

**Lessons from a hill**  
**“Love your enemies”**  
**W/C 17<sup>th</sup> Mar 2024**

Revenge is the way of the world. Practically every action film you watch is about the hero exacting revenge on those who have caused him, or his family, harm. There’s a part of this idea that resonates with us because we have within us an inbuilt sense of justice.

When a nation responds to a terrorist attack you often hear the words ‘proportional response’; in our justice system there’s the expression, ‘The punishment fits the crime.’ The idea comes out of the Old Testament principle, first quoted in Exodus 21:24, which Jesus also references in Matthew 5:38, “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth’” or modern-day speak, ‘Tit for tat’.

Jesus, however, takes Old Testament law and reapplies it very differently. He speaks of ‘resisting’ the evil person. The meaning here is to ‘restrain yourself’ or to not seek revenge. This coupled with his teaching to love your enemy, is amongst the most controversial teachings of Jesus and separates him from practically every other religion, teaching, or philosophy of life.

**Welcome:** We’ve often asked the question, “Who is my neighbour?” How would you answer the question, “Who is my enemy?”

**Worship:** Spend some time in worship. Plan an act of worship that is appropriate to your group.

**Word:** Looking at God’s word together:

**Read: Matthew 5:43-48** (you may also wish to reference verses 38-42)

1. The command “hate your enemy” (v43) is nowhere to be found in the Bible. So, why do you think Jesus states this?
2. Contrast the reading from Matthew 5:43-48 with the parallel verses from Luke 6:27-36.
  - What are the similarities?
  - What are the differences?

3. In what three ways does Jesus say we are to love our enemies?
4. Why does hating our enemies not really work?
5. What is our motivation to love our enemies?
6. What do you make of verse 48, and the similar verse in Luke 6:36?

**Witness:** How would you answer someone who claims that the standards Jesus sets are quite impossible?

**Prayer:**

- Pray that God will continue to build his holy character in your life.
- Pray for the witness of the church.
- Pray for those on the mission field.
- Pray for the testimony event on 24<sup>th</sup> March.