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Traders Point, how are we doing today? Are you doing okay? It is so great to be here with you. If you are joining us online, I just want to say, “Hello.” As well as all of you at all the campuses. Those of you at our Northwest campus, it is good to be here.

If you are just checking us out, maybe it’s your first time coming through our doors or watching us online, you picked a great time to join in. Right now, we are going through a series on Luke. If you are not familiar with Luke, Luke is a book in the Bible in the New Testament. It’s about the life of Jesus.

You may be saying, “If it’s about Jesus, why in the world is it titled Luke?” Luke is actually the author. Luke went to great lengths to investigate and to research and interview eye witnesses. He reported all of his findings and everything about who Jesus was, who he interacted with, the miracles he performed, and even what he said.

What we picked up last week was Jesus has just come down off this mountain. He chooses 12 of his closest followers—he calls them disciples. He says, “I’m going to let you guys in on some key information. I’m going to give you the inside scoop. I’m going to let you know I’m establishing this new community, this kingdom, and this is how you guys are going to live in my kingdom. “I’m going to give you some counter-cultural values.”

He starts talking about all these things and he makes some pretty radical statements up to this point. What we’re going to look at today is actually one of the wildest statements Jesus has ever made.

I want you to think about a time in your life, or maybe you know somebody, a family member, a friend, or a spouse who said something unbelievably crazy, something so off the wall, that you actually questioned the state of mind they were in. You’re like, “How have we been friends up to this point with you talking like that? Should I continue in a relationship with you?”

It’s that type of statement, something wild, something crazy. You may actually be sitting next to that person right now. Please don’t look at them. I’m trying to spare you a conversation on the way home.

This statement that Jesus makes is that kind of statement. And what makes it so crazy is that it wasn’t just any kind of statement, this was an imperative statement. For those of us who checked out during this portion of English class, or maybe just English wasn’t your thing. An imperative statement is an instruction. It’s a command.

He is going to give probably the wildest command known to man. It can be found in Luke 6: 27. If you have a Bible or a Bible app, go ahead and turn there.

And as you are doing that, I want to pose a question to you. This is something for you to think about. This is the question:

What is something you have a limit on?

Now, this can be an external limit, a limit that is placed on us like a credit card, or if you're a student here maybe it is a curfew. Maybe it's screen time. I don't know if you have that setting in your phone, and you're like me where you're just enjoying some good old social media. And you're browsing through, and all of the sudden you get this notification like, "Hey buddy, get a life. Get off your phone."

Is that just me? Okay.

It could be external. Or it can be an internal limit, right? Food consumption—I'm not going to eat that extra piece of cheesecake tonight, or I'm not going to eat past 7:30 p.m.

It can be around our speech. It could be, "I'm not going to say that." We call that a filter. Some of us are still trying to figure out what that is, but it's okay.

But for me, I thought I had a limit set. It was around heights. I would not classify myself as someone who is afraid of heights. There are just certain activities involving heights that I just really don't do.

Until about a week ago when I was talked into repelling down a 17-story building in downtown Indianapolis. I'm still trying to figure out how I got there. The crazy thing is I look happy there, I'm smiling. But inside my stomach is doing flips.

What is crazier, I look over to my right, and believe it or not our lead pastor is actually coming down next to me. Aaron, he is doing actual flips on his rope. He is such a daredevil. He is trying to figure out how he can go down the building without a rope.

He is placing bets like, "Hey, Riley, who can get down there first? Let's race." I'm like, "No, I just want to get down there safely."

I confidently thought I had a limit until I was pushed over it literally. And all of us have those. We all know what limits are. They are what cause us to go up to a certain point before we say, "I'm going to stop, or I'm going to withhold or retreat."

What is something you have a limit on? We all have them. God actually gave his people some limits in the Bible. He gave them some healthy guardrails where he said, "I want to protect you, and I want to benefit you." We call them laws.

What we are going to look at today is there is actually something God has instructed us not to place a limit on. I think we'll find that all of us have a tendency to put a limit on this, and it keeps us from living the life God has called us to live.

We're going to look at this crazy command that Jesus gives in Luke 6. Did I give you guys enough time to get there? Are you guys ready? Luke 6:27:

*"But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you."*

As I was reading this this past week, and studying it, initially what stood out to me wasn't necessarily the "love your enemies" portion, it was how Jesus started the whole thing.

I don't know if you caught it, but he said, "But to you who are willing to listen." So, I just imagine him like, "Hey, guys, disciples, bring it in. Focus. Matthew, over here. Focus, lock in. James, stop talking to Judas. He doesn't care about me anyway. I wish I could tell you why, but I'm not going to spill the beans just yet. Focus in. Listen to me, because what I'm about to tell you is going to change the game."

And moreover, I started thinking about what the whole disciples' perception of this movement actually was, who they thought Jesus was. Because to them, their view of the Messiah was somebody who was going to come in and dominate. Somebody who was going to overthrow the regimen and the Empire of Rome.

They thought he was coming in to kick some Roman tails and take some names Rambo-style, and they were here for it. They were like, "Let's go."

If I could paint the scene of how I envision this going down. Jesus would come down off the mountain and tell his disciples, "This is how my Kingdom is going to be." And Peter is sitting there sharpening his sword, ready for the action.

He is hearing Jesus talk about these counter-cultural values. He is hearing him talk about how God blesses the poor and the hungry, and those who mourn. Peter's like, "That's kind of odd, but I'll go with it I guess. It's only a matter of time before he calls us into action."

Then he hears, "For you who are willing to listen," and Peter's ears perk up. And this big grin comes across his face. He's like, "Alright, here it is. It is time. He is about to tell us to grab our weapons, load up, and ride out on some Romans."

And Jesus says, "But to you who are willing to listen," and he would have everybody on the edge of their rocks at this point, everybody is leaning in and it's so quiet you can hear a pin drop."

And Jesus says, "Love your enemies."

I just imagine jaws on the floor, eyes wide, people scratching their heads. Some of them even laughing like, "What did he say? Johnny Boy, did you hear what my man just said? He said, 'Love your enemies.' Is he serious right now?"

I can only imagine if their reactions were emojis, they would probably look like a whole array of emotions—mind blown, some people laughing, some people angry, some people don't know what to do with what he just said. It would have been all across the board.

But here is why. They would have been thinking about a common Jewish teaching that was taught throughout the synagogue. And it came from Leviticus 19. This is a command that God gave Moses hundreds of years ago for the people of Israel.

*"Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against a fellow Israelite, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."*

The disciples would have learned this in Jewish elementary school. And they would have held onto it, because it was commonly taught by the rabbis in the synagogue. It was taught with good intentions. It was taught as a law. But what was initially given as a guideline, over time started to become a limit.

They began to categorize their neighbors and their enemies. They said, "My neighbor is my fellow Israelite, the person who is another Jew. I'm only going to love them. I'm not going to love anybody outside of them. Anybody outside of my neighbor is unworthy of my love."

And here Jesus comes on the scene and he says, "No, these categories that you've created, neighbor and enemy, they are no more categories. I want you to take the limits off. There is no more limited love. I want you to take off your limits."

I believe we have that same disposition today. This isn't unique to the disciples' time. We all have these moments or these periods where we say, "I'm only going to love up to this point. I'm only going to love this type of person, or this group of people in this circumstance."

God is telling us, "I want you to take the limits off."

My question then is who is it for you? Or, maybe it's a group of people where you said, "I just cannot love them," and more importantly why? Is it because they dislike you, or because you hate them?

I think it's important that we look at some characteristics in order to classify who our enemies actually are. Let's look at what Jesus said. He said this:

Do good to...those who hate you.

Bless...those who curse you.

Pray for... those who hurt you.

What do you notice about this? We are on the receiving end of the treatment. We're not on the giving end of the mistreatment. So, I can't tell you personally who your enemy is. But what I can tell you is that Jesus has not called us to hate, curse, or hurt anyone.

If we, as followers of Jesus, find ourselves developing this in our heart we've got to do something about it. Even in 1 John it talks about, "If you hate your brother or your sister, you are a murderer at heart." The Bible puts murder and hate on the same level.

You may be listening to that and say, "That's kind of extreme." What God wants us to know is that he doesn't categorize sin. So, what we do as followers of Jesus, when we start developing this in our heart—which will happen, because we are human—we've got to take that to God and ask him to remove that junk that's there in our hearts. Only he can help us to repent and forgive.

As it turns out, when it comes to our enemies today, this is what I want us to take away. There is still some ambiguity around this. Who is my enemy? Jesus wants us to know this:

Your enemy isn't someone you hate. It's someone who chooses to hate you.

And what I love even more, is that Jesus doesn't give this nebulous command to go out and love your neighbor. He doesn't leave it up for interpretation. He's like, "Hey, if you need me to be practical, if you want me to get down into the weeds, I'm going to go even further. Listen as I continue to explain what this looks like."

*"If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you."*

Now, I'm just going to be honest that all of us have parts of the Bible we read and we're like, "Yeah, I don't know if I'm with that. Jesus, turn the other cheek. Are you talking literally, or is that figurative? What does that really mean?"

For some of us, growing up, we didn't hear turn the other cheek. From our parents, it was quite a different conversation. It was something different we were hearing. All I'm saying is that if you came home from school and said, "Mom, little Timmy hit me at recess," it was a different question coming from your mom.

It wasn't, "Are you okay?" It was, "Did you hit them back?" Listen, I'm not advocating for violence, all I'm saying is that Luke 6 was missing from some of our parent's Bibles back in the day. That's all I'm saying.

And even if you're sitting there and you're like, "I can't really resonate with that. I've never been in a physical altercation before," you can resonate with the fact that we all have things that get under our skin, right? Things that cause us to be on edge. It's just so hard for us to exhibit restraint and self-control.

And each and every one of us have that one person in our lives who knows just the right thing to say or which buttons to press to get us riled up. Again, you may be sitting next to that person. Please don't look at them. You know they're there. I think what's important for us to take away from this is that how we respond in these situations is an indication of who we follow.

And before I unpack what Jesus is trying to say when he talks about turn the other cheek and give your shirt, I think it's important that I clarify what Jesus is not saying.

So, when he says these things, Jesus is not calling us to be passive. It doesn't mean that God doesn't want us to protect ourselves or our loved ones from any hurt, harm, or danger.

Secondly, and this is very important, God is not advocating that you subject yourself to any kind of abuse in a relationship. Don't take this as permission to allow yourself to be treated that way, or to receive any type of verbal, physical, or emotional abuse ever.

Next, God is not saying that we compromise by tolerating any type of sin. He is saying you can love those who hurt you, and those you disagree with without validating their decisions and their behavior.

Lastly, what God does not mean by this is it doesn't mean God is not a God of justice. We see all throughout the Bible that God is a God of justice. God's heart breaks for those who have been oppressed. God's heart breaks for those who have been marginalized and mistreated.

God's heart broke during American race-based slavery. It broke during Jim Crow. It broke during the holocaust. And it continues to break as people are mistreated today. Don't confuse that with any type of feeling that God does not care about justice, because he does.

But what I want you to understand even in that is that God says, "Yes, I care deeply and passionately about those who have been offended during these acts." But get this. He also cares deeply and passionately about the redemption and restoration of those who are doing the mistreatment.

And that's what Jesus is trying to get them to understand. He is saying, "You guys are getting ready to experience some mistreatment, and how you respond is going to make all of the difference."

Even as I'm saying that, I can see some of you guys are like, "Yeah, but I'm still not there. You just don't know. Some people have got these smart mouths, and it makes it very hard for me to not say something back. I'm nice, but I'm not that nice of a person."

And I hear you. But can I just tell you that Jesus is not calling us to be nice people? His purpose behind that was something much deeper. It was to demonstrate the heart of God.

I think this is what Jesus was trying to get us to understand. Love is not based on a feeling. Love is not based on a feeling, it is based on action and attitude. And if you've been married for longer than six months, you can say amen to what I just said.

Because you remember that moment when you were standing at the end of the aisle, and you guys were gazing into each other's eyes. Your heart was fluttering and you had the little tingles in your stomach. Then what happened? You got home. A couple of months go by. And you know the tingles aren't always there. You've got to learn how to love even when you don't feel like loving.

You may say, "That doesn't sound very genuine. That doesn't sound authentic." But it's biblical. All we have to do is look at Jesus. Jesus was in a garden the night before he was getting ready to be crucified, praying to his Father.

"Hey Pop, if there is any other way we can make this happen, if there is any other way we can save them without requiring me to go to a cross and absorb your wrath, please I'm willing to do this. Let this cup pass from me."

What that tells me is that Jesus wasn't feeling it in that moment, but he still did it anyway. And it doesn't mean that he didn't love us. In actuality it magnified the love he has for us. What Jesus is trying to say is that if the only time you exhibit love is when you feel like it or when you feel people deserve it, then that's not true love.

And I think what is remarkable is that the disciples heard this, and they believed him. They ran with it. The first century church would go on to experience some of the most brutal forms of persecution. And it was their love that transformed the hearts of the oppressors.

Jesus said, "I want you to love the very people who are going to hurt you, mistreat you, and harm you."

But I think the key difference... One of the problems is what the disciples took as a command we take as a suggestion, a recommendation. This is what Jesus recommends in order for us to be good people. We take it as it's about morality.

Maybe growing up you heard that Golden Rule that we had just read, "Do to others as you would have them do to you. Treat others the way you want to be treated."

It was cute in the moment. It was cute when you were young, and then you grew up and stepped in to a real world that said, "Nice guys finish last." Then, what happened? It wasn't so cute anymore, right?

I think the problem was that it never took root because you were never given the why behind it. If you were never given the why behind it, being Jesus, it becomes about morality. It becomes about being a good person, a better person. When it becomes about morality, it becomes about us.

When it becomes about us, then love becomes self-centered and conditional, rather than selfless and sacrificial. And we spend our time trying to become better people rather than surrendered people. Okay?

So, I want you to understand this. I could put it this way. Our problem in following Jesus is we're trying to be:

A better version of us, rather than a more accurate reflection of him.

Can I just tell you that God is not calling us to live an easy life? That's not what the Bible is about. It's not a how-to manual, how to become a better person. Christianity is not self-help, it's self-sacrifice.

As followers of Jesus, we say, "I fully surrender my life to you so that I can be a reflection of you so that I can expand the boundaries of your Kingdom. And when I do that, I can look my enemies in the face and I can say, 'You can withhold your love from me, but you can't withhold God's love from me. Because you can't withhold God's love from me, I'm not going to limit my love for you.'"

And as Jesus is saying this, he wants us to understand, "I actually want to use you, the way that you love, to change the world. It has the capacity to change the world because, guess what? The rest of the world, they already harbor hate, they already seek revenge. But I'm calling you, as this new community, to be different."

Look at what he goes on to say in the next verse:

*"If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return."*

Jesus is saying, "In this new community, I am calling you to live this radically different life. I'm calling you to be so anchored in me that my love transforms you from the inside out. And not only transforms you, but those who are around you."

As you do that, others will see you and then begin to question, "How can you do that? How can you love somebody who doesn't love you back?"

My question is... Imagine if we began to actually love like this. What do you think it would look like if we no longer placed these categories or these boundaries around our love?

That person who, maybe in the future, is going to say something behind your back, what if you bought them coffee, took them out to lunch, and had a conversation with them? And they actually got to know you.

What if that classmate who ends up spreading gossip about you, or saying some things that aren't true?—what if you actually sent them a DM? A DM is a direct message for those of you who are 45 and above. And you actually said, "That hurt, what you said, and it's actually not true," and you began to give them some words of encouragement and bless them in the name of Jesus. It would confuse the mess out of them, okay?

What if that person who hurt you years ago, and you haven't been able to let go of it, what if you actually prayed for them? Now I mean really prayed for them. Truly prayed for them.

What if that family member who you always get into it with, you know, the one you are dreading seeing in a couple of weeks for Thanksgiving? What if this year you made their plate, you fixed their food, and you did it without over-seasoning their mashed potatoes with salt? Don't do that.

And after giving them that plate, you sat down and just had a conversation and you began to empathize and try to hear them out? And you asked more questions than you gave statements?

This is what Jesus wants us to do when he talks about loving our enemies. It's loving who we don't feel like loving. I want you to think of that person who you already determined in your mind is impossible to love. God is saying, "Them. I want you to love them. I want you to bless them. I want you to pray for them."

Because what we do in that moment... This isn't us just being nice people. I'm not telling you to be a nice person. I'm actually telling you to help people see Jesus. We're talking about eternity here, because as we do that we exhibit the heart and the compassion, and the love of Jesus. It becomes less about us and more about them.

If you don't hear anything else I say in this message, I want you to understand this:

Limited love points people to us. Limitless love points people to Jesus.

And that's what he wants us to understand. In the remaining time we have together I just want to give you three directives you can take to God in prayer this week, things you can do to help live this out.

Here is the first one:

Ask God to help you love—through the Holy Spirit.

And here is why this is so important. This kind of love, it's not natural. Okay? It's supernatural. It goes against everything that our nature craves and desires. We naturally seek revenge.

If you don't believe me, all you've got to do is ask my kids. They are four and two, and I didn't have to teach them to get revenge. They are just naturally good at it. Like, if the four-year-old takes a toy from the two-year-old, you best believe the two-year-old is coming back with some vengeance.

The two-year-old is like, "I've got you. I'll see you at arts and crafts time. Watch, I'm taking sharpie across your Elsa painting. You just watch." They are good at it. I didn't have to teach it to them, they just know how to get revenge.

As adults, let me just say that we're not much different. That's why it is so important for us to lean into the Holy Spirit in order for us to love like this. I actually love what Paul says in Galatians:

*"So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves."* Galatians 5:16 (NLT)

Paul will go on in this passage to give the fruit of the Spirit. There are nine of them: Love, Joy, Peace, Patience, Kindness, Goodness, Faithfulness, Gentleness, and Self-control. And let me just tell you, each and every one of those are required for us to love our enemies.

The second thing I want to give to you is this:

Ask God to change the way you see people, including your enemies.

Listen, we withhold our love from our enemies because we disconnect them from humanity. We have to remember that. Each and every person is someone who God created and Jesus died for, including our enemies.

What we have to do is we have to take that to God and say, "God, can you help change the way I see people? Help me to see them the way you see them." When we do that, he begins to give us a heart of compassion, empathy, mercy, and love.



Actually, I love this quote by pastor and author Rich Villodas. He says this:

“Forgiveness flounders because I exclude the enemy from the community of humans even as I exclude myself from the community of sinners.”

Listen, we can't love people effectively if we can't see them as people who need God's love. And we can't effectively show that love if we forget that we too need God's love.

Which leads me to the third directive I want to leave with you today:

Ask God to remind you of the grace you've been given.

I think we often get a case of amnesia when it comes time to administer grace and mercy. We tend to forget just how patient God has been with us, how much love he has shown us. We have to remember we are no better than those who hate us. We have to remember the only way we can be compassionate is because we know just how compassionate God has been with us.

Jesus makes that very clear as he goes on in that passage in Luke:

*“Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.”*

I think what happens a lot of times, when we look at a line like this where he says, “He is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked.” We say, “Wow, that's a little unfair. How can God be kind to those who are evil? How can he be kind to those who are unthankful and wicked? That doesn't sound like a very just God, that doesn't sound like a very fair God to me.”

Can I just tell you something? I'm going to get very personal for a second. The unthankful and the wicked? That's me. That's not my enemy. My enemy is not the unthankful and the wicked. I am the enemy. We all were God's enemies.

Paul makes that very clear in Colossians chapter 1. Look at what he says.

*“...and through him [Jesus], God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.”*

Can we celebrate that because that is Good News? He said, “We were his enemies, but not anymore.”

Do you want to know how I can look at somebody who hates me, who hurt me and show them compassion? It's because God looked at me, somebody who wanted nothing to do with him, somebody who rejected him with my thoughts and my actions, somebody who slapped him across the face over and over again with my sin, and said, “I'm going to be patient with you.”

In his patience, and in his love and compassion, he showed me mercy and he showed me Jesus. And God says, “I have every right to withhold my love from them, but I'm not actually just going to love those who love me. I'm going to love those who hate me. I'm going to prove it by going to the cross and dying for them.”

Jesus would die for his enemies. But the Good News is that as Jesus died on the cross and was put into a grave, he defeated the ultimate enemy because three days later he would rise defeating sin and death. And now he says, "Hey, I have done everything that is sufficient for your salvation. I've proved who I am. I proved that I am God, and all you have to do is believe.

"There's no way you can earn it. There is no more striving for it. I've done everything that is necessary to put you in right standing with me. I want a relationship with you, and I no longer see you as the enemy. I now see you as a child, as my child."

And if you are here today, or you're watching online and you want to make that decision. Maybe you want to start following Jesus. All you have to do is text the word Jesus to 8-7221 and somebody from our team is going to follow up with you this week and help you take your next steps in your relationship with him.

For all of us, I just want to take a moment and I'm going to pray. As I pray, I want to ask everybody here and wherever you are to stand. Would you stand with me as I pray over us? As I pray, I just want to pray that God would help us to take the limits off. Whatever limits we have placed on our love, that only through his Spirit he would help us to remove those limits.

Whatever it is that is keeping us from being able to love like that—our pride, our ego, our bitterness, that his Spirit would do such a work in us that we would be able to look at our enemies and say, "Hey, I don't hate you. I want the best for you. I want to bless you, to pray for you. Ultimately, I want you to know this Jesus that I know." Because that's the way we change our communities. That's the way we change our city. That's the way we change the world, one person at a time.

So, let's pray.

God, thank you. Thank you for who you are. God, we thank you for your limitless love. While we hated you, while we turned our backs on you, you never turned your back on us.

You modeled what it looks like to show limitless love. So, God, we bring everything to your feet at this point, everything that is keeping us from loving the way that you love. Remove every ounce of pride, every ounce of bitterness and ego that causes us to want to retreat and withhold our love from those who need it.

We are talking about eternity. So, God, I pray that as we do that other people would look at us and they would question and say, "How could they love like that? How could they love the person who despises them? How could they love the person who has talked about them?" The only thing we can do, the only response we have is to point to Jesus because we care more about their salvation than our perception.

So, God, be with us as a church. Make everything else fade into the background, fade away, as we lift you high so we can love the way you called us to. God, may you get all the glory, the honor, and the praise as we do it.

God, we lift everything up to you. It's in your Son Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.