

## Washington church of Christ

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# The Washington Messenger

Volume 2 – Number 43

December 29, 2013

## Order of Services

### Sunday December 29, 2013

Song Leader	David Osinski
Prayer	Bob Wydro
Preaching	Bob James
Lord's Supper	
Prayer for the Bread	Ralph Ruggiero
Prayer for the Cup	Arnold Thompson
Prayer for the Collection	Brian Jeffries
Assisting at the Table	Bob DeGrado
Scripture Reading	Bob James
Morning Closing Prayer	Derald Sanchez
Evening Opening Prayer	Tom Dolan
Announcements	Stan Thompson

## Schedule of Weekly Services

Sunday Morning Bible Classes	9:30 am
Sunday Morning Worship	10:30 am
Sunday Evening Worship	6:00 pm
Wednesday Evening Bible Classes	7:30 pm
Thursday Morning Bible Study	11:00 am

## The Quest for Perfection in Love

There was once much controversy over a Detroit Tiger's baseball player who pitched so well that he would have pitched a *perfect* game had not one of the umpires made a bad call on what should have been the last out of the game.

With all of the media coverage of this event, which went way too long, I thought of how everyone was placing so much significance on a baseball pitcher achieving a perfect game, and the fact that it is a difficult thing to achieve. This all made me wonder how many people place the same importance on striving for perfection in life!

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus stated;

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

Let's look at some of the context behind His statement. Immediately before making this challenge Jesus addressed one of the Jews many "wrestings" of the Law...

*"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? (Matthew 5:43-47 NIV)*

"You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy" must have been the popular way in which the average Israelite *synchronized* his life with respect to friend and foe during the days of Jesus' ministry. It could be that he learned this from the scribes and Pharisees and their misinterpretation of Leviticus 19:18 ...

*"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18 NIV)*

The object of this commandment was to emphasize love, not vengeance. And, its perversion in this instance drew a sharp contrast between neighbor and enemy, as if the purpose of the commandment had been that the former is loved and the latter hated.

With this in mind we can better understand the question posed to Jesus in Luke 10:29, "And who is my neighbor?" Was it only the Israelite? ... or was it the Israelite and the proselyte? For we read in Leviticus 19:34...

*The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt. I am the LORD your God. (Leviticus 19:34 NIV)*

It should not be surprising that as result of this woeful misinterpretation of the law, a wall of separation was built between Jew and Gentile ... the former to be loved, the latter to be hated.

And, it also seems that another *barricade* was erected between good Israelites, such as the scribes and Pharisees, and bad Israelites, such as publicans (Matthew 5:46), and in general the entire rabble that did not know the law (John 7:49). In such an atmosphere it was impossible for hatred to starve for it had plenty to feed on.

It was in the midst of this intensely narrow-minded and intolerant environment that Jesus carried on His ministry. All around Him were those walls and fences. He came for the very purpose of breaking down those barriers.

When He said, "I tell you, love your enemies," He must have startled His audience, for he was saying something that probably never before had been said so succinctly, positively, and forcefully. Most assuredly the first one to teach mankind to see the neighbor in every human being, and therefore to encounter every human being in love was Jesus. We need only to reference the parable of The Good (literally, the Compassionate) Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) to see this.

Although those hearing Jesus may have thought His statement of "Love your enemies" was new, it did not contradict the law. Actually, it was the fruition of the seed planted earlier. We stated earlier how the Old Testament forbade revenge (Leviticus 19:18) ... but, the Law went beyond that, teaching that whenever necessary one should render assistance to his enemy ...

*"If you come across your enemy's ox or donkey wandering off, be sure to take it back to him. If you see the donkey of someone who hates you fallen down under its load, do not leave it there; be sure you help him with it. (Exodus 23:4-5 NIV)*

From "Assist your enemy" to "Love him" was but a step. Jesus took that step ... and then challenged us all to seek perfection in our love.

In the context of this passage "perfect" means *brought to completion, full-grown, lacking nothing*. Jesus is saying to the people of that day, as well as to us now, that they, and we, should not be satisfied with half-way obedience to the law of love, as were the scribes and Pharisees, who never penetrated to the heart of the law. In a sense Jesus is repeating here the admonition implied in Matthew 5:45 ("*that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven*"), but He seems here to indicate even more definitely that it is the Father's perfection that we should strive to imitate; that is, perfection here specifically in the love he shows to all.

It is God who causes his sun to rise on evil and good, and sends rain on righteous and unrighteous. So, similarly the love of all those for whom Jesus' words were intended must not stop short of embracing everyone, including their haters and persecutors! Not only that, but in its quality, or character, it must be a love patterned after the Father's in patience, tenderness, and earnestness.

We must keep in mind that the love of even the most mature Christian is, and will always remain finite, whereas God's love is infinite.

Our finite love can never be anything more than a shadow of God's marvelous love. Nevertheless, a love that emulates God's love is attainable.

He is our heavenly Father, who will, for that very reason, not withhold this gift from His children.

### ***Our Prayer List...***

***For Spiritual Responsiveness*** – All of our wayward members ...  
Georgia DeLorenzo ... Sondra DeLorenzo

***For Physical Healing*** – John Baxter ... Larry Smith (Sharon Ferencze's brother) ... Frank and Antoinette Salerno (Annie's parents) ... Mary Celentano's father

***For Wisdom and Good Judgment*** – The Leaders of our congregation ... the leaders of our nation

***For God's Care and Good Providence*** – Our young people away at college ... Our young people here at Washington ... our members who are traveling ... the men and women in military service ... our congregation.

## ***EVENTS AND NOTES***

UPCOMING EVENTS THAT WE ARE AWARE OF ARE ...

- ✦ STAN THOMPSON IS SCHEDULED TO PRESENT THE MORNING LESSON ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 5<sup>TH</sup>.
- ✦ THE NEXT MEN'S BUSINESS MEETING IS SCHEDULED FOR SUNDAY, JANUARY 5<sup>TH</sup>, STARTING AT 4PM.
- ✦ ADDITIONALLY, THE LADIES BIBLE STUDY IS SCHEDULED FOR JANUARY 5<sup>TH</sup> AS WELL ... STARTING AT 4PM.
- ✦ OUR NEXT THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY WILL BE ON JANUARY 9<sup>TH</sup>, 2014 AT 11:00AM.