

The Nature of Hate and Love

Michael Wilkins

Announcer:

Welcome to another semester. Are you excited? We're glad to have you back at Talbot chapel.

We have an exciting lineup for this semester and we know that you will enjoy it and be blessed with us.

I'm wondering if there are any new Talbot students. You just signed up. This is your first semester. If there are, would you please stand? Anyone here who's a brand new Talbot student let us wel- (cutoff)

Now like all good stu-, Talbot veteran students, we're going to allow these individuals to be first to get to the donuts and coffee after chapel. And Dr. Wilkins has promised to keep his sermon under 50 minutes so that we'll have a little bit of time to share that.

It is donut chapel. We thank our AS student body officers for working this out several times a semester. The doughnuts are incredible. The coffee is great. There are bagels; there are healthy choices for those of you who are into that. So please join us after the chapel in the student lounge in Myers.

Next Tuesday we're going to have New Orleans cuisine. It's called Raging Cajun Under the Sycamores. It's a Talbot kick off for this semester. For three dollars and you'll have to just pay as you come under the trees over here. We're going to have all kinds of things I can't even pronounce some of this chicken gumbo with Andouille sausage is it right? black and red snapper shrimp Creole sauce, oh it just goes on and on. So, three dollars and good time to fellowship with your fellow students and the faculty. So please be aware of that as you come next Tuesday.

Our speaker this morning is Dr. Mike Wilkins. He is dean of the faculty here at Talbot and Professor of New Testament. He also chairs the department of New Testament language and literature here and Mike we're looking forward to having you share with us from your heart today. Before he comes, Dr. and Mrs. Rigsby are going to lead us in a hymn of praise. Rigsby has just returned from Israel, where they had another successful tour of the Holy Lands. Were any of you on that trip here today? A couple-, I see some hands. That's good. I understand it was the most rigorous trip so far in terms of physical exertion and they actually climbed into cave number one. Is that true and did you find any more scrolls Dr. Rigsby? Not that he's telling about. Okay. It's good to have both of them with us. Thank you so much for your ministry.

After that, Dr. Walt Russell, Professor of New Testament Language and Literature will lead us in prayer. So without further ado. Brother Rigsby if you'd come and lead us this morning.

Dr. Rigsby:

Did you say 50 minutes? Oh. Okay.

Hymn Number 279 How Firm a Foundation, ye Saints of the Lord is laid for your faith in His excellent Word. Second tune. Let's stand please.

[Hymn Singing]

Remain standing for prayer.

Dr. Walt Russell:

Let's pray together.

Dear Father, I'm reminded of the halftime celebration at the Super Bowl and what a glory in our power as human beings and all that we can do and how wonderful and great that we are. Father I'm also reminded of the fantasy of that we see because of this crash yesterday of this airline and the loss of 88 lives. And we realize how frail and how dependent upon You we are. God, we would ask that You would help us not to believe the lie but believe the truth that it is only as we rely on You, in Your grace, in Your mercy, in Your kindness, that we will be the people You have designed us to be.

Father as we begin this new semester we begin it not with a sense of arrogance or pride or presumption. We don't pat ourselves on the back but we humbly say thank you for calling us here. Be it as undergrads, be it as grad students, be it as staff, be it as faculty, as administration. Thank you for Your kindness, for Your grace that You've shed on us in Jesus Christ. Father we pray as Dr. Wilkins pulls back the veil as we look in Scripture and as we see afresh our Savior's

face that we could with fresh eyes, with humble eyes, with a heart that is tender and receptive, and in the power of you Holy Spirit that we can see Him clearly, powerfully, that we can love Him more, that we can follow Him more faithfully, that we can trust Him more profoundly in the deepest areas of our lives.

Lord as we begin this semester, we commit to be a people that will look to You and not rely on our own strength. Help us to work and labor hard, faithfully, even when we're weary, even when we're discouraged; cling to You, trust You, believe in You so that You may get the glory. Lord thank you for this time to celebrate, this time to look into Your Word. We love You. We praise You. We commit this semester to You, in Jesus' name, Amen.

Announcer:

Please be seated.

Would you join me in welcoming our friend and colleague in ministry Dr. Mike Wilkins?

Dr. Mike Wilkins:

Well it is my privilege to get us started this new semester. And for those who are new, welcome.

For those who are old, that's the faculty. But for those who are returning, welcome back.

As we undertake this this new semester, in which we're focused on preparation for ministry of a variety of sorts, I'd like for us to take on a rather difficult yet quite familiar pair of themes: Hate.

A very very strong word. Have you ever been deeply hurt by someone and you weren't at fault?

Did it produce anger? Did it perhaps produce hate? Think of a time this uh-, last week when you used the word hate. What was the context in which you found yourself?

Love. Maybe a bit easier for you. When did you last use that word love? I used it at about 5:30 this morning as I kissed my wife goodbye. And said I love you doll. And she hugged the cat. And rolled over.

You know hate was a word that we're discouraged to use when I was a boy.

"I HATE YOU"

I would say through clenched feet-, teeth to my brother in a fit of anger, during one of those trivial boyhood fights. And my mother would inevitably say "Michael. Don't use that word. You don't know what you're really saying, now tell your brother that you love him." And through equally clenched teeth I would say "I love you." You know I really didn't know much about either love or hate but they were words that I used all the time and I find myself still using them all the time.

I hate cold weather. I love the beach. I hate green peppers. One of the most obnoxious foods God created. But I love Mexican food. I hate it when the Dodgers lose but I love the women's soccer team winning the World Cup.

Look at this, this the cover of Time Magazine. What a kick. I had never in my life watched a complete soccer game. Never. But I watched every single match the U.S. women played throughout that three weeks. I was fascinated. I loved the game. I love those young women. But I must admit. That I doubt I would have been watching much if they would have lost.

Love in our popular usage usually implies getting some kind of pleasure out of it. And when that pleasure stops. We stop loving.

The way in which we use love and hate often trivializes them to mean only some kind of emotional reaction. But neither love nor hate are trivial. They are two of the strongest words in human language. They have been behind the greatest triumphs and the greatest tragedies of human history. Tune into a number of different radio stations and listen to a selection of songs. And you'll inevitably hear the word love used to express a variety of things ranging from infatuation to brotherhood and goodwill to sexual activity. The way that we use the word love is so generalized as the term that it could refer to most anything. Especially when we get some kind of pleasure out of it.

On a purely human level hatred is destructive. It's the emotion of anger or fear that has settled into a destructive activity. It's an attempt to reject a person completely, to rob a person of his or her very existence. Paul lists hatred as one of the works of the flesh that wars against the Spirit. He declares that hatred is a primary characteristic of persons who were apart from God. "At one time," he says, "we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived, and enslaved by all kinds of passions

and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another." Those are terribly strong words.

In the same issue of time that I just showed you. They showed the women's soccer team was an article entitled "Is Hate on the Rise?" It's an article about the various ethnic and racial supremacists, who have rallied around hate as their pattern of life. It focused on 21 year old Benjamin Smith, who last summer in the Chicago area took their wholly racial war to its illogical conclusion. Shooting 11 Asian-Americans, blacks, and Jews. Killing two before he finally committed suicide himself.

Hate crimes are committed against a person or institution simply out of naked bigotry. Hatred is a mindless, heartless, but scary part of our shrinking global community in which we live. Names that many of us had never heard of are now commonly associated with atrocities that are spurred by hatred; Rwanda, Kosovo, Columbine.

From a purely human perspective, love and hate are patterns of life. While they both have emotional elements attached to them. They are not themselves primarily emotions. Rather they are courses of action that determine the direction of a person's entire life. "I just don't love her anymore!" Have you ever heard someone use those words?

Those were identical words uttered on separate occasions by two men. One married to his wife for only four months. The other married to his wife for over 50 years. It may sound bizarre but it's quite tragically true. Both men said that they no longer felt anything for their wives. That they

weren't getting anything out of the relationship. One of the men told me that he now actually hated his wife, whom he used to love.

They both also said that they had now found another woman whom they really loved. Now. They eventually left their wives and went off in pursuit of what they described as their own personal happiness and fulfillment. That was the introduction to my first year as a pastor over 20 years ago. It was quite a shock. Especially because both men were professing Christians. Wouldn't their professed love for Jesus make a difference in their relationships? Those incidents forced me to take a hard look at what we commonly call love. And what we so casually used as hate.

We might not often link them in this way but love and hate are important keys to the Christian life. However those keys must be used in the way that Jesus used them. In the hands of fallen men and women, hate and love will inevitably end up destructive. But in the hands of a person who has been touched by the love of God himself, they will prove invaluable to living safely and wisely in this world that is dominated by counterfeits of both love and hate.

I was recently asked by a Christian magazine to write two articles for them. They assigned me these titles. The first was to be entitled "What Jesus loved; And loving like that." And the second was entitled "What Jesus hated; And hating like that." It was pretty easy for me to write the first. Jesus' love is the most revolutionary force that has affected the human race. But the second article was so very difficult for me to write. Because I don't really like to think about Jesus hating.

I was a person who was so filled with hate before I became a Christian that it almost destroyed me. But when Jesus touched my life with His love, with His love I was transformed. It seemed so inconsistent to be thinking of Jesus hating. But the primary truth for us to understand is that God hates evil but loves righteousness.

If we rightly understand that the cross defines the central purpose of Jesus' earthly ministry then we will also rightly understand that Jesus came to defeat the very wickedness that had held humanity in its grip since Adam's tragic fall. Jesus came as God's promised messianic deliverer and what motivated Him was love of righteousness and His hatred of wickedness. Starkly stated Jesus hates evil. This is an absolutely essential and convicting truth. But it is also absolutely essential for us to understand that Jesus loves goodness and righteousness. That is why the apostle Paul writes "Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; Cling to what is good."

Therefore neither love nor hatred are arbitrary. We do not choose what to love or what to hate. All appropriate love is in some way directed toward goodness and righteousness and all appropriate hatred is in some way directed against evil and wickedness. When we love we give ourselves completely to the good of another person. And our hatred is directed toward the evil that could harm another person.

Our next door neighbors just came by with their little two day old little boy. I mean he was about as big as a minute. This was their first child and they came in just absolutely beaming with joy. And they made a remarkable statement. "We just love this little baby." Now what does that really mean? They've only had the kid for two days. What does it mean?

What it does mean is that they have experienced a variety of emotions during the months of carrying the child and the hours of delivery. But it's much more than emotions. To love their child means that they have now dedicated themselves to give their little baby what is good for the child. And reject, Hate, whatever evil could harm that child. That's very much what it's like to be involved in ministry. Paul referred to his care for the ancient-, infant church at Thessaloniki as a father caring for his children.

Ministry means loving, giving ourselves through the benefit of those for whom we are responsible. And to reject, to hate, whatever evil would harm our people. Now that's a-, that's a mighty tall task in today's world. Because of this incredible confusion of values. What God says is evil, our culture often condones as good. And what God says is good, our culture often detests as intolerant or old fashioned. So we are to develop a passion for what is righteous and good from God's perspective. And utterly and completely cling to it. Love it. But at the same time we must understand clearly and truthfully what is evil from God's perspective. And that to utterly and completely reject it. To hate it.

Paradoxically, You and I must receive true love before we can know how to love or how to hate appropriately. The apostle John reminds us emphatically that we love, why? Because He first loved us. And he reminds us that it is impossible for a person to hate someone if we know the true love of God. When we have experienced God's love it impels us to love. We can finally find a way of reversing the pattern of self-centeredness that dominates my life and dominates your life by receiving God's love. It shows us what real love is all about and enables us to love with

His kind of love. It gives us a new pattern of life in which we give ourselves to others for their good. But in which we also learn how to consistently reject what is bad for us. And for those, for whom we are responsible. That is the essence of true discipleship to Jesus Christ.

And it is also the essence of what true ministry is all about. If we truly love Jesus our greatest daily ambition must center on becoming like Him, who is the essence of goodness and righteousness. We will nurture-, nurture a healthy conscience that's repulsed, truly repulsed by our own tendencies to blur the line between good and evil. Have we gossiped? Lied? Have we gone back on our word? Have we ever taken something that didn't rightly belong to us? Have we ever acted with pride and arrogance? Have we ever spoken perversely? Have we acted flippantly toward our marriage or family by engaging in adultery or even flirtatious relations with another person?

All of these God hates. Because of the evil they bring. And so should we. Solomon tells us to fear the Lord is to hate evil. And the apostle Paul tells us Love that is sincere clings to what is good.

This last summer I had a clear experience of both of those words. It was Saturday morning ten thirty A.M.. A gorgeous morning with a sun shining brightly on a little park in Torrey Pines near San Diego. On a bluff overlooking a beautiful Pacific Ocean. And I was walking my daughter Michelle down a pine needle covered path and gave her away to her new husband. My wife and I have given our lives to Michelle to try to get her prepared for life. The measure of our love for

her has been giving her what is good for her so that she can learn to walk with God on her own. And the measure of our love for our new son in law is giving our treasured Michelle to him.

But Saturday evening I had a confrontation with a member of the wedding party who is being an absolute jerk. His self-centered attitude and actions were a downer on everyone around him. And so as the father of the bride, it was my responsibility to confront him. I love him but I hate his foolish attitude and actions and I was forced to keep him away from the rest of the group. This is the real difference between hate on a purely human level and hate from God's perspective. I was trying to carry out the wise old adage "hate the sin but love the sinner."

I'm convinced that I did the right thing but I also think that I may have blurred the lines just a bit. I might have started to go at him personally. Not might. I did.

My emotions were certainly involved. I went from the highest possible emotions in the morning to the saddest experience of emotions in the evening. But beyond the experience of the emotions, my pattern of life was involved in a way that I responded to both situations. We are to give ourselves to another so that their highest good will come about. And reject the evil that can come in and destroy relationships that you will face every day of your lives. Not easy. But necessary.

Jesus said that the common attitude that develops among people is to love their neighbor and hate their enemies. To the extent of Jesus' love went beyond that. He told His disciples and showed them that they were to love their neighbors and love their enemies both and even pray for those who persecute them.

I'm always moved by the story of the rich young ruler, who could not give up his wealth to receive Jesus' offer of eternal life. Why? Because his wealth was the god of his life. But in the middle of the scene occurs a simple poignant comment. Jesus looked at him and loved him. That young man represented all that Jesus came to challenge. The self-righteousness of the religious establishment. The allure of wealth as a source of power and prestige and pride and security. The smugness of the (inaudible). But although he appeared to be an opponent, Jesus saw through to his heart and loved him. Loved him even though he ultimately walked away. Loved him enough to try to win him even when he rejected Jesus. Loved him even though he was an enemy-, an enemy. That is an amazing kind of love.

Can we say that we love with that kind of love? There are dangerous devious forces at work in our own day, ranging from ultra-right wing patriot militias and ethnic supremacists to ultra-left wing gay activists and political anarchists. Those forces are blatantly opposed to clear biblical truth and seek to undermine directly Christ's Church. Yet do we love them? Not just at arms-length. Not just theoretically. But do we attempt to get to their hearts and win them for Jesus? Even when they reject our love.

I can't always say that I do. But I must. Because their eternal destiny is at stake. We must be wisely discerning in this often confusing world so that we're not deceived. It's possible to compute-, confuse love with compromise of values and end up condoning their behavior. Or it's possible to allow our hatred of their values to become a hatred of them personally. So we must

be wise. But we must love them. That is the astonishing kind of love that Jesus demonstrated. Even at the cross when He said Father forgive them. They don't know what they're doing.

So as we think about what it means to walk a real walk with Jesus. In a very real fallen world, there's a very real sense in which we must learn what it means to love and to hate appropriately. This is a harsh and at times incredibly cruel world that still lies under the influence of the evil one. None of us know what any of our tomorrows will bring.

This summer my wife and I were as shocked as I'm sure most of you were, to hear the news of another tragedy that fell on the Kennedy family with a crash of an airplane and loss of life of John F. Kennedy Junior, his wife Carolyn and sister in law Lauren. But what is tragically ironic is this, just a week prior to the accident Life magazine did an article on Jacqueline Kennedy. It was a fifth year since she passed away and the cover caption read "Remembering Jackie." And the tragically ironic cover picture is of Jackie holding little Caroline Kennedy.

My heart just breaks for this woman, who now not only remembers her mother and father but also her brother. In her short life, she has suffered tragedies that have caused others in similar circumstances to develop a thick cloud of hatred around their lives. She could, by those circumstances, hate God, hate life. Out of both anger and fear. I've been with many people who have experienced tragedies and hardships of life who have developed a deep seated hatred. They are right to hate the evil of this world. They are right to hate the injustice and the inequity of life. But it can so dreadfully take a bad turn.

Many of you know people who have been so devastated by the tragedies of life that they have no more resources for love. They can develop a settled anger and bitterness that will ultimately turn to a pattern of smoldering hatred of most everything in everyone.

Paradoxically, their hatred must be transformed by love. The answer to their dilemma is God's love in Jesus. But the instrument that will be used is quite likely you.

Couple of years ago I spent a long afternoon at my home with a man, Thomas Tarrants. Had never heard of him, didn't know from anyone but he asked to meet with me for an afternoon. Found out later this man had been consumed by hatred. He had grown up in the 1950s in a comfortable middle class family in Mississippi. But when the civil rights movement started in the early six-, sixties something snapped. He joined the Ku Klux Klan. He became involved in terrorist activities to try to wipe out the Jews and the blacks who were in his words "destroying the country that I love."

But after being sent to prison, he was introduced to Jesus' love. And his hatred was transformed. He tells in his book. A great little book. He's my brother. Of meeting Eldridge Cleaver, the former head of the radical Black Panther Party, who had also been transformed by God's love. As Tom tells it, I found myself-, -self shaking hands warmly with a man I would have hated passionately. And I'm sure he would have hated me just as passionately. Only a few years before. The love of God is an amazing thing. Tom is now a pastor of an interracial church in Washington D.C. and the head of an interracial discipleship ministry.

The young Caroline Kennedy's in our lives, like the way that Tom Tarrants used to be, like I used to be, need to see people who understand clearly how to hate what is truly evil in this life. And yet who are living examples of love. THAT is the ministry for which you are being prepared.

But that person could be you. You may be suffering and no one knows it. You may be devastated by the dreadful loss of one of our own Biola community-, community, Julie, who lost her life so tragically just two weeks ago. You may have lost one of your own loved ones. As my mother in law passed away this Thanksgiving, leaving her husband of 56 years now to try to find what it means to have any kind of daily meaning to life. You may know friends or people in your church whose wife or husband may have walked out on them. You may know someone who lost their job through the devious manipulations of a trusted co-worker. That's reality. Think of the people this morning who are waking up to an incredibly dark world after their loved ones died in that Alaska Airlines crash yesterday afternoon.

Guard your heart. We must learn to reject, to hate the evil of this world. Your own purity and your personal life and in your ministry will, in large part, be dependent upon how to reject absolutely the evil that can so deviously attract your attention and suck us into its grasp. But be careful that you don't allow your emotions to settle into a cancer of hatred that will actually consume you.

Do we love the way that Jesus loves? Do we hate what Jesus hates? Probably not as much as we think we do. Because to love with His kind of love and to hate what He hates will mean our full

obedience to God's will for our lives. The continuing transformation of our personal, corporate, and family life. And our dedicated outreach to the world around us, even to those who may be our enemies.

When we experience Jesus' presence in our lives, we will then be able to give ourselves completely and solely to God and those around us. Ultimately that is what it means to truly love God and neighbor as ourselves. And to hate what is evil.

In the old hymn Charles Wesley described his experience of the impact of Jesus' amazing love in his life by saying "My chains fell off. My heart was free. I rose. Went forth. And followed thee." There could be no better way for our Talbot and Biola community than to be known by that; As those who love what Jesus loves. And hate what Jesus hates. Join me in prayer please.

Father we're not here just for an education. We're not here for a diploma. We're here as warriors in a world. A world that is dominated by hatred. And is obsessed with love. But they have so twisted what you have understood those to mean. Father I pray that we look deep in our own lives. And we open those lives to Your love. Love in such a way that it will allow us to in turn truly give ourselves to that which is good. To give ourselves to those people that are gripped by the lies of this world. And that love in turn will allow us the courage, the strength, the conviction to hate what is evil in this world. Father may our lives be so touched by Your love that purity is what stands out as marking students of Biola and Talbot. We pray this in Jesus' name, Amen.