

You can tell when you're in love partly from the feelings, and partly from your behavior. You start doing things for someone more than you ordinarily would do. In fact, you do things for complete strangers, just because you love someone else.

Today we hear part of a speech Jesus delivers to his disciples. It's Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount which we find in Matthew's Gospel. One difference is that Luke has Jesus give the sermon on the plain. That's p-l-a-i-n. Jesus encourages the disciples to do the behavior of someone who's in love--do without expecting something in return. When he suggests they love not just those who love them, but also their enemies, he's not asking them to have the emotion of love, but to do the behaviors of someone in love.

In commerce one of our guiding principles is you get what you pay for. People expect reciprocation. I expect the product to be worth what I pay; I may even be willing to pay more if I know the product is better. We reciprocate in certain relationships. You hear people say, "I'll do a favor for you if you do a favor for me." Or "I'll refuse to help out because there's nothing in it for me."

Jesus says the relationship of the disciple should be founded on a willingness to do without expecting something in return. It's the relationship of love, not the relationship of commerce. It belongs above all in the family, but also in the parish community, and ultimately in the economy as well. Economic justice among citizens and between nations depends on the willingness of some people to do with less so that those who have less might have more. If our nation develops the behavior of love, we will gladly help the poor, the hungry, the homeless, not just out of duty, but out of a genuine desire to share love.

If we don't feel love toward some people because of their economic class, their race, their addictions, their disabilities, or their appearance, we can at least act lovingly toward them. The behavior of love can lead to the emotion of love.