



Rector's Essay - Loving like Jesus

By Jarrett Kerbel (05/15/26)

How did Jesus love the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Romans? We all know and confess that God is love and that Jesus is our clearest picture of God's love in action. How did Jesus display that love among the many enemies who surrounded him and wished to do him harm?

Followers of Jesus see his love most clearly in the Cross and Resurrection. By taking on all the consequences of human sin in the Cross and rising again as the vindication of God's faithfulness on the third day we see Jesus reconciling humanity to God. In other words, Jesus restores the bond of love God wants with us but we are not able to establish without God's help. The cross is the Glory of God because in it we see the ultimate act of self-sacrificial love.

After the Resurrection, we know that the way, the truth, and the life of Jesus are the way God favors, the faithfulness God will always vindicate. So, we need to study Jesus and his ways carefully so we can benefit from his example of faithfulness.

Which returns me to the question of how Jesus loved his enemies. During the time of his earthly ministry Jesus loved his opponents by engaging them in face to face arguments. Jesus did not shy from a debate as a teaching opportunity and he did not want to leave his interlocutors mis-informed about the Kingdom of God or languishing in fruitless illusions or falsehoods. Jesus loved enough to tell the truth and to correct the misguided.

As a parent, I can relate. How many times have I had to practice tough love with my kids? When they make bad choices the calling of a loving parent is correction. As the mature and responsible adults in the relationship we do know what is best for the

flourishing of our children in most cases, at least when they are minors. To love, is to want what is best for this person, even when they do not see it.

So can we conclude that love is not just affirmation and validation? Fair enough, but love is also complicated by loves that compete and form tensions among our commitments. Jesus teaches us to love God and love our neighbor and love our enemy. Each of us needs to balance the push and pull of various loves: my love for my wife, my children, my siblings, my community, my values and beliefs, the institutions I rely on etc. As a leader I am constantly balancing love for individuals, with love for the church community as a whole, with love for the institution, with love for the faith we confess, and with my love for God.

Love, as Jesus lived it and taught it, is not a simple solution to all problems. For Jesus, love is what pulled him ever deeper into the tensions that tear humanity apart. While he took time to pray on mountaintops, we always returned to the hurley-burly of the human community where he lived out his ultimate love under-pressure, among enemies, and in the face of daunting obstacles.