



## The Goodness for All: An Exploration of Matthew 4:45 and Its Implementation for Church Ministry

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### ABSTRACT

This introduction aims to provide a general overview of the research topic, namely the exploration of Matthew 4:45 and its implementation for church services. Readers will be introduced to the aim and scope of the research, as well as the importance of understanding the concept of goodness in a biblical context. Matthew 4:45 is part of the Gospel of Matthew in the Bible, which presents the story of the ministry of Jesus Christ in the world. Exploration of this text will provide a deeper understanding of the teachings and stories contained in this chapter, so that they can be applied in the current context of Christian life, especially in church ministry. A qualitative approach was applied in this research to explore the principle of kindness in the context of church service. In conducting this research, researchers will be involved in participant observation and in-depth interviews with church leaders and congregation members. Qualitative data will be collected through field notes, interview transcriptions, and content analysis to identify themes and patterns related to the concept of goodness in Matthew 4:45. In this research, it was found that the principle of goodness explained in Matthew 4:45 has significant implications for church ministry. These implications include the importance of building a church community that supports and cares for each other, as well as encouraging the practice of love and mercy in every aspect of church life. In addition, this research also highlights the need to pay attention to historical and cultural contexts in interpreting and applying the principle of goodness in church services to make them relevant and effective.

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### INTRODUCTION

Matthew 5:45 comes from Jesus' sermon on the mount, which is one of the heart of Jesus' teachings. It is not surprising that research into Jesus' sermon on the hill over the last 2 millennia has made it an introduction to the development of Christian ethics and theology (Pelikan, 1988).

This text is at the heart of Jesus' teaching, so to understand the message of this text we cannot simply separate it from its unity with the Sermon on the Mount. Understanding verse 45 or more fully verses 43-48 really depends on how to understand the Sermon on the Mount, because Matthew 5:45 is the final part of the Sermon on the Mount, one of the aims of which is to show its increasingly important position, like in general a narrative, the best argument first, the continuing argument in the middle, but at the end, like Matthew 5:43-48 it is the core statement, the central idea

of the whole of Matthew 5, namely the good for everyone. This exploration was carried out using critical historical interpretation methods related to understanding context.

The Gospel writers report many times that Jesus opposed the exclusive Pharisees and scribes. For example in Matthew 23:4 "*They tie up heavy loads and put them on people's shoulders, but they don't want to touch them themselves*". The Pharisees held people in slavery in the name of the law. They were not immoral people. They obeyed the Law. They paid their taxes (Matt. 23:6), fasted twice a week, gave a tenth of all income (Lk. 18:12), respect religion, zeal for a better life, even to the point of crossing seas and exploring land, to convert just one person (Matt. 23:15) (Boff, 1978). However, they only want to ensure that people obey the law while they are structured into a system that they use for themselves, as those who understand religion best, and that God is always on their side, while marginalizing a number of people who are unable to obey the law such as tax collectors, shepherds, and other sinners.

This kind of tendency is also slowly damaging the body of the church today, including among ordained ministers, who have a high spirit in service but fall into the temptation of exclusivism and authoritarianism that excludes others. In this context, Jesus reprimanded the Pharisees not only because of their problem of legalism, but more on exclusivism which causes separation and discrimination between individuals, creating different 'social classes'. One example is exclusivism disguised as almsgiving, which is then reprimanded in Matthew 6:4: "Let your alms be given in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." In addition, there is also false piety that is rebuked in Matthew 6:6: "But if you pray, go into your room, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will answer you." Jesus emphasized that life is not about the external label given to a person, but about what is revealed in a person's heart when opening oneself to God and to others around him.

In verse 43-44, two verses before this text, it is mentioned that you have heard the word: Love your fellow man and hate your enemy (verse 43) and verse 44, but I say to you: *Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*. A glance shows the authority of Jesus who provides a source of commands beyond the Torah to seek God's will. It is not easy to love enemies, let alone pray for enemies. The main goal that Jesus spoke of was love, so that the Pharisees would not build themselves on legal norms but on the principle of universal love which is superior to all laws (Matt. 5:43-48).

In this context Jesus did not give another law but determined how to apply this law. Jesus rebuked exclusivism and authoritarianism by announcing the good news of love, not social stratification, but fundamental equality, that all are worthy of love. The Sermon on the Mount is a call to participate in a new order that frees them from attitudes of exclusivity and superiority over others, with love that gives itself to, placing itself at the service of others as God has loved us.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research method that will be used is a case study. This approach was chosen because it allows for a deep understanding of the principle of goodness in the real context of church ministry. The case studies will involve selecting churches that represent a variety of ecclesiastical contexts, such as urban, rural, and suburban churches. This will enable a comprehensive analysis of the implementation of the principle of goodness in a variety of ecclesiastical situations.

In this research, the data collection techniques used were interviews, observation and documentation studies. Interviews were conducted with several congregation members and church leaders to gain an in-depth understanding of how the principle of kindness is applied in the context of church ministry. Observations were carried out during church service activities to directly observe how the principles of kindness were implemented in practice. In addition, a documentation study was carried out by analyzing theological writings and relevant literature to strengthen the findings from interviews and observations. It is hoped that these three data collection techniques can provide a comprehensive picture of the implementation of the principle of kindness in church services.

In this research, the data analysis technique used is qualitative analysis. Data collected from interviews, observations and documentation will be analyzed in depth to identify emerging patterns, themes and meanings. Data analysis steps will include data reduction, data display, as well as verification and drawing conclusions. Qualitative analysis will provide an in-depth understanding of how the principle of goodness in Matthew 4:45 can be implemented in the context of church services, so that it can make a significant contribution to the development of church services that are more inclusive and have a positive impact on the entire congregation.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 1. Call for a Social Revolution of Good for All

Jesus not only calls people to be liberated from their exclusivism and authoritarianism, nor only calls them to be creative and free in their expressions of love, but also calls them to join in His greater cause, namely social revolution in the form of a struggle to liberate the oppressed, the lowly and the poor (Boff, 1978). Matthew 5:45 ends with the conclusion found in verse 48, "Therefore you must be perfect, just as your Father who is in heaven is perfect." Seeking perfection is not an easy thing. In today's life, perfection is often considered rare, even perfectionism considered as something out of date or as an undesirable psychological condition. However, Jesus' invitation to become perfect like his heavenly Father in Matthew 5:48 shows that God does not just offer random love. Jesus himself lived in love even though he faced oppression in his day. Likewise, His disciples were expected to show love by confronting the social oppression of their own era.

Perfect here means complete, intact, mature, accomplished, or perfect. It cannot be denied that this word is very important to Matthew. In the Synoptic Gospels this word appears only in Matthew, and is used three times. It cannot be denied that the use of this word by the writer of the Gospel of Matthew was in the framework of emphasizing the special qualities that marked the followers of Jesus. Perfection is their discipleship, the extent to which they follow Him. In that perfect frame is stored the command to love enemies (Bornkamm, 1963). Jesus asked for dedication that can be seen in certain behavioral traits. Perfection, as he calls it, "does not imply total sinlessness and total virtue as a fact" (Gundry, 1982). "Perfection" in loving the enemy for Matthew is not a condition to reach a state, but a result of a state, precisely: "For in this way you will be children of your Father who is in heaven, who makes the sun rise for the bad and the good and send down rain for the righteous and the unrighteous". Loving enemies is closely related to the mark of following Jesus as His disciple. Matthew carefully draws a distinction between "you" – referring to the followers of

Jesus he is speaking to – and evil people, as well as distinguishing between good and righteous people (δικαίους) and unrighteous people (ἀδίκους).

"You (ὁμῶν) in verse 45 are firm, different from the tax collectors (τέλειοι) in 48. Often Matthew places Jesus' followers here in contrast to Jews in general, including non-Jews. Matthew pays attention to the special qualities of followers of Christ in this theme. We are called to show the perfection of God's love that does not limit who our neighbors are, that does not draw the line between good and evil, the just and the unjust. We can "do good to" even when we do not "feel good toward" someone (Gundry, 1982 says our perfection begins when we begin to love all as [our] heavenly Father loves all"). (Tillich, 1965). Perfection is discipleship that is loving, inclusive and ecumenical wholeheartedly.

## 2. Renewing Yourself Out of Confinement

Love of one's enemy extends Old Testament law because, historically, Jews were commanded to love their neighbor, and they tended to view their neighbor as their fellow countryman or tribe. Matthew continually expands on who his neighbors are here, including even enemies. Perfection in love shows that all people are equal from God's perspective. God sees impartially, "making His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sending rain on the just and the unjust" (5:45).

There are at least 3 context illustrations from Matthew 5:45, first, there is a precedent that first century Jews were using non-violent resistance as a way to show protest against the Roman empire, even Jesus formulated his entire sermon on the mount within the framework of considering this situation. Second, the command to love "enemies" (in verses 38-42) is within the framework of preventing them from reacting violently against Rome, for example turning the other cheek, giving away underwear, and going the extra mile. How can each of these examples be 'ecumenical and inclusive' applied to Romans. Third, Matthew 5:44-45 ("Love your enemies... that you may be your Father's children...") has parallels with Matthew 5:9 ("Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."). In other words, peace (ecumenism with Rome) and love of enemies (inclusiveness) go hand in hand.

That's why in verse 46, Jesus said that if you only love those who love you, you are no better than a tax collector. At first glance, Jews would not want to think that they had anything in common with tax collectors. For quite a long time they denied the existence of tax collectors in that era as stealing or taking anything from them. They were paid a commission by Rome but they raised tax rates to make a profit. People call them licensed robbers. But then Jesus gives the image of the tax collector to explain people who only love those who love them.

Furthermore, in verse 47, Jesus said that if you only greet your own people, then you are not doing anything. The ancient greeting to Jews and Gentiles expresses a kind of blessing. The Hebrew greeting shalom wishes peace of divine favor to the person being greeted. Some Jews did not want to greet their enemies because they feared that it would bring success and prosperity to their enemies. Apart from having special (perfect) qualities as followers of Christ, they are guided to get out of their old thought patterns.

## 3. Continuously Doing Good at All Levels of Service

The choice of words used by the writer Matthew is "sun and rain" to represent all the blessings that come to man from the hand of God. Why sun and rain, what happens if one day the world is without the presence of the Sun? Sun and rain show

repeated and lasting goodness to all. Agathos (good) used here not only contains good, but also beneficial, or beneficial. God provides the blessing of salvation for sinners. That blessing is provided for sinners, for everyone. Not just for our sins, but the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). God continues to do good to the undeserving, just as he shines his sun on the bad and the good.

In all levels of ministry, we need to learn from the Samaritan, to discover the meaning of the word '*keep doing good*' here. He was also a Samaritan, but he acted like a brother, making liberation his own struggle, determining what kind of support he could provide, committed to the liberation of the oppressed, willing to make sacrifices to make it happen, rejoicing in accepting the price that had to be paid, he did not stop once progress is made or as soon as a setback occurs. That kind of spirit is needed in the professionalism of our stewardship at all levels.

## CONCLUSION

A summary of the findings from this research shows that the principle of goodness in Matthew 4:45 has great potential to change the dynamics and culture of church ministry. The analysis also highlights that a deep theological understanding of the concept of goodness is essential in implementing the principle effectively. Apart from that, this research also found that the active involvement of the entire congregation in good practices will have a positive impact on overall church growth. In this research, it was found that the principle of goodness explained in Matthew 4:45 has significant implications for church ministry. These implications include the importance of building a church community that supports and cares for each other, as well as encouraging the practice of love and mercy in every aspect of church life. In addition, this research also highlights the need to pay attention to historical and cultural contexts in interpreting and applying the principle of goodness in church services to make them relevant and effective.

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