

Commentary

The love of neighbor is clearly stated in Leviticus 19:18, but the hatred of enemies is not found in any Old Testament text. Jesus is evidently attacking a common mindset that sharply contrasted relations with one's countrymen and those outside.

Racial profiling has become part of our modern vocabulary. It signifies suspicion regarding people of a particular ethnic or racial background solely on the basis of their appearance. It has come into play in more cases than we would like. And can easily affect our own outlook as well. There was a time when African Americans were the people of lesser status in America. That has not completely disappeared. But it has been preempted by negatives feelings toward Middle Eastern people, people of the Muslim faith. The roots of this are found in the acts of terrorism that have been perpetrated on the West in modern times by people from the Arab world.

Our Gospel today addresses this problem very directly. The law of the former covenant commanded love of one's fellow citizens. The mandate of Christ looks to love for everyone. We may say that we have no enemies. But when we begin to look down on the people of a particular ethnic strain because of terrorist activity of a very limited number, then our love of all is being limited. The majority of people want to live in peace and harmony. Our attitudes to each other should be characterized by fairness and equality.

For those who harbor enmity against us for whatever reason, we should pray regularly for a change of heart. It is also quite easy for us to develop a hostile mindset. From such an attitude we pray to be delivered, always confident that God's grace will not be lacking.

Points to Ponder

Racial profiling

Causes of racial hatred

Forgiveness after a grievous offense