

WEDNESDAY March 4, 2015	THURSDAY March 5, 2015	FRIDAY March 6, 2015
<p>And I confer on you a kingdom, just as my Father conferred one on me. (Luke 22:29)</p> <p>It's so easy to get caught up in the affairs of this world. It's what we naturally see with both our eyes, and our hearts. Remember, there is a kingdom that overlays our nation, our economy and our earthly identity. It's Jesus' kingdom. We must fight in our hearts to keep His pure values, His eternal priorities, and His ethic of love central in all we do.</p> <p><i>Lord, give me eyes to see the transient nature of this earthly kingdom and the eternal nature of Your heaven-like kingdom, the one that rescues, redeems, and reconciles on earth. Help me to always want and embrace Yours.</i></p>	<p>Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who mistreat you. ... Be merciful just as your Father is merciful. (Luke 6:27-28,36)</p> <p>Loving enemies is hard work – not just because it's hard to do, but because it's difficult to discern. What actually is love in this particular situation for this particular person? There are many complicated scenarios. Most actions clearly require kind love, but others may regretfully involve tough love. Tough love may actually temporarily hurt as it compassionately acts in their best interest.</p> <p><i>Lord, this feels like dangerous waters – to love in ways that might hurt someone. Can my heart be pure enough to do this? Please cultivate in me a heart so filled with love for those who might wish me and others harm that I can love them with tough love when necessary. And may they experience Your mercy as they respond to my love.</i></p>	<p>But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ~ Jesus (Luke 6:27-28)</p> <p>Jesus often qualified his teaching as being for “you who are listening” (sometimes, for “him who has ears to hear.”) He knew that, at any given time, there may be people listening to His teaching who weren't really listening, whose ears were not ready to hear. Our starting place in embracing Jesus' radical way of peace is to ask ourselves if we are ready to unplug our own ears to His radical message, and to ask God to help us really hear.</p> <p><i>Dear Father, I know you are speaking to me, to us, to Your Church through Jesus. Please help us, starting with me, to really hear what You are saying.</i></p>
SATURDAY March 7, 2015	MONDAY March 9, 2015	TUESDAY March 10, 2015
<p>But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ~ Jesus (Luke 6:27-28)</p> <p>Once we are truly listening to Jesus, we will hear Him call us to love. Love does not consist of doing what makes us feel good, but doing what IS good, regardless of how we feel. Jesus loved the world more than anyone has ever loved anyone else. When Jesus said ‘yes’ to God's will and the cup of suffering, when He absorbed the hatred of enemies and the cowardice of friends, when He hung on the cross for our sins – He didn't experience a nice feeling. Jesus chose the way of self-sacrifice for the good of others.</p> <p><i>Dear Father, Thank you for the example of Jesus to show us how much You love us and how meaningfully we can love others, including those who hurt, harass, and abandon us. Help me say yes to Your will, like Jesus.</i></p>	<p>But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ~ Jesus (Luke 6:27-28)</p> <p>Jesus calls us to love like He loved. We love God, love our neighbour as we love ourselves, love our friends, and even love our enemies. As a follower of Jesus, we can legitimately ask “Who is left not to love?” Is there any individual, any group, or any type of person on the planet, towards whom our disposition ought not to be love? (For now we'll leave Satan, demons, and cats out of the picture.) Knowing that love guides our way of relating to everyone, Christ-followers can afford to become single-minded and open-hearted.</p> <p><i>Dear Father, I know my emotions pull me in many directions, and sometimes they lead me to ruminate, to speak, and to act in ways that are not the way of love. Please help my spirit become clear on this one point: may I let love lead me in all that I think, say, and do.</i></p>	<p>But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ~ Jesus (Luke 6:27-28)</p> <p>But HOW are we to love our enemies? Jesus refuses to leave it abstract. He gives us three stages that enemy love can take, depending on the degree of hatred or animosity against us. 1) When they only hate, we initiate loving action. 2) When they verbally abuse, we verbally bless. 3) And when they aggress against us, removing our ability to initiate kindness or verbally encourage, then we pray. The key is stage one – initiate kindness when you are aware that someone doesn't like you in particular, or doesn't like Christians in general. Too quickly we let ourselves off the hook by jumping to stage three – praying for our enemies. But Jesus refuses to let love be exclusively reduced to a prayer. Love initiates action.</p> <p><i>Father, in quietness and stillness I pause to hear your voice. Please reveal your creative plan for ways I can and should initiate love toward the haters in our world and in my life.</i></p>