

Immanuel (Augsburg) Lutheran Church  
Shobonier, Illinois  
Epiphany 7C  
February 20, 2022  
Luke 6:27-38

### A Sermon You'd Rather Not Hear

"But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. . . . 31 And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. . . . 36 Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." (Luke 6:27-28, 31, 36 ESV)

In the name of Jesus, the only Savior of the world,

There are some passages of Scripture we really love to hear. "God is love." "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." (Ps. 23:1). Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep." (John 10:11). Again, Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life." (John 11:25). Of course, there are many more.

But there are also some passages of Scripture we'd rather not hear, and today's Gospel is one of them. After all, who wants to love one's enemies? Too often, we don't even love our family, our spouse, our children, or our friends as we should. But love our enemies? That's a bit much to ask, isn't it? After all, you'd rather bear that grudge you've been nursing for so long. You've put a lot of time and energy hanging on to what that other person said or did. And what about that person who has hurt you, or intends to hurt you? You're supposed to love that guy who wishes you harm, even wishing you'd go to hell?

And if that's not enough, Jesus says you're to "\*do good\*" to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." Not only does our old Adam not want to love our enemies or do good to them, we certainly do not want to pray for them. In fact, what we really want is vengeance, to get even. We want them to get what they deserve. We want to do them harm. We want to get them before they can get us.

And if that's still not enough, Jesus says, "Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back." Ok, Jesus, that's way too much. I'm not going to give to every beggar; who knows if he really deserves it or what he'll do with it. And if someone takes my stuff, you can be sure I'll do everything I can to get it back.

And then, just when we're about to stop listening to Jesus altogether, He hits us where it hurts. "As you wish that others would do to you, do so to them." That's the Golden Rule. You've heard it since you were a child. Treat others as you want them to treat you. Well, maybe if they're family or friends, or if they're nice to me. But Jesus, you ask too much. It's too hard. And when

you say, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful," You don't really know what you're asking us to do.

Oh, doesn't He? He knows exactly what He's telling you to do. After all, He is talking to those who hear, that is, you, the children of God He has made you and called you to be. Jesus is calling you to follow Him and His example. For Jesus loved, and loves, His enemies. He did, and does, good to those who hate Him. He blessed, and blesses, those who curse Him. He prayed, and prays, for those who abuse Him. He did it all for you.

After all, by nature you are His enemies. By nature you hate Him, curse Him, abuse Him. By nature, because you are sinners, and, therefore, His enemies. And "while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8). "For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life." (Rom. 5:10). Yes, what Jesus says to you, He did. When He was hated, harassed, maligned, threatened, betrayed, denied, falsely arrested and accused, beaten, scourged, convicted, crucified, He loved those who did it, doing the greatest good of all to them. He died for them and all their sins, even as He has died for all of yours, to save you from your sins. He died and rose again so that you might live with Him forever. He never sought vengeance against His enemies and those who wished Him dead, even in hell. Instead, He prayed that His Father would forgive them, forgive you.

Yes, Jesus did to you, and for you, what you could not do for yourself. He loved you who hate Him, curse Him, abuse Him. And He wants you to do that for others, even your enemies. He wants you to live as the children of God He has made you. He wants you to "be merciful, even as your Father is merciful." As your Father, who sent Jesus to be your brother, has had mercy on you, so He wants you to have mercy on others, even your enemies.

And if you don't think it can be done by mortals, consider Joseph in today's Old Testament reading (Gen. 45:3-15). His brothers had hated him and sold him into slavery, and he ended up in Egypt. Though God was with him, he was falsely accused and imprisoned because he would not be seduced by Potiphar's wife. And then, after a time, ten of his brothers came to Egypt to buy food. He had the chance to take vengeance on them, to get even, but he didn't. He forgave them. He told them to bring Jacob, his father, to Egypt, and he would provide for them. He had come to know that all that had happened to him was for God's purposes of saving his family alive. And later, when Jacob had died, he had to reassure his brothers again that he forgave them and would not do them harm. Though they intended evil against him, God worked it for good. Indeed, Joseph fulfilled what is said in Psalm 25, "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you." By God's grace, Joseph overcame evil with good.

So, you see, God has judged you, but not condemned you. He has forgiven you and continually forgives you. He gives you forgiveness in overflowing measure. You can hardly receive it all. With God's judgment on you, His forgiveness, you can't help but show that same forgiveness to others, including your family, your friends, even your enemies. Is it easy? No way! But in Christ,

as you receive His love, His forgiveness, His blessing, everything He gives, you show it to others as well. And you'll do it even when, especially when, they don't deserve it, when they hate and mistreat you. For you do not deserve such rich blessings from God, but for Christ's sake He showers it all on you in abundance. God grant you such overwhelming love, grace, mercy that you likewise show it others. Amen.

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

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