

Forgiven Ones

7afterEpiphany

Pastor Josh Frazee

Luke 6:27-38

Grace, peace, and mercy be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, we are forgiven ones in our Lord Jesus Christ. We have received the forgiveness of sins for the sake of Jesus' death and resurrection. As ones who have been forgiven and who have received the faith to believe in Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we are called to live in the world, but not of it. What does this look like?

As we continue to hear the Sermon on the Plains, with Jesus' eyes focused on us today just as they were focused on His apostles at the time He preached it, we learn what it looks like to live as forgiven ones. Last week we learned that we are blessed in Jesus, and that as ones forgiven by Him, we hunger and thirst for righteousness. We are blessed not because we had this hunger and thirst—we were sinners like everyone else—no, we are blessed by being forgiven, and because we are forgiven, we hunger and thirst for Jesus, all of His Word and all of His gifts in baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar.

This week, we continue to hear from Jesus what it looks like to be forgiven ones living in His grace, righteousness, and forgiveness.

Verse 1

Jesus continued: “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.”

Again, Jesus gives this list as a list of fruits that those forgiven ones will produce because they are the forgiven ones. Jesus told them that the fruit of being a forgiven one would be to “love” their “enemies.” From this, Jesus lists three ways of doing this love: doing good, blessing, and praying for them. As we've heard before, love is not an emotion but is instead doing things for our neighbors. And our neighbors include those we might consider “enemies.”

Truly, we have no enemies but the spiritual powers: sin, death, and the devil. Yet from time to time the devil makes us agitated with one another to the point where we might consider our fellow human beings “enemies.” It is to them and for them that Jesus said forgiven ones would do the love of doing good, blessing, and praying for them.

As forgiven ones, we are eternally rich. Those who hurt us in this life or take our goods in this life are not worth considering with the immeasurable joy we have at having eternal life. The commentator Lenski put it this way: “I cannot like a filthy, vicious beggar and make him my personal friend; I cannot like a low, mean criminal who may have robbed me and almost taken my life; I cannot like a false, lying, slanderous fellow who has perhaps vilified me again and again; but I can, by the grace of Jesus Christ, love them all, namely see just what is wrong with them, desire and work to remove that wrong thing, and to this end do them all good (Luke Commentary, p.361).”

In other words, to turn the other cheek and offer the other tunic also is to treat the other person with love, but it is more than that. It is to pray to God that that person be changed from their evil ways. What is more loving than praying that God would turn someone from their evil ways and bring them to the eternal

salvation of Jesus? Then the other would hopefully stop doing the wrong things and be with you in paradise. There is no loss in that!

Verse 2

“If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount.”

Outside of Christ Jesus, we might expect to live life only ever laughing with friends and avoiding those who treat us unkindly. We might expect to live life only loving those who love us back. We might expect that we are expected to do good only to those who treat us well. And we might also expect to only lend to those who we know will be able to repay us. Outside of Christ Jesus we might expect these things.

You, dear brothers and sisters, are in Christ. You are in God the Son, who came to die for you even while you were still His enemy, lost and rightly condemned in your sin. Jesus manifested God’s love for us throughout His life and in His death, praying for those who crucified Him, that God would not hold crucifying Him against them.

We are all forgiven ones—you, me, and all of our brothers and sisters in Christ. As forgiven ones, we have received forgiveness for our many sins—we all have internal lists miles long which only we, and possibly our spouses really know, while others may see a few to have a problem with—again, we have been forgiven for these in Christ. As forgiven ones, we also desire the forgiveness of others. In our Adult Bible Class, we are covering this topic. Here’s how the author of our leader’s guide puts it: “The Christian who deals with a sinning brother or sister will show a humble and gentle spirit, as befits those who know they themselves are not without fault and who know they also are prone to fall into sin. Such a Christian will seek to win an erring brother or sister, not self-righteously or with a superior attitude, but as one forgiven sinner seeking to share God’s grace with another sinner (Leader’s Guide/Corinthians/CPH, p. 87).”

Verse 3

“But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

In our Lord Jesus, we are given the Holy Spirit to help us produce good works. Not works to earn us favor, but works we can do because we already have God’s favor, in Jesus. In Him, and through the Holy Spirit, we can love our enemies, and do good, and lend, without expecting a return. We can do these things as sons of the Most High.

We love because we were first loved by God in our Savior Jesus Christ. That is how it works for us. We were ungrateful and evil and did not deserve any of God’s love, but He gave it anyway as grace. Today, we can practice the same, learning from how God first loved us.

This is all by GRACE: God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense. We were loved and forgiven at Christ’s expense, and now we love and forgive others who were also loved by God at Christ’s expense. In Jesus’ Name. Amen.

