

Love Your Enemy: Jared Kunz

July 19, 2020

Greetings all! It is great to see half of your faces again! My name is Jared Kunz and I'm the youth pastor here at Hosanna. *Whew* 2020... what a wild ride! The good news is we just passed the half-way mark! Good job everybody, you did it! We only have 165 more days to go! During these crazy times I, for one, have been grateful for, the internet! Sure... it might be partly responsible for the downfall of human civilization... but it does have its funny moments! Here are some of my favorite so far this year.

2020 every second



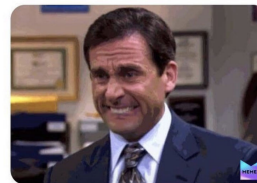
Waking up every morning in 2020 be like



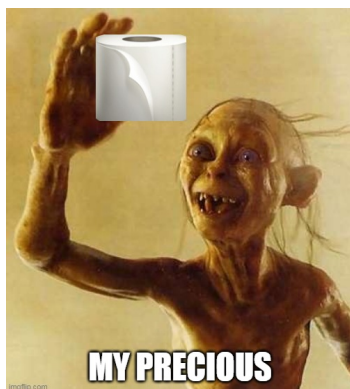
Time traveler: What year is it?

Me: 2020

Time traveler:



I don't know about you, but being able to laugh through the apocalypse has an odd way of making me feel better.



In all seriousness though, it is great to be back. I have missed my Hosanna Community terribly over these past months. While the break from life was great in some sense, to be able to take a breath from a busy schedule, I learned to appreciate so much that I was taking for granted. I am so grateful for the extra time I got to spend with my family. I have a renewed view of how much I appreciate being 'busy', how much I appreciate my work with the youth, and how much I took for granted being able to meet together with my church community! Also, how much I appreciate toilet paper.

OK, no really in all seriousness now! While it is important to be able to laugh, it is also important to be realistic and address the reality of the world we live in. This is an unprecedented time. The world has been heating up, and it is starting to boil over right before our eyes. While this has been common occurrence throughout history, in my 37 years of life I haven't witnessed anything quite like this. For myself and the generations following me this is a confusing, anxiety-ridden, time of fear. Processing the emotions and thoughts generated has been taxing. At times you may have felt many of the beliefs you have had about the world, about humanity, about the order of things - have been shaken, challenged, or even broken. In uncertain times there is a temptation to cast off all the things we've been taught about the world we live in and try to forge our own path through the chaos. I've personally felt like I've been trapped in a fierce storm these past few months. The winds and rains of media and others' opinions constantly blowing in my face and blurring my vision. The chaos is stoking my anger, feelings of injustice, sadness, fear - constantly trying to keep me off balance. The world is relentlessly trying to tell me which way to go, to pull me... push me, to believe what it tells me is the "correct" way.

I've felt that... and I'd be willing to bet I'm not the only one. But, I've also felt something else... in the quiet parts of my heart I have also heard a gentle voice reminding me that I'm not alone, that there are those that have faced times such as these. Instead of trying to figure out how to navigate the chaos alone, there is a map of wisdom and principle that was written by God and translated by those that have known such times. Amidst all the chaos, God is quietly telling us that we don't have to have all the answers, we just need to lean into Him and let the principles and virtues of Jesus be our solid rock.

So, with all that going on, I felt that it would be good to examine one of the core concepts of Christian Faith - and in my opinion, very pertinent to life in 2020... Loving your Enemy.

Jesus lays out this principle in **Matthew 5:43-48**

"You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

This is a classic that I'm sure everyone is familiar with and will be the foundation to our study today. This passage comes from the sermon on the mount, a sermon in which Jesus is addressing a multitude of commonly held beliefs about the nature of God. Jesus repeatedly gives examples of the common ways that people understood God, and his law, and then is taking all of the principles to the next level. For example, earlier in the sermon Jesus talks about how murder is wrong... which is clearly something everyone knows... but he takes the concept to another deep and personal level by saying even being angry with someone bears the same consequences as murder in God's kingdom. This was and still is a controversial take on the true nature of God. At first glance it is even hard for us to comprehend the level of seriousness Jesus has for the inner workings of our hearts and minds.

"Love your enemy" is likewise an extremely profound and controversial statement. Perhaps, one of the most controversial statements He makes in the entire Bible. I think Christians can agree with it in theory, in our minds... you hear the statement "love your enemies" and say, "Oh sure yeah, I do that, Got it Jesus"...But when you try to apply this principle to your real life, outside of your head, it's not quite as easy as it seems to be... do we love the person that cuts us off in traffic? Do we love the person that is dating the person we have feelings for? Do we love people from the other side of the political aisle? Do we love terrorists? Do we love serial killers? I mean actually love them in our hearts, not just in theory? The deeper we apply this idea, the muddier the waters get. How far is Jesus taking this one and what is the actual practical application of it for those of us that believe in this core principle?

Let's break this down a bit...

What is love? - I actually can't say that out loud in youth group or people start singing the song... you'd be surprised how often that happens! But yes, what is Love? To be fair, I could spend the rest of my life giving sermons on this one and probably still not fully explain it, so we'll have to focus on the basics here today.

The most basic way I explain it is that Love is the culmination of all the teachings and principles of God - applied to ourselves, and then acted out of us in relation to others, the world, and to God. The bible says that God is love... so to love is to see what God sees, to feel what God feels.

It's pretty simple in a way, we teach it to kids all the time. Love is in the principles of the fruits of the spirit. Love (duh), Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control.

And the Apostle Paul states it for us in **1 Corinthians 13:4-7**

"Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."

These principles give us the road map of what love is. However, while simple on the surface, as you follow the map it leads us to a fuller understanding of love that is deep beyond measure.

In order to illustrate this I am going to be referring to a transformational book for me, "I and Thou" by Martin Buber. Now speaking of deep, this book really gets in there, if you're interested I highly recommend it, however, we will need to summarize today, so I will be doing a quick 'Jared take' on it. Martin Buber can get really complicated, so buckle up, I'll do my best to get us all on the same page.

You see, as humans develop, we quickly realize that we are a single entity. You are an I... you learn to interact with the world as a singular. You realize there are also things that aren't like you: a table isn't the same as you; it's not an individual like you are. These are things. Then as you keep developing, you at some point realize there are other individuals like you. You make choices and decisions and have feelings and emotions... and they do, too... even though their choices and feelings may be different from yours. You can have interactions with things or other people.... But at this point in relationship, these are

usually transactional types of interactions... meaning we use the things or other people for our own purposes.

Love is when we realize that we are no longer alone. No longer just an “I” looking at these other “you”s and things and that’s it. It is when we change the way we view the ‘other’ to be part of ourselves. You hold the ‘other’ with the same honor, respect, humanity, and principles that you hold for yourself. They become more than objects... they are I’s, just like you are. The relationship changes from “I and It” to “I and Thou”... In this way, we actually consecrate the other person... seeing and treating that person more and more like God does... this is how we become love. We see others the way God sees them. They are no longer things to use, but become beloved to us.

This is how a friend becomes more than just another person you know... they become part of your understanding of yourself. It’s how the person you have a crush on is somehow set apart from everybody else in school. It’s how we love our husbands or wives with a love beyond all understanding, even if we know all of their flaws. It’s how we see the incredible potential and complete, perfect, beauty of our children despite the rigors of raising them. They aren’t things or distant “others”... they *are* us, we are them, in a real relationship... Love draws us together to see each other more perfectly. The way God sees us.

I think Jesus had this deep and radical view of love in mind when he commands us to Love our enemies. He further illustrates this in **Luke 10:25-37**, the story of the Good Samaritan:

“One day an expert in religious law stood up to test Jesus by asking him this question: “Teacher, what should I do to inherit eternal life?”

Jesus replied, “What does the law of Moses say? How do you read it?”

The man answered, “‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, all your strength, and all your mind.’ And, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’”

“Right!” Jesus told him. “Do this and you will live!”

The man wanted to justify his actions, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?”

Jesus replied with a story: “A Jewish man was traveling from Jerusalem down to Jericho, and he was attacked by bandits. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him up, and left him half dead beside the road.

“By chance a priest came along. But when he saw the man lying there, he crossed to the other side of the road and passed him by. A Temple assistant walked over and looked at him lying there, but he also passed by on the other side.

“Then a despised Samaritan came along, and when he saw the man, he felt compassion for him. Going over to him, the Samaritan soothed his wounds with olive oil and wine and bandaged them. Then he put the man on his own donkey and took him to an inn, where he took care of him. The next day he handed

the innkeeper two silver coins, telling him, 'Take care of this man. If his bill runs higher than this, I'll pay you the next time I'm here.'

"Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" Jesus asked.

The man replied, "The one who showed him mercy."

Then Jesus said, "Yes, now go and do the same.""

Every time I read this passage I feel like more jumps out at me. I have often thought that Jesus, who knows the heart of all, was perhaps trying to convey to this religious scholar... that perhaps HE was the Levite in the story... maybe he had even, that very same day, just walked passed a wounded man on the side of the road... and maybe Jesus knew this and went directly to his heart. I can't know that to be true for sure, but it is an interesting thought.

In this parable, Jesus again, just like in the sermon on the mount, takes the common idea of who we are to show love to, who is our neighbor...and goes even deeper with it. He implies we aren't to be concerned with who our neighbor is, with who's worthy of our love... because the religious scholar wanted to narrow down who he should be showing love to, he wanted to perhaps justify his own actions... Samaritans were viewed as traitors by people like the Scholar... he did not see them the way God does... they were not other "I"'s.

Jesus takes the commonly held belief that Samaritans were the villain and makes one the hero. Jesus goes to the heart of the matter and straight to the scholar's heart.

It's not a question of who you show your love to. It's not a question of if they are deserving of this radical love. Just show love. Become love. Period.

So as we are unpacking "Love your enemies," so far we have looked at the Love part, but there is still the last part, the enemies part. Let's take a look at it...

Let's start with the definition of Enemy. Enemy comes from the Latin, *inimicus*. If we break that down, in- means "not" and amicus, which means "friend." So enemy means "Not Friend." Pretty simple and straight forward. Jesus is telling us to love those that aren't our friends, ok got it.

Another one of the issues with trying to define a word like "enemy" is that while simple on the outside, it is very complicated once you start to really think through it. It is hard to define Enemy as it has so many different connotations and uses. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary Defines it as...

"1 : one that is antagonistic to another, especially: one seeking to injure, overthrow, or confound an opponent

2 : something harmful or deadly - alcohol was his greatest enemy

3a : a military adversary

b : a hostile unit or force"

And Interestingly, the term doesn't seem to be understood or applied universally. And it can even change over time for many people. While researching for this message I came across a paper titled, **The Love of Hating: The Psychology of Enmity** by psychologist Ofer Zur, Ph.D. He explains it like this,

"The term "enemy" seems to have a wide range of meaning. A classic study in the United States in the midst of the cold war revealed that young students viewed the Soviets as "the enemy," not because they posed a physical threat to the United States but due to their different ideology and competitive stand as a super power. Personal enemies, unlike national ones, were never described as someone with opposing views. It seems that the characteristics that constitute an "enemy" are changing. Most adults over age fifty who have gone through some personal experience with war define "the enemy" in the traditional way, meaning the country with which we are at war. However, most young people in Europe and the United States have not experienced any war during their adult lives and consistently define "enemy" in more abstract terms, involving different ideologies, religions, values or competition for world domination. The definition of the enemy has been broadened and linked mostly to those who are different and unknown rather to those who are threatening."

So putting that all together, what we see as our enemy is very much connected to us, to our perceptions, principles, and beliefs. I mean, really, if you think about it, you can decide to make anybody your enemy at any point, just like you can decide to make anybody your friend. **It is all in relation to how you feel about them and how you relate to them.**

Additionally, an often overlooked point that Jesus seems to be making is that **we are not in control of whether someone else makes us their enemy or not.** He's telling us that we are responsible for whether we make others our enemies. I find this interesting because when I was younger I thought it was wrong to "not be friends" with everyone. As a youth pastor, I still see this as a big issue today. So much anxiety and effort in our youth goes into making sure that they are "friends" with everyone around them... and they can get bent out of shape when people don't see them as friends. I think it's helpful to notice that Jesus is by no means saying you should be friends with everyone. In fact, as those of us who have made it through the teenage years can attest, we probably shouldn't be friends with everybody; it's not possible and it could even be detrimental to you to have that kind of mindset. It also means that we don't have to carry the burden of how others may view us. Maybe other people see us as an enemy, but we don't have to see them that way.

An enemy can be a superficial thing, like when kids say they have a "frenemy", whatever that is. The real meat and potatoes of Jesus asking us to "love our enemies" comes in when we take a long hard look at our inner spiritual workings. When we take the uncomfortable step of examining our actual feelings towards our enemy. When our enemy is no longer a benign "not friend" and starts to be a target of our negative emotions... when we do the *opposite* of what Jesus is calling us to do... when we do what is the common human understanding... we Hate our enemies.

Hatred is an uncomfortable word, it's a word that gets thrown around a lot, probably without much thought put into it. But what did Jesus mean by "enemy"?

Hatred is difficult to define and surprisingly hasn't had as much research done on it as you might think. Psychologists have found it hard to actually get empirical data on hatred because of its complex nature. Apparently when asked, most people don't say that they have experienced hate themselves. They say that they have experienced extreme emotions like anger, that they have seen *other* people who are hateful towards others, but they themselves, no. Now clearly this can't be the case, it is more likely that we either don't have a solid understanding of what hatred is, or that perhaps it is so socially unacceptable to entertain the idea that we might harbor hatred for other humans that we can't admit it to ourselves, let alone others.

Another reason hatred is difficult to define is because it is so closely tied to strong emotions that it is difficult to differentiate it from those other emotions. When does anger, or contempt, or disgust, become hate? Many psychologists aren't even sure Hate itself is an emotion, it may be a conflation of other emotions that turns into something greater than the parts. Regardless of the finer points, there are some qualities of hate that most psychologists can agree on that will help us define it as more than just a strong negative emotion.

First, hatred is defined as a long-lasting negative emotion. For example, when you get angry at someone or something, you experience immediate negative emotions but those strong feelings tend to go away as the incident that created them resolves. With hatred, the strong feelings tend to last much longer than they reasonably should... so Hatred often takes much more work to get past, if we can get past it at all.

Next, **hatred is characterized by believing the target of the hate has a malevolent nature, malicious intent, or is evil.** With other emotions, the target of the emotion is the behavior or event that caused you to feel the emotion. For example, if someone is making a joke about you that hurts your feelings, especially if it's in a public setting, you have a good chance of feeling humiliated. If the person who did this apologizes and stops doing this, your feelings of humiliation will likely decrease and eventually disperse.

However, depending on the details of the situation, your humiliation may become hatred if you believe that the person is doing this on purpose... and you decide that they won't change... they can't change... because you judge that, at their core, they are malicious and determined to harm you. You then perceive that you are the victim of this evil perpetrator. It is very important to note that this is all happening inside the HATER, it's the person with the hatred within their inner thoughts and beliefs about another person. This might not be rational or correct, however, to the person with the hate, it seems totally justified. Sound familiar?

It is worth noting that hatred can build up over time. When a person continually does something that causes us to feel negative emotions, it might not start as hatred. But if it keeps occurring it becomes easier and easier to start believing that the person doing or saying these things is malicious or evil. We reinforce our own bias and victim status over time until it becomes full blown hate. And what's worse, it makes us feel good and right and just to do it.... Because they deserve it after all...

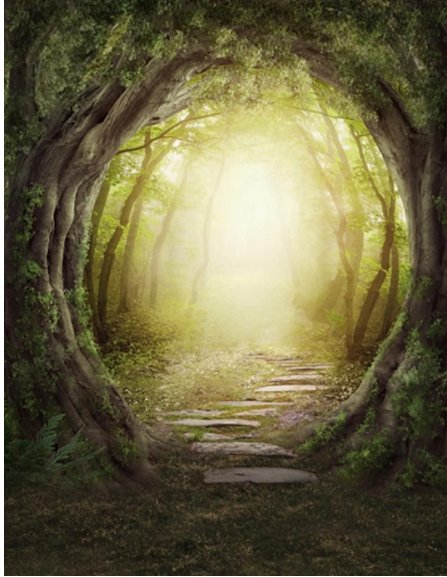
But make no mistake: hate is not good, right, or just... and it is not Godly.

The next characteristic of hate is that **it has a different goal than other negative emotions**. Negative emotions like anger, contempt, or disgust, lead us to have actions tied to them that have specific goals in mind. For example, we will look at anger again. When you feel anger, your goal becomes wanting to make that cause of the anger stop. This can lead you to attack what provoked either verbally or physically. And when it's just anger, and the cause is confronted and stopped, the angry feelings usually subside. Hatred, however, is going to the next step... remember, with hatred it's believed that the object of the anger is malicious. You perceive them as fully in control, not crazy, fully aware, and intentionally doing this to you... they are evil... Hatred evokes inside you the desire to *harm* the one making you angry, not just *correct* them. It makes you want to *eliminate* them all together... because, remember, when we hate, we have deceived ourselves into believing that we have the right to hurt them back.

Hate is believing that our enemies are not made in the image of God, that they are not I's, that they aren't worthy, that they are intentionally malicious and evil. Hate is distance, exclusion, demonization, and destruction. Hate is our doing, our making, we choose it and perpetuate it... In short, Hate is the corrupted twisting of Love, Hate is the antithesis of God.

This is some heavy stuff... but it's some heavy stuff that we need to hear right now. We are all painfully aware that we live in a world of division, confusion, lies, fear, and darkness. A world that is, in large part, living out the destructive dynamics of hate that we've been talking about this morning. A world that wants to force you to comply with its perceptions and desires... whatever they might be... because it believes opposition should be crushed, thought should be controlled, morality is relative. A world that claims it stands for love but acts out in so much hatred.

And we all live in this world, and we all feel the sadness and anxiety that this division and hatred bring. And sadder still, these dynamics are not present only in the world out there... they are also at work within the Church... and within each of us who choose to participate in those dynamics. How do we participate? We participate each time we utter "idiot" under our breath about people on Facebook... or call people we see on the news "morons"... and forget that these "others" were created in the likeness and image of God. We participate when we justify our self-righteous anger... when we refuse to hear or associate with others who are "different" from us. These beliefs and actions, and many others like them, become the stones we throw at our enemies. We spend so much time crafting the most effective stones to throw... each logical argument, each scientific fact, each political talking point, each bible passage thrown towards our "enemies" become the paving stones for the path of hatred.



But there is Good News! We can choose to stop carving the perfect stones to hurl at our enemy and just... put them down... stop... throwing... stones... realize there is another world... another path out there. We may have let it get overgrown being too busy chipping away at our little stones. But it's there, it's always been there, and once we do some gardening and clear away the weeds, we will be able to see the master crafted path... It's called the Kingdom of God... and Jesus Himself is the Way. We don't need to build it ourselves... we just need to walk in it. And to continue the metaphor... each stone on the path is etched with the virtues we walk in – Joy, Peace, Kindness, Patience, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, Self-control, and most importantly, Love. And Jesus walks with us... every step of the way.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan Jesus asks His listeners, "What does the bible say? How do you read it?" and my answer is,

Even though I'm not perfect, I want to walk this path... I believe these principles with all of my heart. I believe the only way we will get through these times is by following Jesus, who is the Way. I will choose to build bridges to others, speak honestly what is in my heart, listen to what is in the other's heart, lean into hope and faith, and try to be a light in this darkened world. I'll strive to see others as beloved... and relate as "I and Thou." I will actively believe the best in people, give the benefit of the doubt, and simply love the best I can... I will most likely stray and stumble, I will be tempted to stop and pick up stones, but with Jesus' help, I know I will always be reminded to put them down and find the way back to the path that will lead me to grow into a better me, to live a better life, and to try to make my part of the world just a little bit better.

Now, as we close, I invite you to consider your response to Jesus' question... and then, as Jesus says, "Go and do the same."