

## SERMON TEXT IS OUR GOSPEL LESSON FROM THE 5<sup>TH</sup> CHAPTER OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

Want to get Capone? Here's how you get'em: He pulls a knife, you pull a gun. He sends one of yours to the hospital, you send one of his to the morgue. That's the Chicago Way.

Those are the words of officer Jim Malone, artfully played by Sean Connery, in the classic film, "The Untouchables." Kevin Costner stars as the determined, yet quite naïve Treasury agent Eliot Ness, whose single focus is to clean up prohibition-era Chicago and cleaning up Chicago means sending Al Capone to prison. Ness happens to meet Officer Jim Malone, played by Sean Connery, the street-wise veteran cop, who may be the only honorable policeman in Chicago, who helps him take down Capone.

Retribution, vengeance is not only the Chicago way; it's the way of the sinful flesh.

Once again, our Gospel is from the Sermon on the Mount. In past weeks, we have looked at the Beatitudes and being salt and light. Today's Gospel deals with how we respond when **others** sin against **us**. Jesus talks about revenge and our attitude toward our enemies.

Once again, notice the words of Jesus in our lesson this morning, "You have heard that it was said ... **but I say to you...**" Jesus is again taking the Mosaic Law and applying it to our thoughts, words, and deeds. Jesus is referring back to the book of Exodus. The original text from Exodus reads like this: "If there is harm, then you shall pay life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for

wound, stripe for stripe (21:23-25).” Sadly, people were abusing and misusing these words of Scripture.

God gave these words to Moses in a very violent world. People were reacting to offenses with violence and ever escalating retribution. If anyone at anytime committed any crime against you, you felt justified in killing them. Did someone cheat you by using dishonest weights? Kill him. Did someone steal a sheep? Kill him. Did someone kiss your daughter without your permission? Kill him. If someone poked you once, you poked back twice. If someone hit you, you stabbed them. You had to be careful because someone might kill you just for looking at them funny.

We are the same way today. To paraphrase the words of Office Malone, don't make the mistake of bring a knife to a gun fight. That's the way of the sinful flesh. The Golden Rule of the sinful flesh is: "Do it unto others before they can do it unto you." The Bible teaches us, "Love keeps no record of wrongs," but the flesh says "I'll never forgive, let alone forget." The way of the flesh is to keep score. To get even.

That is the way of the world. But, this is not God's will for His creation. Jesus is teaching us that God's will is that we be reconciled. We show our neighbor his/her wrongs. If I have harmed or hurt, stolen or cheated my neighbor, than I make amends to them. Repentance, forgiveness, and living at peace with all people is the will of God for me and for my neighbor,

II. What better example do we have of one loving their enemies than God Himself.

You talk about breaking your Father's heart! That's exactly what we did to our Father in heaven. He literally gave us everything life and the perfect home to live in and enjoy, but it wasn't good enough. We wanted to

be God, so we rebelled. But, God did not turn to us a heart of revenge. He turned to us a heart of love and took it upon Himself to save.

That is the Good News of the Gospel. St. Paul says it this way, “God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” In His love, God sent His Son to save us from our sin, from death and hell, from ourselves, our self-centeredness and selfish egos. This Jesus did by bleeding and dying on the cross. Paul writes, “[God] made Him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). Jesus shed His blood so that we would be forgiven. With the blood of Jesus covering over all of our sin, we are righteous before God.

When you are baptized into Jesus, Jesus clothes you with His righteousness that covers over all your sin. Wearing the righteousness of Christ, you – in your thoughts, words, and deeds – can be a perfect reflection of Christ. And I will make clear to you: A perfect reflection of Jesus to people who have wronged you, hurt you, harmed you; someone you just don’t like very much.

Again, look at the words of Jesus, “For He [God] makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” How does God treat His enemies? In His creation, the wheat of pagans grows as well as a Christian’s. The MRI machine works on the pagan as well as the Christian saint. God gives unbelievers their daily bread, even without their thanksgiving. I cannot say it any more simply than this -- Dear Children of God, we treat our neighbor as God treats us. Which brings us to Jesus’ words in our Gospel this Sunday.

“If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also,” Jesus says. In the culture of Jesus’ day, a master would slap his slave

across the right cheek with the back of their right hand, not so much to be a physical assault or punishment (it would hurt, to be sure), but to insult them. Even in our day, we use the phrase “a slap in the face” to mean that we’ve been insulted, humiliated. Let me make this clear: Jesus is not addressing the issue of self-defense or national defense policy, teaching that we cannot defend ourselves. Jesus is teaching an attitude of the heart that does not seek to get even, even when you are the one insulted.

“If anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well,” Jesus says. The tunic was the under garment worn in Jesus’ day and the cloak was the outer garment, which could also serve as a blanket at night. Jesus is teaching us that if somebody has a beef against you – whether it is legitimate or not – and demands your inner garment, give them your outer garment as well, to avoid further strife and contention. Wow! Think about that -- Jesus is teaching you it is better for you to be cold than to be at conflict with your neighbor.

“If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles,” Jesus says. In Jesus’ day, Israel was under Roman occupation. A Roman soldier could legally compel any non-Roman to carry his pack for one mile. When Christ speaks of going two miles, he is speaking of being willingly to serve your neighbor, even beyond the requirements of the law, even when doing something you would rather not do.

This idea doesn’t sit well with us; we don’t like it at all. When insulted or wronged, we want to strap on our six-shooter and get even! That is the way of the flesh. But, this is not the way of Christian love.

The Christian life is the life of repentance. God continually does His work in us, raising us from the death of our sin to life in Christ, strengthening us with us grace in Word and Body and Blood so that we can

love and forgive. This love is self-sacrificing; it does not insist of being right, on having its own way. This love prevails even over our feelings of disgust and our desire for revenge; this love loves even those who have insulted us, offended us, hurt and harmed us. God's work in us through the means of grace produces a heart of strength, strength to love even our enemies. We can say with Paul, "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (Ph 4).

In the context of Jesus' words this morning, I would also like to emphasize that God does not want evil to go unchecked, to thrive in His creation, so He has empowered civil authority – police, the criminal justice system, armed forces -- to preserve order in His creation, to prevent course outbreaks of evil and sin in this world – [as God worked through Eliot Ness and the Untouchables to curb Al Capone and organized crime](#). This is what the 4<sup>th</sup> Commandment is all about. God preserves order in His creation through the power that He has entrusted to civil authority. Jesus' words in our Gospel are to prevent personal vengeance.

The love that we have for our neighbor, Dear Saints of God, is not some fleeting emotion, but rather a duty and in Christ, we have the strength to love.

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# Concordia Lutheran Church

*The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

801 Beacon Lane

Beulah, North Dakota

Rev. Toby H. Heller, Pastor

February 23, 2014



*"Love your enemies and pray for those  
who persecute you."*

*Matthew 5:44b*



**Old Testament Reading:** Leviticus 19:1-2, 9-18 (ESV)

And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, "Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them, You shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy.

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap your field right up to its edge, neither shall you gather the gleanings after your harvest. And you shall not strip your vineyard bare, neither shall you gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard. You shall leave them for the poor and for the sojourner: I am the Lord your God.

"You shall not steal; you shall not deal falsely; you shall not lie to one another. You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.

"You shall not oppress your neighbor or rob him. The wages of a hired servant shall not remain with you all night until the morning. You shall not curse the deaf or put a stumbling block before the blind, but you shall fear your God: I am the Lord.

"You shall do no injustice in court. You shall not be partial to the poor or defer to the great, but in righteousness shall you judge your neighbor. You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord.

"You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.

**Gradual**

Praise the Lord, all nations!

**Extol him, all peoples!**

For great is his steadfast love toward us,

**and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.**

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;

**bring an offering, and come into his courts!**



**Epistle Reading:** 1 Corinthians 3:10-23 (ESV)

According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

**"Alleluia"**

p. 156

**Holy Gospel:** St. Matthew 5:38-48 (ESV)

*[Jesus says] "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you."*

*"You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

**Nicene Creed** p. 158

**Hymn of the Day** # 649

**Sermon**

**Prayer of the Church**

**Offering**

**“What Shall I Render”** p. 159

**Service of the Sacrament** p. 160

**Distribution Hymns** # 696, 628

**“Thank the Lord”** p. 164

**Post-Communion Collect** p. 166

**Benediction** p. 166

**Closing Hymn** # 848

Today we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion in which we joyfully receive Christ's Body and Blood, under bread and wine, for the forgiveness of our sins. As we celebrate the Sacrament, we also give public witness that we are in complete agreement with the denomination's doctrinal teachings at whose altar we commune. Therefore, we ask that only communicant members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod commune with us. All guests are asked to talk to Rev. Heller before coming to the altar to receive the Sacrament.

**Welcome to worship** as Jesus reveals Himself to us as the Son of God in this season of Epiphany. In this season, when we see and hear Jesus, we see and hear God. Visitors, please sign our guest book and worship with us again soon.

**Our Annual Meeting** will be this morning after worship. Please join us for potluck brunch following the voters meeting.

**The February Human Care Project** is collecting tuna for Women's Action & Resource Center. Please put your donations in the shelf unit in the entryway. Thank you.



**It has so pleased God** in His wise grace to call from this vale of tears unto Himself in heaven the soul of our dear sister in the faith, Carmen Dschaak. Christian Burial will be Monday, February 24, 2014. *There remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God (Hebrews 4:19).*

***We are the North Dakota District...***

As I visit our many congregations in the North Dakota District, do you know how many times I see an old crucifix in the storage room, in the church basement, or on a back altar? When our congregations were started, these crucifixes were placed on the altar in front of the church. We are indeed a church that "preaches Christ crucified!" The crucifixion and resurrection of our Savior is one glorious redemptive act. This is our heritage, our history, and our faith.

President Baneck

**In our thoughts and prayers,**

† Kyle Miller (Nona Blaisdell's brother);

† Bennie Dschaak & Family, as they mourn Carmen's death.



**Stewardship of Offerings & Attendance**

Attendance: 124 Offerings: \$2,494.00

“You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.”  
We are God's children – created in His image. Although tarnished by sin, we have been renewed in His image through Baptism into Christ's sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. And where Christ goes, we follow, reflecting the image of God in love, in generosity, in kindness, in humility. How Jesus is, thus are we called to be.

A 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration  
in honor of  
Elsie Buchmann  
will be held this afternoon at  
Sunset Manor, 114 Hwy 49 South  
from 2:00—4:00 p.m.  
Please join us!

## † This Week at Concordia †

Sunday	8:30 am	Divine Service
	9:30 am	Sunday School/Voters Meeting
	10:30 am	Potluck Brunch
Monday	10:00 am	Carmen Dschaak Funeral
Tuesday	2:00 pm	Bible Class
Wednesday	3:30 pm	1 <sup>st</sup> -year Catechism
	4:30 pm	2 <sup>nd</sup> -year Catechism
	7:00 pm	Chime Practice
	7:30 pm	Bell Practice
Thursday	9:00 am	Deadline for March calendar information
Sunday	8:30 am	Divine Service
	9:30 am	Sunday School/Bible Class
	11:00 am	<i>Worship @ Glen Ullin</i>

### Church Office Hours

Monday – Friday 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM  
Church: 873-4388 Parsonage: 873-4223  
revheller@westriv.com  
concordiasecretary@westriv.com  
Website: [www.concordiabeulah.org](http://www.concordiabeulah.org)

*Please use a pew card to record your worship and/or Communion attendance this morning*