

Do Unto Others

*Again, thanks to Glenn Stassen for his marvelous book **Living the Sermon on the Mount.***

We've been doing a series on the Sermon on the Mount and this day, this Palm Sunday brings us to the conclusion with "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

In the Greek there is a "therefore" at the beginning of that final summary commandment.

What comes before the "therefore" that introduces the Golden Rule are these words, "If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! " Seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened, ask and you shall receive.

You have all you need to do what is right and good.

Therefore, do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

You don't have to do this by yourself. You have God. You have Jesus.

You have all you need.

I think that doing unto others as you would have them do to you could be hard, if you have to do it all by yourself.

But God has given us every good and abundant gift, therefore, we can easily give to others as we have been given to by God.

There's plenty left over for us to give to others.

Throughout the Sermon on the Mount God's merciful love shapes the kind of love we perform as followers of Jesus and as citizens of the Kingdom of God.

The mission statement for our church which we are testing out in these six months before we vote in June is,

"Our mission is to foster the spiritual growth of a community of devoted followers of Christ."

A key to understanding that is that we have all we need to be devoted followers of Jesus Christ because God has been overwhelming in his mercy and love and

Therefore

We can love with the love by which we have been loved.

Everything Jesus has been saying in this Sermon focuses on all that is possible in the love and mercy of God.

God's love for the enemy shapes the nature of our own love for our own

enemies.

God's presence in our most secret places makes possible our own love for God in secret.

Jesus Christ's own forgiveness from the cross "father forgive them for they know not what they do" makes possible for us to forgive others rather than judging the mote that is in their eye and ignoring the "log" that is in our own.

God's loyalty to us even at our most undeserving makes possible for us to love the unlovable.

This is all a special Jesus kind of love.

This special "Jesus Love" has three parts.

1. The kind of love that Jesus teaches us to love has a way of discerning what others would want us to do for them. The idea of "doing unto others" presumes that, **somehow**, we would know what others would want us to do for them. Love, in the Gospel stories of Jesus is not just a romantic thing. Love is first of all God's love for us, God's forgiveness and mercy even to the undeserving. God knows us better than we know ourselves and God enters our world, shares our common lot in the person and work of Jesus and shows us how to love others, even those opposed to us, our enemies. God in Christ shows us the possibility of loving those who will not love us back. The ability to enter into the joys and concerns of someone else is a thing called "Empathy." The dictionary defines this as "The **power** of projecting one's personality into (and so fully comprehending) the object of contemplation."

It is a "power."

I never really thought of it as a power. But it is.

It is a power of entering another's life and understanding the joys and sorrows of another. It is getting out of our own self-centeredness and understanding as God understands.

Sometimes we call this "walking a mile in another man's shoes."

Most of us, me included, don't take time to walk three steps much less a mile in another person's shoes.

Jesus' love encourages a way of perception that encompasses others' as well as our own perceptions and loves.

In fact, by developing the ability to understand others, we develop a richer and wiser self.

This is like being able to speak more languages than one. You don't forget your own language by speaking another, but in speaking another language, you begin to understand better those who speak that language, their joys and their pains.

Having two eyes gives you "depth perception." With one eye, everything looks that same distance from you. With two eyes, you are able to see things in a proper perspective; you can see better everything in relationship to one another. You can see "deeply" into the world.

2. The second part of Jesus Love is the ability to do deeds of thoughtfulness for others. The first part of Jesus love is empathy, the entering into the world of another. This second part is the ability to do something about it. Jesus doesn't just say, "feel kindly toward another in such a way as to allow you to understand their world." He said "DO unto others." This Jesus love involves "DOING." Not just feeling.

The verb "to do" is one of the oldest verbs in our language. The really old verbs in English are all "irregular." That means that they don't conjugate logically. The past tense of the verb "to do" should be "dooded," right? What dooded he do? Dooded he do a bad thing or a good thing?

Watching my grandson learn English is filled with the marvelous mistakes along these lines. Actually, I think I've heard my grandson say, "dided." He gets that did is the past tense, but he forces the word into the pattern of most other English verbs by putting an "-ed" on the end.

To do is one of our oldest verbs and one of our most important. Jesus doesn't just say "have feelings for others as they have feelings for you." He uses the old verb "do". Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

And he uses that verb all throughout the Gospels.

"Not everyone who says, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who does the will of my father in heaven"; "everyone who hears these words and does them will be like a wise man who builds his house upon rock..." and "Every good tree which produces good fruits" The Greek word for "produces" is the same

word that is translated in the other instances as “does.” A good tree “does” good fruits.

The best story Jesus tells about “doing” the will of God is the parable of the Good Samaritan which is depicted in the window outside of our sanctuary. We are confronted by this story every time we enter this sanctuary.

There are nine acts of **doing** that the Samaritan performs in that story. There are nine deeds of deliverance and hope for the man who is set upon by robbers and left for dead on the side of the road.

He goes to the wounded victim when no one else would go.

He pours wine on the victim’s wounds,

Pours oil on them

Bandages them,

Puts the man on the Samaritan’s own animal.

Cares for him

Brings him to an inn for safekeeping until he could return

Pays in advance for further care

Promises to come back and pay more than what is needed.

By including so many acts of kindness, Jesus tells us that **doing** deeds are crucial to compassion.

Feeling and empathy are fine. Doing is better.

3. The third aspect to Jesus Love is that it involves confrontation of those who are not acting lovingly toward another.

Jesus parable of the Good Samaritan makes clear that the priests and others who “pass by on the other side” are not doing what is right and good by the man who has fallen victim to the robbers.

More than that, those who do not love Samaritans because they are enemies of the Jewish people of Jesus’ day, are part of a culture that is harmful and hateful.

4. Finally, a Jesus love seeks justice for others even when this justice may not be in our own self-interest.

For all these things, our Jesus entered into the city of Jerusalem on that fateful day we call “palm Sunday.” He enters the city, not on a great white horse as any self-respecting hero might do, but on a donkey. And not just a donkey, but what the King James version calls the “foal of an ass”. A year old donkey.

He must have looked like a fool.

But he was a hero in the most important sense of the word.

And the key word is “therefore.”

We are loved by a God who loves us in spite of our rebellion against him.

Therefore, we can do unto others as we would have them do unto us.