



You're Gonna Have 'Em

Opening

What if our theology could get up from our armchairs and move into our world? That would be something worth paying attention to. This is The Armchair Anabaptist podcast.

<intro song> Lay your guns down, down on the floor. There ain't no good in those guns anymore. Take my hand and let me kiss your cheek. Let our friendship be sweet. <end>

“Because Mennonites have usually found that the way to faithfulness is to separate from others and eventually if only I am here, then at least I'll agree with myself.”

“And I don't think that we can say we love someone and then shoot them. It doesn't make sense.”

“I always tell folks that, ‘Look at - if you're in a debate and winning the debate becomes more important than reflecting love towards the person you're debating, then do the Kingdom of God a great service and shut up.’”

“How do we encourage people to see nonviolence as something more than a position about war?”

“Because we're not just sitting around doing podcasts and theology, we're actually trying to live our lives as Christians.”

<song> This is a reckoning between you and me. The righting of all wrongs as we eat and as we drink. <end>

Introduction

Kevin Wiebe: You're listening to The Armchair Anabaptist. This is episode #12, *You're Gonna Have 'Em*. I'm Kevin Wiebe.

Jesse Penner: And I'm Jesse Penner and we are your hosts. We've been talking a lot over this season about loving our enemies and of course, Jesus talks a lot about loving our enemies. But something that shouldn't be missed as we talk that way is the fact that Jesus' teaching presupposes that we are going to have enemies. It's kind of built into his teaching that they will exist. So what do we make of that? And why is it significant in the way that we think about our relationships with others?

KW: We have an excellent panel of guests that we are going to be talking to about this today. We're going to be talking to Pastor Melissa Florer-Bixler, to Dr. Greg Boyd, to Dr. Carol Penner, to Pastor Cameron McKenzie, as well as Stephanie, Travis, Jennifer and Deborah from the Many Rooms Church Community, which is a network of house churches in Winnipeg's North End.

JP: We're going to kick things off with Pastor Melissa Florer-Bixler. She's the pastor of Raleigh Mennonite Church, and she actually authored a book on exactly this topic called *How to Have an Enemy*. So we asked her, what are we to make of the fact that Jesus seems to suggest that we will have enemies.

Loving our enemies assumes we will have enemies – why is that significant?

Melissa Florer-Bixler: Yeah, I think that this is one of the big questions that often gets overlooked in this question of how to love your enemies. The question that actually comes before that, which is who are my enemies, and I think hearing in Jesus' proclamation there, that there's some assessment that he's anticipating that we have been through to be able to talk about what that means actively and persistently in our lives. And it's that assessment that I think we've actually been given an opportunity for in perhaps in a new and more intensive way in this sort of season of our social and political lives. So in some ways, not to be too Pollyannaish about this, but some real opportunities for us to, I think, dig deep into this question in our communities and churches.

KW: Dr. Carol Penner is a professor and the Director of Theological Studies at Conrad Grebel University College. We asked her this question as well about how loving our enemies makes the assumption that we will in fact have enemies. And what are we to make of that and why is that so significant? This is what she had to say.

Dr. Carol Penner: I think we sometimes think of enemies as being out there somewhere, people who hurt us. But in fact when you look at where violence happens for the majority of people in Canada today, that would be women and children, that's the majority of people in Canada, violence will happen to them in their home. They will be hurt by someone they love, someone who loves them. By an aunt, by an uncle, by parents, by a neighbour, a babysitter, someone who's supposed to take care of them. These caregivers, they hurt children, they sexually abuse them or they beat them or they psychologically abuse them; they make those children their enemies.

We don't usually think about people in our family as our enemies. The irony is the children will keep loving you even though you hurt them, because that's what children do. But loving your enemy could mean loving your family member and not hurting them, because as soon as you abuse someone, you're treating them like an object. You're not treating them like a child of God. You're treating them as if their ideas and their feelings have no power, have no agency. For children, all they want to do is to have their parents

love them, and if they get hurt, they blame themselves. They don't blame their parents and so loving your enemy, that could mean loving your family.

JP: Pastor Cameron McKenzie is the lead pastor of Fort Garry EMC. We asked him the same question. Here's his response.

Cameron McKenzie: Of course we have enemies. I was just thinking, well, that question just reflecting on them even today. I was thinking of the church in Nigeria, the Catholic Church in Nigeria, just a couple of weeks ago. Where the worshippers are in there worshipping, are those people that came into the church enemies of the people in that church? Of course they are. They came in, they acted with violence, they took life. They devastated the community. Of course we have enemies.

As I said at the beginning, our enemies span the spectrum from the very facile, unimportant kind of to that kind of enemy, where they're our mortal enemy in that sense. It shouldn't surprise us if we go back to the story of humanity and we look at the story of Cain and Abel, we understand right in the beginning of this story, embedded in the story is violence and conflict and animosity. Born out of jealousy, spiritual pride, whatever, here's two brothers, one becomes the enemy of the other. And that story amplifies throughout the Book of Genesis. You get the story of Lamech, who says, "I have wounded a man for insulting me and killed a man for hurting my feelings." Essentially, if Cain is avenged seven-fold, Lamech is avenged seventy-seven-fold.

This idea that human violence is amplifying and then of course Noah, "the thoughts of men's hearts are evil continuously and the world is filled with violence." The state of animosity is the normal state of the world caught in sin, so it doesn't surprise me that we have enemies. Jesus assumes we'll have enemies. Paul assumes we'll have enemies. They all use the language of doing good to those who persecute you. That's what they did to the prophets before you. Those kinds of lines are all there. And I think what that means is we should recognize that that we're not being singled out in any strange way if we have enemies.

That's one of the things I would take from it because it seems to me right now we live in a world where Christianity has amplified the martyrdom suffering complex and I don't know that it's valid. The fact that there are people who oppose what we want or what we think God is calling us to do, well, that's just the normal state of affairs. The church has never existed in a place of complete equilibrium with everybody around them. And in fact, if you look at the history of the church, more often than not, different groups within the church have being the most virulent enemies of other groups within the church. It wasn't the pagans that that martyred our Anabaptist ancestors, or forebearers, it was other Christians who said "these Christians need to go," or whatever the case might be. It doesn't surprise me that we have enemies.

Maybe the problem with enemy is that in our world, we always think of enemy in the most intense terms and we don't have a sense of perspective on what an enemy is and that there are degrees of ways in which people have animosity towards us. At the very least we should be able to calibrate our responses to those kinds of things.

Think about the vote we're having in the conference on women in ministry, for example. You start talking about voting you're talking about people who want one thing and a group of people who want something else. Well, there's animosity or there's at least competition there. I wouldn't call those people, enemies of each other. That's on one side of the spectrum, but it keeps flowing all the way along there.

JP: Dr. Greg Boyd is pastor at Woodland Hills Church in St. Paul, MN. He's also the author of many books, including the *Crucifixion of the Warrior God*. We asked him what we should make about the fact that Jesus seems to assume that we are going to have enemies in our life

Dr. Greg Boyd: See I think we will have enemies. People who oppose us. People who just hate us, maybe. So they're enemies in terms of their stance towards us. But I don't think they're supposed to be enemies in terms of our stance towards them. How can it be when our call is to love them. And so we're to see them: here's a person who is maybe opposing me and wants to do ill by me. But my job is not to reciprocate, never retaliate. This quid pro quo game that the world plays: I hit you, so you hit me twice as hard, so I hit you four times as hard, so now you bomb my house, and now I bomb your city and the merry-go-round goes on.

We're to be a people, I believe, who are called to opt off of that, never retaliate. That's why Jesus says, "do not resist an evil doer," just prior to saying, "love your enemies and bless those who persecute you." Do not resist. And the word resist there, *anthistēmi* in Greek, it doesn't mean that you become a doormat. It just means don't reciprocate in kind. Don't respond to a push with a push or a slug with a slug or a bullet with a bullet, but rather – get in the way but you have to do it in ways that are consistent with showing love towards the other person. And so that means they can't be considered our enemies.

One other thing, and that is that Paul says in Ephesians 6:12 that our battle, our struggle is never against flesh and blood, never against flesh and blood, never against other human beings, is always against the principalities and powers, and dominions and rulers and authorities and those in dark places. And here's the thing about this verse. Those powers, you understand it in the New Testament apocalyptic contexts, those are the fallen powers that are always trying to get us to identify other human beings as enemies.

Again they want to cause us to self implode. And so the only way we can be loving all flesh and blood is by resisting those powers. The powers that pull us for self preservation, the powers that pull us to our trust in violence and all the rest. We've gotta be battling the

principles of powers in order so we can continue to love unconditionally all flesh and blood. We're never to regard them as our enemies.

JP: I've enjoyed this conversation. The different things that have kind of come out. It seems to me that there's a few big themes that are running through this, right?

First of all, the identification of enemies. How do we understand who our enemy is?

Second is the question of how intense is that relationship? I think there was some helpful distinctions made, going just because we have an enemy doesn't mean it needs to be this monumental thing. There are degrees of enemies, and there are degrees of relationships that we have with people.

Maybe the third thing is the recognition, and Dr. Greg Boyd talked about this. I think it was helpful to remember that just because we recognize and acknowledge that somebody may be an enemy to us, it does not mean that we ourselves need to be postured as an enemy towards them. An acknowledgement of animosity or having an enemy doesn't automatically mean that there needs to be sort of open conflict coming from both sides.

KW: There's also another part that Dr. Boyd mentioned, and that's a recognition of the true enemy. That while the spiritual powers that be would love nothing more than to have us always putting all of our animosity towards other people, but that our true enemy is actually the spiritual forces of darkness as Ephesian 6 talks about, and that there is a true enemy out there that we need to posture ourselves against, and that is the forces of darkness. The forces of evil. But that human beings are not our true enemy, and that our posture towards one another as human beings, even if their posture towards us is that of an enemy that we posture ourselves towards them, as has been mentioned in a different way, that our response is that of love. And I appreciate the words of Paul in this in the New Testament that as far as it depends on us to live at peace with everybody. [Romans 12:18]

JP: Right. Dr. Boyd actually kind of made that even stronger as he talked about the fact that there is nothing more that our true enemy would love to do than to make us refocus or reframe this into thinking of other people as our primary enemies.

We're going to go off on just a little bit of a rabbit trail here. As I was talking with Pastor Cameron, one of the questions that came to mind for me was wrestling with verses in Scripture that talk about persecution, and maybe especially over the last couple of years and some of the tensions that have come up, the political tensions, the differences of opinion over things, there has been maybe a growing sentiment in the North American church or in pockets of it, that we should expect to have enemies and persecution, and that actually it's a sign that we are living in the correct way to have the world sort of begin to hate us or come after us. And there can become a little bit of a, maybe an unhealthy

martyrdom complex that comes from expecting or actually even seeking out enemies in the world by the way that we behave or act. I asked Cameron if this was something that he saw as well.

CM: Sure. I think it can. I think one of the things that when you say you know, love your enemies and assume that you're going to have enemies puts us into a conflict-based relationship. And once you're in a conflict-based relationship, you begin constructing all of life in terms of that of that conflict. This is a competitive world, it's competitive for resources, it's competitive for voice, it's competitive for power and then you start sanctifying your desire for resource, your desire for power, your desire for voice and influence as somehow being a part of your God-given calling. You begin to sanctify the kind of life that you have, so that anyone who opposes the life that you have is now opposing God's will.

There is this sense where sometimes we have to deal with enemies of our own making. And Paul is actually really clear on this. As far as it depends on you, live at peace with all people. [Romans 12:18] We create a lot of the animosity that we experience in our lives. In any given interaction others are only 50% of the problem, so when I approach somebody, I have to assume that I'm 50% of this interaction and I have to take 100% responsibility for 50% of what goes wrong, if something goes wrong. And I can only take 100% responsibility for 50% of what goes right.

There is this thing where what you're talking about, I think, is we make our own enemies, we really do and we make them because of the ideological, political, social conventions we live in; we're shaped by so many factors. Even what we think the Bible says about us. I did this with students frequently. I'd ask students to tell me how many of you grew up in a church, like you spent your entire life living in the church. At Providence, that would be 75% of the students in the classroom. And then I'd say to them, none of you have read the Bible for the first time. You've just never done it. It was it was read, interpreted, shaped, delivered to you from little picture books you read as an infant all the way through Sunday school. By the time you were actually reading these words for yourself, deliberately and thoughtfully, you had a whole, almost cast in concrete view of what this story was about and who you are and how you're supposed to react.

I think we do need to be really careful about that and that we don't assume every time we see disagreement with us, or every time we see pushback against us, we're actually looking at a real enemy, and that we develop the habit of looking at ourselves and maybe learning to trace some of the roots of our conflict with other people to ourselves. That's a really important qualification.

JP: Our conversation with Dr. Greg Boyd took a similar turn. We ended up talking a little bit about Christian nationalism as well, and acknowledged the persecution complex that can sometimes exist within the North American Church.

Dr. Greg Boyd: Well, I think Jesus tells us to expect persecution, if he was persecuted then so you'll be persecuted. But Jesus didn't say, therefore, arm yourself and fight back. He said "put away your sword. If you live by the sword, you'll die by the sword. [Matthew 26:52]

The folks that get involved in Christian Nationalism – well you know, love believes all things and hopes all things. [1 Corinthians 13:7] And so I just assume that there's sincere people who are, in my opinion, very, very, very misguided. And I think it's very, very dangerous. You mix religion and violence and it's never good.

I mean religion is like you're just injecting steroids in the stuff. Whatever people would normally do, well, if you put God in it, they'll do it more passionately and sadly all of the stuff in the church history that is abysmal and terrible, and how we tortured people and all that that comes out of a Christian nationalist mindset.

The minute we identify the kingdom of God with a nation, boom! It's not going to be beautiful, it's going to be a quote unquote 'Christianized' version of the kind of nationalistic impulse that people have always had, and the thing is... In my opinion, when you fuse the Christian faith with the interests of any nation, well, all you've done is just paganized Christianity.

All nations - they almost all throughout history have fought for god and country. In the name of some god, and for some country. So the idea that we will fight for god and country is not a uniquely Christian thing. It's a mantra of paganism that goes back to Homer. You know, they're always fighting the name of some deity or whatever. And then we just make Jesus one of those deities, the right one, which is what everyone else is doing with their deities.

Now to follow Jesus is to follow him on the way of the cross and that's to go the opposite way and to do this you may have to crucify your common sense, because our common sense has been formed by the pattern of this world, and it's just common sense. It just makes sense that if your enemy is going to kill you, well, you gotta kill them first. They're gonna persecute you, kill you then we're going after them first. It's common sense. But here's what I always say in response to that. On the one hand, you got to ask what is our Lord, Jesus or our common sense. And the answer has got to be Jesus. Jesus has got to trump our common sense, if it comes to that.

But the second thing is if I find that my common sense is in violation to Jesus, I have to assume that the problems with me, not Jesus. Usually what people do is – this starts with

Augustine most clearly – is when they say obviously if someone's going to kill you, you should kill them. If someone's gonna kill your family well then you should kill them, that's justified violence, that's just war theory. And if it's obvious, common sense, that I should defend me and my loved ones, well, then why not my neighbour? If I'm supposed to love my neighbour, why not my state? And so boom – now Jesus' teaching about loving enemies gets reduced to hey, don't retaliate against the grouchy neighbour you've got. But it completely takes out the radical dimension of the whole thing.

So what I teach folks is this: let's assume that we're in the wrong, that there's something wrong with our common sense but maybe if we start practicing loving our enemies in all these little ways, because people always go to the extreme – “what they are going to kill you? What if they're going to rape your wife?” That doesn't happen most of the time and you know the thing is, is that when something that terrible happens, no one is going to be thinking, “oh, what's the rule I'm supposed to follow?” When you're in situations you operate out of your character. So maybe if we started loving enemies in little ways before we get to the catastrophe...

I think that every day we should be praying for our quote unquote enemies. My congregation, I instruct them, remind them all the time to be picking out the three to five people or people groups that you have the hardest time loving. Think of the politicians that drive you the most crazy, make you the most angry, pray for them every day. You know, it's interesting that – and I didn't notice this until just this last year – but enemies is the one group that Jesus specifically tells us to pray for. Pray for the Romans and pray for the Samaritans, pray for your enemies. And I think that's because that's a muscle we've got to be flexing, otherwise we are going to use it. And so if I start praying for my enemies every day, maybe then I'll develop a character over a year or five years or ten years that's such that, God forbid that if anyone does break into my house and is threatening me or my loved ones, now I'll be operating... I'll actually see the wisdom in not killing this person because my character has been formed. So that that's I think an absolutely indispensable practice. We won't naturally grow into loving our enemies if we're not intentional and loving our enemies continually and forming our character in that direction. I guarantee you we will be hating our enemies. And to that degree, we're not at all following the teachings of Jesus.

KW: This conversation about a martyrdom complex and thinking the world is out to persecute us as North American Christians. I mean, I know there is legitimate persecution in the world. It does exist and Jesus does talk about persecution, but one of the interesting things to me as I've read the scriptures is this little passage in the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is telling them about persecution. And he says in Matthew 5:11 “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it. Be very

glad. For a great reward awaits you in heaven” and then Jesus says this: “and remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.” And so Jesus is comparing their persecution to the ancient prophets. We might look at that and we might miss that little piece and we might think, well, yeah, the prophets were persecuted and just think it's the world. But no, the prophets were persecuted by the people of God.

When I look around, I sometimes see a lot of Christians hurting other Christians. I see a lot of the people of God doing a lot of harm to other people of God. And sometimes I wonder, are we the biggest persecutors of one another and then it causes me to wonder as well. Have I been someone who has been needlessly persecuting another Christian instead of being someone that is loving my enemy?

JP: Absolutely. I think we sit in a privileged position in North America as Christians, as a part of the church, and there probably is some truth to the fact, probably a lot of truth to the fact, that as we think about the idea of persecution, the first question we should be asking ourselves isn't are we being persecuted? Maybe the first question we should be asking ourselves is, are there ways in which we are persecuting or going after people who think differently than us in ways that Jesus never intended?

KW: What you're about to hear is a roundtable discussion from Many Rooms Church Community, which is a network of house churches in Winnipeg's North End. Stephanie, Travis, Jennifer and Deborah were gathered around a table discussing this idea about having enemies. Or do we have enemies? Who is our enemy? This is Jennifer.

Jennifer: Well, I certainly don't have charitable thoughts toward, you know, my neighbours down the back lane who are partying up to a weird hour. And the person who's breaking a big TV in the back lane to get some copper out and leaves a big mess. I don't necessarily consider them my enemies but I feel at odds with what they're doing and that that's one way I feel it.

Deborah: So you don't like what they're doing, not them.

Jennifer: Right. I think we all, whenever we have an enemy...

Stephanie: But that might be something that we've gotten so used to doing we don't recognize that we are choosing not to make someone an enemy. Because we do have other friends in the neighbourhood who are just so angry at something, people for their bad behaviour and they feel like it's personal. And whereas I think we've taught ourselves that when someone breaks your window or your slashes the tire that they aren't an enemy. I don't know. But yet we could decide they were an enemy. I don't know why.

Deborah: They can be a nuisance, but they're not really an enemy.

Stephanie: Like, what do you think Travis, because you've had a lot of situations where people have actually; I feel like it's been pretty personal in there.

Travis: Yeah. So again the Sunday school childish answer would be, yeah, well, if you have an enemy, just make them a friend and then you don't have enemies anymore, right? And that's kind of what we're talking about, how do you define an enemy? And so although I feel very strong that I'm called to love everybody and that means everybody, even the person who doesn't like me I'm kind of assuming my enemies are the people who don't like me or who hate me, and so it would be easy to just match their way of thinking and their way of viewing me as "oh, if you don't want to be my friend, then I'm obviously not going to be your friend and therefore, we're enemies."

So I guess maybe that ties back to what I was saying earlier, like when do you decide to not engage with someone who doesn't like you? Because you can actually antagonize them with love.

So when is it appropriate to not engage with someone because it's just best for them to deal with it themselves? Some of it is timing. We had a neighbour who hated us just so we kind of just stayed out of his way for the most part. But at the same time, we offer greetings of the day, whatever it is, as you passed to know that you know it's not reciprocal, the feeling, we still offer love and friendship and whatever else but if it's not picked up then you kind of respect that.

I guess also like in an environment, if you have a friend who's prone to stealing things, you're not going to leave your wallet unattended on the table. Out of kindness, you kind of remove it just so he's not tempted. And so in some ways, I think it's okay not to bake pies and remind them that I'm this person in your life that you hate, that you need to work on that relationship that we don't have.

I think currently for the people that really don't like me, it is interesting for me to think like how do I best love them because I do sometimes greet them and you know, let it be known that "hey, if they ever want to change their stance on their thinking of me, then I'm open to that." I'm still a neighbour. I'm still a friend. And yet I think sometimes that just stings for them to know that I'm not... Because I think they're wallowing and they're in a situation where they're feeling that I'm this terrible person and they would like me to have those same negative feelings towards them. I don't actually know. I don't know what they think, but it is difficult to know what is the best approach to love these people.

Jennifer: I think that's where you're seeing the beauty of the family of God sometimes and the body of Christ, is that there are there are more of us to go around, to love, so that when there is a breach between myself and another person and we feel like we're enemies right now, well, I'm not the only person that is loving them as Christ loves them. There are other people- people in my community, they are able to show them love and they are

able to receive love from, and maybe not even within our church. Sometimes we've sometimes we've connected with another church in our neighbourhood and said, can you love this person right now because there's a breach with us? We're struggling. We've had to have some boundaries, but you have a different relationship with them. Can you show some love here right now?

The family of God has many parts. The body of Christ has many parts, and so when one part is unable to love right now, there are other parts and Christ is in that.

JP: We talked with Pastor Cameron McKenzie and asked the question what does it mean to have an enemy in a Christian way?

CM: Jesus says in Luke 6 “do good to those who hurt you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who despise you.” I think that's what it looks like to have an enemy in a Christian way and that is powerfully countercultural. “Consider it all joy when you fall into trials.” [James 1:2 KJV]

I think one of the things that we've bought into, part of the general cultural consciousness that we've bought into, is the idea that if there is somebody who is genuinely seeking ill for us, somebody who genuinely despises us, somebody who is quite prepared to say all manner of wicked and harmful things about us in public, and those people are there. That's another category on that spectrum of enemies that we have. That even if those people exist, what Jesus says is, bless them, pray for them, do good for them. That is, I think, how a Christian responds and loves their enemy.

It's not complicated, it's challenging. It's really hard, but it's not complicated to go into the quiet place where you go and actually pray for the people that you're angry with. When the whole thing with Ukraine broke and we were we have a weekly group that meets on Friday mornings for prayer. And so obviously part of what we were praying for was Ukraine. We tried really hard to pray for Putin. We tried to pray really hard that he would remember his baptismal vows. That he would remember this piece of his life that he claims to care about, his faith. That's a hard thing for us to do, but it's an important thing for us to do. That's also how we get past that pre-emptively judging who's in and who's out and who God's doing what with. So that's how I think you love your enemy as a Christian.

JP: Yeah. We brought the same question to Dr. Carol Penner. We know now as Christians that we're going to have enemies. What is a Christian response to this?

CP: I think loving an enemy in a Christian way means being very clear about your own power and being very clear about who is a child of God. We are all children of God. And some children of God do have more power than other people. So for example, I have more power than my children. I can intimidate them, I can hurt them, without them being able

to defend themselves simply because I'm so much bigger than them and I have power over them. For me to love my enemy means I have to look at every single person and think about how am I using my power in relation to this person and it is the vulnerable people we interact with, who we make into our enemies.

So for example, my mother has since died, but she was very frail and in a nursing home and she was very hard to deal with. And I was so angry with her sometimes, like I was really angry with her and I thought, I could see myself hitting someone like this. I would think no Christian would ever hit an old person. And yet, because there was this power differential and she wouldn't do what I asked her to do, I found myself having violent thoughts towards her. Can we admit that in the Christian church that when there are power differentials, we are tempted to violence. We are tempted to make the people we love into our enemies.

In another sense, when I think about the violence or when I think about the conflict that we see in Canada right now with all of the pandemic conflict and even political differences. How do we be a Christian and have an enemy? It has to do with believing that everyone is a child of God and that we must treat people with respect and not bullying them and not overpower them with our voice, but listen to them and hear them out and try to find ways to interact that give humanity to the situation rather than making it us versus them.

KW: This is what Pastor Melissa Florer-Bixler had to say about what it means to have an enemy in a Christian way.

MFB: Yeah, what I hear in in the life of Jesus, in the life of Israel, in its connections to the life of Jesus, is the sense that when we talk about enemies, we're really naming that there is catastrophic sin, destruction and death that impacts our world, and that often almost entirely siphons through human beings and through relationships. The relationship of harm where one person has the ability, is able to execute harm over another person in a persistent way is a relationship that we call enmity. Once we begin to sort of think more intentionally about what that relationship means, we can also then open ourselves up to a God who wants to redeem even our enemies. That not simply has come for the best people, the people who do well, but has a message of redemption through those who have experienced harm and destruction, who create a form of life that makes it possible for us to no longer live as enemies.

JP: Oh man, there's a lot of good stuff that we've covered today. I want to be careful about playing favorites because all our panelists today were my favorite. But I do really enjoy listening to the Many Rooms Church Community talk this through. Just something about sort of the down to earth sitting around a dining room table and talking through real relationship, real situation, active things that they're involved in and processing and kind

of walking through with kind of messy edges and in messy life with other people. There's something really life giving about them letting us into their slice of life there and taking us along on that journey.

KW: There's something really profound about that and about just listening in on something authentic, and it reminds us as well that as we live our lives, we cannot do this alone. They're part of a community that is actively living and serving and worshiping together, but I know they would also be the first to remind you that they need Jesus in this. And as we live this life and as we encounter people who are enemies of ours or as we fail and make ourselves enemies of others, we need to come back once again to the cross. We need to come back once again to Jesus, to rather seek the forgiveness that we need for ways in which we have been enemies of others, or to come to Jesus for the strength that we need to love our enemies and love those who have harmed us.

JP: Right. The question of what does it mean to have an enemy in a Christian way, I think comes back exactly to we have an enemy focused on Christ. That is where our eyes are fixed in the midst of these things.

KW: Our feature song today is a song called *Be Heard* by Brandon Post.

Be Heard, Brandon Post

I only think I'm heard about half the time
The other half I'm sitting here figuring out
What's on my mind
And sure I'll let you interrupt
Your thoughts are louder than mine
I only think I'm heard about half the time

I only really listen when I'm bored
The other times I'm sitting here
Trying to recall the score
Thinking about who meant what
and I how I love you more
I only really listen when I'm bored

So hold your tongue
Wait 'till they're done
Oh, quiet your heart
Your mind is on the run

I tend to feel the distance when it's dark
Turn out the last light
and finally hear my heart

The ache becomes so well-defined
Of how we're far apart
I tend to feel the distance when it's dark

Closing

The Armchair Anabaptist is a Theodidaktos podcast and Theodidaktos is a publication of the Evangelical Mennonite Conference.

You can check us out online at www.thearmchairanabaptist.ca and find us on iTunes, Spotify, and wherever podcasts are found.

Special thanks to our guests who have joined us today. That was Pastor Melissa Florer-Bixler, Dr. Carol Penner, Pastor Cameron McKenzie, Dr. Greg Boyd and the Many Rooms Church Community in Winnipeg.

Our intro song is First Communion by Dane Joneshill and our feature song today was Be Heard by Brandon Post.

Our executive producer is Erica Fehr, our producer and audio engineer is Kevin Wiebe and our administrative assistant and wizard of all things web related is Ruth Block.

I'm Kevin Wiebe. And I'm Jesse Penner. And we have been your hosts for The Armchair Anabaptist. We certainly hope that what you have heard today will do more than stay as merely food for thought, but that it can help inspire each of us to get up out of the comfort of our armchairs and translate into living more like Jesus.

Join us next time as we continue our journey looking at the life of peace and hearing some real life stories about how people love their enemies and hearing about some practical ways that we can do that as well. Join us next time on The Armchair Anabaptist.

**Edited for clarity.*