

**James 2:8** If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well; **9** but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors. **10** For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. **11** For He who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. **12** So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty. **13** For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy.

**Luke 6:27**

"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28** bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. **29** To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. **30** Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. **31** And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. **32** But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. **33** And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. **34** And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. **35** But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. **36** Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. **37** "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

## *Showing Love & Mercy*

This morning I want to spend a bit more time on our second theme from the Book of James for a reformed Church: The Mercy of the Church. As you can see from our morning reading, what James is teaching us here in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter relates very closely to what Jesus taught in His Sermon on the Mount. Our text was taken from the shorter version related to us by Dr. Luke.

- As homework, it is always good to read the long version found in Mathew chapters five to seven on a regular basis. 😊

Our long study of the Gospel according to Luke centered around this general theme:

- Jesus has come to save His people from their sins and to establish His Kingdom.

Then we learned in Acts that it was a Kingdom that would fill the whole earth as His disciples proclaim the truth while showing love & mercy in response to God's great love!

- Jesus said, "If you love me, keep my commandments."
- Jesus summarized all of the Old Testament Law and the Prophets in the two great commandments: To Love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength and to love your neighbor as yourself
- In other words, we love God because He first loved us with His gracious gift of salvation, and then we are to love others as the demonstration of who God is to the watching world.

At verse 36 we have Jesus saying, "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."

At the center of Matthew's account, after the call to love our enemies, Jesus says, "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect."

- **It could not be clearer that we are called to show love and mercy, to be perfect and holy like our Father in Heaven.**
- **Anyone want to try and earn their way to heaven with those types of requirements?**
- **Anyone think they can muster up a little perfection this week.**
- **Anyone think they can be Holy in the way that God is Holy?**

**What Jesus is talking about here is how we are to respond to the gracious gift of salvation that we have been given:**

- **He sets a very high standard,  
but gives us some VERY practical instructions on how to do this day by day.**

**As we study these instructions and examples, we must always remember that Jesus died to forgive our sins & that He has sent the comforter to guide and strengthen us! Jesus is explaining the “good works” that Paul said we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in and that James will speak of in two weeks. Basically Jesus gives us four acts of love and mercy that we who are His Saints, are to “hear and do!” Loving – Doing Good – Blessing – Praying**

**Jesus makes all of these practical...**

**And challenging:**

- **Love your enemies!**
- **Do good to those who hate you!**
- **Bless those who curse you!**
- **Pray for those who spitefully use you!**
- **We are to love them with our good deeds and bless them with our prayers!**

**In our flesh we want to rationalize most of the practical examples away, but we must be ready to HEAR and DO what Jesus and James are saying here this morning. With regard to what Jesus says, one point of confusion that we must avoid is to remember that all of these examples involve personal relationships...**

- **They do not apply to the civil magistrate that has been given the power of the sword to be a terror to evil doers.**
- **They do not apply to the Church that is tasked with defending God’s truth which means at times excommunicating errant members.**
- **And yes children, there are times where mom and dad will show you mercy with the rod.**

**With all of that said, what Jesus commands us to do as individuals in our everyday lives is challenging indeed!**

- **Turning the other cheek:  
Are you quick to take up a challenge to fight or are you willing to walk away, even if someone strike you?**
- **Or even how do we respond when someone just calls us a name?**

**The next example was pointed at the Jews who hated the Romans who they saw as their enemies: If a soldier exercised his right to your coat, the response was not to be one of bitterness, but rather one of concern for the soldier offering even your tunic if that is needed as well.**

How do we treat the people in our lives that are carrying out all those laws and regulations that we strongly disagree with. [parking meter story] Verse 30 is tough one for us in our materialistic world: “Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.”

A man who refuses to work should not be given money if he asks for that...

**BUT** there is always something that you can give them if it is only a kind response or wise advice.

- The bottom line here is whether we care more about the person than we do the material goods involved!

Today, we often put the stuff first and foremost & are willing to let the personal relationships work out as they might.

- **REMEMBER**, Jesus is explaining how we are to love, serve, bless and pray for our enemies, those who hate us, those who curse us and spitefully use us!

**We simply cannot obey what is being said here without there being some great personal costs!**

**AND** Jesus stresses this again, saying that even sinners can love and be nice to those who love them!

Verse 35 reminds us to have the right perspective: We are to expend our time, talents and treasure on our enemies expecting nothing in return in this world, knowing that our “reward will be great” and the we “will be sons of the Most High.”

- Even here, we are **NOT** loving, doing good deeds, blessing & praying for our enemies so **WE** can get bigger rewards later:
- The reward is the advancement of the Kingdom of God and bringing glory to our Savior as we are “merciful, just as our Father in heaven is merciful.”

This is the whole point of what Jesus is teaching: The good fruit that we, as good trees, are to bear is holiness! As Jesus commanded the disciples in Matthew’s account of this sermon, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

- Sometimes this will be simple material abundance like Job’s treasures being doubled and sometimes it will be the blessing of seeing Jesus standing at the right hand of God as someone is martyred like Stephan.

Perhaps the best way to see what Jesus & James are saying here this morning would be to make a couple of columns on a piece of paper to list our actions for the past week or to chronicle the coming week:

On the right side we should list:

- Where we showed love to an enemy
- Where we did something good for someone who hates us,
- Where we blessed someone who cursed us
- And where we prayed for someone who used us spitefully.
- And yes, where we forgave someone

**On the left side we should list:**

- Those times where we were judgmental or critical of others,
- Those times where we condemned the actions of others,
- Those times where we failed to forgive someone
- And those times where we failed to give of our time, talent or money when we had the opportunity.

**This list would give us a pretty good picture of how we are doing with “Practical Christianity!”**

- Some might say that such an exercise might encourage “salvation by works” or just put people on a guilt trip?
- NOT if we have heard & DONE what Jesus has commanded:

**This is a call for good trees to bear good fruit!**

**These are the “good works” that we have been created in Christ Jesus to walk in!**

- Is it important? Jesus certainly thinks so: He demonstrated these truths during His earthly ministry and says they will be demonstrated at the final judgment of mankind

**We can think of many examples of how Jesus lived what He is teaching but none more important than His greatest act of love:**

**Romans 5:6-8 “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners [God’s enemies], Christ died for us.”**

**The world is full of those who are the enemies of Christ: And these are the ones that Jesus is commanding US to show Love & Mercy too:**

**Those who hate us, curse us, spitefully use us, insult us, waste our goods, unwilling to repay loans: Or as verse 35 summarizes, “the unthankful & evil”**

- These are the unlovely, the irritating, the nasty people that we would much rather judge than love!
- Those are the ones that Jesus commands us to Love with our good deeds & bless with our prayers!

**How will we do this? Paul gives the simple answer in Colossians 2:6:**

**“6 As you have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving.”**

**We received Jesus because God gave us the gift of salvation, not because of our strength, intellect or will power!**

**As Jesus gives us these tall orders, we must learn that we walk with Him in the same way: Totally dependent on His gracious gifts!**

- We will be tempted to ignore or try to water down the tasks that Jesus has given us, thinking they would create too heavy a burden...
- I was tempted to soften them even as I prepared this message:

➤ **BUT that would be the exact opposite of what we need:**

**Allow me to close with the words of Jesus as He prayed for His followers in Matthew chapter eleven, beginning at verse 25:**

**“I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them to babes.**

**26 Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. 27 All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father. Nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him.**

**28 Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.**

**29 Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”**

➤ **May we be those faithful servants who carry that light yoke & easy burden of showing Love & Mercy!**

### **Communion Meditation:**

*God calls us to His feast:*

**Isaiah 25:6 “6 And in this mountain The Lord of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees.”**

**By eating and drinking we proclaim His death, His great love, until He comes!**