

It's been a strange season for professional sports as they try to adapt to life in a pandemic. The Lakers took home the NBA title this weekend, and baseball's playoffs entered the League Championship Series. Tonight the Dodgers will take on the Braves in the first of a seven game series.

For me, baseball is a metaphor of life in so many ways. The following story illustrates what I mean. Most of us are aware of the intense rivalry between the New York Yankees and the Boston Red Sox. I don't think there is any other like it in just any sport. When they play one another, sparks can fly!

Wade Boggs played third base for the Red Sox in the 1980s. When he played at Yankee Stadium, one of the Yankee fans made it a personal mission to harass him. The man had a box seat close to the field and would torment Boggs with obscenities and insults for the duration of every game. Finally, Boggs decided he'd had enough.

As the man began his typical insult routine at the next game, Boggs walked directly over to the man, who was sitting with a group of friends. "Are you the guy who's always yelling at me?" Boggs asked.

"Yeah, it's me. Whatcha gonna do about it?" responded the man belligerently.

Wade took a new baseball out of his pocket, autographed it, tossed it to the man, and went back to the field to continue his pre-game routine. The man became one of Wade's biggest fans at Yankee Stadium.

Would you have done that? Would you have given something of value to the person who abused you, yelled at you, made your life difficult? Jesus taught his disciples some tough lessons, but one of the hardest must have been his instructions to turn the other cheek when struck, to love your enemy and pray for him. Most of us, when faced with hostility, want to fight back, not turn the other cheek. Jesus asked, "For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matthew 5:46). Jesus ups the ante for those who want to be his followers. Be like him who, as he was dying on the cross, forgave even those who crucified him. Be like God who sends the rain upon both the just and unjust.

Who will you pray for this week? As the Yankees fan demanded of Wade Boggs, "Whatcha gonna do about it?" when someone insults you or hurts you? Maybe it's time to give Jesus' way a try.

Oh, and by the way, Boggs left the Red Sox in 1992 and put on a Yankees' uniform for three years. Just another life lesson from baseball – sometimes those we labeled an enemy can become our friend.