

Epiphany 7 2/20/22
 Luke 6:27-38 C

BUT I SAY TO YOU WHO HEAR, LOVE YOUR ENEMIES, DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATE YOU, BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU, PRAY FOR THOSE WHO ABUSE YOU ... BE MERCIFUL, EVEN AS YOUR FATHER IS MERCIFUL.

How does that saying go, “Don’t get mad, get _____.” What you’re thinking right now tells you everything you need to know about the desires and intentions of the flesh. Don’t get mad, get **even!**

That’s like the premise of 90+% of western movies. You know: good guy is wronged – his land is stolen, his family is harmed, he is beaten or they try to hang him for a crime he didn’t commit – and what does he do? Good guy straps on six-shooter, hunts down bad guys who harmed him, and exacts his revenge. **Yes!** That’s what we want to do. Repay evil for evil. Get even with’em. We just can’t wait until so-and-so gets his.

How different Jesus is from the way of this perverse world and the intents and desires of the sinful flesh. Today, we hear His words,

“But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 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. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them...Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

Which is a hard saying to our flesh because ... **sin hurts**. You know that all too well, don’t you, Dear Child of God. None of us is immune from the pain that sin causes. We’ve been hurt. We’ve been offended. Grieved. Sin has, in one way or another, at one time or another, embittered our life.

That's why we can understand the story of Joseph so well. We meet Joseph when he's 17-years-old. Remember what you were like at 17? Yes, you knew everything, and so did Joseph. He was the baby – Benjamin would come later – and dad loved him more than any of his other sons. And, his dad didn't have to give him that coat of many colors, for all the brothers to know it. And then there's his dream about all his brothers bowing down to him! Moses tells us, "his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him" (Ge 37:4).

You know the story – Father Jacob sends kid brother to check on his livestock, to make sure the brothers are taking care of dad's property. They see that "dreamer," and decide to kill him. Then they change their mind and sell him into slavery.

In Egypt, he rises to become Pharaoh's right-hand man. Because of the famine in their homeland, his brothers were forced to go to Egypt, where under the wise leadership of Joseph, they had laid up food for the lean years. Then begins the words of our Old Testament reading for this Sunday. Joseph reveals Himself to his brothers and look at his words,

"I am Joseph...God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth. And to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me, but God" (vv. 3, 7-8a)".

Joseph living witness to us of what it means to "love your enemies...be merciful, even as your Father is merciful". Being loving, merciful, forgiving means that we are reflection of our Father in heaven.

You have confessed once again that you have sinned against God in your thoughts, words, and deeds; that you deserve only God's temporal and eternal punishment, yet what does God do with sin? You know I love

to ask you that question. So, **what does God do with sin?** He forgives it – not because you are really, really, really sorry; not because you have done enough “good” things to make up for the bad – as if that were even possible – no, He forgives it for the sake of Christ, Christ on the cross.

Look at those words of Jesus. “Love your enemies”. The Bible says this, “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son.” Even when you hated God’s will and were His enemy, God showed His love for you by sending His-only begotten Son to be born of Virgin Mother, to take on human flesh so that He could take on all your sin and all its wages of death.

“Do good to those who hate you.” The Apostle John tells us, “He came to His own, and His own people did not receive Him” (Jn 1:11). Jesus returns to teach in the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth, and the people welcome the Messiah with the disdainful words, “Is not this Joseph’s son (Lk 4:22)?” And they took Him to the brow of a hill, to throw Him down the cliff. There He is, in untold agony on the cross, and He is mocked, “If you are the Son of God come down from the cross” (Mt 27:40). He trusts in God, let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him” (Mt 27:43). “He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ of God” (Lk 23:35). There Jesus is, doing good, even to those who hate Him, as He is beaten, crowned with thorns, nailed to the cross for the salvation of the world.

“Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” And, Jesus does love those who curse and abuse you. “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do,” and He dies (Lk 23:34).

God doesn't repay sin with evil. Even though we deserve only God's temporal and eternal punishment, God doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. He repays sin with Jesus and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

In the new birth of your Baptism, you were forgiven all your sin and raised a new creation in Christ, so that you can be Christ to your neighbor, even that neighbor who hurt you, grieved you, offended you, embittered your life.

"Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you...as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them". Which means, we don't get mad, **we get loving.**

Loving, merciful, "as your Father is merciful." By nature, it is true: We are all beggars before God. So, we come here with our shopping bag completely empty. We have nothing to give God...or our neighbor. We beg, "For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us." And God does, through the voice of your pastor, "I therefore forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." We come hungering and thirsting for the righteousness of God, so He feeds us, "Take, eat; the body of Christ. Take, drink; the blood of Christ, shed for the forgiveness of your sins." Here, in the worship services of His house, God in His mercy fills our shopping bag with LOVE...FORGIVENESS...GOODNESS...KINDNESS...PATIENCE. Know why? **Your neighbor needs it.**

No, your neighbor doesn't "deserve" it any more than you deserve God's love and forgiveness, and goodness and kindness and patience. No, they may well not come to you pleading and begging your forgiveness, any more than Joseph's brothers and the crowd that mocked Jesus when

He was dying on the cross did; they may do the same thing again, and again, and again, but you have the heart and mind of Christ.

And remember what God put in your bag? So, when you meet your neighbor that rubs you the wrong way, you can reach in your bag and give them LOVE. That neighbor that hurt you, you can give them FORGIVENESS. And in trying and troubling situations, you can give your neighbor GOODNESS, KINDNESS, PATIENCE. All because God gives them to you.

Living in Christ, we don't mad, we get **loving**.