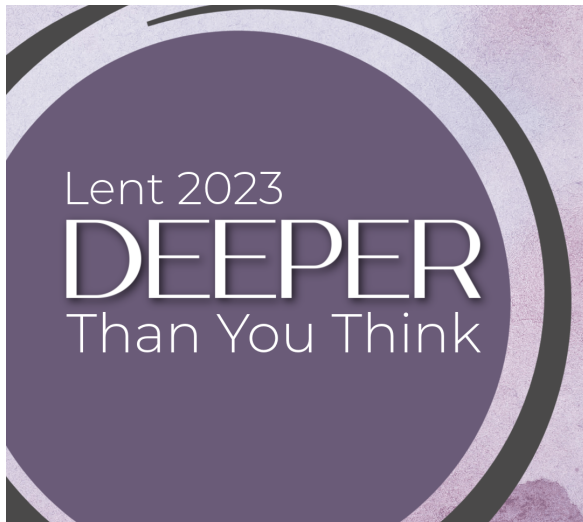


DEEPER THAN YOU THINK: Perfection

March 26, 2023

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Matthew 5:43-48

'You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 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. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax-collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters,* what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase or image stands out to you?
2. Jesus challenges his disciples to extend love toward those who were religious, political, and cultural outsiders, even opponents. What might this look like or mean in your context? What does it mean for a community (like a church), not just an individual, to love in this way?
3. Loving enemies and "praying for those who persecute you" does not mean letting people abuse, exploit, or take advantage of you. How might love also help someone draw needed and healthy boundaries?
4. What do you think it means for Jesus to ask his disciples to be perfect? What kind of "perfection" might Jesus be talking about here, especially following a passage that teaches about love?
5. Do you think striving for perfection is a good thing? Why or why not? How might perfectionism be destructive or unhealthy? How might striving after perfection be a blessing to others or a community?

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