

**MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH**

**February 20, 2022**

**7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany**

**PRELUDE:** Carol Gustafson; Singers: Dave Fugleberg, Hannah Carrizales

**CALL TO WORSHIP:** *Psalm 103:1-5*

*Bless the LORD, O my soul;  
And all that is within me, bless His holy name!  
2 Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
And forget not all His benefits:  
3 Who forgives all your iniquities,*

*Who heals all your diseases,  
4 Who redeems your life from destruction,  
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender  
mercies,  
5 Who satisfies your mouth with good things,  
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.*

**HYMN #197 "Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee"**

**PASTOR:** *Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

**CONGREGATION:** *We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen*

**PRAYER**

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE:** **Joseph's brothers sold him because of his pretty new coat. God worked it out for something good.**

**READER: Diane Plait**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Gen 45:3-15, 21-28 Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still living?" But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. 4 Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! 5 And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. 6 For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. 7 But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. 9 Now hurry back to my father and say to him, "This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don't delay. 10 You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me--you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. 11 I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise, you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.' 12 "You can see for yourselves, and so can my brother Benjamin, that it is really I who am speaking to you. 13 Tell my father about all the honor accorded me in Egypt and about everything you have seen. And bring my father down here quickly." 14 Then he threw his arms around his brother Benjamin and*

*wept, and Benjamin embraced him, weeping. 15 And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.*

*45:21-28 So the sons of Israel did this. Joseph gave them carts, as Pharaoh had commanded, and he also gave them provisions for their journey. 22 To each of them he gave new clothing, but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five sets of clothes. 23 And this is what he sent to his father: ten donkeys loaded with the best things of Egypt, and ten female donkeys loaded with grain and bread and other provisions for his journey. 24 Then he sent his brothers away, and as they were leaving he said to them, "Don't quarrel on the way!" 25 So they went up out of Egypt and came to their father Jacob in the land of Canaan. 26 They told him, "Joseph is still alive! In fact, he is ruler of all Egypt." Jacob was stunned; he did not believe them. 27 But when they told him everything Joseph had said to them, and when he saw the carts Joseph had sent to carry him back, the spirit of their father Jacob revived. 28 And Israel said, "I'm convinced! My son Joseph is still alive. I will go and see him before I die."*

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *1 Corinthians 15:21-26; 30-42 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.*

*15:30-42 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? 31 I die every day-I mean that, brothers-just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die." 33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God-I say this to your shame. 35 But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" 36 How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. 39 All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40 There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. 41 The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. 42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable;*

**READER:** Here ends the reading of God's Word.

**CONGREGATION SINGS:** God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:** I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

**GLORIA PATRI:** *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**PRAISE SONGS: 1 or 2** praise songs chosen by CAROL

**SERMON: HOW TO PROPERLY DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES** Luke 6:27-38

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

**MARRIAGE:** One of the best kept secrets of most marriages is there are days when husbands and wives, who love each other deeply, don't like each other very much. Some couples miraculously avoid those days but most don't. When I do a wedding, I tell couples that they have permission on those days to kill their spouse under one condition: that the murder WEAPON can only be KINDNESS. I say, "You have permission to kill each other with kindness."

Today's message from Luke 6:27-38 is very similar. Jesus gives us a formula for "HOW TO PROPERLY DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES." Let's look at it:

### **I. SPEECH: DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES WITH KIND WORDS**

*Luke 6:27-28 "But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you."*

**HEARING:** The first thing Jesus points out is that this teaching is for "you who hear me." This is a teaching we don't want to hear by nature. By nature, we want to retaliate against those who hurt us. We want to make them suffer like they have made us suffer.

**CORY:** Cory Ten Boom, her father and her sister were sent to prison camp by the Nazi's for helping Jews escape Holland during World War II. Her father and sister died in the camps after much abuse from the German socialists. Cory miraculously lived and was liberated. Some time later she ran into one of the cruel guards from that camp. He wanted her forgiveness but she understandably hardened her heart. But God kept speaking to her and she went to him and offered her full forgiveness and it was a turning point in her life. She went on to be one of the most powerful evangelistic speakers in history. But she had to first be willing to listen to Jesus to get to the place that she could be healed inside and filled with the Holy Spirit.

**QUESTION:** Are you willing today to hear about a different way to deal with those who have abused you?

**SPEAKING:** The next thing I want to point out is from verse 28. God wants us to verbally bless and pray for our enemies. I have done this a number of times and it really works. I find that it works best when I do it out loud. I name the name of the person who has hurt me and I start to pray blessing into their live. Let's just say the person who hurt you was named Bill. Offer up prayers of blessing like this:

- I thank you God for Bill and I praise you for bringing him into my life.
- I forgive Bill for hurting me.
- I pray for blessing for Bill in every area of his life. Bless him most of all with a close relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Bless Bill's finances, bless Bill's health, bless Bill's marriage and family and give Bill the joy of the Lord.

**BOOMERANG:** I call this a "BOOMERANG PRAYER." What happens is that what you pray for Bill comes back to you in your life in some way. The opposite is true as well. If you wish ill upon Bill, you will find an increasing leanness in your soul and the presence and joy of the Holy Spirit will be greatly reduced in your soul.

JOSEPH: This is what Joseph did in our Old Testament Lesson in Genesis 45. Let me repeat some of his kind words to his brothers who had been so wicked toward him: *"I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! 5 And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. 6 For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. 7 But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. 8 "So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt.*

FOUNDATION: There is no doubt that those words came from a heart that had forgiven them many years earlier. Had he not forgiven them he would have undoubtedly punished them severely now that the tables were turned. He had already experienced the BOOMERANG of blessing those who did him wrong. God blessed him abundantly and it flowed to the entire nation and to his family eventually.

## **II. GRACE: DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES BY TREATING THEM LIKE GOD TREATS HIS ENEMIES**

*Luke 6:29-35 "If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. 30 Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. 33 And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 34 And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners,' expecting to be repaid in full. 35 But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked.*

KINDNESS: Jesus points out that anyone, even "sinners" can be nice to those who are nice to them. But he shows them that there is a higher way to express love that comes from the heart of God. It is the same kind of love God shows to His enemies as he gives them the same sunshine, fresh air, rainfall, healthy bodies and opportunities that he gives to those who love Him. God does not like to punish the wicked. He prefers to draw them to salvation through blessing them with good things. One powerful verse that describes this is **Romans 2:4** *"Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?"* God uses kindness to lead us to repentance and he urges us to do the same for those who hurt us.

Jesus gives us a three-step plan here to show grace to our enemies. Grace is giving them what they don't deserve.

1. **LOVE YOUR ENEMIES**-This is the starting point. This is not the love of friendship which in Greek is "PHILEO." It is the selfless love of God that has no emotional basis. It is the love called "AGAPE." It is not warm and fuzzy...it is the love of choice. There is only one way to get this love. It must come from Christ who lived it all the way to the cross. You may need to pray like this: "God, I don't like Bill, in fact I despise Him. But I ask for the supernatural gift of love for him so that I can offer him gifts of grace just like you do for me." God will answer that prayer and give you a greater love for Bill than you could ever get by him being a kind friend to you. AGAPE is a special and powerful love that changes lives.

2. **DO GOOD TO YOUR ENEMIES**-Once you get this love you quickly need to put it into action before the devil comes to you to poison your heart again. Make a plan of action and that will seal the deal and cement in

that AGAPE love. If your husband hurts you bake him a cherry pie or chocolate cake or make his favorite meal. If you wife says things that hurt you, buy her flowers, or take her out to her favorite restaurant or whatever you know she loves. This is opposite of what comes natural, but it is the only way to break the ice and heal the relationship. The hurtful person may never apologize unless they are nudged in the right direction.

This song verse puts it so beautifully: *“Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter, feelings lie buried that grace can restore; Touched by a loving heart, wakened by kindness, chords that were broken will vibrate once more.”*

3. GIVE TO YOUR ENEMIES: Finally, Jesus tells us to “lend without expecting them to pay us back.” That means our motives have to be pure. We can’t do this to get them to treat us better or to make them our friends. We must give grace to them without any expectation of them ever treating us nice in the future. Remember this is AGAPE love, not PHILEO. We are doing this 100% for their sake and not one bit for our own. People can smell a hidden agenda a mile off so make sure your motives are pure and you have no expectations.

EXPECTATIONS: I know a younger man who is having marital difficulties. I saw him the other day and whispered to him E-D-R...he looked at me kind of puzzled and I said “EXPECTATIONS DESTROY RELATIONSHIPS.” He said to me, “I needed to hear that. I have a good wife but my expectations of her are destroying my attitude toward her.” He needs AGAPE...to learn to give without getting anything in return and that in itself is a miracle of God.

JOSEPH: Joseph may have been tempted to forgive but not forget. He could have helped his brothers keep from starving, but make sure he never saw them again. But he forgave his brothers and even invited them to move to Egypt to the best farm land in the country. The crucible of cruel slavery and wrongful imprisonment had purified Joseph to the depths of his soul and filled his heart with the love of God. DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES BY TREATING THEM WITH GENEROUS GRACE.

### **III. MERCY: DESTROY YOUR ENEMIES BY TRYING TO UNDERSTAND THEM**

*Luke 6:36-38 "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. 38 Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."*

PITY: At this point in his powerful message, Jesus adds the final step for dealing “killing our enemies with kindness.” He wants us to not only bless them with our words and do good things for them, but He wants us to UNDERSTAND THEM AND PITY THEM. It is so easy to hold an angry grudge toward someone in our hearts without trying to understand them. Jesus here tells us this: BE MERCIFUL AND DON’T BE JUDGMENTAL: It is so important to want to understand why a person is mean and cruel.

MOCCASINS: You have heard the old *native American proverb*: *“Never judge another man until you have walked a mile in his moccasins.”* One thing that really helped me in this area was doing Bible studies at the Carlton County jail when I was the pastor at St. Paul’s in Cloquet. Those men taught me many lessons as I learned how difficult their childhoods were and how easy mine was. I learned how those men had been used, abused and abandoned by their own fathers. Years and years of abuse had hardened them and turned them into candidates for committing crimes against a society that they felt didn’t care for them one bit. I never condoned the wrong that they did, but for the first time in my life I understood why they became criminals and I even felt sorry for them.

EXPERIENCES: I once had a person in a church that was very unkind to me. I tried to be so good to her, but something bitter inside of her just lashed out at me in ways that even surprised her. Later on, I learned that her father was a lawyer who was married to his career and had disappointed her so many times that she had deep inner hurt that poured out toward authority figures.

TENDER: We all need a thick skin and a tender heart. Someone once prayed this “pastor’s prayer:” ***“Lord give me the hide of an elephant and the heart of a child.”*** If we can remain tender hearted and if we seek to discover why some people are so hurtful, it will help us to be a channel of healing in their lives. I am not promoting the idea that we are doormats or should stay in abusive situations. But Jesus is telling us not to be judgmental toward people who have deep problems. Let me echo this idea with the poetic words of a caring pastor of another era: ***“Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, Where there is hatred, let me sow love, Where there is darkness, light, Where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I might not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood, as to understand, to be loved as to love...”***

POLITICS: As much as many of us are absolutely disgusted with the antics of Canada’s Prime Minister Trudeau, we also would do well to remember that he is a product of a very warped upbringing and questionable roots. I suspect the anger he is displaying toward the truckers and the violent way he is crushing them is just another expression of his inner brokenness, which has been displayed in other unhealthy ways up until now. Condemn his actions but pray for the salvation of his soul and the healing of his bitter heart.

JOSEPH: Joseph had a great understanding of human behavior and weakness. He was able to see the hand of God and focus on being a faithful man God could use to save a nation, rather than on the terrible deed that got him to Egypt. Joseph focused on feeding a starving nation rather than feeding a grudge. What was the result? Genesis 45:27 ***“the spirit of their father Jacob revived.”***

LINCOLN: Abraham Lincoln was such a leader. After he was elected, Lincoln appointed all three of his political rivals to his cabinet—Seward as secretary of state, Chase as secretary of the treasury, and Bates as attorney general. He saw beyond their scathing election year rhetoric and acknowledged their talents and potential as colleagues. Only a great man could do such a thing. Don’t you want to be great like that? I do.

JESUS: My sermon title was a kind of play on words, “How to Destroy your Enemies.” I actually meant, “How to Destroy the Enmity of your Enemies and Offer the Hand of Friendship.” We do it through WORDS OF BLESSING, DEEDS OF GRACE AND AN UNDERSTANDING ATTITUDE OF MERCY. Jesus demonstrated this when he died on the cross for the sins of the world. ***Romans 5:10 “For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!”*** The first step to having peace with our enemies is to receive Jesus into our hearts as our Savior and Lord.

Now may the peace of God, that surpasses all human comprehension, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen

**HYMN #416 “There’s a Wideness in God’s Mercy”**

**PRAYER: “Lord, make me an instrument of your peace, Where there is hatred, let me sow love, Where there is darkness, light, Where there is sadness, joy. O Divine Master, grant that I might not so much seek to be consoled as to console, to be understood, as to understand, to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive, it is in pardoning that we are pardoned and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen”**

**LORD'S PRAYER:** *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

**BENEDICTION:** The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

**Closing Song chosen by Carol**

**POSTLUDE:** Carol Gustafson

**READER: Diane Plait**

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*Gen 45:21-28*

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**READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.**

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