

Order of Worship for February 23, 2025

P: The Lord be with you,
C: **and also with you.**

Opening Hymn: *“Jesus Has Come and Brings Pleasure”* - **Hymn #533**

Confession and Forgiveness p. 151

Service of the Word

Entrance Psalm:

P: Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him;
C: **fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way.**
P: Fret not yourself because of evildoers;
C: **be not envious of wrongdoers!**
P: For they will soon fade like the grass
C: **and wither like the green herb.**
P: Trust in the LORD, and do good;
C: **dwelt in the land and befriend faithfulness.**
P: Delight yourself in the LORD,
C: **and He will give you the desires of your heart.**
P: Commit your way to the LORD;
C: **trust in Him, and He will act.**

**All: Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

P: Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for Him;
C: **fret not yourself over the one who prospers in his way.**

The Kyrie: (*Lord, Have Mercy*): **152-3**

Hymn of Praise: *“This Is the Feast”* pg. 155

Salutation: (sung)

P: The Lord be with you.
C: **And also with you.**

Prayer of the Day

P: O God, the strength of all who put their trust in You, mercifully grant that by Your power we may be defended against all adversity; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
C: **Amen.**

Old Testament Lesson: Genesis 45:3-15

R: And Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph! Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; do not tarry. You shall dwell in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, and your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. There I will provide for you, for there are yet five years of famine to come, so that you and your household, and all that you have, do not come to poverty.' And now your eyes see, and the eyes of my brother Benjamin see, that it is my mouth that speaks to you. You must tell my father of all my honor in Egypt, and of all that you have seen. Hurry and bring my father down here." Then he fell upon his brother Benjamin's neck and wept, and Benjamin wept upon his neck. And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them. After that his brothers talked with him.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Epistle Lesson: Romans 12:14-21

R: Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

R: This is the Word of the Lord.

C: Thanks be to God.

Alleluia and Verse: p. 156-7

Holy Gospel: Luke 6:27-38

P: The Holy Gospel according to St. Luke, the 6th chapter.

C: Glory to You, O Lord. (sung)

P: [Jesus] said, "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not

demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them.

“If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

P: This is the Gospel of our Lord.

C: Praise to You, O Christ.

Children’s Message: (8:30 AM)

Sermon Hymn: “*O Love How Deep*” - Hymn #544

Sermon: “*Love Your Enemies*” – **Luke 6:27-38**

Several weeks ago, a discussion of theology spilled over into politics. Vice President JD Vance, a practicing Roman Catholic, cited Catholic ethical teaching to defend the Trump administration’s actions. He used the idea of the *ordo amoris*, the ordering of loves, to show why they were focusing on those within the United States, and changing priorities on immigration, refugees, and foreign aid. This hierarchy of who we love is based on proximity and begins with those within our family, those closest to us. It extends out to those who are close to us geographically, nationally.

That led to some pushback. As Lutherans, we may not always agree when the pope points out your bad theology, but it’s still worth paying attention to when he does. Others pointed to the parable of the Good Samaritan as a recognition that the Christian definition of who our neighbors are is expanded by Jesus, to include those who are ethnically, nationally, and/or religiously different than we are.

Jesus extends the idea of who we are to love even further in today’s Gospel lesson. Continuing the sermon on the plain, Luke’s version of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus today focuses on changing the ordering of loves. Instead of just loving those closest to you, he tells his disciples to love their enemies. Instead of just loving those who are in their family, in their tribe, in their community, they are to love those who are different than they are.

We’re blessed to live in a time where many of us don’t have physical enemies. We don’t live in fear of being attacked, although if you’re an opposing fan in a rival’s home stadium, you might still be a little nervous, as a recent Allstate Insurance commercial shows a Baylor fan sitting in a section full of Kansas fans. Yet for those who live in Ukraine, in Israel and Palestine, and in

other areas of conflict throughout the world, being among enemies is much more of a concern. An enemy is not an abstract concept for them, and it was not an abstract concept for the people Jesus is teaching and preaching to here.

And Jesus makes it even less abstract and more practical by describing specific actions to show what loving your enemy looks like. Bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. Turn the other cheek when you're struck. Give the shirt off of your back when someone asks for your coat. Give to those who beg from you, and don't demand back your goods if someone takes them.

This is a difficult teaching. If you honestly wrestle with what this means, you're left with seeing how bad you are at following these commands. These commands don't follow the order of love that we anticipate. We would like to follow the last of those commands, what we call the Golden Rule, but instead only treat people as well as they treat us. In these words, Jesus is communicating the standard of what's expected of God's people in God's kingdom. We are to love and forgive like no one else does, even our enemies.

Because as we reflect on these commands, we are forced to confront how we utterly fail to follow them. We can't do it. We can't keep these commands; not completely, not joyfully, not wholeheartedly. It's not just difficult; it's impossible.

Those commands are impossible for us to keep. We have trouble enough loving those around us, those we actually like. How could we love those who hate us, those who persecute us, those who wish us harm? We can't. But God can. And God did.

Jesus lived out these commands he gave, the description of how things are in the kingdom of God. He didn't just love his family. Instead, he said that whoever does the will of His Father in heaven were his brothers and sisters.

Jesus loved even those who persecuted him, even praying from the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He puts the best possible construction on their actions ("they don't know what they are doing") and asks for God the Father to show them grace, to give them mercy. Jesus lives out the very command he gave to us. What we can't do, what we refuse to do, Jesus willingly and perfectly accomplishes. He overcame evil with good. Because of what Jesus has done for us, we're forgiven even when we conform to the world and hate our enemies. But Jesus calls us to follow him in living a different way.

All of this is demanded by virtue of God's own graciousness and mercy. Christians behave lovingly to their enemies not as a ploy to outmaneuver them, not even because they anticipate a reward (although we hope and pray for some sort of positive change or outcome), but finally because God is a God of mercy. Luther puts it this way: "We should pray that our enemies be converted and become our friends and, if not, that their doing and designing be bound to fail and have no success and that their persons perish rather than the Gospel and the kingdom of Christ."

And that is the key part in how we can try to love our enemies, even if we will only do so imperfectly. We pray for them. In his book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes: "This is the supreme demand. Through the medium of prayer we go to our enemy, stand by his side, and plead for him to God. Jesus does not promise that when we bless our enemies and do good to them, they will not spitefully use and persecute us. They certainly will. But not even that can hurt or overcome us, so long as we pray for them." I cannot hate a Christian (or any other person) for whom I pray, because when I pray for them, I see someone who needs the love of Jesus just as much as I do. Changing my perspective, seeing others through the eyes of God, opens our hearts for God to show love through us.

During the proceedings of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, part of that nation's attempt to move beyond an era of apartheid and all the evil that went with it, a woman about 70 years old was called to testify concerning the activities of a policeman in her township. The young policeman had come one night with some others and had pulled her son from her home and right before her eyes he had shot the woman's son at point-blank range and left him for her to bury. Two years later the same officer had come and arrested her husband. He, too, died before the woman's eyes. "What do you want?" asked the presiding official at the Truth and Reconciliation proceeding.

After a silence, the woman answered, "I want three things. I want to be taken to the place where my husband was burned so I can gather up the dust and give his remains a decent burial. Second, my husband and my son were my only family. They were all I had. Therefore, I want this police officer to become my son. I would like for him to come twice a month to my home in the ghetto and spend a day with me so I can pour out on him whatever love I still have remaining with me. And finally, I want this officer to know that I offer him forgiveness because Jesus Christ died to forgive me. This was also the wish of my husband. I kindly ask that someone come to my side and lead me across the courtroom so that I can take this police officer in my arms, embrace him, and let him know that he is truly forgiven. As they led the woman across the room, the police officer, apparently overwhelmed, fainted. As others attended to the officer, the woman's friends and neighbors, most of them victims of the same sort of violence, began to sing softly, "Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. . ."

So, who do you need to pray for? Who do you need to love? Is it the co-worker who is your rival for advancement? Is it the bully at school or online? Is it someone on the opposite side of the political spectrum? Is it a rival for someone's affections, or even the other man or other woman? Whoever your enemy is, pray for them. Love them. See them as a sinner for whom Christ died, a sinner who is as in need of grace and forgiveness as you are.

Following Jesus changes how we order our loves. Instead of just loving those who are like us, those closest to us, we are called to love everyone, even our enemies. We will try, and we will fail. Yet because of Jesus' perfect love for us, even while we were his enemies because of our sin, we are forgiven. That's a wonderful promise.

5th Petition of Lord's Prayer and Explanation

Prayer based on Jesus' words in the Gospel Lesson:

P: "Love your enemies." You give us this command, O Lord Jesus.

C: "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to get back the same amount."

P: "My brothers and sisters, believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ must not show favoritism. Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in filthy old clothes also comes in.

C: If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, 'Here's a good seat for you,' but say to the poor man, 'You stand there' or 'Sit on the floor by my feet,' have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?"

(James 2:1-4)

P: You want us to love even the neighbor whose weeds grow into our lawn, the boss who favors other employees, the friend who betrays us, the bully who frightens us, and the spouse who abandons us.

C: "But I say to you who hear, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To one who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from one who takes away your cloak do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who begs from you, and from one who takes away your goods do not demand them back. And as you wish that others would do to you, do so to them."

P: How can we love our enemies when we fail to love those we love?

P: Direct our thoughts to You.

C: "You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, (His enemies), Christ died for us."` (Romans 5:5-8)

P: Send us Your Holy Spirit so that as forgiven people we can live like this:

C: "Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is Mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." (Romans 12:17-20)

P: "But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the ungrateful and the evil. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful."

C: "That you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous." (Matthew 5:45)

P: "Forgive, and you will be forgiven."

C: "Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing." (Luke 23:34)

All: "You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'" (Galatians 5:13-14)

(other concerns):

P: All this we pray in Your name, O Jesus.

C: Amen.

8:30 AM continues . . .

Choir Anthem: O Love by Elaine Hagenberg

Lord's Prayer:

Closing Prayer:

P: God of compassion, keep before us the love You have revealed in Your Son, who prayed even for His enemies; in our words and deeds help us to be like Him through Whom we pray, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

Blessing: (Pastor)

C: Amen.

Closing Hymn: "The People That in Darkness Sat"- Hymn #412

Postlude

11 AM continues . . .

Offering:

Offertory: “*What Shall I Render*” pg. 159

Service of the Sacrament

Preface: p. 160

P: It is truly good, right, and proper that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to You, almighty God, everlasting Father, for You sent Your Son Christ Jesus to show Your great love to even us who made ourselves Your enemies by allying with the devil to sin against You. By His death and resurrection, You have freed us from that sin and given us the ability to love even our enemies. Therefore, with angels and all the army of heaven we praise and make great Your holy name, evermore praising You and singing . . .

Sanctus (*Holy, Holy Holy*) p. 161

Prayer of Thanksgiving:

P: Blessed are You, O Lord God, for You have broken into our world of suffering with Your great love given to us in Your Son Christ Jesus, who loved us even to the point of dying for us on the cross. We ask that You send us Your Holy Spirit so that we come to Jesus’ altar in true faith, trusting that He gives us His true body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins and moves us to love even our enemies. All this we pray in His name.

C: Amen.

Lord’s Prayer and The Words of Our Lord: pg. 162

Pax Domini (*Peace of the Lord*) and **Agnus Dei** (*Lamb of God*): p. 163

Distribution of Holy Communion:

Communion Hymns:

“*O God of Mercy, God of Might*” – **Hymn #852**

“*Lord of All Nations, Grant Me Grace*” – **Hymn #844**

Song After Communion: “*Thank the Lord*” pg. 164-5

Prayer After Communion:

P: God of compassion, keep before us the love You have revealed in Your Son, who prayed even for His enemies; in our words and deeds help us to be like Him through Whom we pray, Jesus Christ our Lord.

C: Amen.

Benediction: (sung) pg. 166

Closing Hymn: “*The People That in Darkness Sat*”- **Hymn #412**

Postlude