

LOVE EXTRAVAGANTLY

PASTOR CHARLIE BERTHOUD

LUKE 6:27-36

LOVE
God
Neighbor
Enemy

Sunday, February 22, 2026

“Love Extravagantly” | Luke 6:27-36 | Pastor Charlie Berthoud

What are you doing for Lent this year?

Lent is the holy season where we are called to turn from sin and follow Jesus more sincerely, to the cross, and beyond into new life. It goes from Ash Wednesday, which was a few days ago, thru Easter, for 40 days, not counting the Sundays.

I have some ideas of how you can engage with this holy time.

For your Lenten practice:

- You can pray.
- You can fast.
- You can make room for silence.

And you can play tic tac toe. I'll tell you about that in a few minutes.

This year our Lenten theme is focused on loving God, neighbor, and enemy—teachings from Jesus himself.

In Mark 12:28-31, and in Matthew and Luke, Jesus teaches about loving God and neighbor, in slightly different ways. Listen for God's word from Mark.

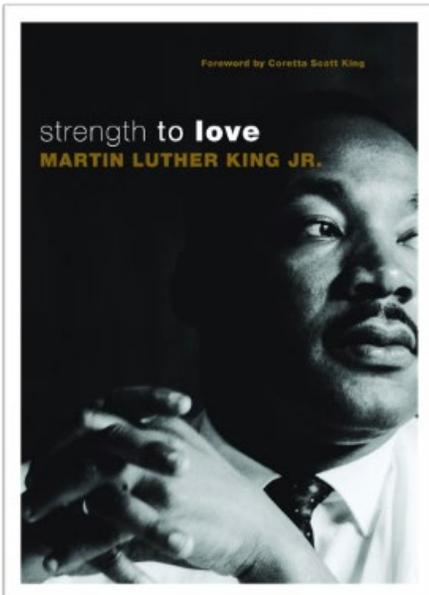
One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well he asked Jesus, “Which commandment is the first of all?”²⁹ Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one;’³⁰ you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’³¹ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

Along with the commandment to love God and neighbor, Jesus adds the very challenging commandment to love enemies, in Matthew and Luke. Listen for God's word from Luke 6:

“But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you;²⁸ bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you.²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt.³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again.³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.^[e] Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”

Let's be clear: loving enemies doesn't mean being a doormat and letting people walk all over you. Loving enemies means being strong, wise, and courageous in difficult situations.



The anthology *Strength to Love* by Martin Luther King Jr includes his sermon called “Loving Your Enemies”, where his words from the 1960s are very relevant today:

“This command of Jesus challenges us with new urgency. Upheaval after upheaval has reminded us that modern man is traveling along a road called hate, in a journey that will bring us to destruction and damnation. Far from being the pious injunction of a Utopian dreamer, the command to love one’s enemy is an absolute necessity for our survival.”

More recently, we have the simple and clear wisdom from the Super Bowl halftime show, where Bad Bunny concluded his performance with the words God bless America, followed by sharing the names of all the countries in the Americas. And the billboard projected the message: The only thing more powerful than hate is love.



There's lots of hate in the world. As we all know too well, we live in a time of deep political division.

“Loving your enemy” sounds simplistic and naïve. But MLK is right, it's urgently necessary. You dislike and maybe even hate the actions and politics of someone else, while still recognizing the person as a beloved child of God, worthy of love.

The life and teaching of Jesus remind us that everyone is a beloved children of God.



In the “Love God, Neighbor, Enemy” curriculum, I learned about the “Tent of Nations”, a Christian farm and educational center, on a hill, southwest of Bethlehem.

Despite rising tensions in Israel and Gaza, despite vandalism and hostility, they continue teaching agriculture and peace-building to anyone who is interested.

On a stone at the entrance of their property, they have a sign, in Arabic, English, and German, which says: “We refuse to be enemies.” <https://tentofnations.com/>

The Love GNE curriculum also reminds us that we’re not talking about three separate things, but an interwoven dance, to help us welcome the transforming love of God in Jesus Christ, and in return become more loving toward God, neighbor, and enemy.

So, to help with the hard work of loving God, neighbor, and enemy, I think we should play tic tac toe.

I’ve shared a version of this a couple years ago, encouraging us to love our neighbors. The smiley face in the center represents you. The eight blank spaces are where you can put the names of your neighbors. This might mean your physical neighbors, the people who live adjacent to you. Or it might mean people you interact with on a regular basis: co-workers, classmates, friends, or relatives.

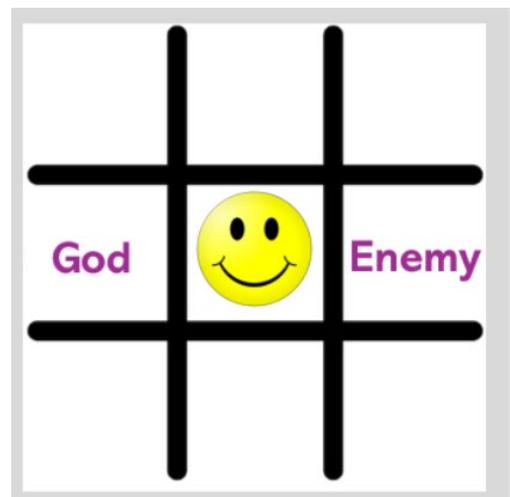
This time, in the spirit of the interwoven dance of loving God, neighbor, and enemy, I encourage you to reserve one square for God. You could put a cross in the square, or the word God, or an image of Jesus.

And I encourage you to dedicate a square for an enemy.

That might mean a neighbor that you’ve squabbled with. Or someone at work who bugs you. Or a bully at school. Or a family member. Or a politician or someone who votes differently than you vote.

Some of us might need more than one square for the enemy...!

For this Lenten series, we are using the Love God-Neighbor-Enemy curriculum for our sermon titles. Today as you’ve seen is “Love Extravagantly.” I don’t use the word extravagant a lot, so I looked it up.

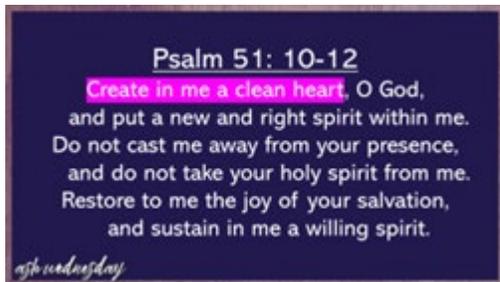


Extravagant

- lacking restraint in spending money or using resources
- exceeding what is reasonable or appropriate; absurd

That's a tough calling, to love God, and neighbor, and enemy with extravagance. Fortunately we have the extravagant love of God, who loves us no matter what. We celebrate this every Sunday with the good news, in Jesus Christ we are forgiven and we are loved.

From that love, we're called to love others. So, we have six weeks in Lent to ponder these teachings and become more deeply committed to the way of Jesus.



Four days ago, on Ash Wednesday, we gathered for worship. We heard the prayer of Psalm 51: "Create in me a clean heart O God."

I spoke about our Lenten focus on loving God, neighbor, and enemy. I encouraged people to pray for God to clean and strengthen our hearts, with our hands on our hearts, so that we could be more loving as disciples of Jesus.

We put ashes on foreheads and the back of hands, remembering that life is short, with the words God spoke to Adam: "You are dust and to dust you shall return." With that awareness of the brevity of life, the call to wake up and be intentional about loving God, neighbor, and enemy seems even more urgent.

As I pray, I invite you to put your hands on your heart.

Loving God, in this season of Lent, we pray that you would soften our hart hearts. Clean our hearts; strengthen our hearts. Remind us again and again of your love for us and for the whole world, so that we can become more loving towards our neighbors and enemies, with our families, with everyone. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.