

Gary M. Morello

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Love the Unlovable

Matthew 5:43-48

Last week, here at our church we celebrated the lives of **all** our young people. Celebration Sunday was awesome! Children were laughing, parents were smiling and EVERYONE was rejoicing -- as we should have been. The joy that filled this room was contagious. It is such a gift to be apart of a welcoming, inviting and radical accepting church.

Our church opens its doors to anyone regardless of age, race, sexual identity, creed, religion or lack of religion! Christ's church, **is** a place for everyone.

Thank God we have a **spiritual home** to gather in, when darkness creeps its way into the world, into our nation, into our families and into our own lives.

Just hours before we began to worship God last Sunday -- an event took place at Pulse Night Club in Orlando Florida – an event **SO dark** that it rattled **the core** of our world, nation, families and personal souls.

The news was absolutely devastating -- over 100 innocent people were shot by another human being with a rifle. Forty-nine people have died and 53 people have been wounded.

President Obama said in an address to the nation from the White House. "We know enough to say this was an act of terror and act of hate."

Obama, in his 8th year as President of the United States of America has become a veteran at addressing our nation on 8 occasion because of Mass shootings. Heart breaking information to think about...

But here is the truth, **we have** to think about these issues. These life destroying occurrences are taking place more and more as time goes on. Violence, war and hate have crossed the border and entered there way into our nation like never before.

Shocking realities for us all!

- We are Teaching and educating our young people on how to exit a situation when a gunman opens fire
- Hospital drills are being done where immediate evacuation is practiced due to a gunman simulation
- Every other T.V station you turn on reports some horrific act of hate that took place due to gun violence.

This is our America! This is **our reality!**

And here's the thing -- This darkness clouds our emotions.

When tragedies hit close to the heart; Anger, Fear, Rage and Judgment enter into our lives and paralyze us from accessing love. We tend to view the human beings that commit these acts of sin as **EVIL and as The ENEMY!**

So, we are faced with a very difficult question? How can we open our hearts to love, letting God's light enter into our being so that we can cast away the darkness?

To find an answer that counters our **natural human instinctive emotions** We must look to God for clarity.

God's invitation for us is found in Holy Scripture when Jesus preached his sermon on the mount in the Gospel of Matthew Chapter 5

Jesus says:

⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, **Love** your enemies and **pray** for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes **his sun rise on the evil** and **on the good**, and sends rain on the righteous **and on the unrighteous.**

In Matthew 5:43, Jesus explains the current thinking that Israel wrongly derived from the Law of Moses. "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." He goes on to explain why this is wrong thinking and that we must live in love towards all no matter how they behave towards us. We are called to a higher standard of behavior.

We do not treat others as a mere reaction to how they treat us but rather we treat them according to the love of God.

The context of Matthew 5:43-48 has nothing to do with perfection and imperfection as we see it but instead it is dealing with the maturity of our relationships with one another. We can react childishly by responding to negative emotions or we can be spiritually mature, following the example of our God, and extend love **EVEN** when people are NOT worthy of it.

What is SO inspiring about Jesus is that regardless of what you believe about Him, He calls **EVERYONE** into a relationship with love despite circumstance.

Loving your enemy is a high calling! There is NO simple answer to this task. But Jesus is offering us an alternative, an alternative that has little do with the other party involved and everything to with us.

Jesus says: “But I say to you, **LOVE** your enemy. Notice that there is a pause after Jesus says -- But I say to you, followed by the word **LOVE**. Love here is being used as a verb **meaning** it requires action on our part. To love your enemy means you have to make **a decision** to do it. **A decision** about how you are going to see the value of another human life.

God’s love is **NOT** a *feeling* as much as it is a *decision* to wish for the well being of others. Breaking it down like this it becomes easier as Christians to want for the well being of everyone **NOT** just for those we care about.

Once this has been established and **a decision** has been made to view others and ourselves as children of God rather than as the enemy or evil -- we can enter back into a relationship with our heart.

The heart is where human beings can find God's light! And what is in God's light will allow us to open our eyes to blue skies rather than dark clouds.

The Apostle Paul says in Romans 3: "since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God;"

Every single human being that has walked this earth has sinned. And what do all of us ask for from God when we have done something wrong? We ask for **forgiveness**:

This virtue is one of Jesus' greatest. Jesus Christ embodied the spiritual principle of forgiveness, which has allowed for radical inclusion and hospitality among human beings.

**Forgiveness is also a decision that we all need to practice!
This decision is hard but we know anything worth something
in life takes work...**

Whenever any of these unspeakable mass shootings happen we watch how quickly people point fingers. Everyone is Ready to jump on the bandwagon of hatred.

The mentality becomes **An eye for an eye! This just leads to more hate. And we all do it!**

In her book, Lessons in truth, H. Emilie Cady says this about forgiveness: “If you have ill will toward anyone, if you are prejudiced against anyone, if you have accused anyone even in your silent thought of injustice, or if you have criticized anyone, sit down alone at night before retiring and mentally ask God to forgive you.”

When we invite God into our lives and communicate with God for forgiveness **pain transforms into compassion.**

Jesus says in Matthew chapter 6 verse 15: “But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”

What wisdom can be found in forgiveness! The human spirit as a result of God’s power is granted space to forgive others and ourselves. As a matter of fact, it can literally change perception. Rather than looking at another human life as the enemy or evil... We can see sunrise and righteousness.

Jesus in this mornings reading challenges us to do exactly that! He says: “For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.”

Forgiveness can be more than a **theory** we can actually live it **by** putting ourselves in the shoes of other people and have compassion for their pain and suffering.

Let’s never forget what Jesus did on the cross! Nailed and crucified to a piece of wood, innocent blood and a loving heart he cried out:

“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’

These people involved in these mass shootings, what was happening in their lives that made them commit such vicious acts of hate? Perhaps their souls were tormented. We may never know the full story or the whole truth but **to hate is to suffer.**

Nothing about a mass shooting is acceptable. Honestly, it is atrocious.

But God is asking each one of us to rise above and make a decision to love the unlovable.

By making a **decision** to love our enemy we in turn can unite as one in Christ and bring Joy back into the world. Light can penetrate the darkness. And Love can kiss hate away.

Consumed with toxic hate in his heart for himself and others a young man committed the deadliest mass shooting in the United States and the nation's worst terror attack since 9/11.

We have an opportunity as individuals and as a community. The opportunity is to take our decision of love and forgiveness and put them into action. **Exposing to the world a heart filled with love rather than a mind confused by hate!**

The action is to stand in solidarity with the LGBTQ community, to hold hands with the vast majority of Muslims in our nation who are people of peace, and to be apart of the solution rather than the problem!

We need to condemn the hatred of homophobia and Islamophobia, as well as give voice to removing these weapons of mass violence from our streets, and promising not to forget.

Not to forget the pain that accompanies loss. We have lost many lives because of reckless behavior. Our hearts go out to everyone who has been affected by this injustice.

In 1964, Martin Luther King, Jr., said this: "Hatred paralyzes life; **love releases it**. Hatred confuses life; **love harmonizes it**. Hatred darkens life; **love illuminates it**."

If God's light is ever going to enter darkness – **WE MUST** make a **decision** to invite love into the equation even when we can't feel its presence.

All around the world people are **shouting,**
loudly
2 words...
Love wins, Amen...