

He Did Not Revile

1Peter 3:8-22

Lent 4, April 3, 2019

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

Be like minded. Be sympathetic. Be lovers of the brotherhood. Be compassionate. Be humble.

All of these exhortations are meaningless. When we hear these exhortations nothing specific comes to mind. With our modern propensity toward abstractions virtually nothing concrete comes to mind when we hear these words. They are just words.

When told to be like minded we have no idea with whom we are to be like minded. When told to be sympathetic we have no idea with whom we should be sympathetic. When told to be lovers of the brotherhood, we have no idea who the brotherhood is. When we are told to be compassionate we hear the exhortation to be nice which is not the same thing, but who would know in our modern mixed up world. When we are told to be humble, God may as well be speaking to us in Swahili for all the meaning that has to us. With our modern school system joined by the TV set and the cinema preaching to us self-esteem and being yourself, being humble is such a foreign concept that no one knows what it means.

Because these things are vague we can fool ourselves into believing that we have done them. We can exonerate ourselves of any failure to do them. After all if a specific act cannot be pointed to that says that we did them, then we can claim that we did them even when we did not and who can point to our failures to prove otherwise? We can imagine ourselves to be compassionate and lovers of the brotherhood even though we are not because those terms carry so little meaning that they can accuse us of nothing even as they exhort us of nothing.

But God does not let us off of the hook so easily.

You want to know with whom you should be like minded? You should be like minded with God, obviously. You want to know what it is to be sympathetic and lovers of the brotherhood and compassionate people and humble? Do not repay evil in place of evil. Do not pay reviling in place of reviling. If you do not repay evil in place of evil and reviling in place of reviling, then you are compassionate, sympathetic, lovers of the brotherhood and humble.

Let us take reviling in place of reviling because it is the specific example of the greater principle. Reviling is what happens when someone hurts you by their words. People revile you when they damage your reputation. People damage your reputation when they say false things about you and it costs you. They may say false things about you that people believe and when they believe it they do not do business with you. They may say false things about you and as a result of the false things that they say people refuse to associate with you. They begin to avoid you in certain public places. You lose friends over it. You lose acquaintances over it. These people might be people that you know. These people who revile you may even be family members. It is particularly back stabbing when family members revile you to the family. You could lose your status in the family, be cut off from the family, be written out of the will. If you

are young reviling generally happens at school when someone insults you or makes up a story about you that is false and posts it on social media, spreads it around at school, until finally you have a bunch of people who believe evil about you and you have fewer friends. That is reviling.

Reviling can also do damage to your reputation. You may have taken someone into your confidence revealing to them personal information in order to obtain their sympathy and advice. Then you find out that they were not worthy of your trust because they repeat what you said to them to others. They do it to appear righteous in the eyes of others or they do it to hurt you or they threaten to do it in order to manipulate you. What sin you were confiding or secret that you were keeping is now known. Your reputation is damaged and all of the consequences that go with it.

Now in this situation here is what it means to be compassionate, humble, sympathetic, and a lover of the brotherhood: do not revile that person in return. When they revile you do not revile them back.

When you do not revile them back, then you are compassionate, sympathetic, a lover of the brotherhood and humble.

If you revile them back, then you are a lover of justice and fair play and you are not compassionate, sympathetic, a lover of the brotherhood, or humble.

Reviling is just an example of evil. God says not to repay anyone evil in place of evil. Here evil can mean any of a number of different things. It can mean that someone cheated you out of your money through some kind of scam. It can mean that someone took an opportunity that should have been yours. It could mean that someone physically harmed you. It could mean that your spouse committed adultery. It could mean that your children disobeyed you. It includes any evil or harm that anyone might perpetrate on you. When they do, do not return them evil in place of evil.

Do not cheat them back. Do not hurt them back. Do not commit adultery in return. Do not harm in return. If you do not pay back evil in place of evil, then you are sympathetic, compassionate, a lover of the brotherhood, and humble. You are not interested in justice. You are rather interested in Christ.

If someone harms you, bless them. Pray for them. Seek to do them good. Seek their best interests. In this way you will keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. If you want justice and fair play, then your lips will speak deceit and your tongue will speak evil because it will be the easiest way for you to pay them back for what they have done to you.

But if you do, you are not interested in Christ and you are not seeking peace and pursuing it. You are seeking justice and the quest for justice does not lead to peace and is not interested in Christ.

In order to do this, you cannot fear what they fear. If you fear what they fear, you will wind up reviling and doing evil right along with them. They fear their idols of gold and silver. They fear their idols of money and popularity. They fear their idols of self-righteousness and vain glory and that is why they harm you. And if you fear what they fear you will harm them in return. That is why they revile you and if you fear what they fear you will revile them in return. By paying back evil for evil and reviling for reviling you are simply confessing that you

worship the same false gods that the people who do you evil and revile you worship. You do not worship Christ. If you did you would not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling. You would be like minded to God, compassionate, sympathetic, lovers of the brotherhood and humble.

Here is why. Jesus was reviled. He did not revile in return. Jesus was threatened. Jesus did not threaten in return. They did evil to Jesus. Jesus did not do evil in return. Rather He prayed for them and prayed for their blessing. He asked God not to hold this sin against them.

Jesus was not reviled justly. He did not deserve any of the mocking or the spitting or the slapping or the flogging that He received. Jesus did not deserve any of the evil that was done to Him. He did not deserve the flogging, the crown of thorns, the beatings. He did not deserve the way of sorrows or crucifixion. He did not deserve death and yet He bore it all for your sake.

He was the righteous dying in place of the unrighteous. His accomplishment in offering His life was the expiation of all of your sins to bring you to God. He died to forgive you of your sins and wash them all away in His blood. Since your sins are forgiven you are reconciled to God.

If Jesus had repaid evil for evil, then He would have called down fire on the ones who harmed Him. But if Jesus had gone the way of justice and fair play and had called down fire on the ones who harmed Him, then He would not have died and without His death you are damned.

If Jesus had repaid reviling for reviling, He could have forced the hand of Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate into releasing Him. He could have threatened to report the injustice He endured to Caesar or why stop there? He could have threatened to have pointed it out to God. And Jesus certainly could have reported their sins to God, but that would be the way of justice and fair play. If Jesus had done that and had forced Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate to let Him go, then there would have been no atoning death for our sins and we would be in hell.

And frankly if Jesus had gone the way of justice, He would not have come to earth in the first place. He would not have given up His heavenly glory to be born of the virgin Mary in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. He would not have bothered to be subject to the temptations of Satan. He was better than that! He would not have bothered to answer a bunch of fool questions from human beings who ought to know better. He would not have tolerated the arrogance of disciples who think that they are better than other people and better than other disciples. He would have let us all go to hell and would not have died for any of us. He had no obligation to die for us. If Jesus were interested in justice and fair play He would have repaid us for what we deserve. We would spend an eternity in hell.

But Jesus is compassionate. He is like minded to the Father. He is sympathetic, a lover of the brotherhood and most of all Jesus is humble. He lays aside His own righteousness and takes on our sin and dies in our place. He seeks no justice with us. He seeks no fair play with us. He does not seek to pay us back as our sins deserve. And we are saved.

Now if Jesus does not seek to pay us back for what we have done, why should you seek to pay back others for what they have done to you? Do you think that you are better than Jesus?

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.

Chancel Drama:

One student

One teacher

One server

One date

Scene one (at school)

Teacher: I want you to notice situations in the next week in which you become angry. When you do become angry I want you to think about the opportunity that your conflict with the other person gives to you especially in view of your faith in Jesus Christ.

(students leave)

Scene two (at restaurant)

Student: I would like a steak with baked potato and the vegetable of the day. May I have a glass of iced tea with that?

Server (acknowledges order)

Date: I would like the bacon cheeseburger with fries. May I have a coke with that?

Server (acknowledges order and removes menus.)

Server (when server returns with the meals she places the meal in front of the date, but dropped the student's plate on the floor spilling his order.) I'm sorry.

Student: I forgive you.

Server: Most people just get angry and furious with me when this happens. Why aren't you mad?

Student: I mess up a lot, and my God forgives me. God would not want me to be angry and upset with you.

Server: Let me get you a new order and it will be on me.

Scene three (back at school)

Student (reporting to teacher) I couldn't believe what I was saying right there in the restaurant. And it was so easy!"

Teacher: So you glorified God by not getting upset. You have given witness to Christ and thus served all who hear what you said. You have also grown more like Christ.