

*This is from a story written by a man who was taken prisoner by the Japanese Army in World War II. He and his fellow prisoners worked hard to love other people the way Jesus asked them to. As the war was ending, while still a prisoner he and his fellow prisoners met some wounded Japanese soldiers. This is what happened.*

Further on, we were shunted on to a railway siding for a lengthy stay. We found ourselves on the same track with several carloads of Japanese wounded. They were on their own and without medical care. No longer fit for action, they had been packed into railway trucks which were being returned to Bangkok.

They were in a shocking state; I have never seen men filthier. Their uniforms were encrusted with mud, blood and dirt. Their wounds, sorely inflamed and full of pus, crawled with maggots. We could understand now why the Japanese were so cruel to their prisoners. If they didn't even care for their own, why should they care for us?

The wounded men looked at us forlornly as they sat with their heads resting against the carriages waiting for death. They had no one to care for them. These were the enemy, more cowed and defeated than we had ever been. Without a word, most of the officers in my section unbuckled their packs, took out part of their food rations and a rag or two, and, with water canteens in their hands went over to the Japanese train to help them. Our guards tried to prevent us, shouting at us. But we ignored them and knelt by the side of the enemy to give them food and water, to clean and bind up their wounds, to smile and say a kind word. Grateful cries of 'Aragatto!' ('Thank you!') followed us when we left. An Allied officer from another section of the train had been taking it all in. 'What fools you all are!' he said to me. 'Don't you realize that those are the enemy?'

'Have you never heard the story of the man who was going from Jerusalem to Jericho?' I asked him. He gave me a blank look, so I continued, 'He was attacked by thugs, stripped of everything and left to die. Along came a priest; he passed him by. Then came a lawyer, a man of high principles; he passed by as well. Next came a Samaritan, a half-caste, a heretic, an enemy. But he didn't pass by; he stopped. His heart was filled with compassion. Kneeling down, he poured some wine through the unconscious lips, cleaned and dressed the helpless man's wounds, then took him to an inn where he had him cared for at his own expense.'

Jesus said "Love your enemies."

*Adapted from "To End All Wars" (1963) - Ernest Gordon*