

Sermon followed by Service - February 16, 2025 - Luke 6:27-36

Is this one of those pages? One of those pages that should be torn out? One of those times Jesus is talking to someone else? We might wish so.

When Jesus says: **“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, turn your cheek to the one who hits you”** we hear a voice inside us, don't we? It might be a loud voice: “You gotta be kidding!” It might be a quiet voice: “He must not know who I have to deal with; if he did he wouldn't say things like that.” It might even be a scared voice: “What if ...?” The attorney in us starts looking for loopholes. The civil-rights protestor in us speaks up: “What about my rights? If I don't stand up for myself What about my rights!” We can listen to those voices. Or we can listen to the voice of Jesus.

The voice of Jesus can sound a bit scary here, perhaps a bit dangerous, maybe even a bit nuts. We might be tempted to think: “Jesus isn't talking to me here.” So let's think about whom Jesus is talking to. Jesus is talking to his disciples, people who know Jesus is more than just some teacher telling us to get along. Jesus is talking to his disciples, people who know Jesus was on a mission from God, people who wanted to be in on Jesus' mission from God. So who is Jesus talking to in our lesson? People who want to be in on what God is doing. That's us, isn't it? Looking at it from another angle, who is Jesus talking to? He's talking to people who know the heart of God, people who have experienced the grace and mercy of the Father. And that's us, isn't it? Jesus is talking to people who love being the children of God, people

who want to live with the heart of God, people who want to be in on what God is doing. I'll say it again - that's us; isn't it? Still doesn't make our lesson easy, does it?

If Jesus had just said: "Love your spouse; love your family; love your church" we probably wouldn't hear so many voices arguing inside us. We want to love our family. We want to love our church. Why? Sometimes for no better reason than this - we want them to be nice to us. Not the most lovely and loving of reasons, is it? Sometimes we want to show love simply because we think we can get a good return on our love investment. A kinder and gentler husband and father will probably see a kinder and gentler wife and family. Kinder and gentler children will probably have kinder and gentler moms and dads and brothers and sisters. With some people it's easy to imagine a good return on our love. But that's not the kind of love Jesus is calling for here. Even the godless narcissist will be nice if they think there's something in it for them.

But Jesus said: "**Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, turn your cheek to the one who hits you.**" What can we expect to get in return for loving our enemies? Disappointment, hurt; taken advantage of, ripped off, stabbed in the back, and worse. And yet Jesus says, "**Love your enemies.**"

If Jesus had just said: "Get along with your enemies," that might sound a bit easier, wouldn't it? We can try to keep some distance from people who make life miserable for us. If we aren't pressed too hard, we can find it possible to be civil with people or maybe even work with people who are hard to get

along with. At least until we get home where we can let off our steam. But Jesus doesn't just say: "Get along with your enemies. Be nice to their faces." Jesus shows us the heart of our Father: **"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, turn your cheek to the one who hits you."**

How do we measure up there? I have to admit: "I don't." It's easier to have the heart of the world than to have the heart of the Father, isn't it? When the bully pushes, it's easier to push back than to work together. When a dirty, smelly man comes looking for a hand-out, it's easier to think: "Get a life" than "I wonder what he really needs." When someone takes advantage of us, it's easier to put distance between us and to be done with them, than to bless and pray and forgive. When we pray **"Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us,"** it's easier to pray the first part "forgive us" than the second part "as we forgive those who sin against us." It's easy to think God should forgive us more than we forgive others. In other words, it's easier to have the heart of the godless than to love with the heart of the Father, isn't it?

That shows us just how amazing our Father's heart is. He is the Most High and yet he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Think about it - the only reason we can stand before God's altar and expect forgiveness is because God loved his enemies. If God limited his love to his friends, people friendly to him, those who loved him, we would be lost. But God didn't limit his love. He sent his Son to die for a world of wicked ingrates. He sent his Son to die for us. And Jesus ... he didn't pull back when he was beaten, mocked, spit on. He didn't strike

back; he didn't curse back; he didn't hate back. Instead, he prayed, "**Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.**" And today our Father forgives you and he forgives me.

His love doesn't stop there. Today Jesus calls us to show the same kind of love. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who speak against you. Pray for those who treat you poorly. If Jesus were to stop there, he would already be testing our faith and love. But Jesus goes on - "**If someone strikes you on the cheek, turn to him the other cheek also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you.**" Sounds like a recipe for getting beat-up and bankrupt, doesn't it?

But Jesus' point isn't that we let people take advantage of us. His point is love. Christian love doesn't get hung up over property or pride. Love doesn't want to strike back. Love puts other people's needs before our own needs.

Does that mean we set ourselves up as victims? Here's part of the answer. Our lesson is just part of the picture Jesus draws for our lives. We could talk about self-defense; good citizenship in putting criminals behind bars; the tough love of saying "no." There are times to defend our self. Times when we don't let people take advantage of us - not just for our sake but for their sake. Times when true love demands that we say "no"; again, not just for our sake, but for their sake. But here's the most important part of the answer. Jesus doesn't set us up to be victims. Instead Jesus sets you up to share his victory over sin and Satan, to share his peace.

By his love, Jesus broke the power of sin and Satan. He broke the power of selfishness in us; he broke the power of hurt-mongering evil out there. And now, today, by your love you do the same. I know it can be scary to be a people of peace. But fear doesn't have to rule. Jesus has set us up to go to heaven - no matter what we give up, no matter what is taken away from us. With Jesus, the life and the riches of heaven are yours, and no power of evil out there can change that, no hurt in here can change that. What does that mean? We are safe. We are safe and alive to live as the children of God, safe and alive to show the love of God. Amen.

THE SERVICE

IN OUR WORLD TODAY ... we are surrounded by so much hurt, anger, bitterness; we hear so many calls and cries for justice and retribution. In our own lives we have so many reasons for hurt and anger, even “righteous” anger.

IN OUR WORSHIP TODAY ... the One who has the best reason to be hurt and angry and bitter, the One who has good reason and right to call for retribution ... that One calls us to live lives of peace and forgiveness. In this world of hurt, how can we live lives of peace and forgiveness?

OPENING HYMN

“Son of God, Eternal Savior”

Hymn 729

Son of God, eternal Savior, source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us, hallows all our human race,
you our head, who, throned in glory, for your own will ever plead:
fill us with your love and pity, heal our wrongs and help our need.

Bind us all as one together in your Church’s sacred fold,
weak and healthy, poor and wealthy, sad and joyful, young and old.
Is there want or pain or sorrow? Make us all the burden share.
Are there spirits crushed and broken? Teach us, Lord, to soothe their care.

As you, Lord, have lived for others, so may we for others live.
Freely have your gifts been granted; freely may your servants give.
Yours the gold and yours the silver, yours the wealth of land and sea;
we but stewards of your bounty held in solemn trust will be.

Son of God, eternal Savior, source of life and truth and grace,
Word made flesh, whose birth among us hallows all our human race,
by your praying, by your willing that your people should be one,
grant, O grant our hope’s fruition: here on earth your will be done.

INVOCATION

In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

CW 188

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves
and the truth is not in us.

**If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just
and will forgive us our sins
and purify us from all unrighteousness.**

Let us confess our sins to the Lord.

Holy God, gracious Father,

I am sinful by nature

and have sinned against you in my thoughts, words, and actions.

I have not loved you with my whole heart;

I have not loved others as I should.

I deserve your punishment both now and forever.

But Jesus, my Savior, paid for my sins

with his innocent suffering and death.

Trusting in him, I pray: God, have mercy on me, a sinner.

Silence for meditation and reflection

Our gracious Father in heaven has been merciful to us. He sent his only Son, Jesus Christ, who gave his life as the atoning sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by his authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

LORD, HAVE MERCY - SUNG

CW 190

In peace let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace from above and for our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For the peace of the whole world, for the well-being of the Church of God, and for the unity of all, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

For this holy house and for all who offer here their worship and praise, let us pray to the Lord.

Lord, have mercy.

Help, save, comfort, and defend us, gracious Lord.

Amen.

GLORY TO GOD IN THE HIGHEST - SUNG

CW 191

Refrain: Glory to God in the highest, glory to God, and peace to his people on earth, and peace to his people on earth.

Lord God, heavenly King, almighty God and Father, we worship you, we give you thanks, we praise you for your glory.

Lord Jesus Christ, only Son of the Father, Lord God, Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us. You are seated at the right hand of the Father; receive our prayer.

For you alone are the Holy One, you alone are the Lord, you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in the glory of God the Father.
Amen. Refrain

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Love is patient. Love is kind. It does not envy. It does not boast. It keeps no record of wrongs. Love never fails. Lord Jesus, you did not give up on us or abandon a world of sinners; instead, you made your dwelling among us. Give us patient and selfless love that reflects your love for us. Move us to put aside the pain of the past, to forgive those who have sinned against us, and to enjoy together the peace of being forgiven by you and by one another. **Amen.**

FIRST READING

Genesis 45:3–15

Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence.

Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

“So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay. You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’

“You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly.”

Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 103A

Refrain

The LORD is kind and mer - ci - ful,
slow to an - ger, and rich in com - pas - sion.

Tone



Praise the LORD, / my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his / holy name—
who forgives / all your sins
and heals all your dis- / eases,
who redeems your life / from the pit
and crowns you with love and com- / passion,
who satisfies your desires / with good things
so that your youth is renewed like the / eagle's. *Refrain*

The LORD is compassionate and / gracious,
slow to anger, abound- / ing in love.
He does not treat us as our / sins deserve
or repay us according to our in- / iquities.
For as high as the heavens are a- / bove the earth,
so great is his love for those who / fear him;
as far as the east is / from the west,
so far has he removed our transgressions / from us.

**Glory be to the Father and / to the Son
and to the Holy / Spirit,
as it was in the be- / ginning,
is now, and will be forever. / Amen. *Refrain***

SECOND READING

Romans 12:14–21

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. On the contrary:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. Alleluia.

GOSPEL

Luke 6:27–38

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

"Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you.

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise be to you, O Christ!**

HYMN OF THE DAY

"Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive"

Hymn 733

"Forgive our sins as we forgive," you taught us, Lord, to pray,
but you alone can grant us grace to live the words we say.

How can your pardon reach and bless the unforgiving heart
that broods on wrongs and will not let old bitterness depart?

In blazing light your cross reveals the truth we dimly knew:
how small are others' debts to us, how great our debt to you!

Lord, cleanse the depths within our souls and bid resentment cease;
then, bound to all in bonds of love, our lives will spread your peace.

SERMON

Luke 6:27-38

NICENE CREED

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one being with the Father. Through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary, and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate. He suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures.

He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who in unity with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. We believe in one holy Christian and apostolic Church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

OFFERING

If you prefer to give online, the code at the right will take you to our Online Giving page. We invite our online givers to join in our offering with an "I Give Online" card in the pew racks.



PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

M: O Lord, it grieves me that anger, strife, and bitterness have become a part of my life. Forgive my sins and renew my spirit so that I will pardon others, correct the mistakes I have made, and be more cheerful toward those around me. Remind me through your Word that your Son's peace provides the needed hope and reason for healing and change.

M: Lord, make me an instrument of your peace;
where there is hatred, let me show love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
to be consoled, as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;

for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

M: Lord God, give me strength and willingness to say with your Son, "Not my will but your will be done." Make me cheerful and trusting to bear whatever you let happen to me. From your hand I am willing to take the good and the bad, the joy and the sorrow. Keep me from sin, gracious Father, and comfort me with your kind Word.

Special prayers and intercessions may follow.

NEW MEMBER WELCOME

Tyler and Kate Jorgensen
with Abigail and Jackson

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

THE SACRAMENT

(Guests, please see our communion practice on page 2.)

(Gluten-free wafers are available; ask Pastor.)

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Lift up your hearts.

We lift them up to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give him thanks and praise.

It is truly good and right that we should at all times and in all places give you thanks, O Lord, holy Father, almighty and everlasting God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lived among us as a human being and revealed his glory as your only Son, full of grace and truth.

Therefore, with all the saints on earth and hosts of heaven, we praise your holy name and join their glorious song:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY - SUNG

CW 200

Holy, holy, holy Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full,
full of your glory. Hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.

Hosanna, hosanna in the highest. Hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night he was betrayed, took bread; and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my T body, which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; this is my T blood of the new covenant, which is poured out for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."

The peace of the Lord be with you always. **Amen.**

JESUS, LAMB OF GOD - SUNG

CW 202

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sin of the world; grant us, grant us peace.

DISTRIBUTION HYMN

"Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us"

Hymn 767

Lord of glory, you have bought us with your lifeblood as the price,
never grudging for the lost ones that tremendous sacrifice;
and with that have freely given blessings countless as the sand
to th' unthankful and the evil with your own unsparing hand.

Grant us hearts, dear Lord, to give you gladly, freely, of your own.
With the sunshine of your goodness melt our thankless hearts of stone
till our cold and selfish natures, warmed by you, at length believe
that more happy and more blessed 'tis to give than to receive.

Wondrous honor you have given to our humblest charity
in your own mysterious sentence, "You have done it all for me."
Can it be, O gracious Master, that you need what we can do,
saying by your poor and needy, "Give as I have giv'n to you"?

Lord of glory, you have bought us with your lifeblood as the price,
never grudging for the lost ones that tremendous sacrifice.
Give us faith to trust you boldly, hope, to stay our souls on you;
but, oh, best of all your graces, with your love our love renew.

CLOSING PRAYER

Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good;
his mercy endures forever.

Whenever we eat this bread and drink this cup,
we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

O God the Father, source of all goodness, in your loving-kindness you sent
your Son to share our humanity. We thank you that through him you have
given us pardon and peace in this Sacrament.

We also pray that you will not forsake us but will rule our hearts and minds by your Holy Spirit so that we willingly serve you day after day; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace. **Amen.**

CLOSING HYMN

“May We Your Precepts, Lord, Fulfill”

Hymn 697

May we your precepts, Lord, fulfill and do on earth our Father’s will
as angels do above; still walk in Christ, the living way,
with all your children, and obey the law of Christian love.

So may we join your name to bless, your grace adore, your pow’r confess,
to flee from sin and strife. One is our calling, one our name,
the end of all our hopes the same: a glorious crown of life.

Spirit of life, of love, and peace, unite our hearts, our joy increase,
your gracious help supply. To each of us the blessing give
in Christian fellowship to live, in joyful hope to die.

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