**2/23/25**

**Part Two**

**Vicar Vince Piekarski**

**Luke 6:27-38 (NRSVUE)**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 1:2, NRSVUE) (2) **Amen.**

Welcome back for part two of the Sermon on The Plain! I am glad that you all have joined us once again, for this all too important second installment of this vital message. If you happen to think back to Last Sunday, and jog your memory a little bit, then you remember that we got an alternative version of the Beatitudes with the “Blessed Ares” and the “Woe Tos.” We learned a bit about the very need to shift our actions and mindset in following with the role reversal that Christ exhibited and calls us to. This Sunday I feel that we actually get some more concrete details thrown in the mix. We get some clear-cut expectations buckled together with ethical principles to further create a better formula for right living. In these three paragraphs we get a rather clear picture of our expectations, and following these two messages delivered the last two Sundays we definitely have a better road map for sure.

However, with all that being said, then that means that we all have to really be listening. For I know for certain that anyone and everyone can hear a message, but actually listening to that very messages means that it has to be absorbed. More importantly, it means that the message and the concepts really need to be applied by living them out in our actions throughout our daily lives. We are not just to think these concepts and this map are to be followed by someone else, or we are not supposed to just share this with others and not actually live by it as well. Listen, digest, and apply with heart will have us all leading by example for sure.

So, just like every other Sermon I or any Pastor deliver, or every time that we read the Word from the Bible, we know that we have to look inward on ourselves. We come to the very realization that we always have some work to do to improve ourselves and our mark on society. However, the best part is that we never have to do any of this alone, for we have this very community right here to do it together with! We learn and grow with and because of one another. That is the power of relationship, and that is the blessed nature of our hunger to be better human beings living in the Christlike manner that Jesus lived out as the very best and perfect example. He did not share these things and show us how to live to just be admired, Jesus did these very things so that we could see and hear and do as well. Respect, Care, Love, Share, Forgive, and so many more concepts and practices are wrapped up in these two messages that He not only chose to share with His disciples, but all those folks that chose to seek Him out and follow Him no matter where he went. This message was for one and all back then, and it is for all of us here and now as well.

Now, as if the flashbacks to my recent Christian Ethics class in Seminary were not enough two weeks straight, this week actually added on to those very flashbacks in a different manner. For my entire life as a youth and young adult came to the forefront as I fondly remembered my time in the Royal Rangers, or Christian Boy Scout Group. For verse 31 of today’s Gospel Reading, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” (NRSVUE) (2) evoked the very principle of the Golden Rule that I grew up learning. Now, we utilized the version from Matthew chapter 7, verse 12, where the wording happens to be ever so slightly different, as it states, “In everything, do to others what you would have them do to you.” (NIV) (4) I like this version just slightly more, for the very word everything is front and center. It is the very reminder that we are not to make selections as if we are out there shopping and putting things we need in our shopping cart at the grocery store, but we are to do right in each and every situation in life. That also even means the ones that we really do not desire to at times. Furthermore, this also really reminded me of the Royal Ranger Pledge that we recited at the beginning of every weekly meeting. And that is, “With God’s help, I will do my best to serve God, my church, and my fellowman; to live by the Ranger Code; to make the Golden Rule my daily rule.” (4) Well, you already heard the Golden Rule in two versions this morning, and The Ranger Code that is spoken of here is defined as how one is to live life by being “Alert, Clean, Honest, Courageous, Loyal, Courteous, Obedient, and Spiritual” (4) All very defined categories and principles that can be deployed and applied in relation to our Gospel Readings from the last two weeks, and my recent Christian Ethics class in Seminary. With these basic core values and concepts to help guide us in life, we can show our very love and compassion as we live out our life in Christ as well. That is precisely what the Sermon on the Plain delivers to each and every one of us here and now, and the people that sought Jesus and the disciples out back then.

So, you may be sitting there and thinking that I plan to lecture you and tell you how to clean up your act. You just might be sitting there and thinking that I am going to tell you that you have not been doing right. You may even be sitting there and thinking that these concepts and principles may have worked one way or another back then, but they were not living in the world and times that we are living in right now. Then, just then, you may be sitting there and thinking, doesn’t the Vicar up there in the pulpit have the very same work to do himself? And…. for all those very points…. I boldly and emphatically answer…. Yes! Yes, we all are called to love our neighbor, no matter if they cheer on the New York Giants, Philadelphia Eagles, Pittsburgh Steelers, Buffalo Bills, or whatever NFL team they desire. It does not matter if they like Denny Hamlin, Kyle Busch, Chase Elliott, Michael McDowell, or any other Nascar driver. It also does not matter if they are Hindu, Episcopalian, Evangelical, Catholic, Lutheran, Non-Denominational, Muslim, or whatever Faith based group they desire to worship in. For that fact, it does not even matter if they claim to be agnostic or atheist. The call has been, and always will be to love. That also is to love with no conditions! To love no matter what they have done for you, or they have not done for you. To love no matter what they have taken from you, or even paid you back for. To love no matter how many times they care for you or accept you, or how many times they pray for you or bless you. To love no matter how many times they may curse you or even disagree with you. The times and the setting are always different and rough, but yet they are one in the same when it comes down to breaking things down to the very basic elements. We are still in the people business, and we are still dealing with the heart. The entire Sermon on the Plain can be summed up in one word if you really think about it, and that very word is LOVE! Now, don’t you go and think I have forgot about you, for the key point or ideal is to love yourself before you can go out and dish up love to one another. So, yes that means we all have to work on ourselves, including myself, in order to be able to deliver that radical love, appreciation, and acceptance that Christ calls us to.

Now, it may not be the most desirable, or the easiest to do at times. We all know that we can think back to several scenarios that we would much rather love to kick some folks in the shin, to yell at them, to smack them upside the back of their head, to make an obscene gesture, or to even cut them off when driving or even speaking. We may even think back to the times that we actually have done so, and maybe we have even felt guilty. Then, we may also think back to times that we felt that we were right, or that we even felt better because we acted and responded the way we did. We may justify our behaviors even though we know they are wrong. This is where I recall that we are the only ones that can control our actions, and our very reactions too. We need to examine things, and ask ourselves if these very actions and mindset are coming from the heart. Furthermore, we need to add a layer to that and examine them in a manner that allows us to ask ourselves if these very actions are Christlike. Our very calling and purpose is to go and do, and to learn from others as well. We are not supposed to just flip the switch; we are supposed to be slow to anger. This is precisely where verse 36 applies, as we are to “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.” (2) Of course, this all is easier said than done, but nothing worth trying or doing is ever going to be easy. We are called to walk on the very path that is less traveled, and this is precisely how and what we do on that path. When we apply what we have heard here the last two weeks we are doing exactly what we have been called to do. We are following the very example that Jesus set before each and every one of us.

As I wrap things up, I really think how much the tail end of verse 38 makes so much more sense. It makes more sense after researching more and more. It makes more sense after typing, revising, retyping, deleting, adding, moving, and piecing this sermon together. It states that, “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.” (2) “The “good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over” is not a reference to success in the transactional economy that Jesus calls his followers to resist settling for and settling into. Our giving is indeed met with God’s giving, but that is because it is in the nature of God to give, not because we found the magic coins for the cosmic vending machine.” (5) There is no transaction, there is no receipt, there is no expectation of return. We go and do and give with no conditions. Our only expectation is of self, as we hope to follow and set the right example and do so by following the very best example in and through Christ.

We are reminded that “Jesus died on the cross. In resistance and response, the Father raised the Son from the dead. Following this pattern, the Most High continues to fill those who are empty and call to life those (who are) as good as dead.” (5) Forgiveness, love, compassion, mercy, peace, grace, selflessness, abundance, and generosity have been delivered to one and to all through our Triune God. It is our call to go out there and radically share with everyone we encounter, and more importantly, even ourselves.

So, I leave you with this last story to chew on and think about. I believe this mindset particularly lines itself up very well with all that we have spoken of here these last two weeks from the Sermon on the Plain. So, put your listening ears and thinking caps on as I share this…. “A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about his feelings. He said, “I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart. One wolf is a vengeful, angry and violent wolf – the other wolf is a loving, kind, and compassionate wolf.” The grandson asked him, “Which wolf will win the fight in your heart?” The grandfather answered, “The one that I feed!”” (8)

**Amen.**

**References & Study Points**

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 Preaching

 Year C 2025

 February 23rd, 2025

 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

(2) BibleGateway.com

(3) The Four Pages of The Sermon

 Revised and Updated

 A Guide to Biblical Preaching

 Paul Scott Wilson

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(4) Royal Rangers

 https://royalrangers.com/about

(5) WorkingPreacher.org

 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

 The Most High continues to fill those who are empty and call to life those as good as

 dead

 February 23, 2025

 Commentary on Luke 6:27-38

 Mary Hinkle Shore

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 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany (Year C)

 Generosity that does not draw boundaries based on the recipients’ responses

 February 20, 2022

 Commentary on Luke 6:27-38

 Sarah Henrich

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 Seventh Sunday after Epiphany (Year C)

 This reading continues the Sermon on the Level Place which we introduced in the

 comments on the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany, Luke 6:17-26.

 February 24, 2019

 Commentary on Luke 6:27-38

 Ronald J. Allen

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 It's All About The Kingdom

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 Sermon: Listen!

 Christopher Halverson

 Friday, February 21, 2025

 Luthermatrix

 The blog of a Lutheran Pastor, writer, and political animal.

**Luke 6:27-38 (NRSVUE)**

 Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He invites his followers to

 shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies

 and outsiders. Living in harmony with God’s intent brings the reward of overflowing

 blessing.

 [Jesus said:] 27 “But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good

 to those who hate you; 28 bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat

 you. 29 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. 30 Give to everyone

 who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back

 again. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you.

 32 “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners

 love those who love them. 33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what

 credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 If you lend to those from

 whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners

 lend to sinners, to receive as much again. 35 Instead, 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 he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the

 wicked. 36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

 37 “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, running over, will be put into

 your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”