

SERMON FOR FEBRUARY 24, 2019  
TEXT: LUKE 6: 27-38  
THEME: BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

<sup>27</sup> “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,<sup>28</sup> bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. <sup>31</sup> And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. <sup>32</sup> “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. <sup>37</sup> “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup> give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

In the name of Jesus:

In our text for today we read about an event in Jesus’ ministry called the Sermon on the Plain. As we saw last week, we see Jesus teaching the people who come to Him what it really means to be blessed by God. The blessings of Jesus came to those who sought out Jesus. Everyone who sought out Jesus was healed by Jesus. Now, not everyone was healed. Those who were too proud to seek out Jesus’ healing touch were not healed. Those who were too busy to come to Jesus were not healed. Yet Jesus was merciful to all, He turned no one away; all that Jesus offered was given as a free gift, and to all who were open to receiving Jesus’ gift received what Jesus gave. People who came to Jesus to receive what Jesus was giving were blessed by getting what Jesus was giving, namely, new life in Him. Jesus came down from heaven to bless sinners by giving them eternal life. Every one of us needs a

Savior because we are poor, rotten, miserable sinners. When you come to the recognition of who you are, namely a no good sinner, then you realize that you need what Jesus offers, namely forgiveness, life, and salvation. So if you want to be blessed by God you must first recognize that your life is empty and nothing without God. When you have your hands outstretched to receive what Jesus gives, then you will get what Jesus has to offer. When you confess your sins to Jesus, He is faithful and just and will forgive you all of your sins and cleanse you from all unrighteousness.

Jesus says that blessed are the poor in spirit, for to you belongs the Kingdom of God. But what does that type of life look like? We can talk about being blessed by God, but how does one live who IS blessed by God? Jesus shows us in our text for today, for Jesus blesses you and me, so that we might be a blessing to others. This passage is appropriate for us to consider today, because it is increasingly popular in our day and age for Christians to complain about the way that they are treated in society. We suffer all sorts of injustices done to us. Jesus spells them out; we are hated, cursed, abused and persecuted for our faith. Others will speak ill of us, take advantage of us, and chastise us. We are tempted to stand up and fight back. But Jesus tells us to be different, to live differently. We will all experience mistreatment and will suffer for what we believe, but we are called by Jesus to be different. You could say that Jesus directs us in how we are to live as Christians.

Note what Jesus says in verses 35-36 of our text: “<sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the

evil. <sup>36</sup> Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” God has Good News for you, News that has turned the world upside down. God is your loving Heavenly Father. He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. He is merciful to you, He does not desire your eternal damnation, instead God loves you and wills that all be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth of God’s love in Jesus Christ. At the right time God sent His Son into the world not to condemn the world but to save it, by His Son’s perfectly lived life, His innocent suffering and death, and by His victorious resurrection. God so loved you that He sent His one and only Son into the world so that by believing in Him you will have everlasting life. And God so loved not only you but the whole world that He sent His Son into the world so that all who believe in Jesus they have been given the right to be called Sons of the Most High God. God is entirely UNLIKE US, He is merciful, kind, and gracious, and just this is His nature and disposition toward us, so now He calls us and expects us to live in like manner with others, but especially to those who are our enemy and those who seek to do us harm.

You and I have been blessed by God and have received His mercy in the waters of our Baptism. You are now in Christ and His new creation. You are called by God to in the words of the Apostle Paul: I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. <sup>2</sup> Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

We who have been bought by Jesus, who believe in Jesus, are to live like Jesus, reflecting the love that Jesus has for us to others. Remember the old song made popular in the 1960's, called "They will know we are Christians by our love?" A Catholic priest wrote that song. It was based on Jesus' words: <sup>34</sup> A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. <sup>35</sup> By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." Jesus takes that thought and expands on it here in the Gospel of Luke, telling His followers that seeing as you have received the mercy of God, share that mercy with others. God the Father does not judge you but He forgives you, so don't judge, and you will not be judged. The Father doesn't condemn you but saves you in Jesus, so therefore do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Your Heavenly Father has forgiven you all of your sins on account of Jesus, so forgive as He has forgiven you, which is why Jesus teaches us to pray in the Lord's Prayer to "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us." God the Father is the giver of all good gifts, so give to others as He has given to you. And do not do this only to those who are your friends, but to this especially to your enemies, for as Jesus says: <sup>30</sup> Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. <sup>31</sup> And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. <sup>32</sup> "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup> And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup> And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same

amount. <sup>35</sup> But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return.” As this is the Father’s nature, so now this is to be your way of life. We don’t get this sense in the English language but what Jesus is really saying here is that as followers of Jesus is it absolutely IMPERATIVE that we constantly be merciful and loving to others, just as our Heavenly Father is to each one of us. God’s attitude to those in need is always to be merciful and compassionate, always to help those who are in need, and seeing that He is that way with us, we are to reflect His nature and show that same type of love that He has shown to us. There is no other alternative. Just as God is loving to the most needy and wretched and undeserving among us, so we are to be merciful to others. Our lives reflect to others what Jesus has done for us on the cross, giving of Himself and dying for others, we are called now to die to our selfishness and live for others.

That is what Joseph did in the Old Testament. He had every right to pay back evil with evil to his brothers who sold him into slavery. Joseph had every right to extract every drop of vengeance he could by paying his brothers back for all that he had done to him. But Joseph’s response was not one of payback or retribution; He left all things in God’s hands. “You meant it for evil but God meant it for good.” And so it should be for each of us! Vengeance is mine, says the Lord. We trust in Him, leaving all things to His direction, knowing that He will work all things out to our good and the glory of God the Father.

And so we give, knowing that what we give will be given back to us, that the measure we use will be measured out to us. As God the Father is generous to us in all things on account of Jesus, so we are to be generous in all things to all people. If

we live in the generosity of Jesus, then Jesus will show His generosity to us through others. When we live to share the blessings of Jesus, then others will not only benefit, but also that blessing will be returned to us through the lives of others. The Apostle Paul says in the Book of Acts: “ In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” The more we give of the blessings of Christ, the more we will receive His blessings, for we have been blessed by God, to be a blessing and to share His blessings with others. We have been blessed, to be a blessing!

Amen