



ELIZABETHTOWN  
CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

PRACTICING PEACE, SERVICE AND OPENNESS TO ALL

*Whose side are you on  
anyway?!*

Psalm 133.1; Matthew 5.43–44

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**Who's on MY team in an era of tribalism? How do we think about our team as a congregation that identifies together, but is welcome to all?**

### **WORSHIP THEME?**

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Last year was a great Super Bowl. We predicted right here last year that the Eagles would win. And it was awesome for me as an Arizona transplant who had adopted the Eagles as my team. Our whole family was rooting for them. Well, as much as some of them care about football.

So I was really excited going into this season. We got a puppy a few months ago and I started indoctrinating him too. Teaching him to attack. And it looked like the Eagles were going to do it again this year. Only to lose a close one to the Saints.

In a world where we are constantly being told who to love and who to hate, we're going to follow Rule 5.44.

At the end of the day, we're all on the same team.

### **PSALM 133.1**

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*How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!*

It is good when we dwell together in unity. But it sure is fun to root against a villain! David had Goliath, Jesus had Judas, The Apostle Paul had the Romans, and NFL fans have....the Patriots.

I gave a full review last year of why they're soooo unlikable. They're cheaters, ruthless decision-makers cutting players when they no longer serve as a means to their ends, and worst of all, very successful. I heard one guy liken the Patriots to stink bugs—no matter what you do to keep them out of the Super Bowl they always seem to find a way in.

There's no way anyone can like these guys. In fact, anyone who likes these guys is just as bad as them. Patriots fans are the kind of people who use all the toilet paper and not replace it. Wait that's not fair, they're the kind of people who take all but one square and then make the next person replace it.

2 Have I ever told you all that I actually met one of the most famous Patriots? It was my Junior year of college. My brother comes into my room, too early on a Saturday morning, and says, “Greg, there’s these two huge U of A football players in our kitchen.” “Shut up!” I replied. Sure enough, there they were, about 600 pounds of the U of A Defensive line standing in our kitchen. They were there to look at a scooter I had for sale.

Scooter makes Sports Illustrated. Closest I will ever get to SI. You know this really ruins my narrative on the Patriots.

As coincidence would have it, Tedy married one of my brother’s high school classmates, Heidi—who is also a really nice person—by all accounts is a nice guy and a loving father.

Dang it! Turns out Patriots are people too. This really hurts my narrative that all Patriots and their fans are terrible people. And God loves them.

#### **MATTHEW 5.43–44–RULE 5.44**

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*“You have heard that is was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be children of God.”*

Jesus tells us to love our enemies because love is the cornerstone of his message. And we know that love is an effective way to turn people from the dark to the light.

But I wonder if this is part of why Jesus tells us to love our enemies, it’s because we might discover that they aren’t our enemy after all. And that when we want to lump people into categories, ascribe their intentions, assume we know everything about them because we know one thing about them, we might be wrong.

We might learn that we may disagree here or there, but maybe we have more in common than we thought.

**Rule 5.44. We’re all on the same team.**

It's all good fun to divide ourselves among sports teams. But the real world is quite different. In today's world of polarized politics. That's the way of Jesus and what we strive for here in this congregation.

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