

# Walking in the *Foot Prints* of Jesus

*A Discipleship Journey*



## **Sermon on the Mount**

Week 14

**Turn the Other Cheek – Really??**

Matthew 5:38 - 42

### Opening Prayer:

Falling In Love  
Prayer of Pedro Arupe, S.J.

Nothing is more practical than finding God,  
That is, falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.  
What you are in love with,  
What seizes your imagination,  
Will affect everything.

It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning,  
What you will do with your evenings,  
How you will spend your weekends, what you read,  
Who you know, what breaks your heart,  
And what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

### Reflection

The next two Scripture passages bring us to the high point of the Sermon on the Mount, passages for which it is both most admired and most resented. Jesus often pushes us off the cliff of our comfort zone. Often, He does this subtly using metaphors and parables, but here He goes right to the heart of the matter. This week Jesus teaches us to turn the other cheek; next week we learn about loving our enemies.

*You have heard it said, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil. But if anyone strikes you on your right cheek, turn the other to him as well. If anyone wants to sue you over your coat, hand him your cloak as well. Should anyone press you into service for one mile, go with him for two miles. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow.*

Matthew 5:38 - 42

In the lawless culture of ancient Israel, violent retribution and revenge was the payback for wrongs done. The law of Moses both defined justice and restrained revenge. So, if a man knocked out another man's eye, he must not be killed for that – “an eye for an eye”. The punishment must fit the crime.

Jesus doesn't contradict the need for reparation but leaves it up to the judges responsible for maintaining law and order in the community. What Jesus emphasizes is that revenge has no place in our personal relationships. These are to be based on love, not justice. Our response to those who wrong us is love - without revenge or retaliation.

Jesus then offers four mini-illustrations that apply this principle of Christian non-retaliation and indicate the lengths to which it must go. Each introduces us to a person who seeks to do us an injury. Each illustrates a principle of love - the selfless love of an injured person who refuses to satisfy themselves by taking revenge, but instead, considers the welfare of the other person and the greater community and acts accordingly.

This teaching doesn't mean we are to be doormats; it doesn't encourage us to passively accept aggression or hostility. Rather, it discourages repaying evil with evil. The practice of non-retaliation and universal love gives us a proactive, highly engaging alternative to retribution of any kind. This is a new, creative, and courageous way of acting and, while it may seem nearly impossible to practice, we trust that it can be accomplished with God's grace.

*Reflection Questions:* When I am wronged, what causes me to respond with revenge or retribution? What would help me respond with respect and love instead? How do I open myself to God's grace so that I can "go the extra mile"?

### Closing Prayer

Speak to Jesus about what is on your heart, then rest in silence for a few moments listening for His response.