

SERMON FOR FEBRUARY 20, 2022

TEXT: LUKE 6: 27-38

THEME: THE GOLDEN RULES

27 “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. **29** 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. **30** Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. **31** And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them. **32** “If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33** And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. **34** 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. **35** 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. **36** Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. **37** “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; **38** 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:

About twenty years before the birth of Jesus, the two most prominent Jewish rabbis were named Shammai and Hillel. One day, a Gentile approached the two of them with this challenge: “I challenge you to summarize the teachings of your religion while standing upon one foot.” Shammai dismissed him with the words, “You don’t know what you are asking.”

The questioner looked at Hillel and gave the challenge again. Hillel stood upon one foot and said, "Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to another. That is the whole law, and all else is commentary."

There is nothing new in Hillel's teaching. The Golden Rule has been around for centuries in one form or another. One can find the Golden Rule in many different cultures, it is a standard teaching for many different cultures. The Golden Rule, however, as Jesus sermonizes in His Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain, is not some new type of teaching or thinking. The Golden Rule is as old as the Law itself, for the Law is summed up in this, Loving God above all things and loving your neighbor as yourself. These are the GOLDEN RULES.

When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain, Jesus was simply explaining what God had given to humanity in the Ten Commandments. Jesus' sermons brought to light the practical nature of what God had given to His people.

The first Law or rule is simply this, summed up by Jesus with these words: Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength. This Commandment is required by the Lord of everyone. No matter who you

are, no matter your age or sex, you are required to love the Lord your God with everything you have.

And who is the Lord? He is the One who made heaven and earth. He created Adam and Eve in His own image, an image that was lost in the Garden of Eden. Our first parents decided against loving the Lord with their whole being, so they disobeyed the Lord's command, bringing sin and death upon them and all of their future descendants, including you and me.

But God sent a Second Adam, His only begotten Son, who is the perfect image of God the Father. If you want to see what the Lord looks like, get a good look at Jesus. His will was set upon doing the will of His Heavenly Father throughout His life. Jesus kept this Golden Rule, He truly loved the Lord His God with all of His heart, soul, mind and strength. Jesus did this for you. Jesus loved you so much that He gave His life for you, dying on the cross as the payment for the purchase of your soul and life, so that by believing in Jesus you are forgiven, called a child of God, and you now have the privilege of living your life in His name.

Now how do you do that? By loving one another, just as Jesus loved you. You love your neighbor as you do yourself. Jesus gives concrete examples in how this is done in the Beatitudes, for in the Beatitudes, Jesus teaches about

Himself. He shows what He has done for you, so that you can out of love for Him go and do the same to others and for others.

And so Jesus says: “**27** “But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. **29** 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. **30** Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. **31** And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.” Do you see how this works? Jesus here is showing you how He lived for His life for sinners, and now, you, who are baptized into Christ and remade in His image are called to live your life accordingly in thanks to Him who saved you by His love.

You have been saved by the grace of God to show the grace of God to others. Jesus says: “ **36** Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. **37** “Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; **38** 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.”

A number of years ago, The New York Times Magazine told the story of Nicholas Gage and his mother Eleni. Eleni was a Greek peasant who smuggled

her son out of the village before he could be “re-educated” by the communist party. As a result, she was tortured and murdered on August 28, 1948.

Thirty-two years later, her son quit his job as a reporter for the New York Times. He devoted his time and money to finding his mother’s killer. He sifted through government cover-ups and false leads. Eventually he found the person who ordered Eleni’s death. His name was Katis.

In a moving account, he tells of going up the path to a seaside cottage, where he sees Katis, fast asleep. He stood and looked at the man who had killed his mother. But as he pondered his revenge, Gage remembered how his mother did not spend the last moments cursing her tormentors; rather, she faced death with courage because she had done her duty to those she loved. “I could have killed Katis,” he confessed.

“It would have given me relief from the pain that had filled me for so many years. But as much as I want that satisfaction, I have learned that I can’t do it. My mother’s love, the primary impulse of her life, still binds us together, often surrounding me like a tangible presence. Summoning the hate to kill my enemy would have severed that bridge connecting us. It would have destroyed the part of me that is most like my mother.”

Gage prowled all over Greece, looking to treat somebody else as he felt his mother had been treated. He spent his money trying to give the enemy a taste of his own medicine. Instead he was interrupted by love, a mother's love that made sacrifices for him, a love that was not withheld even in the face of certain death, a love like the love of Christ on the cross.

When we love one another like this, we show ourselves to be children of the Most High God. The promise of the gospel is that God is kind to the ungrateful, the wicked, and the self-sufficient. You have heard it said, "Do to others as you would have them do unto you." But the gospel says, "Do unto others as God has done unto you."

It isn't a matter of treating others how you want to be treated. It is all about treating others the way God has treated you. He loves you with an everlasting love. He forgives you all of your sins. He provides for your needs and continues to love you without measure. So now go and do likewise, for in doing so you give glory to God and share the love of Christ with others.

To the glory of God and in Jesus' name

Amen