



Loving Our Enemies: Reflections on the Hardest Commandment

Jim Forest

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Not everything Jesus taught must be regarded as a commandment. Counsels on voluntary poverty or celibacy, for instance, have been seen as an option for a small minority of Christ's followers. The same cannot be said about the love of enemies. This does not fall in the "if you would be perfect" category. It is, instead, basic Christianity, which Jesus taught through direct instruction, through parables, and by the example given with his own life. And yet it is undoubtedly the hardest commandment of all, one that runs counter to our natural inclinations. It is, as Jim Forest shows, a commandment that calls for prayer, discernment, and constant practice. Along with reflections drawn from scripture, the lives of the saints, and modern history, Forest offers "nine disciplines of active love," including "praying for enemies," "turning the other cheek," "forgiveness," and "recognizing Jesus in others," that make the love of enemies, if not an easier task, then a goal worth striving toward in our daily lives.

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