

Sermon February 23, 2025

Today Jesus continues his "sermon on the plain" as he teaches his disciples about radical love and what we need to do to build and thrive in the sacred kingdom of God. What you give is what you will receive. Hear now Luke 6:27-38:

'But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

'If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

'Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.'

## Radical Love

### Breathing

Look around... Love

Look around again. Look at who we are... these people we love so much. Jesus reminds us today that it isn't enough to love the people who look like us or think like us or that we have known all of our lives. We need to extend that love to reach beyond these walls and into a new reality.

Our door bursts open and Jesus walks into our time and place with an urgent message. He strides in with words that we have heard so many times before... in fact they have started to lose their power because they are so familiar.

But, in these times, we need these words more than ever.

"It's easy to love people who love you, and it's easy to love people who are lovable," he says. "Everyone does that. I need you to do more!"

Love the people that make you uncomfortable... love the people who are different and challenge you to view the world in a new way... love the people who scare you.... love the people who hurt you... love the people who have hurt the one's you love. Love your enemies as much as you love your friends.

And how do you show that love?

Share in abundance and expect nothing in return... not even a word of thanks. Offer radical forgiveness in the places where you have been harmed.

Treat every single person in this huge world that God created the way you want to be treated, no exceptions.

## ***No matter what.***

Now, Jesus is not telling us to be victims... to accept horrible circumstances and try to "love our way out." Jesus is telling us to find new ways of resisting evil. "Love your enemies," Jesus said, "do good to those who hate you." This is the idea that inspired Martin Luther King, Jr., to kneel down with his brothers and sisters in front of water hoses and snarling police dogs. Lots of people thought he was crazy. "Only violence can fight violence," they told him. But the authorities and the oppressors didn't know what to do with this kind of resistance. They only knew the power of violence; they understood the powerlessness of victims who knew their place, but this was something they hadn't seen before: victims who refused to be victims, victims who refused to fight back with violence, victims who claimed their place... ***and then reshaped what that place looks like.***

I believe that Jesus is calling us to a new way of being in the world... to reshape what our place looks like, so we are empowered to spread the gospel far and wide!

When Jesus insists that we love our enemies, he is calling each of us to a radical form of resistance... to love without limits... to love even those who wish us harm. To love with a strength that changes the way our place looks and acts.

A wise woman I know said "my prayers need footprints!"

And so we pray.

- ♥ We pray to the God who dwells among us, trusting the Spirit who lives and breathes within us
- ♥ We pray in the hope that we can be transformed, and that radical love can be awakened in us.

This, dear sisters and brothers, is the work Christ is calling us to do. This is the transformation that the Spirit empowers in us, that we might become

God's compassionate children, capable of loving even our enemies so that in the world God loves, peace might break out everywhere.

This leads us to an important question: Where have your prayers left footprints?

We are called to walk a difficult path, but we do not walk alone. Our God, who is the source of all being, walks with us and in us and yes even with and in our enemies. God is with us moving us to a deeper compassion, so that we can move beyond our need for the limits of the law. So that we can live as the daughters and sons of God, so that we can work together to see the beauty in one another, the beauty of all those siblings who like all of us embody God. This work to which we are called is not easy, but it is essential for the Kingdom of God. So let us pray without ceasing. Let us pray for friend and foe alike. Ukraine and Russia... Israel and Gaza... and for all those who leave prayerful footprints for us to follow.