

****Vid bumper**

Welcome to Redemption Church. My name is Chris Fluitt and I am excited about our new Sermon Series starting next Sunday. You are called to be a Leader.. too often we fall into failure – a Leader Slip. I want to invite you to join me the next 3 weeks as we invest in you and your calling to be an influencer of people – A Leader!

First Love

Today we are in the last week of our Sermon Series First Love. We have come nowhere near covering everything your Bible says about Love and keeping it first in our life. Today I want to end our First Love sermon series with a challenge. Please turn with me to Matthew 5:38. Today is going to be a challenging message... The challenge comes straight from Jesus.

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, `Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.'(NIV)

Matthew 5:39 But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.(NIV)

Matthew 5:40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.(NIV)

Matthew 5:41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.(NIV)

Matthew 5:42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.(NIV)

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, `Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'(NIV)

Matthew 5:44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,(NIV)

The Challenge

Jesus gives us a challenge. He challenges the system. He challenges the way we view the world. He challenges the idea of what it means to love and who to love.

The system is “Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.” In the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 19:21 & Exodus 21:24, it puts into law a system for dealing with conflict. If someone takes your eye, you take their eye, if someone takes your tooth, your hand your foot, then you take their tooth, hand or foot. Life for life.

This was the system in the time of Moses. This was the system during the time Jesus spoke in Matthew 5. And it is still the system today. When someone does us harm, there is something in us that rises up to do harm to them. When someone says something mean to you, your mind immediately races to think of something mean to say in return.

Jesus challenges this system. He challenges our system. He offers a system based on love. In this system we are challenged to respond in love.

Love has the highest value

In His system love has the highest value. The thing that was taken is not as valuable as the love that is given. The eye is not as valuable as love. The tooth is not as valuable as love. The revenge for a strike on the cheek is not as valuable to Jesus as Love.

Is this challenging?

If someone attempts to sue you or to steal your “tunic” (a piece of clothing – think jacket)... Jesus suggests that the tunic is not so great a value that you should try to stop them... in fact you should let them have it... SAY WHAT!? He goes on to say give them your cloak also.

Does sound challenging yet?

In the system that Jesus proposes, nothing material is more valuable than love. IN A WORLD OVERRUN WITH MATERIALISM AND GREED... IN A WORLD WHERE YOUTH KILL EACHOTHER TO STEAL THEIR SHOES... IN A WORLD WHERE THE PROFFESION OF LAWYER IS AN EVER GROWING FIELD BECAUSE WE ARE CONSTANTLY TAKING PEOPLE TO COURT TO TAKE THEIR STUFF..

His system combats the system of this world. His system says Love comes First.

HERE IS WHAT I AM NOT SAYING. I am not saying...

- God wants you to give away all your money and possessions and have nothing. No.
- God does not want you to defend your life or the lives of others. No.
- God wants you to let people abuse you. No.

Love has the highest value

The point is to let love be FIRST in value.

Then Jesus says this...

Matthew 5:41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.(NIV)

You may understand the heart of this verse. You have probably used the phrase go the extra mile before. There is greater depth of understanding here that requires historical context to understand.

Israel was under the control of the Nation of Rome at the time of Jesus. Any Israelite had to do what the nation of Rome said... But also any Israelite had to do what any Roman citizen said to do...

DING DONG

(Guy walks up and puts bags on the floor)

If at any moment a Roman citizen were to ask an Israelite to carry their bags, the Israelite was obligated to carry those bags 1 mile.

Imagine that...

You are busy when cooking a meal... **DING DONG**

Imagine the humiliation...

Imagine the abuse of human rights... because of their nationality they were better than you...

This happened with such regularity... **DING DONG**

... that Israelites would put down mile markers from the doorstep of their home so they knew where the threshold of 1 mile was.

This is the context of Matthew 5:41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.(NIV)

Think of the frame of mind a Jew was in when he heard Jesus say these words.

“These people treat me like a beast of burden, and you want me to go past the mile marker and walk 2 miles!?”

Jesus offers a most difficult challenge. And if we are honest we would admit that it might be hard to understand why Jesus wants us to walk the 2nd mile. I mean didn't Jesus come to end suffering? If Jesus loves us why then would He ask us to bear this abuse? How can this 2nd mile possibly benefit me?

The 1st Mile Obligation

Let me try to explain what is going on here.

Life stinks man. There is abuse in life. There are people who will treat you like garbage. Life is filled with cruel obligations. It seems like there is always

DING DONG someone showing up with a burden for you to bear.

Life is filled with 1st mile obligations.

And the abuse, the burden, the obligation appears so frequently that we too have marked off our 1 mile obligation.

We have marked off these intervals of “this and no more.”

We hate these obligations... We avoid these obligations... Some for good reason... but some have no good reason.

Ever drive up to a red light and see a homeless man with a sign...? Maybe you hung back a little so you weren't near enough to make eye contact... or you begged the light to green extra quick... or you simply pulled all the way up and looked straight ahead like they didn't exist... or you pretended to talk on your phone...

Jesus told us... Matthew 5:42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.(NIV)

Challenging right?

The 1st Mile is Obligated and be it a fair obligation or an unfair obligation... we don't particularly enjoy the 1st mile.

So why would Jesus suggest the 2nd mile? Is He trying to double our torment?

Love walks the 2nd mile

Jesus tells us to walk past our boundaries. He tells us to walk past the 1st mile.

DING DONG

They were obligated to carry the Romans luggage and walk the 1st mile.

If we only walk in obligation, then we are not giving a gift of love. It is not something offered but something required.

Answer this for yourself **Are we walking in obligation or in love?**

Love goes walks past what is obligated.

I am not obligated to walk another step with you... after what you did... after what you said... but it is love that takes a step past the first mile marker.

You raised your kids and now they are outside your home and are no longer your obligation. But you just wait for one of those kids to call home needing help. A good mom and dad come running past the 18 year obligation.

On your job you have a job description. This is your obligation. But someone who really loves their job finds ways to go beyond their obligation.

My dad was approached by a man with a drug & alcohol addiction and a directionless life. This man needed help making ends meet and asked for help by way of mowing my dad's lawn. My dad was not obligated to help him. He could have said get out of here and go get a job. My dad stepped past the 1st mile marker and said "you find a lawnmower and I will buy it for you and fill it with gas for you to start your own lawn mowing business. The man is making a living for himself today, is free from addiction, married living in a nice home, and serving the Lord today! It's because someone walked past obligation and into the 2nd mile.

You know that God has always walked into the 2nd mile with you right!? God has never been obligated to us.. He is the creator. Yet he walked with us and provided for us... Then we betrayed him and fell into sin. He could have laid the burden down on the other side of the 1 mile marker and walked away... but no! He kept walking with man.

The old testament is story after story of God walking with men who fell short, who failed, who took him for granted, who disobeyed, who worshipped other Gods... yet God walked with them.

Jesus, God manifest in the flesh, is God stepping down from the 1 mile marker of heaven and stepping into our world. He stepped into the shame and pain of

the cross. He stepped into the grave. He rose again and he is still in step with us today. He carries our burdens way past the point of obligation.

The 2nd Mile is better than the 1st

If you only operate in the 1st mile obligation, then you are not enjoying life very much.

The 1st mile is all obligation. The 2nd mile is YOUR CHOICE.

The 1st mile may be abuse. But even though it is abuse you don't let the situation control your heart. You don't let the abuse make the decisions concerning your soul. And even if you are in a seemingly hopeless abusive situation you can walk the 2nd mile. You can choose to walk in love.

Roman law might force me to walk this mile, but I can also choose to do it out of kindness and love. No law can control my heart..

Everything done out of free will & love is always better than what is done out of control. The greatest art in the world was done by artists who nearly starved to death. They created the art out of a love for the art. They did not create the art out of an obligation to their profession.

In your marriage it means the world when you see your partner go beyond obligation. THE GRACE THEY GIVE YOU IS 2ND MILE GRACE.

If you go to church out of a first mile obligation, then you don't really enjoy church. But if you come because you are madly in love with Jesus Christ...

If you worship out of obligation... now it is time to sing. We have to sing..

If you give out of obligation...

The 2nd mile is better. Walk past obligation and walk into love.

Quick things before I close and we pray in the altar...

In Jesus' system we treat our enemies as dear friends.

Matthew 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'(NIV)

Matthew 5:44 But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,(NIV)

In Jesus' system love is of first value and should always be our first response.

Stop acting from obligation, expectation, or fear. Make Love First

In Jesus' system we are perfect through love.

Matthew 5:48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.(NIV)

Matthew 5 closes with these words from Jesus. The words are frightening!

How can we be perfect? We have made so many mistakes..

The word perfect here does not mean without error. This word perfect means COMPLETE. Not needing anything to be added to it to become whole.

If we will fall head first into Jesus' LOVE FIRST system... if we will reject the works system and embrace His love, we will become complete and whole...

Here is what I want you to do today. I want you to pull up your mile marker. I want you to take away that boundary that marked the edge of your obligation. I want you to leave that marker here at the altar today.