



“Do not repay anyone evil for evil but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all. If it is possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all.”

Romans 12:17-18

“Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.”

Martin Luther King Jr., accepting the 1964 Nobel Peace Prize

“Two wrongs don’t make a right.” It was one of my Mom’s favorite phrases when my brothers and I tried to defend ourselves against blame. “Someone else had started it,” we would say. Tommy broke my Barbie, so I hid his Tonka truck. Retribution was justice! That was not the way Mom saw it. Two wrongs don’t make a right.

My Mother’s words were a valuable lesson to me and one that even to this day I remember and repeat when needed. Words that I have drilled into our daughters; as well as shared with many youth, adults, and at moments even strangers along the way. Words that seem perhaps meek, and yet words that warrant remembrance, as well as retelling, again and again until the point is driven home. Words that I wish would have meant something this past week in the face of many difficult situations and conversations, but namely one nationally televised Presidential debate.

Paul said, “Do not repay evil for evil.” And yet when we are wronged it is easy to want to lash out. Payback seems natural and justified. If we hurt, we want the other person to hurt. If we have been wronged or taken advantage of, well, then it seems only right that the other person receives that same kind of treatment. Someone hurls insults at you, well by all means you get down in the mud as well. It’s to the point where we have become comfortable with the adage, “Payback is a _____,” and saying it in the face of those situations where it seems only fitting that someone should suffer for their actions.

My friends, Christians are called to something better. This isn’t a political stand or my attempt to simplify the horrible realities that seem to surround us these days. This is simply faith-based truth; a way of life that we as believers and followers are called to. A call for all of us to think on and to apply Christian love, peace, acceptance, respect, and a sense of integrity where and when needed. Two wrongs still don’t make a right – and they never will – no matter how you slice it or dice it; no matter how much pain or suffering has been endured.

The pointed words from Romans, as well as Martin Luther King Jr.'s speech, are a reminder that we as believers need to be about more than the easy. The simple truth is we would all benefit from taking a breath at points and asking ourselves what the highroad might look like in the situations that we face? In the face of hurtful action, what might we do that is good?

Please don't get me wrong, we do not excuse the actions of those who have done harm, but neither do we descend to their level of human interaction. Instead we follow Christ, who lived peaceably and who offered healing and forgiveness to others. Tall order – no doubt – and yet a necessary one if we are to come anywhere close to living out the convictions of our faith and the realities of what it is to be a believer and follower of Christ in this world.

Prayer:

Gracious Lord Jesus, thank you for giving us an example of love in the midst of hate.

Give us grace to follow you in all circumstances and to share your goodness and peace with everyone.

Amen