**Love your enemies** (Matthew 5.44)

Imagine the church hall is set out for a sale and overnight someone tries to steal take the lot.

Imagine you wake up at 1am to loud noises of your neighbour’s music. What should you do?

Revenge shows you are [1] serious, [2] not weak, and [3] it warns them not to do it again.

And these seem reasonable to show. So why is revenge so wrong according to Jesus?

What Jesus suggests in Matthew 5.38-42 seems crazy, counter-intuitive, and a recipe for more hurt. How can they help?

NB. Jesus does not even say that these will stop the other person doing it again.

TEXT sounds good in theory but what does it actually mean? How will it change things?

[1] Is it an attempt to shame the ‘enemy’ into better action?

[2] Is it saying that although you hurt me I will not try to get my own back?

[3] Is it wanting the best for the ‘enemy’ – whatever that means?

Think how taking revenge and hating your enemies makes things worse, sometimes much worse.

Surely the opposite (love) must better. TEXT does not mean emotional liking, but it does show the nature of God’s grace.

eg JC on the cross: “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing”.

My experience of Restorative Justice. Fine, but does it go far enough?

When neighbour is noisy, tell them it upset you, yes, but give them a cake when you tell them!

When someone is caught stealing from a Garage Sale, give them free picking!

If it seems hard we should not be surprised. It is almost impossible without God’s help. That is true of most of what Jesus asks of us. Thus: “**be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect**” (Mt 5.48).

But just because it is hard does not mean we should not try?