

Our Redeemer Lutheran Church
Quincy, IL
Rev. Martin Eden

Epiphany 7
Saturday, February 19, 2022 at 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, February 20, 2022 at 9:00 a.m.

“Be Merciful, Even as Your Father is Merciful”

Luke 6:27-38

Just like last week, we hear Jesus preaching a strange message – not strange to us because it hasn’t been read in our churches very often, because we rarely get to the 7th Sunday of the Epiphany season. It is not strange to us in that we are not familiar with these words of Jesus, but think about it: “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you...If someone strikes you on the cheek, turn to him the other also. . . lend to others expecting nothing in return.” This is a strange message. Again, not because we have never heard it before. On the contrary, this is a passage that gets quoted all the time.

The reason that this is such a strange message for the people of this world is because it points in the absolute opposite direction that the world points us in. The slogan has been around for a long time: “Don’t get mad, get even.” The world tells us that “He who laughs last, laughs best.” And my personal favorite is that “revenge is a dish best served cold.”

The sinful mind is a devious, dark, hateful thing. As I said last week, “Since Adam’s Fall, we live in a cold, dark, evil world.” We love to get the last word. We

don't like being taken advantage of. Truth be told, we don't necessarily like it when other people have success. That is how you know someone is a real friend.

A real friend is someone you can not only share bad news with and they will listen and comfort you, but a real friend is someone to whom you can tell good news and they will celebrate with you and be excited for you without telling you about something even better that happened to them one time. Or worse yet, telling you something really good that happened to their brother-in-law three years ago.

Everything in our human nature says, "I'm #1 and you better not get in my way. And I am going to diminish you so that I feel bigger."

That is the way of the world. That is not the way of God. That is not the path that Christ has laid out for us. Jesus says, Don't just love your friends, "Love your enemies...Pray for those who mistreat or abuse you...If someone strikes you on the cheek, turn to him the other also." Our sinful heart tells us, "Get even." Jesus tells us, "Be merciful, event as your Father is merciful."

The world points us in one direction. Christ points us to His cross, and to His Table to receive the Sacrament of His body and blood. Christ points us to the love, mercy, grace, and forgiveness that only God can give.

We can't keep God's Law – not even a little bit of it. None of us are perfect friends or neighbors. What Jesus tells us to do here in Luke Chapter 6 are

requirements that none of us can fulfill in our lives. No matter how “Good” we think we are, as we time and time again see, none of us even come close to doing what God demands. So what can we do? It’s really not a question of what we can do, it is a question of what can God do for us?

The Holy Spirit has taken each of you, turned you completely around, and pointed you toward Christ’s cross. Christ has shown you His pierced hands and feet. You have been washed clean in the water of Baptism and in the Blood of Christ. Christ has fulfilled God’s Law for us, and has suffered our punishment, so that we are declared righteous by God.

God has forgiven you and turned you completely around saving you from the fires of Hell, pointing you toward Himself and away from the sin of this world. God rescued us and headed us in the opposite direction of the wickedness that would only lead us to death and destruction. God has put us on His path of righteousness. He has saved us from death. He has forgiven our sins. And today, we hear Jesus say, “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

Even though our works do nothing to make us saved (or more saved – whatever that would mean), however, God does want us to show a genuine care and concern for all the people in our lives, even our enemies. Christ tells us to remember that we were once God’s enemies.

In Verse 35, Jesus reminds us that we were ungrateful, evil people to whom

God has shown great kindness. Christ says that even though none of us deserve it, our Father in heaven has shown mercy toward us and promised us a great reward in heaven.

Even on our best day, we could never give to another human being any measure of kindness even similar to what God has done for us. And give thanks to God that He does not think in the same ways that our minds think.

We say, "Don't get mad, get even!" God says, "When I was angry with the people of this world for rebelling against Me and breaking My Law, I sent My Son, My only Son to suffer their punishment for them and die on the cross."

Rather than taking revenge on Adam and we his children, God has sent His Holy Spirit into our lives to take us by the hand and lead us to safety. He has led us to the baptismal font. He leads us to His Table, and He keeps us pointed in the direction of Christ's cross, never to look back at the death and destruction behind us.

Today, we join together to share in God's Word and His Sacrament, and we pray that God would continue to show us kindness. And we pray that the Holy Spirit would continue to give us strength that we might show mercy to others as God has shown mercy to us. Amen.