

"Loving Your Enemies"
by Rev. Frances Savill
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Luke 6:27-38

Most of you know that I am a military chaplain as well as a minister. Military training isn't easy, it is supposed to stretch and challenge us. Days are long... very long... starting with PT early at 0 dark:stupid, there are tests daily, new information constantly, inspections, timings, etc. It's stressful, and it's intended to be stressful.

I had my car and music CD on, and there was a recurring song that seemed to play much more often than any other.
The song was: Keep making me.

The words go like this:

*Make me broken So I can be healed
'Cause I'm so calloused And now I can't feel
I want to run to You With heart wide open
Make me broken*

*Make me empty So I can be filled
'Cause I'm still holding Onto my will
And I'm completed When you are with me
Make me empty*

*Make me lonely So I can be yours
'Til I want no one More than You, lord
'Cause in the darkness I know you will hold me
Make me lonely*

*'Til you are my one desire
'Til you are my one true love
'Til you are my breath, my everything
Lord, please keep making me*

I was pretty broken at that time, stressed and struggling, and I did not like that song. I couldn't pray those words, hearing it I thought; "You have no idea what you're talking about." Who prays "make me broken", "make me empty".

But I did pray; "Lord, please keep making me." And I did sense that God was using that time of brokenness, as part of making me, even if I didn't like it.

Courses end, and life settles down, and things are busy, and I found myself praying those words. At times I find myself calloused, and I need God to break me, a little, so my heart can be opened again. And my constant prayer is "Lord, please keep making me." Make me more and more into the image of my Lord.

This morning we come to Luke 6 with Jesus' teaching on what life in His kingdom is like. And in this teaching, Jesus describes an upside down world – values opposite to any other. Jesus call for radical generosity, and mercy.

His kingdom calls for servant leadership, where sworn enemies are to find a new way of life and be reconciled in Jesus. I find The Message to be most helpful in understanding what Jesus is calling us to:

27-30 "To you who are ready for the truth, I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the supple moves of prayer for that person. If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it. If someone grabs your shirt, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more payback. Live generously.

We follow a king whose crown is not made of diamonds and precious jewels, but a king who wears a crown of thorns.

We follow a Saviour who not only taught radical generosity, but he lived it, and practised it, and continues to show us how generous and gracious God is to us.

We follow a Saviour who not only teaches us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, but while we were sinners, while we were his enemies, he died for us, forgiving us, and showing us God's mercy and love.

I will often hear people say things like; "I can worship God as well or better on a golf course, than I can in a church." And that's true.

We can worship God any and everywhere.

And the church is not easy – there are so many different people with so many different likes and dislikes and things are not all the way I want them.

But for those who want to grow as disciples of Jesus, who want Jesus to continue to make and remake them, in His image, this is the better place.

Here we don't get our own way.

Here we are reminded that the values of God's kingdom are upside down to the values of our world.

Here we are reminded that we are called to be radically generous, merciful, forgiving and caring.

And here we experience God's radical love, forgiveness, generosity, mercy and caring for us in the body and blood of Jesus given for us, and through other disciples around us.

Lord, please keep making us.

The challenges, the trials, the problems we face can drive us to our great and generous God, and in him, clinging to him, we learn to walk in his ways.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus, your kingdom is not what we expect and is not easy for us. But in your love, we learn your ways, and you continue to make us new. Thank you that your radical love, mercy, forgiveness, and generosity meets us here. Amen.