

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY Matt. 5: 38-48 Mt. Calvary, West View / Pentacost,
Avella 02/19/2017

Theme: Less Talk, More Doing

+ Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. AMEN +

Our Text is taken from the continuation of the Gospel of Saint Matthew, the 5th chapter:

"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

I have heard it again. It is a common statement, said in various different contexts. It is said in a commercial that is trying to impress upon you that they are willing to prove to you that they can meet up to the standards necessary for you to curry their services; it is said by unruly teenagers in order to fight the power that they see oppresses them; it has also been said by a disgruntled worker who refused to do a tasks requested nor wait upon certain customers, simply because he felt the justification to ignore such people who did not fit his particular standards, even though he was in the wrong. Can you guess what this phrase is which can cover so much ground in so many more contexts? It is the statement that drives me up the wall: "Respect is earned, not given." What is more appalling than this statement, is there are many who believe this to be a gospel motto to be followed in their lives.

It is a shame that we have so many people who wish to follow such a creed that is so damaging to human interactions. If a person needs the earning of their respect, then they will cut you off in the turning lane, because, after all, you did not earn the respect necessary to not be treated as a lesser human being. The same as for taking more than "one" as the sign says. I can recall many a time that the employees of Wal-Mart would stand around the current pizza boxes, with perfectly good pizzas in them, and wait for the "fresh" ones, and take all of them, leaving

the old pizzas for the next hour lunch crew, simply because they did not respect their fellow associates enough to let them have fresher food.

I can go on, but suffice to say, the condition of sin in our society is clearly seen in the interactions of one another. It is a “me first” and “look out for number one” attitude that permeates our society to no end. It is not a problem that we can fix with “talking about it,” or shoving money into ad campaigns to teach respect through billboards. It truly is the Christian who can rise above this and actually display civility in showing that respect for persons, is not to be earned, but is to be given, simply because we care, and more importantly, because it was done so for us.

Jesus tells us that the old ways of doing things need to change. He started last week with the appointed gospel, and the same understanding can carry over to this week’s as well. ***"You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;*** if anyone would sue you and take your coat, give him your cloak as well; forced to go one mile, go two. Give to him who begs from you, do not refuse him who would borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, for you are all under the watchful eye of God the Father and you are treated the same, for you are the same – created in His image.

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. But perfection cannot be attained. No matter how hard I try to be respectful, that bozo in the next cubicle does that stupid thing again and I just do not like that

guy! Why do I have to respect him? Because as sinful human beings we too have upset and grieved almighty God far worse than Cain has when God said to him, “*Why are you angry, and why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; its desire is for you, but you must master it.*” Right after this little talk, Cain promptly kills his brother able. He was unable to conquer the sin, and neither can we, try as we might. The point is not to discuss with God how hard it is to do right, and try to justify ourselves saying, “they deserve what they got coming to them.” but to do that which makes right. The Holy Ghost makes us do the things necessary to remove the sin from our lives, in coming to the Sacrament, coming to the Word, receiving the instruction and acknowledging that I cannot do this myself, I need a Savior God to save me from this sin crouching at the door and to live a life trusting in the salvation needed, so I can live for God and neighbor.

Jesus does just this, in going to the cross, He love His enemies, enough to die for them, and give them everlasting life through faith in Him. This Jesus has done, not waiting for us to come to our senses and finally earn His respect, but freely out of love for His creation, enemies, fellow brothers born of woman, you and me, given respect of everlasting life by faith alone.

Having been respected as such, we too respect our neighbor, by giving when asked, by not taking all and leaving leftovers. In the Old Testament we are reminded not to glean so thoroughly that there is nothing left for the poor to gather. If you have no farm, then do not take everything and leave just the unwanted stuff. This past week I had to acquire three gallons of milk from the local grocer. Why? Because we have no cow. Oh, why three gallons? Because there is a group of persons in my house that drink milk sometimes at every meal! He knows who he is. Having gotten to the store, I notice that there are two different expiration dates. Some say 2-28 others say 3-7. Now I could have taken three march dates, but that would leave only the

February milk for those behind me. What to do? Out of respect for those behind me, I took two February and one march. I knew that we would go through at least two before next month, so why be greedy? Show a little respect for fellow man and leave the edges un-reaped. Did this make a difference? Will more people respect God and man since they saw the example of Pastor? Probably not, as there are a few empty pews over here in this area here, but that does not mean you do otherwise. What your heavenly Father sees in secret He rewards in secret.

The point is, Jesus shows us the doing at the cross for you that you may have everlasting life, and you do though the Word and Sacraments. If He takes care of you then certainly we can do more for our neighbor, simply out of respect. Huh. How about that. A whole sermon on respect and not one reference to the Queen of Motown. In His most Holy Name we pray.

AMEN.

+ AND NOW MAY THE PEACE OF GOD WHICH SURPASSES ALL UNDERSTANDING
KEEP YOUR HEARTS AND MINDS IN UNION WITH CHRIST JESUS. AMEN+
Offering / Prayers

There are only two days on my calendar...today and the day of judgment.