

You Show Forth God

Matthew 5:38-48

The Seventh Sunday after Pentecost, February 19, 2017

Immanuel Lutheran Church, Broadlands

You are the light of the world. Let your light shine in front of others so that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

You let your light shine by keeping the Law of Moses. You do not keep the Law of Moses by sacrificing woolly animals and draining their blood. If you do, you will be sacrificing the wrong animals. Jesus is the Lamb of God. You do not keep the Law of Moses by building a tabernacle. The tabernacle in the Old Testament was the tent that Moses had Israel build in the wilderness. Jesus is the tabernacle in the New Testament. You do not keep the Law of Moses by building a temple. In the Old Testament the temple was the dwelling place of God on earth. Solomon built the temple. In the New Testament the temple of God is the body of Christ. Christ built it in three days. The body of Christ is the place where God dwells on earth.

You do keep the Law of Moses by avoiding murder. You do keep the Law of Moses by avoiding anger toward your fellow disciples. You do keep the Law of Moses by avoiding insults toward your fellow disciples. You do keep the Law of Moses by reconciling to your fellow disciple if your fellow disciples has some sin that you have committed against him.

You keep the Law of Moses by avoiding adultery. You keep the Law of Moses by avoiding lust. You keep the Law of Moses by cutting off those things from you which promote lust.

You keep the Law of Moses by keeping the things that you promise in the name of God. You keep the Law of Moses by being honest in all of your dealings. When your yes is yes and your no is no, then you have kept the Law of Moses.

That is when your light shines.

Your Lord goes on today with more instructions on how you let your light shine in front of unbelievers so that they will see your good deeds and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

In order to let your light shine it is not sufficient that you merely administer justice in a fair way. In other words your light does not shine as disciples of Jesus when you keep track of the sins of others and make sure that those disciples who sin against you get what is coming to them. It is not sufficient to let your light shine if you keep track of what other disciples of Jesus owe you and make sure that they pay you. It is not sufficient for you to make up for the sins that you have committed against your fellow disciples. It is not sufficient that you give what is owed to other disciples when you sin against them. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is not sufficient to let your light shine. Even the unbelievers in their courts believe in fair play and demand that quid pro quo be followed.

In order to let your light shine do not resist someone who is evil. Take no revenge against anyone who slaps you on the right cheek. If someone should strike you on the right cheek rather than to strike him back turn to him the other cheek so that he may strike both of them. Has not the holy apostle written to us and commanded us in the name of Jesus not to take revenge, but rather to leave room for the wrath of God? Has not God said that He would repay and that recompense belongs exclusively to Him and not to us? If these things are true then you are never to take revenge, not on a fellow disciple and not on anyone else either.

When your Lord commands you not to resist an evil person, He is not talking about your fellow disciples. He is talking about any evil person that strikes you. You may have heard fancy explanations

from theologians and historians about how Jesus doesn't really mean what He seems to be saying in this passage. Some people have said that by turning the other cheek you are in a way rebuking the other person for what he has done. But Jesus is not interested in rebuking the evil person at this point. He is interested in you letting your light shine. If you strike the evil person back, you are not letting your light shine. The reason is simple. If you strike the evil person back, you are behaving exactly the way that the unbelievers behave. You do not stand out from them as distinct. And when you hit back you are not acting like God.

If it is the case that you should turn the other cheek, then it is logical that if someone wants to take your tunic, you should give him your garments as well. If you demand your tunic back, then you are behaving exactly like the unbelievers behave and your light does not shine. If you let him have your garments as well, then you are behaving in a way that distinguishes yourself from them and your light is shining. Therefore it follows that if someone wants to force you to go a mile, that you go with him two miles. The unbelievers will do the bare minimum that is required of them. Only one who is a disciple of Jesus will go the extra mile. It is not sufficient therefore that you merely do what is required of you in order to let your light shine. Everybody does that. If you want your light to shine in front of others so that people see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven, go the extra mile. It is then that you will be acting like God.

Now if all of this is true then it makes sense that if someone wants something from you that you give it to them. If someone wants to borrow from you, you do not turn them aside. If you do not give freely, then you look like an unbeliever for they do not give freely either. If you turn aside someone who wants to borrow from you, then you look like an unbeliever for they also wish to avoid entanglements with those who would want to borrow from them. If you do give freely and you do lend to others, your light shines.

In order to let your light shine before others so that they may see your good deeds and give glory to your Father in heaven it is not sufficient that you love your neighbors and hate your enemies. Even unbelievers love their neighbors and hate their enemies. If you love only the people who love you, what reward do you have? Don't even the tax collectors do as much? The unbelievers love the people who are close to them so if you love only those who love you or only your neighbors you are not doing anything different from what they would do and therefore your light does not shine.

If you want your light to shine, it is necessary to love your enemies. Your enemies are those people whether members of the congregation or not who have wronged you and you are angry about it. Those are your enemies. Think about that for a second. For some of you a person's face will instantly come to mind when I say the word "enemy." That person has wronged you. Whether you deserved it or not may not matter. They have wronged you and you want to see some justice done to them. You would like to see them receive what they deserve for what they have done to you. That person is your enemy. Some of you may have to think for a while because your temperament is different or you may not have been wronged recently and so you would have to think for a while. But with some reflection you will be able to come up with someone who is your enemy. If you don't think you have enemies, then you are not alive or you are dishonest. Jesus commands you to love your enemies. Unless you have enemies you cannot love them. Think of the person that you cannot stand to be around. Think about the person that you avoid as much as you can. They may even be blood related to you. They may even be with you on the pews right now. Or they may be someone else, but they are there. If you want your light to shine, love them. Care for them. The apostle commands you in the name of Jesus to feed them if they are hungry and give them something to drink if they are thirsty.

Pray for the ones who persecute you. When Jesus gives this commandment, He is thinking about His disciples as a group. He is not thinking of individuals when He gives this commandment. When He talks about persecution He is talking about the persecution of His beloved Church. He commands you to pray for those who mock your faith. Pray for those who insult your faith. Pray for those who seek to tear your faith down. Pray for those who mock your Lord with sacrilege. Pray for those who treat Jesus as a curse word and byword. For the Christians in Syria, the Lord is commanding them to pray for ISIS and to pray for its good.

It is only then that your light will shine. It is only then that the unbelievers will see your good deeds and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. It is only then that they unbelievers will see God.

You disciples of Jesus are privileged to see God frequently. You see Him primarily in His body at the Sacrament of the Altar. After all that is where the body of Christ is and where the body of Christ is where the temple of God is. Therefore God dwells in the Sacrament of the Altar.

You disciples understand that when one speaks according to their vocation and when that vocation is given by Jesus to speak His word that it counts the same as listening to Jesus Himself. Jesus says to His ministers, "Whoever listens to you is listening to Me." Therefore you are listening to Jesus even now. You have the encounter with Jesus often and frequently. The unbelievers confess no such faith. The unbelievers will not see God unless you show Him to them.

When you do the things that Jesus has commanded, the unbeliever will see God.

After all doesn't God send His rain on the righteous and the unrighteous? Doesn't God send rain to the believer and the unbeliever alike? Therefore when you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, you are behaving in a way that God behaves and you are therefore showing them God.

When you give to anyone who asks you, you are behaving the way that God behaves. After all God forgives you of your sins whenever you ask Him. He also gives you countless other things that you ask Him. If God waited for us to earn the things which He gives to us, He would never give them to us. Therefore when we give without expecting the person to earn it in return, we are behaving the way that God behaves.

When you pray for those who persecute you, you are showing people God. After all God Himself prayed for His enemies while they were nailing Him to the cross. When you love your enemies, you are behaving the way that God behaves because God loves His enemies also and gave His Son to die for them.

We were His enemies you know. When we listened to the serpent in the garden we gave to the serpent what we owe to God. Countless times in the Old and the New Testaments God wants us to listen to Him. His Word is of the utmost importance. It gives us faith. It creates life and then creates new life. It sustains us in faith. Without the Word we do not exist and our faith does not exist. With the Word we have everything and so God commands us to listen. When we listen to the serpent we are giving to the serpent what is rightly owed to God. When we give to the serpent what is rightly owed to God, we are worshipping the serpent. The serpent has become our God and God has become our enemy. The serpent and God are enemies. They are opposed to each other and when we listen to the serpent we become an enemy of God. God despises and His soul hates the wicked and that is what we were.

God loves His enemies. And since He is God He does not pray for His enemies, but He does take action on their behalf. He loves them and He sends them His Son who dies for them. Whether you view it from the perspective of the Father or from the perspective of the Son God is loving His enemies. God sends His Son to die for His enemies so that they would be forgiven and loved by Him. God dies for His

enemies so that they would be saved and forgiven by the Father. Either way God is love. And He loves you.

When our sins demanded His tunic from Him, He gave His cloak as well. When our sins demanded that He be defiled by them, He gave His life as well. He did not turn aside those who ask from Him. He does not turn aside those who would borrow from Him even though we cannot pay Him back. When we struck Him on the right cheek, He gave His back and His hands and His feet. And you are all forgiven.

Therefore if you are going to show others what God is like, you will do the same. If you are going to show others God's perfection, you will be perfect also.

And the commandment to be perfect is stated by our Lord in such a way that it is also a promise. It is not merely that He wants you to be perfect, it is also that He promises that you will be perfect. There is a Greek word for "must" but Jesus does not use it here. The translators become too obsessed with obedience to see what Jesus is really saying. Jesus is using the form of speech that He used when He spoke to Israel from the top of Mount Sinai. It is not that you must be perfect. It is that you will be perfect. God promises it. You will be perfect. You will be like God. Just like from the top of Mount Sinai. He promised them that they would not have other gods and that they would not misuse His name and that they would keep the Sabbath Day. He promised them that they would honor their father and their mother. He promised them that they would not murder, nor commit adultery, nor steal, nor lie, nor covet. What a blessed life that is! What glorious joy it would be to avoid those things.

And so now when God wants your light to shine so that people may see Him, He promises that when you do it, you will be perfect, even as He is perfect.

In the Name of Jesus. Amen.