ourselves. But Jesus gives us the strength to pray for others. He has given us His Holy Spirit so that we can. So even though we do not love our enemies, Jesus loves them. When we say with our actions that people are not worth praying for, Jesus is praying for them and for you. Yes, He will continue to do so and help us with that, for that is the Lord. Amen.