

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany – February 23, 2019
Good Shepherd Ev. Lutheran Church

Pastor Charles Heup

Luke 6:27-38 (NIV)

"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, ... (31) Do to others as you would have them do to you. (32) "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them.... (36) Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. ... Forgive, and you will be forgiven. (38) 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."

Dear Children of God:

What did you do for Valentine's Day? Some people get married on Valentine's Day. Others get engaged. Lot's of cards were exchanged – florists sold tons of flowers. Heart shaped boxes of chocolate are a popular gift. Other lovers get a bit more creative and or romantic and treat their special someone to a candle lit dinner or some other form of pampering. Valentine's Day is a special day to show our love in a special way.

In our text Jesus speaks about showing our love in a special way – his words remind us that:

The Love of Our Savior God Changes Lives

- 1. Our heavenly Father has been merciful to us**
- 2. Our lives will reflect his mercy**
- 3. As we show love to all people**

Jesus spoke the words of this text to his disciples to help them understand the love of God and to understand how to reflect that love in their relationships with others. Before we begin to discuss his words in greater detail it is important for us to be reminded of the love and mercy that God has shown to us: **(1 John 3:1) See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!**

We are God's children only because of God's love. We were born as children of the Devil. By birth we were God's enemies. In his mercy Jesus showed his love for us by willingly accepting the consequences of our sins. He was rejected punished by God even though he was the Son of God. He offered his perfect sinless life to God as a payment for our sins. **But when the set time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.** (Galatians 4:4-5 NIV) In love the Father sacrificed his Son and sent the Holy Spirit to change our mind about sin – calling us to faith and restoring to us the rights and privileges of being his children. **Yet to all who did receive him [Jesus], to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God--** (John 1:12 NIV) Through faith in Christ Jesus we are members of God's family and heirs of salvation.

No longer are we slaves to sin and the devil. We have been set apart from sin. And that fact will show itself as we respond to the love of God who has shown his mercy to us. We know the mercy of God and that mercy motivates and enables us to live differently than those who are unbelievers. Jesus explains in our text.

35) 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. (36) Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

The words we speak and the deeds we do in love and mercy to others are evidence and proof that we are children of the Most High. God is kind and merciful to those who are unthankful for what he has done for them and who continue to do all kinds of evil which is contrary to his will. He still provides them with food, clothing and shelter, even though they do not appreciate it. **He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.** (Matthew 5:45 NIV)

When we sin against him he does not immediately strike us down in his wrath as we deserve. **He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.** (2 Peter 3:9 NIV)

Ultimately, of course, those who do not come to repentance and who die in their thanklessness and sins will spend eternity in hell – but in their life time God will have provided them with a time of grace and showered them with undeserved kindness.

God's children will show the same kind of mercy that they have shown by their Father in heaven. To do otherwise Jesus shows us would mean that we are not really God's children. If our love isn't different than the love which unbelievers show then we're not responding to God's mercy. Jesus provides this example for us to follow. **35) 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.** Later, in our sermon we'll talk more about the examples which Jesus gives us for showing that we are God's children.

In his mercy, God offers us the reward of heaven. God isn't forced to give us this reward because of what we do. He gives it to us only because he wants to. We know our heavenly Father's mercy therefore, we have a different spirit – a spirit that follows our Father's example, and shows love to our enemies.

37) "Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.

In the verses of this text we have discussed to this point Jesus has reminded us to pattern our love and mercy after the love and mercy of our heavenly Father. In these verses, Jesus urges us to love with humble, forgiving, and generous spirit.

The temptation to judge and condemn others is very real for the disciple of Jesus. Those who are seeking to live a life reflecting the mercy of God might be more conscious of the shortcomings of others; hence, the warning of our text. Do not judge – don't condemn what God has not condemned. Don't be a fault finder. Be sure to put take the words and actions in the kindest possible way. Then, you will not be judged by others. Ultimately the one who in sinful pride is not willing to show mercy will find that God will reject him because of his lack of mercy.

Rather than judge and condemn Jesus urges us to give and forgive.

Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38) 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."

When others sin against us this is an opportunity for us to demonstrate the very same mercy that God has shown to us. In the Lord's Prayer, we pray: Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. Luther reminds us that **we pray in this petition that our Father in heaven would not look upon our sins or because of them deny our prayers; for we are worthy of none of the things for which we ask, neither have we deserved them, but we ask that he would give them all to us by grace; for we daily sin**

much and surely deserve nothing but punishment. So we too will forgive from the heart and gladly do good to those who sin against us.

Because of our sins, we have built up a huge debt against God. We deserve his punishment -- death and hell. God in his mercy has forgiven us this debt. He sent his Son to pay our debt for us. Jesus did this when he died on the cross. The debt we could never repay, even if we had trillions of dollars, God forgave. Therefore, Jesus teaches us to ask God not to look at our sins but, rather, at his grace and for Jesus' sake to give us all the things we pray for. Because God forgave us a huge debt, we learn from him to forgive the small debts (sins) that any of our fellow human beings might owe us.

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32 NIV)

God's children have a different spirit than those who are not his children. We can see the difference in this spirit when we compare it to the spirit of the world that seeks to get even and take revenge or which holds on to grudges. Mercy that keeps us from judging and condemning others and leads us to forgive is proof that God's love lives in our hearts by faith. Therefore, Jesus promises us those who forgive will enjoy God's forgiveness.

The love of our Savior God changes lives. We know our heavenly Father's mercy. Therefore, we have a different spirit. Because we have a different spirit, we show love even to all people even those who are our enemies.

In this text, Jesus has pointed out our heavenly Father's mercy, love, and forgiveness and has reminded us that, as God's children, our lives will reflect his love and forgiveness in our words and actions. Jesus provides several examples of actions that will set us apart from those who are not children of God.

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, (28) bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. The natural reaction of our sinful nature is to hate those who hate us, curse those who curse us and mistreat those who mistreat us. But when our hearts are warmed by the Lord's forgiving love, this will show itself to our enemies as we help them, as we wish them God's blessings and pray that the Lord would open their hearts to the his and forgiveness.

Next Jesus describes three situations that call for a loving response: **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. (30) Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back.**

Jesus is making a point to us – reminding us that his disciples will not react to these situations in the usual manner. He wants us to think about our reactions and to act in love. Jesus isn't providing us with a rule of behavior to follow when we have been hit or when someone has stolen from us. He's reminding us that God's children will respond in love no matter what the situation.

Is Jesus serious? Can anyone really live this way in the real world? If we just let people do whatever they want, won't they be encouraged to do more and more to us? Romans 12:17-21 provides an answer and explanation: **Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. (18) If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. (19) 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. (20) 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." (21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (NIV)

Remember that God is our protector. He will see to it that we are not harmed. He wants us to repay evil with good so that those who harm us will be ashamed. He will enable good to overcome evil. Our deeds of love may even lead others to become Christians.

Do to others as you would have them do to you. (32) "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. (33) And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. (34) 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.

To love those who love us, to do good to those who do good to us, to give to those who will give back, there's nothing unusual about such actions. Even unbelievers behave this way. God's children have a different standard. They don't do bad just because they've been treated badly and they don't do good just to those who treat them well – rather they are to follow the "golden rule," doing to others what they would want others to do for them. We do this in response to the love our Savior God has shown to us. God promises his blessings to such loving forgiving and giving.

38) 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."

Jesus urges us to share what we have been given in a generous fashion. All that we have comes from God and therefore there is no reason for us to short change anyone in our giving. God gives to overflowing like a generous merchant – as the Psalmist reminds us: **my cup overflows. Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.**

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May God help us to show this different spirit of love and mercy in our dealings with our family members, our fellow Christians, and even our enemies. Amen.