

Luke 6:27-38
"Love Your Enemies"
Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

February 24, 2019
First Lutheran Church, Glencoe, Minn.
Pastor Peter Adelsen

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

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ:

[Intro]

"Can't we all just get along?"

"Can't we all just coexist?"

"It's all a matter of opinion anyway."

How many of you have heard statements like those?

Yes, it is good to get along when it comes to matters of *no* real importance. Yes, it may be good to coexist when the issue at hand *isn't* life or death. Yes, we all have our opinions.

But, when is it good to compromise when matters are of the *most* importance?
When is it good to coexist when the issue is a matter of life or death?

[Love Your Enemies]

Last week, Jesus spoke to us the Beatitudes and Woes, or the blessings and curses. Today, Jesus continues His sermon as He speaks to us about loving our enemies and about judging others. Throughout our text this morning, beginning with the Beatitudes and Woes last week, Jesus is teaching us the goodness of the third use of the Law: our guide.

Today's Gospel lesson is not to be read out of context, but is to be read as Christ continuing right where He left off.

Last week, Jesus said everyone who trusts in Him as Lord is given immense blessings in the life to come, but those who trust in man, they receive the curse of eternal death once they die.

Jesus also said that Christians will face hate and persecution by the sinful world, but in the end everyone who trusts in Jesus rejoices, because our reward is great in heaven. So, that is the context leading up to today's Gospel lesson.

Jesus continues today saying, "***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***" (Luke 6:27-28).

So, as a follower of Christ, we are to love our enemies.

Now, what kind of teaching is this?

When someone wrongs you, don't you just want to take out revenge on that person?

This is our natural instinct. We want to return the favor to our enemy.

And, do not be mistaken, each person here this morning at First Evangelical Lutheran Church in Glencoe has an enemy.

You may think you could not possibly have an enemy. After all, you don't do anything that could offend another person.

But, because of my faith and trust in Jesus as my savior, I know that ***I*** have enemies. Within my own extended family, I have family who look down upon me since I left the ELCA for the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod for the truth of God's Word.

When I grew up in the ELCA, I was told that the Missouri Synod Lutherans were weird. I never understood why, but that is what I was told. I was told that those LCMS people were weird.

It turns out that the reason why the LCMS was so weird is because the LCMS trusts that God's Word is true. And now, I'm a Missouri Synod pastor, an under-shepherd of Christ.

We all do have enemies. You may have family, like me, who dislike you because of your faith in Jesus. You may have coworkers or classmates who believe you are stupid and ignorant for trusting in Jesus.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had countless enemies. He had enemies precisely because of what He spoke in last week's Gospel lesson and this week's Gospel lesson. Everything Jesus spoke caused more enemies to appear.

You see, our sinful flesh doesn't like God teaching us right from wrong. Our sinful flesh likes being in control. Our sinful flesh wants to be its own god. Our sinful flesh wants to get back at our enemies.

But Jesus says, "***Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you***" (Luke 6:27-28).

Today's cultural definition of love is to let everyone do what they want without any consequence. This is ***not*** what Jesus is teaching.

Jesus is ***not*** endorsing or accepting any evil. Jesus is ***not*** telling His followers to compromise with God's Truth. Jesus is ***not*** saying that we should look with favor to things that are contrary to His saving Word.

Instead, Christians ***are*** to love our enemies by doing good to them and making our enemy aware in the kindest way that they have transgressed from God's Word.

And, do not be mistaken, all oppositions of the world are God's enemies. This includes sin, death, Satan, wickedness and perpetrators.

[The World Calls Christians the Enemy]

Now, how does the sinful culture respond to Jesus and His followers? The world calls Jesus and Christians the enemy.

The sinful world says:

- "How can you be loving if you say homosexuality is a sin?"
- "How can you be loving if you say abortion is a sin?"
- "How can you be loving if you say gender-change surgery is a sin?"
- "How can you be loving if you say only those who trust in Jesus are saved and all others are damned?"
- "How can you be loving if you won't let me believe anything I want about God?"
- "How can you be loving if you won't let me do what I want?"

This is the world we live in. This is the context Jesus was speaking our Gospel text. Here, Jesus is describing how Christians should act when we are hated and persecuted.

This is our foreseeable consequence of being a baptized believer in Christ. The world hates us, because the world hated Jesus. We are hated and persecuted “*on account of the Son of Man*” (Luke 6:22).

But, like our Lord Jesus, we do not react in violence, but we trust that God will act. We trust that God will defend us from all our adversaries.

So, we are to do good to those who hate us. We are to bless those who curse us. We are to pray for those who abuse us.

If this wasn't enough, Jesus continues. “*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*” (Luke 6:29).

So when we are physically abused and assaulted for our faith in Jesus, we are to take the punishment. When our enemy strikes one cheek, we are to offer the other cheek. When our enemy steals from us, we are to give them all we have.

This is what Jesus calls love.

The hope is that our enemy's conscience would realize the evil they had done and repent and follow Jesus.

As Christians, we are to love everyone. We are to love those who love us and love those who hate us. We love all people, because Jesus loves all people and desires all people to be saved.

- We love by sharing the Good News of Christ in how we live our daily lives.
- We love by being content with what we have.
- We love when enemies ask us about why we are the way we are.
- We love when we respond to the enemy saying, “I love you, because Jesus loves you.”

[Judging Others]

Jesus does not end His sermon there, but continues. He says, “***Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you***” (Luke 6:37-38).

You may remember Pope Francis saying: “Who am I to judge?” when it came to sexual sins.

Is Jesus teaching us ***not*** to judge? Is Jesus telling us ***not*** to condemn?

Well, yes and no.

Jesus is teaching all Christians to ***not*** judge and condemn using their ***own*** reason. We are ***not*** to judge and condemn using ***our*** opinions.

At the same time, Jesus is teaching all Christians to ***never compromise*** with God’s Truth. So, when God says something is pleasing, it is pleasing. And when God says a particular act is a sin, it is a sin.

For when we compromise with God’s Word, this is not loving. This is not loving your enemies. This is not blessing those who curse you. This is not praying for those who abuse you.

Yes, Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners, but He ***never*** urged them to remain in their sinful ways, but to repent of their sin and thus be forgiven.

You see, the Triune God does not change and thus as Christians we are not to change His Word as to better fit with today’s sinful culture.

[God is Merciful]

So, as Christians, why do we love our enemies? Do we do this because Jesus said so? Yes, but there is more than that.

You see, Jesus wasn’t just some ordinary teacher. If He was, then His words would have been forgotten centuries ago.

Jesus is far from ordinary. Jesus is the incarnate Son of God. Jesus is God in the flesh.

Jesus tells us, ***“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful”*** (Luke 6:36).

You see, while we were yet still enemies of God, God the Father sent His one and only begotten Son into ***our*** world and took on ***our*** flesh and ***our*** sins upon Himself, so that through His atoning death and glorious resurrection, all who believe and trust in Jesus are given life, forgiveness and salvation.

Jesus came to put all His enemies under His feet. He came to destroy the last enemy of God: death. (1 Corinthians 15:25-26)

So, through Christ’s death and resurrection, all who believe and trust in Jesus are given forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation.

Everyone in Christ is no longer God’s enemy, but is His precious child.

So, in Christ, we love our enemies because there is something greater coming up in the future – the resurrection of the body. Since Christ has been raised from the dead, all who trust in Him will be raised when Christ comes again on the Last Day.

As Paul writes in our Epistle reading, ***“So it is with the resurrection of the dead, what is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable”*** (1 Corinthians 15:42).

As followers of Christ, we love our enemies, because we have a merciful God who has forgiven us through Christ and He has given us an imperishable salvation, which is guaranteed for us, by grace through faith in Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen.

✠ SOLI DEO GLORIA ✠