

## The Beatitudes

“Love your enemies” Luke chapter 6 verse 22

More counter cultural and counter intuitive teaching from Jesus follows the beatitudes. It sounds a bit as though he is saying that his followers should allow themselves to be ill treated, but far from it. When people act towards each other with enmity, anger, hatred and violence, they are usually being moved by strong emotions and impulses which they are often not aware of, let alone fully in control of.

To love an enemy, to do what is good to people who hate us, to bless those who curse us and pray for those who mistreat us demonstrates the freedom to choose a better way. Rather than simply continuing the cycle of aggressive, negative response by striking back or taking revenge, we are to be the people it stops with, the ones through whom love, forbearance and forgiveness are injected into the world around us.

There is a difference between humiliation and humility. It is possible to stand in the face of those who want to denigrate us and bring us down with dignity, just as Jesus maintained his dignity when standing trial before his death. When we do this, we make a statement, even if we say nothing. We are saying that we look to something other than 'winning' to give our lives meaning and purpose; that we do not need to enter the world's personal battles for ascendancy. We are demonstrating a radical difference in our outlook. Later in this passage, Jesus repeats the lesson; “Love your enemies, do what is good and lend, expecting nothing in return. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High.”

The apostle Paul takes up the theme in his letter to the Romans, quoting the book of Proverbs; “If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. For in so doing you will be heaping fiery coals on his head. Do not be conquered by evil, but conquer evil with good.”

### Prayer

Father, my natural reaction when people treat me badly is to fight back and to seek revenge. I know that this is one of the reasons that the world is the way it is today. Please help me to be so secure in your justification and vindication that I do not need to get the better of people who treat me, but can be free to will and to act in their best interests, as a witness to them of your love and grace, and showing myself to be one of your children. In Jesus' name, amen.

*All these devotionals can be found on our website [inghamitechurch.org](http://inghamitechurch.org) on the 'Resources' page. Click on the link to go there.*