Enemy-Love *[The Sermon on the Mount]*

Matthew 5:43-48 (preached on November 1, 2009)

Grace DC Announcements

- **Next Week's Sermon Discussion Guide (Nov. 10-12 CGs)** will consist of discussion questions for the *Sunday sermon* (11/8 guest speaker: Rev. Skip Ryan) and debriefing/reflection questions on the *Fall Retreat*. Not everyone in your CG will have attended the retreat, but this will be a good opportunity for those who did to share what they learned and continue to process things in community.

Note to Discussion Leaders: *Please remember to start by reading the Bible passage as a group. While this is a "sermon discussion" guide, it's vital that our reflections and applications are grounded in scripture. In a similar vein, do your best to help group members to link their discussion points to the scripture text. Don't skip over all the questions that invite the group to observe and interpret specific verses in the passage.*

READ Matthew 5:43-48 (OT reading: Psalm 104:10-24)

REFLECT

1. What kind of people do you tend to see or treat as your "enemies"? Is your definition of "enemies" different from what Jesus had in mind in v. 44 (see also vv. 10-12; cf. John 15:18-19)?

2. *The saying Jesus' quotes in verse 43 reflects the way the religious community had so shrunken the scope of their responsibility to love others that it included only their friends and people who were just like them (Israelites).* What are some ways we do the same thing? Are there ways you, in so many words, condone "hating your enemies"?

3. How would you respond to the objection: "But isn't God himself harsh toward *his* enemies and quick to judge them?" Consider, for example, 2 Peter 3:7-9; Genesis 18:23-33; 1 Timothy 1:12-14.

4. How is praying for your enemies a good indicator of whether you've actually started to love or forgive them? Is there something about the nature of prayer that makes this so?

5. What are some reasons Jesus gives us for why we should love our enemies (vv. 43-48; see also 1 John 4:7-8, 18-21)? When was the last time you pondered the surprising patience, kindness, generosity of our heavenly Father towards all (v. 45; cf. Psalm 145:9, 16; Acts 14:16-17)?

6. Observe the logic of Jesus' statement in vv. 46-47, and discuss: How does loving your enemy demonstrate that something supernatural is taking people inside you? (Consider this quote: "(Jesus) knows that when love no longer has to wait on the performance of others … an immense transformation has taken place." -Adolf Schlatter)

7. Consider the following quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer (a minister who was eventually martyred in Nazi Germany): "When you confront your enemy, think first of all about your own enmity with God and about God's compassion towards you." If you've embraced Jesus, how can remembering that *you are formerly an enemy of God now loved perfectly by him* give you power to love your enemies (Romans 5:6-11; Luke 23:34; Acts 7:60)?