THE 2013 BECHTEL LECTURES
Violence, Victimhood, and Recovery: Insights from the Parables of Jesus

Lecture One
Love's Four Objects and the Pursuit of Peace

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I wish to begin by expressing my gratitude to Conrad Grebel University College for inviting me to be this year's Bechtel Lecturer. I am genuinely honored by the invitation and delighted to have the chance to return to Canada, where I have made many valued friendships over the years (this is my sixth or seventh visit to this vast land). I am even more delighted to get the chance to visit Conrad Grebel University College, and to include it with the other Mennonite colleges and seminaries in North America with which I have forged strong personal links. There are no such Anabaptist institutions of higher learning in my part of the world, so I always find it both deeply rewarding, and oddly reassuring, when visiting North America to spend time in conversation and fellowship with like-minded Mennonite friends and colleagues here.

Two years ago my wife Margaret and I spent a week in Elkhart, Indiana, on our way home to New Zealand after visiting our son and daughter-in-law in New York. Our family had spent seven months at the Anabaptist Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart some 20 years earlier, and it was the first time Margaret and I had been back there together. It was an amazing week. We were received with such love and warmth and joy by so many people that Margaret likened it to being in heaven! It was a powerful reminder—not that we needed any reminding—of how deeply formed and how greatly blessed we have been over the past 30 years, not simply by the Anabaptist theological tradition in some abstract sense but by concrete friendships with many wonderful Mennonite Christian people. We are so grateful for all we have received from the Anabaptist-Mennonite

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family of faith, to which many of you here this evening also belong.

Among the greatest gifts we have received, unsurprisingly, has been an appreciation of the centrality of peacemaking and nonviolence to Christian discipleship. We have learned that to follow Christ is to own the "things that make for peace" (Luke 19:42, cf. Zech. 8:16), and that to belong to the church is to belong to a community of peacemakers: a people reconciled to God and to one another in Christ, and entrusted by him with the "ministry of reconciliation" to the world (2 Cor. 5:18). What that vocation means in practice will vary from place to place and age to age. Every setting has its own distinctive challenges.

In our own time and place, here in the West at the beginning of the third millennium, it means among other things having to wrestle with the deadly reality of global terrorism and massive state-led military responses to it, and with learning how to live together peacefully in a multi-faith, pluralist, globalized world. The sheer complexity of these challenges was thrown into sharpest relief by the dreadful events of September 11, 2001, events that dramatically altered world history. Historical change is of course a perpetually occurring phenomenon, and there is nothing new about our human capacity for cruelty and bloodshed. But there remains a genuine sense in which history *did* change significantly on that sultry summer morning in New York City when fully laden passenger planes were flown into the Twin Towers (and the Pentagon) and some 3,000 innocent people perished. Recalling that awful day, one British journalist writes: "I was in Brussels when Armageddon arrived."[1]

As well as plunging America and her allies into an era of seemingly endless war, the religious sensibilities of the hijackers and their handlers, and those of many in America who have prosecuted the so-called "Global War on Terror," have heightened anxieties in the public mind about the potential—even the predisposition—of religious piety to promulgate and perpetrate acts of unspeakable horror and violence. It has also raised questions about the relationship between the world's great faith traditions, and whether it is ever possible for them to "dwell together in unity," in the words of the Psalmist (Ps. 133:1).

[1] Martin Fletcher, "Sifting Through the 9/11 Apocalypse," *Dominion Post*, September 7, 2011: B5.

It is now a commonplace to hear religion generically excoriated—especially by the so-called "New Atheists"—as a singular cause of many of the world's most entrenched hatreds and conflicts. It is much less common but surely much more important to hear public discussion about how the unique power of religious belief and devotion—which is, after all, an ineradicable part of human existence and is never simply going to disappear of its own accord—can be harnessed in the cause of peace, justice, and reconciliation. (It is here that the Anabaptist-Mennonite experience has so much to teach the wider church and indeed the wider world).

A Common Word

There are some signs of hope, however. In October 2007, for example, 138 Muslim leaders in America published an open letter in the *New York Times* addressed to their Christian counterparts and entitled "A Common Word Between Us and You." The letter proposed that, while Islam and Christianity are obviously different religions, the commandments to love God and love one's neighbor are a crucial area of agreement between the Qur'an, the Torah, and the New Testament. The unity of God, and a commitment to love this God and to love one's neighbor as oneself forms the "common ground," they suggested, on which Islam, Judaism, and Christianity are founded, and thus furnishes a constructive basis for forging interreligious understanding and peacemaking. The following month an appreciative response, crafted by Christian theologians at Yale University, was published in the *Times* under the signatures of over 300 prominent Christian leaders. In July 2008, 150 scholars and spiritual leaders from both religious communities gathered at Yale to discuss and debate both statements. The proceedings of their conference were published in 2010 in *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor*,[2] and there have been further follow-up events as well.

Meanwhile, the Common Word initiative has grown into what is possibly the world's most successful interfaith enterprise ever. It has achieved unprecedented global acceptance, including endorsement by the heads of the Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Anglican, and Lutheran communions,

[2] Miroslav Volf, Ghazi bin Muhammad and Melissa Yarrington, eds., *A Common Word: Muslims and Christians on Loving God and Neighbor* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010).

by over 460 Islamic organizations, and by some Jewish authorities. The goodwill engendered by the venture has also begun to trickle down to a congregational level. According to Christian theologian Miroslav Volf, the Common Word project has the potential to become an historic watershed in redefining relations between the world's two numerically largest faiths.

Distinctive Frameworks

Even if all three Abrahamic religions share a common emphasis on love of God and neighbor, differences of definition remain. Muslims, Christians, and Jews will likely mean somewhat different things by the words "love," "God," and "neighbor" in the commandments, and there will be differences *within* each tradition as well. All may agree on the necessity of worshiping the one true God, but will disagree on the nature and attributes of this God.

For Christians, for instance, a proper understanding of the nature of God is inextricably connected with the doctrines of Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Trinity, all of which Muslims deny. For many Muslims (and indeed many Jews), these doctrines serve to imperil or impair or even contradict God's absolute Unity, which lies at the basis of the great commandment. But this of course is *not* how Christians perceive it. For Christians, there is still only *one* God—one numerically identical divine essence—but one shared by *three* modes of subsistence, as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. This tri-unity of God, moreover, is not some secondary or expendable detail; it is integral to appreciating what it means to love God and love neighbor. For, in Christian understanding, love derives from God's very own being, so that how we understand "God" will shape how we understand "love." As 1 John famously puts it, "God is love" (4:16), and "We should love one another because everyone who loves is born of God and knows God . . . for God is love" (4:7-8).

To say that "God is love" and that to experience love is to "know God" is to say more than God *has* love, *feels* love, or *expresses* love for his creatures. It is to say that love is an essential attribute of God's personal being. Now love, of its intrinsic nature, is a relational reality. It requires an object toward whom it is directed and from whom, in its purest form, it receives love in return. According to Christian Trinitarian confession, this relational give-and-take of love is present within the very life of God. God is

an incomparable and unique Unity, to be sure, but a unity that is internally differentiated, with reciprocating love flowing endlessly between the three persons of the triune Godhead.

This love also flows outward in historical acts of creation. But it manifests itself supremely, Christians believe, in the Incarnation of Christ—by which and through whom God graciously receives human nature into the divine experience. And the ultimate demonstration of God's love in all its unconditional, indiscriminate, and sacrificial perfection is Christ's atoning death and resurrection for the sake of our redemption. It is the self-giving life and death of Christ that serves as the supreme paradigm for what it means to love our neighbors as ourselves. "Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

So, then, the Christian narrative of salvation—with its undergirding apprehension of God's tri-unity (or what has been called Christianity's "complex monotheism")—offers a distinctive framework for understanding the meaning and depth of the love we are summoned to show in the great commandments. Muslim and Jewish traditions will similarly have their own distinctive insights into these commandments while demurring from certain features of Christian understanding. The challenge for all three communities is to develop not simply a passive toleration of one another's idiosyncratic views but a positive appreciation of what each brings to the table.

Such mutual appreciation will most readily arise from an open-hearted, sympathetic encounter between the most sincere believers of each tradition. Such interfaith engagement on the part of the most deeply committed affords the possibility of each encountering in the religion of the "other" aspects of what is good, true, and holy. And when dedicated believers of one tradition experience in the adherents of another tradition facets of truth, beauty, goodness, and holiness that they cannot deny, things necessarily change. When one finds *God* disclosed in one's neighbor and even, perchance, in those hitherto thought to be strangers or infidels or apostates or enemies, in that discovery lies the prospect of lasting peace—a peace grounded in something far more profound than passive toleration and far more enduring than anything secular politics can produce.

With this background in mind, let me now turn to one of the two places in the gospel tradition where we find the "Common Word" of love

for God and love of neighbor explicitly stated, expressly endorsed by Jesus, and dramatically illustrated in a powerful parable. The passage is Luke 10:25-37—a passage I will focus on in both these Bechtel lectures and drawing on my recent book, *Compassionate Justice*.[3] In this first lecture I will concentrate on the interchange between Jesus and a Jewish questioner about the meaning of the greatest commandment in the law, which the parable serves to illustrate, and in the second lecture on what the parable teaches about violence, victimhood, and recovery.

What Must I Do?

Luke's narrative opens with a certain "lawyer" asking Jesus what he must do "to inherit eternal life." The lawyer would have been a Torah scholar, an expert in the texts and traditions of first-century Jewish law and custom. The fact that he stood up to ask his question and salutes Jesus courteously as a "teacher" suggests he has been seated among those whom Jesus has just been instructing, thereby recognizing Jesus' authority as a rabbi.

The question he asks was probably a commonplace in religious discussion of his time, and it is likely that Jesus was well known for discoursing on it (cf. 18:30; Mark 10:30; Matt. 19:29; 25:46). As a specialist in the Torah the lawyer would have naturally assumed the answer to his question resided in the Torah. But where? How was the meaning of God's law to be rightly understood and obeyed? He was presumably hoping to elicit from Jesus a summary of the Torah's most fundamental or ineluctable requirements, perhaps captured in a single paradigmatic commandment, the fulfilment of which would comprehend all other precepts in the law and thus guarantee eternal life.

Jesus responds to his question with a counter-question inviting the lawyer to nail his own colors to the mast: "What is written in the law?" he asks. "What do you read there?" (v. 26). This was a standard rabbinic formula for inviting someone to recite or expound the relevant Scripture. What is most revealing at this point of the interchange is the extent of common

[3] Christopher D. Marshall, *Compassionate Justice: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue with Two Gospel Parables on Law, Crime, and Restorative Justice* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012). I have kept bibliographical citations to a minimum in these lectures because they are available in this book.

ground between Jesus and his interlocutor. There is agreement that access to the future world is a valid concern and should not be taken for granted; that the requirements of entry are disclosed in the Torah; and that performance of the Torah is not only desirable and feasible, it is absolutely essential. There is no trace of anxiety, on either side, about the dangers of legalism or self-righteousness or earning one's own salvation through accumulating merit. The key issue is not *whether* Torah observance is necessary for salvation, but *how* the Torah is to be construed and obeyed.

In response to Jesus' question, the lawyer brings together two widely separated commandments in the Torah: the *Shema* from Deut. 6:4-5, which faithful Israelites were expected to recite twice a day, and the formulation of the Golden Rule in Lev. 19:18.

> He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind [cf. Deut. 6:5]; and your neighbor as yourself [cf. Lev. 19:18]."

Here, then, we have the "Common Word" text. There are three striking features about this interchange. First, it is the Jewish lawyer, not Jesus, who nominates the love commandments as the law's center of gravity; second, in doing so, he conflates two distinct commandments into a single unitary obligation; and third, he construes this obligation to be principally a matter of volitional obedience rather than emotional experience. Let me expand on each of these observations.

The question of originality

The first thing to note is that it is the lawyer who offers the twin love commandments as the heart and goal of the law's teaching and the key to eternal life. This insight is not depicted as a hermeneutical innovation on the part of Jesus, though Christians have often regarded it as such. It comes instead from the cross-examining and somewhat hostile Jewish lawyer. Some commentators propose that he is simply echoing or reflecting back what he had first learned from Jesus' teaching. That could be so, but there is absolutely no hint of it in the text. On the contrary, Jesus expressly asks him to draw on his own existing legal knowledge to answer the question: "What do *you* read there?" The foundational importance of the love commands, in

other words, is another area of commonality between Jesus and the Jewish scholar.

This may come as a surprise to many Christians, who usually credit Jesus with this original insight. Indeed, enormous scholarly effort has been expended trying to prove that Jesus' teaching on the double love commandments was innovative or unique. To be fair, the evidence is complex and difficult to assess, and there are certainly distinctive features about Jesus' teaching on the subject in the Gospels. But none of the biblical accounts ever suggests that Jesus was alone in recognizing the pre-eminence of the twin love commandments. Certainly Luke has absolutely nothing invested in implying that Jesus' perspective was in any way novel or original. He even places the crucial confession on the lips of an antagonistic legal opponent, who was out to "trap" Jesus in his words. As far as Luke and indeed all the Gospel writers are concerned, this truly was a "common word" shared not only by Jesus and his supporters but also by his critics and opponents.

The conflation of the twin commands

This leads to the second observation on the episode. In answering Jesus' question, the lawyer conflates two distinct commandments into a single unit without differentiation, governed by a single verb: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength and mind . . . and your neighbor as yourself."

In the other parallel story in the Gospel tradition involving the love commandments (Mark 12/Matthew 22), the situation is different. There, love for God is identified as the "first" and "greatest" commandment, and love of neighbor as "the second" commandment, though it is "like" the first in character (Mark 12:28-31; Matt. 22:38-39). This hierarchical enumeration keeps the two commandments quite distinct. Love for God is given absolute primacy; love for neighbor comes second in importance, though it remains inseparably linked with the first. But this enumeration does not occur in Luke's episode. Here the lawyer blends the two commandments into a single obligation, controlled by a single verb. Moreover, Jesus endorses this amalgamation: "You have given the right answer," he says. "Do *this* (not, do *these*), and you will live." The two commandments are not simply juxtaposed; they are effectively combined.

What are we to infer from this? The inference seems to be that love for God includes and enables love of neighbor, while love of neighbor expresses and requires love for God. This does not mean the two objects are considered identical or interchangeable, with "God" and "neighbor" being different words for the same reality. There are still two objects—God and neighbor—and God is still mentioned first. But there is only *one* love. The key point is this: *There can be no love for God without love for neighbor, and no love for neighbor that does not involve pleasing or obeying God.* To love God with all of one's heart and mind and soul and strength—the totality of one's physical, moral, intellectual, and emotional capacities as the commandment enjoins—*requires* loving one's neighbor as well, and loving one's neighbor is an *integral* part of one's total response to God. God cannot be loved in isolation, but only in and through loving other people. This, again, is something on which Jesus and the Jewish lawyer are in total agreement. Love for God and love of neighbor are inseparable obligations. Without love for neighbor, it is impossible to love or please God.

Love as ethical obligation

This brings us to the third observation. The "love" that Scripture speaks of in all this is primarily a volitional and moral commitment, not an emotional experience. After all, if God *commands* us to love, then love must be first and foremost a matter of formal obedience. It is not a case of having warm, fuzzy feelings towards others—which cannot be ordered into existence anyway—but rather a case of *willing* and *doing* what is necessary to secure others' welfare.

Once more, this is something Jesus and the lawyer agree on. The lawyer asked, "What must I *do* to inherit eternal life?" Jesus responds by prompting him to recite the love commandments and then says, "*Do* this and you shall live." Love is something to be done, not something to be felt. Love for God is to be "done" by obeying God's will. Love for neighbor is to be "done" by acting in the neighbor's best interests. Both parties concur on this. But, for the first time in our story, a crack begins to open up between them on two other consequential matters—on how far love should go on behalf of its object and on how inclusive love's object should be. On these two matters, Jesus appears to sets a new high watermark.

Recall that Jesus' interrogator is a lawyer, and a very good lawyer at that. Like all lawyers he wants to nail down his terms; and as a good lawyer he pays very careful attention to the actual wording and context of the relevant legislation. The law stipulates that he must love his neighbor as himself, and Jesus confirms that by doing so he will gain eternal life. "But," the lawyer inquires, "Who precisely is my neighbor?" This seems to be a perfectly reasonable question, and one that close attention to the commandment's original setting and intent can easily answer. It is crystal clear in Leviticus 19 that "neighbour" refers to fellow members of the covenant community of Israel. It designates not just those living in close physical proximity to oneself but those sharing in the same full covenantal status as oneself. To "love one's neighbor" in Leviticus 19 does not mean to act benevolently towards all human beings in general; rather it means to uphold and protect the rights, dignity, and status of all those within the covenant community. In short, the "neighbor" of the original commandment is a fellow Israelite.

For Jesus, however, the key issue in the interpretation of Lev. 19:18 is not the definition of "neighbor" but the meaning of "love." Neighbors, according to Jesus, are not created by accident of birth, nationality, religion, or law; they are discovered through love. When love is present and active, the identification of neighbors takes care of itself. According to the rule of love, we stand in neighborly relationship to every person we encounter, irrespective of any secondary status that law, religion, culture, ethnicity, nationality, or creed might or might not confer upon them.

It is here that Jesus differs from the lawyer. Both accept that love of neighbor sums up the Torah and is essential for eternal life. But whereas the lawyer thinks the critical issue is the scope of the term "neighbor," Jesus considers it to be the scope of the term "love." The lawyer reduces love to its legal minimum by restricting the category of neighbor to fellow members of his own religious community. Jesus, however, maximizes the category because he refuses to limit the demands of love. Neighbors are not chosen or created by religion or nationality; they are found and cultivated through human encounter. Moreover, because love of neighbor is inseparable from love of God, and because the latter is meant to engage the entire personality in undivided commitment, there can be no exceptions to love's attentiveness and no limits to what love requires.

But how does Jesus convey his new, radically extensive understanding of neighbor love? How does he seek to persuade the lawyer of its radical implications? Not by means of abstract philosophical reflection or by exegetical-linguistic debate, but by telling a story—the so-called parable of the Good Samaritan—an imaginary little tale that operates on multiple levels and teaches many lessons. In my book *Compassionate Justice,* I probe the relevance of this parable (and the parable of the Prodigal Son) for legal theory in general and restorative justice in particular. In the second Bechtel lecture, I will illustrate how I do this with respect to the areas of victimization and recovery. In what remains of this lecture, however, I want to comment on the parable's relevance to peacemaking. For arguably the most radical and disconcerting feature of this remarkable tale is the way it elides the boundary between neighbor-love and enemy-love.

A Parable of Enemy Love

The parable tells of a man who is brutally assaulted on a trip from Jerusalem to Jericho and is left for dead on the side of the road. Two passing temple officials notice the unconscious man in the ditch. But instead of stopping to help him, they cross to the other side of the road and carry on their way. Next a travelling Samaritan merchant chances upon the victim. He is "moved with compassion" at what he sees. He bandages the victim's wounds, lifts him onto his own donkey, and transports him to a nearby inn, where he takes care of him overnight. The following day the Samaritan must resume his journey, but not before paying the innkeeper in advance to continue nursing the injured man back to health, and promising to reimburse him for any other expenses he might incur. Jesus concludes the story by inviting the lawyer to nominate which of the three characters in the episode acted like a true neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers, and then enjoins the lawyer to "go and do likewise."

Jesus' first audience would have been taken aback at the appearance of a Samaritan in the story. After the priest and the Levite, they would have naturally expected the third character to be an Israelite layman, since the threefold division of "priests, Levites and all the children of Israel" was a standard way of summarizing the diversity of the nation. Yet not only does Jesus use a Samaritan in place of an Israelite, he portrays him as responding

in a way that puts the religious leaders of Israel to shame.

The jarring nature of this reversal of roles cannot be emphasized too strongly. All the literary and historical evidence suggests that relations between Jews and Samaritans in the first century were implacably hostile. Both groups viewed the other in the darkest of terms, and tensions between the two communities were widespread, deep-seated, and sometimes viciously violent. Only by appreciating the full extent of this culture of mutual loathing can we begin to comprehend the far-reaching ramifications of Jesus' casting of a Samaritan as the savior of the Jewish stranger on the roadside.

Jesus uses the parable, we have seen, to expound the commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev. 19:18). But his exposition is stunningly subversive. Had he simply wanted to emphasize the need to show charity towards those in distress, any three individuals would have sufficed as actors in the drama, as long as the third one did the right thing. Had he only wanted only to take a pot shot at priestly myopia or clerical self-centeredness, the third person down the road could have been an Israelite layperson who showed them up by way of contrast. And had he only wanted to encourage moral concern for outsiders and opponents, he could have portrayed the victim as a Samaritan and his rescuer as a faithful Jew. But by deliberately *reversing* these roles—by portraying a despised enemy as the vehicle of compassionate, restorative love—Jesus effectively achieves two more radical outcomes: he expands the meaning of neighbor love to include enemy love, and he nullifies the identification of religious opponents with the enemies of God or the instruments of Satan.

Both moves were phenomenally daring. With few exceptions it was taken for granted in antiquity that one should love one's friends and harm one's enemies (cf. Matt. 5:43). Jesus, by startling contrast, deemed love of friends to be ethically unremarkable (Luke 6:32-34; Matt. 5:46-47), while commending love for one's enemies as the true sign of fidelity to God, "for God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked" (Luke 6:27-31, 35-36; Matt. 5:44-45). This was shocking enough. But what is doubly shocking in the parable is that the one who displays such God-honoring enemy love was himself deemed by Jesus' hearers to be an enemy of God, a "foreigner" (Luke 17:18), who knew not the God of Israel he falsely claimed to worship (cf. John 4:22), and upon whom divine judgment could legitimately be called down (Luke 9:51-55).

Jesus could have enrolled a Samaritan as the victim and had a Jewish benefactor stop to render him assistance. That would have exemplified love for enemy well enough. But it would not have deconstructed the pervasive stereotyping of other religious groups as inherently evil adversaries, and could even have reinforced his audience's sense of moral superiority towards them. To reverse the roles of hero and villain was an incredibly audacious thing to do. Kenneth Bailey explains how, even after living in the Middle East for over 20 years, he never had the courage to tell Palestinians a story about a noble Israeli, or Armenians a tale about a noble Turk.

> Only one who has lived as a part of a community with a bitterly hated traditional enemy can understand fully the courage of Jesus in making the despised Samaritan appear as morally superior to the religious leadership of his audience. Thus Jesus speaks to one of the audience's deepest hatreds and painfully exposes it.[4]

The parable of the Good Samaritan is thus a parable of enemy love and a parable of generous religiosity. It shows how the boundaries dividing people into mutually hostile groups are relativized and destabilized when individuals choose to ascribe absolute priority to love and compassion over all other cultural and religious reservations or inhibitions. Witnessing the desperate need of the dying victim, the Samaritan is so "moved with compassion" that an erstwhile Judean enemy is transformed into a neighbor and treated as such. The Samaritan extends to an anonymous stranger the intimacy of care befitting a close friend or brother, without giving a moment's thought as to his ethnic origins or religious loyalties. It is as if the whole sorry history of hatred between these two rival groups had never existed.

The parable teaches, then, that the familiar, comforting correlation we make between friend and foe with good and evil is deceiving and dangerously unreliable. Religious enemies are capable of doing great good, and compatriots can do real evil, sometimes by doing nothing at all. It also teaches that the most powerful way to overcome such destructive dualisms is by simple acts of kindness and compassion on the part of individuals who

[4] Kenneth E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Critical Approach to the Parables of Jesus in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 48.

reach across the divisions of fear and loathing that divide hostile communities in order to treat the "other" as brother, the foreigner as friend, the enemy as neighbor, the one who suffers as the object of human compassion.

Love as Compassionate Action

I said earlier that the "love" the biblical commandments speak of is primarily a volitional and activist commitment, not an emotional experience. Commentators frequently belabor this point, with a palpable sense of relief. They note, for example, that only by understanding love in non-emotional terms is it possible to make sense of "loving your enemies." Love of enemy cannot be a feeling, because enemies by definition are those for whom we do not feel tenderness or affection or warmth. We love our enemies, not by caring deeply for them but by refraining from harming them, hurting them, or killing them, or perhaps by actively helping them.

Now this is true, insofar as it goes. Biblical love is unquestionably an action more than a sentiment, something done more than something felt. But the parable of the Good Samaritan suggests there is more to love of neighbor than benevolent activism. The Samaritan's extraordinary actions—which are recounted in exquisite detail, as we will see in the next lecture—are the direct result of his being "moved with compassion" at what he saw (v. 33). This verb denotes a stirring in his innards, a gut-wrenching surge of emotion that propelled him into action. The love he displayed was more than a clinical, cold-hearted compliance to the dictates of moral law; it was a passionate, sympathetic sharing in the victim's personal suffering and isolation. The Samaritan did justice to his legal and moral obligation to love his neighbor as himself by *feeling* compassion *and* by *acting* in accordance.

For Jesus, neighbor-love is more than practical action, more than showing respect for the equal rights and freedoms of others (as it is in contemporary liberal ethics); and certainly more than choosing not to kill someone. It is instead a love patterned after our love for God. Just as love for God cannot be reduced to exterior actions alone but is all-encompassing in its reach—engaging the entire heart, mind, soul, and strength—so love for neighbor cannot be limited to external deeds alone but involves feelings, thoughts, and motivations as well. This is an important consequence of the amalgamation of the two Torah commandments into a single command,

governed by a single verb. It is not uncommon in the Abrahamic traditions to see a deep affinity between one's love for God and the emotional intensity of human love, especially romantic love. This is the common stuff of mysticism and worship. It is less common to reverse the relation and understand love for one's fellow human beings as demanding the same intensity and passion of love that we have for God.

But this is precisely what the parable teaches. The whole-heartedness of the covenant love for God enjoined in the Torah must also be extended to neighbors as well. *Both* God *and* neighbor are to be loved with the whole of one's heart, mind, soul, and strength. In both cases, the love entailed is volitional, rational, practical *and* emotional in character. Such love is commanded, not because it involves actions alone but because it begins with an intentional commitment before it is either an action or an emotion. We must choose to love before we do anything practical, and whether or not we feel anything emotionally. But, having chosen the path of love, actions and feelings will ensue.

The Samaritan acted with such sacrificial dedication to meeting the needs of an erstwhile enemy because he felt compassion for him. He saw him as a fellow human being in life-threatening need. This is only explicable if he had first renounced the dehumanizing stereotype that deems outsiders and religious opponents to be less than fully human or even the embodiments of evil. He must have predetermined that he would show care to all those he directly encountered in his daily life, irrespective of race, class, religion, color, nationality, or creed. He felt compassion because he had already taught himself to put the equal humanity of others ahead of all other considerations. Then, being "moved with compassion" at what he encountered, he engaged all the powers of his personality—his sight, heart, hands, strength, time, possessions, and intelligence—to meet the needs of a collective enemy.

This is the most staggering feature of the parable. The Samaritan's display of love exceeds mere charity; it is unreserved in its passion and commitment. This leaves us, as hearers of the story, with an inescapable question: Whence comes such all-encompassing love for others? Whence comes this intensity and generosity of human love that universalizes "neighbors" and even elides the distinction between neighbors and enemies? It can only come, Christian believers would say, from the Triune God, the

source of all love. It can only come from knowing and understanding the love of God, and experiencing that love in all its limitless depths and boundless grace.

Conclusion

This is perhaps the main take-away lesson of this parable for interreligious peacemaking. If Muslims, Christians, and Jews encourage those within their respective faith traditions truly to love God with all of their hearts, minds, souls, and strength, as their Scriptures all require, *and* to appreciate the extensive, self-giving nature of God's own love, *and* to model their love of neighbor on their love for God and on the love of God itself, then peace must result. "Everyone who loves," 1 John 4 says, "is born of God, and knows God, for God is love." And no one who is truly born of God, or who truly knows God's love, can hate or kill or demonize their enemies in the name of that God.

There is a second take-away lesson for peacemaking as well. The parable recounts a direct encounter between members of two mutually hostile religious communities and the emergence of a relationship between them. The Samaritan did not simply render emergency first aid to the victim at the roadside and then continue on his way. He committed himself to a relationship of enduring care and responsibility for the victim, both in the immediate term and into the future. There is perhaps an important clue here for peacemaking. The deliberate fostering of interpersonal contact between individuals from opposing groups is an extremely powerful though under-appreciated tool for conflict transformation. Arguably the best and only lasting way to initiate change in the attitudes of mutual suspicion and hostility that divide warring groups is by building one-to-one friendships between key individuals from both sides—what Jewish conflict specialist Marc Gopin calls "civilian diplomacy."[5]

Such concrete relationships between individuals from opposite sides of the tracks by their very existence complexify reality and disallow the wholesale demonizing of the other group. Just as the impact of collective violence is ultimately experienced by individual actors, and disseminated

[5] Marc Gopin, *To Make the Earth Whole: The Art of Civilian Diplomacy in an Age of Religious Militancy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2009).

through personal networks by the constant recounting of stories of suffering and injustice, so the impact of individual acts of reconciliation can spread through the relational networks tying communities together, and can gradually accumulate until a tipping-point is reached and society-wide shifts in consciousness occur. As stories of enemies acting out of character as enemies are told and retold, they erode the foundations of prejudice and stereotyping upon which historically entrenched structures of animosity rest, so that peaceful coexistence begins to be conceivable.

Jesus' remarkable parable of the Good Samaritan is one such story of enemies acting out of character as enemies. It is a fictional story, to be sure, but it is still an immensely powerful story for deconstructing the comforting yet ultimately death-dealing distinctions we draw between "us" and "them," "truth" and "falsehood," "friends" and "foreigners," "believers" and "unbelievers," "neighbors" and "enemies." Certainly it is immensely powerful for Christians because of the unique authority of the one who tells it. Yet it is also powerful for those outside the Christian tradition because of its intrinsic moral truthfulness. It is impossible to deny that the Samaritan in the story did the right thing, whereas the other characters did not.

However, the greatest challenge lies not in what the Samaritan did; it lies in closing words of Jesus. "Which of these three," he asks the lawyer, "do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" "The one who showed him mercy," the lawyer replies. Jesus said to him, "Go *you* and do likewise."

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