

The Lord is gracious and full of compassion, \*slow to anger and of great kindness.  
The Lord is loving to everyone \* and his compassion is over all his works. Psalm 145 8-9



Matthew 5:48 NRSV “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Eugene Peterson offers another translation for this text in the Bible in contemporary language which attempts to capture scripture in its intent in for our lives.

Matthew 5:43-48 from the Message

You're familiar with the old written law, 'Love your friend,' and its unwritten companion, 'Hate your enemy.'

I'm challenging that. I'm telling you to love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst.

When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer,

for then you are working out of your true selves, your God-created selves. This is what God does. He gives his best - the sun to warm and the rain to nourish - to everyone, regardless: the good and bad, the nice and nasty.

If all you do is love the lovable, do you expect a bonus? Anybody can do that. If you simply say hello to those who greet you, do you expect a medal? Any run-of-the-mill sinner does that.

"In a word, what I'm saying is, Grow up. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.

Are you wondering if Jesus really meant love your enemies and walk along side of them? Can we wiggle out of being "perfect"--because most of us--even all of us are not "perfect" in our loving? And after all—there are some terrible people...and we even know some of them... Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew is again challenging what we assume we know—even about praying for someone else. The word used in Matthew 5:48 is *telos*--meaning becoming into wholeness or becoming into how God sees us. in our black and white understanding of what is right and what is wrong we can neglect the wholeness of God's creation--even others who do not imagine as we do, dream in the same colors or even hear the same music--and yet they are beloved by God. God sends them goodness also that they too might become fully who they are...

In this time of confrontation and divisiveness in our culture, we can take a deep breath and know God loves us into who we are fully; we are expected to be attentive to the people who walk with us, can heal us deeply of the fear, anxiety, and woundedness that get in the way of loving our neighbor who may not be like us--or even not like us. This journey however is not undertaken alone. Christ walks with us in the other. We are changed in the journey.

Celebrating our interdependence with one another and all things is not the same as independence. For freedom we are set free in the light of Love of God to love and care for each other. We are encouraged not to savor the aloneness and independence that separates us from hearing the still small voice of God or experiencing the healing touch of Christ Jesus in our midst from someone who walks with us.

Christ is speaking to us—can we hear like the saints and prophets before us—Francis, Martin Luther King, Jr., Florence Nightingale, John Muir, Gandhi... God is calling us...

*Peace, Pastor Susan+*