



New Beginnings, Volume 30, 2008
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Luke 6:27-28

“But if you are willing to listen, I (Jesus) say, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for the happiness of those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.”

The challenge given to us by Jesus in this passage from Luke is one of the most difficult in the Bible. It is also one that proves to be a stumbling block to many of us. I remember when I first read this many years ago, thinking how unreasonable this commandment by Jesus is. Over time I have struggled with these words especially in the light of the sectarian violence that separates Muslims from Jews and Christians. It is difficult enough to try and love some people of different cultures, races, and beliefs but when they are actively trying to kill you it is nearly impossible. How could a person from Israel honor these words in regards to people from Iran or leaders from Hamas when they are sworn to destroy them? We also in this country are challenged by worldwide terrorism which has taken thousands of American lives in the past seven years. Love them? Pray for them? How can we?

The point that Jesus is making of course is that hatred begets hatred and violence begets violence. When we as people can't see anything but what divides us we can't bring reconciliation to a relationship. When we are only trying to overcome our adversaries rather than destroy the causes for what separates us, we will only know conflict. Is there great risk in trying to seek reconciliation? Of course there is. But how many centuries of hatred have brought us to this place where we are

today? How many more deaths are necessary on both sides before we seek a place with honor? Can peace ever be achieved? I hope and pray that it can be, but it will never happen until we begin to love our enemies as children of God and to pray for their eternal souls. In the end what do we have to lose by doing this?

Perhaps as a place of beginning we need to start by looking at our own personal relationships. Before we worry about world peace let's see if we can bring peace to our families, friendships, work relationships and institutions. With divorce rates above 50% we can certainly do a better job of loving our spouses and praying for them. With countless youth caught up in drugs, alcohol, and gangs both formal and informal we could sure use some prayers for peace with them. The murders that seem to take place weekly in the work place speak to the need for more understanding, prayers, and love. The division that exists in churches, politics, and schools only serves to spawn more hate and violence. Jesus said “love God and one another”. Let's start with that and perhaps the loving of our enemies can follow.

Come and join us at the Mosinee United Methodist Church as we pray for and love a divided community. Let peace begin with you.