

Rev. Timothy M. Crummitt

Seventh Sunday after Epiphany - Year C

103rd Sunday of Pandemic - Online Worship Only

St. Paul's Lutheran Church

Genesis 45:3-11, 15

Psalms 37:1-11, 39-40

I Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

Luke 6:27-38

02/20/2022

Gospel

The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke:

[Jesus said:] 27“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. 31Do to others as you would have them do to you. 32“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38give, and it will be

given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

The Gospel of Our Lord

Prayer

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen

Living in Christ

Good morning! In the past couple years I have gotten into what is called the “audiophile” community. I love music, it’s playing in the background around me pretty much all the time. And while I have always wanted it to sound good, it wasn’t until the past few years that I have really paid attention to how it sounded. Like most hobbies, it starts off innocently, but I soon realized that it can quickly spiral into something that would drain the average person's bank account. When I started, \$100 felt like a lot to spend on a set of speakers, but one could easily drop a few grand without batting an eye. I’ll be honest, while I can tell that some speakers sound better, the nuance that diehards can discern is beyond me. The goal for many is to find that perfect system, one which balances the type of listening they enjoy while at the same time remaining true to the way the music was recorded and mixed at the studio.

You will often hear the word “fidelity” thrown around. Fidelity is “*the quality or state of being faithful,*” or “*accuracy in details.*”¹ It’s an interesting word, one that is appropriate for our text too. Dr. Sarah Henrich recounts the work of God in the Gospel of Luke, saying that “*In Mary’s song God is twice identified as merciful (verses 50, 54). In Zechariah’s, likewise*

¹ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/fidelity>

*(verses 72, 78). That mercy, a sign of God's fidelity to God's promises, creates a people who "might serve God without fear in holiness and righteousness" (1:74b-75). All gifts flow from God's "tender mercy" and fidelity to promises made. In Luke 6, we see that generous healing, restoration, and hope flow through Jesus. Jesus makes sure we who are listening know that it is our calling as well."*²

So... God's fidelity, God's faithfulness, is repeatedly shown in scripture, and more specifically, in the actions of Jesus Christ. But then the tables are turned. Jesus calls everyone around him to come closer and listen as he teaches. It is here where we learn what it means to be a believer, what it looks like. In one sense, we become the audio speakers, and if we want to reproduce a signal that is accurate to the source, we must model the life Jesus calls on us to live. Listen again to what Jesus says: *"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. 31Do to others as you would have them do to you. 32"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of*

²<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/seventh-sunday-after-epiphany-3/commentary-on-luke-627-38-2>

the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. 36Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. 37“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38give, and it will be given to you.” I told you last week that you would get your answer, well, here it is! In 225 words Jesus outlines a way of life that turns everything upside down. Just like last week, I love and hate how convicting this passage is! It forces me to look again at how I model the Christian life. If there was ever a scripture that gave us some concrete ways to be followers of Jesus Christ, you can certainly find it here.

You could meditate on this piece of scripture every day for the rest of your life and still not understand it fully. So, let's start with just one part. *“Love your enemies... If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. 33If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.”* (I said we would focus on one part, I never said it would be an easy one!) My pastor growing up would often say two things that I think bear repeating here: We can disagree without being disagreeable, and I don't need to like you, but I do need to love you. I think that we make the mistake of thinking that we cannot love someone without liking them. This just isn't true. Just because I do not enjoy a person's company does not mean I want that person to suffer. I often think of that famous quote from Ender's Game *“In the moment when I truly understand my enemy, understand him well enough to defeat him, then in that very moment I also love him.”* Christ forces us to begin that long and challenging journey to understand the Other. This doesn't mean we let someone get away with whatever they want, but it forces us to realize that they are a beloved child of God too. Is it

easy? Oh God, no! But it's certainly a place to start... and sometimes that first step is the hardest. Let's see where it takes us. Amen.