

To those who are called, sanctified by God the Father, and preserved in Jesus Christ: mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. Amen.

²⁷ But I say to you who hear: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. ²⁹ To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. ³¹ And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. ³² But if you love those who love you, what credit 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 credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. ³⁶ Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. ³⁷ Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

Text: Luke 6:27-38 Gen. 45:3-8a, 15 1 Cor. 15:35-38a, 42-49 Ps. 86 Resp. Ps.: 103

Hymns: 767, 546 (1-2, 4-5), 411, 652

BE MERCIFUL, AS GOD IS MERCIFUL

Dear fellow believers in Christ,

With all the rudeness and downright cruelty that takes place on social media, with some people ‘getting in other people’s faces’ as we see and hear about it in the news, and with our own natural desire to get revenge on those who do bad things to us, how should we deal with this? God has just the help we need in His Word for us today.

Jesus begins, “*I say to you who hear....*” Whatever Jesus says is important to us. In our text Jesus tells us how to treat those who hate us, and say and do hurtful things to us. What our Savior expects of us is hard for us to do, sometimes extremely hard. But we know that Jesus’ way is the right way, and that Jesus’ way is the way that always works out the best for us and for others.

“*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.*” Jesus says this twice in our text for emphasis. We don’t have to like our enemies, but we do have to “*love*” them. We don’t have to be friends with those who hate us, but we do have to “*do good*” to them. “*Love*” in the original text is the ‘ah-gah-pe’ love we heard about a few weeks ago. It’s the same word for “*love*” in

John 3:16: “*For God so loved the world, that*” (in this agape “love”) “*He gave His only begotten Son.*” Instead of our natural, vengeful reaction of hurting those who hurt us, Jesus tells us to love them selflessly and treat them with self-sacrificing kindness.

Jesus says, “*Bless those who curse you*” – literally from the original: “*Say ‘God bless you,’ ‘I wish you well’ [to] those who wish us evil.*”

Jesus says, “*Pray for those who spitefully use you.*” Someone who “*spitefully [uses]*” people has a serious problem with God. Jesus tells us to “*pray for those who spitefully use [us],*” that God would get through to them and change their heart. Praying for someone who has hurt us is a big help in being able to forgive him.

“*To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also.*” The original refers, not to being slapped, but being hit. Since it’s wrong for us as individuals to hit someone, then it’s not wrong for us to try to keep someone from hitting us and letting him beat us up. But that doesn’t mean we can hit someone simply because he hit us. The Bible says “*Repay no one evil for evil.... If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men*” (Ro. 12:17-18).

Jesus says, “*From him who takes away your cloak*” (your coat), “*do not withhold your tunic*” (your shirt) “*either.*” Since it’s wrong to steal, then it’s not wrong for us to try to keep someone from stealing from us. If someone is in need and takes something from us, we shouldn’t automatically demand that he give it back. It was wrong for him to steal it. But we can still choose to let him keep it, and even give him something else that he needs.

“*Give to everyone who asks of you.*” God doesn’t give us everything we want, and He doesn’t give us things that would be bad for us. We want to keep this in mind in our giving to others. We want to willingly share what God gives us with others. Although some people take advantage of the kindness of others, we can’t let that be an excuse for us not to give to anyone at all.

Jesus tells us, “*Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.*” “The Golden rule” is from Jesus. A wonderful guiding principle in any situation is to ask ourselves how we would like people to treat us, and then treat others like that.

Jesus asks, “*If you love those who love you,*” ... “*and if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.*” If we only love those who love us, and only do good to those who do good to us, that’s nothing special. Even unbelievers do that. “*And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.*” Since we should return what we’ve borrowed from others, it’s not wrong to expect others to return what they’ve borrowed from us.

But there are situations in which we should lend someone something whether or not we think we'll get it back.

“Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return.” We shouldn't be kind to someone only if he's kind to us. We want to be loving and kind and good to others, whatever the situation, whether or not they are loving, kind, and good to us, because God says it's the right thing to do.

“For God is kind to the unthankful and evil.” The Bible says, *“[God] makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust”* (Mt. 5:45). God freely gives His blessings all over the earth, to those who believe in Him and to those who don't, to those who are good and to those who are evil, to those who thank Him and to those who don't. We want to treat others the way God treats us all.

“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” None of us deserves anything good from God. We're all sinners. If God treated any of us the way we deserve He would punish us all forever in hell. But *“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (Jn. 3:16). Even though we don't deserve it, God Had mercy on us and sent Jesus to die for our sins on the cross. God gave us our faith in Jesus and saved us. Jesus tells us to *“be merciful”* to others, *“just as your Father also is merciful”* to us. The Bible says, *“Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you”* (Eph. 4:31-32).

“Judge not” (Don't judge what's in other people's hearts), Jesus says, *“and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you....”* The Bible says, *“Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Ro. 12:21). If someone says and does bad things to us and we retaliate by saying and doing bad things to him, we're just continuing the cycle of hurting. But, with God's help, if we're good to him instead of vengeful, he may have a change of heart, stop treating us badly, and start treating us kindly.

Jesus says in His Sermon on the Mount, *“If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses”* (Mt. 6:14-15). If we judge what's in other people's hearts and condemn them and refuse to forgive those who sin against us, God will not forgive our sins. And if we don't have God's forgiveness for our sins, we're going to hell. But, with God's help, if we forgive others, God will forgive us.

When Jesus tells us to “*forgive*” others, “*forgive*” in the original is literally “*let go.*” God says in His Word, “*I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins*” (Is. 43:25). For Jesus’ sake God completely, freely, unconditionally forgives our sins and lets them all go. If we keep dwelling on the hurt others have caused us and how wrong and unfair they were toward us, we’re not forgiving them, and we’re continuing to hurt ourselves. Our Savior, who gave His life for us on the cross even though we don’t deserve it, helps us to forgive those who hurt us, let go of our anger and pain, and be at peace. Jesus tells us all these things about loving and forgiving and being kind to those who hurt us because He wants us to be at peace with them (at least in our own hearts), at peace with ourselves, and at peace with God.

“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.” This pictures God’s blessings as all kinds of good things loaded into a container which is shaken to get as much as possible into it, overflowing, and then ‘poured out’ to us. When we are loving to others, they may not be loving to us in return. Then again, they may. We can leave it all in God’s hands, and let Him take care of everything. And we can be sure that God will always bless us for being kind to others for His sake.

In the original Jesus literally says, “*Keep on loving!*” “*Keep on doing good!*” “*Keep on blessing!*” “*Keep on praying for those who [hurt you]!*” “*Keep on [offering the other cheek]!*” “*Keep on giving to [others]!*” “*Keep on being merciful!*” “*Keep on forgiving!*” As Christ’s people, this is our whole way of life. We cannot do these things by ourselves. Jesus forgives us when we fail. In Jesus’ love and forgiveness for us, He teaches us to love and forgive others.

Jesus assures us, “*Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High.*” As God helps us to love and forgive and be kind to others, we have His assurance that we are His children – our greatest blessing in life! Jesus says, “*Your reward will be great.*” Just before our text Jesus says, “*Your reward is great in heaven*” (v. 23). Heaven isn’t a “*reward*” we earn, but one God gives us as a free gift of His grace. Living by faith in Jesus, reflecting Jesus’ love in in our attitudes and actions toward others, Jesus will take us to be with Him one day in heaven!

“Lord, teach us to be merciful to others as You are so merciful to us.” Amen.