

NORTH MAIN STREET SERMON FEBRUARY 23, 2025

SPECIAL READING FROM LUKE ...Luke 11:9-10 says, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you". This passage is part of a story in the Bible about prayer and how God will answer our prayers.

Luke 6:27-49 ²⁷ "But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. 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? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and 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 and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." ³⁹ He also told them this parable: "Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both fall into a pit? ⁴⁰ The student is not above the teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like their teacher.

⁴¹ “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? ⁴² How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

⁴³ “No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. ⁴⁴ Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. ⁴⁵ A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of. ⁴⁶ “Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say? ⁴⁷ As for everyone who comes to me and hears my words and puts them into practice, I will show you what they are like. ⁴⁸ They are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built. ⁴⁹ But the one who hears my words and does not put them into practice is like a man who built a house on the ground without a foundation. The moment the torrent struck that house, it collapsed and its destruction was complete.”

The word of god..

Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.. The gospel lesson this morning is a continuation of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain from last week. It is plain talk -- tough talk -- hard to listen to talk. We come today to his most difficult teaching. Here is what sets apart the Christian faith from other religious perspectives and elemental common sense. And yet, at the end of the day, it defines the core of Christian ethics. We all know what its like.. Occasionally someone that we have a difficult time loving will cross our path. When I'm honest with myself, I admit I would be just as happy if he dropped off the face of the earth. I

refuse to describe how my Christian love extends even to him. Will Rogers may never have met a man he didn't like, but the rest of us know that somewhere along the line we have run into someone we cannot forgive. "Love your enemies," Jesus says. "Do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you." Can we really love our enemies? Why did Jesus lay on us this impossible demand? If the teaching troubles you, fear not, you are not the first to back away from it. This is the season of turning. We are called on this journey to turn our lives to the Lord, to turn away from all those things which have harmed us and others; to separate ourselves from actions and attitudes that demean and destroy. What does that mean for us? Well, according to our scripture for today, it means that we must go against our gut instincts when it comes to people we don't like, who have treated us badly, or who differ from us in any way, shape, or form, and we must LOVE them. Not tolerate them, ignore them, shut them out, or worse, demonize them, but LOVE them. If you think that Jesus pushed us in uncomfortable ways in the past, I think you'll find this current challenge of His a real difficult one to adhere to. But Jesus has a point. He says, it's easy to love your friends. They are already your friends! We can't seem to let go of the hurt, fear, and pain just like the Pharisees. The scribes and Pharisees were utterly hostile to this teaching., However, If we look at it from a different perspective we will see that there was nothing new at all about this teaching from our Lord Jesus. When Jesus gave His explanation of the Ten Commandments, His ideas seemed shocking. He told the people that the law saying "You shall not kill" carries the implication that you should not even be angry at a person without just cause. Jesus didn't add new content to the Ten Commandments. Rather, He explained the full intent of the law of God as it was originally given. He did the same thing in [Luke 6](#). The Great Commandment God gave His people in the Old Testament was this: "You shall love the Lord your God with all of your heart and all of your mind and all of your strength, and your neighbor as yourself." Of course, the Pharisees gave a narrow interpretation regarding what was included in the Great Commandment. They defined "neighbor" as a fellow Jew, so the mandate to love your neighbor as

much as you love yourself did not apply to Gentiles or foreigners who were outside the camp.

The Pharisees twisted and distorted the original significance of the Great Commandment, and what Jesus did in response was simply say: “This is what the Great Commandment entails. This is the full import of the Great Commandment.” Even we might be more comfortable if We could translate this commandment this way: “Be loving toward your enemies.” What would you do if your enemy was your neighbor. Could you be loving toward your neighbor? Jesus spells out what it means. It has to do with how we behave towards those who are our enemies. Can we be loving towards them. Jesus said, “Do good to those who hate you.” Pray for those who spitefully use you.” To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also, and from him who takes away your cloak don’t withhold your tunic. If somebody comes and asks you for help, help the person. “If somebody needs it, give it to him, even if it means you’re not getting anything back. That is what it means to love your enemy: What good is it if you love those who love you? What good is it if you only do good to those who do good to you? Jesus was talking here about Christian personal ethics and what we should be doing for others. Jesus has been teaching in the synagogues and he is surrounded by a multitude of people who have either just seen him heal others or experienced healing themselves and heard him teach, and now he springs this on them. Surely everyone is still listening right? Jesus just flipped cultural understandings on their head through his message of blessings to the “least of society” and his woes to those who would be seen as blessed in society. So now Jesus is focusing in and speaking to those who are still on board, those who still want to live in this new kingdom that he is establishing. And to that end, he establishes a challenging expectation. “Love your enemy.” This command wasn’t for the faint of heart. This is a

tall order Jesus gives to his followers. Jesus tells them to love their enemy, but how can they even get to that point when they cannot be sure who is their enemy. For many of us as Christians, we probably don't have many personal enemies, people we interact with regularly that we actually despise. We know that we can identify our national or impersonal enemies. But when we identify someone as our actual personal enemy, it changes things. When we identify them, we force ourselves to reconcile with Jesus' teaching here. What does it look like to love our enemies? How can we do this. Thankfully Jesus helps us answer that question too. We may say.. "Jesus are you sure? Do I really have to do this?" Jesus gives these answers to those who are listening on how to respond to our enemies. Jesus is once again overturning conventional norms and asking us to respond to our enemies in an unorthodox way. Jesus first calls us to the four commands that he gives at the beginning, to love, do good, bless, and pray. These commands call us to action. When Jesus calls us to love one another as he has loved us, he calls us to live like he lived, to do good to others, and that is action. Jesus' desires for his followers to love generously. If someone takes our coat, don't withhold the shirt, but give to them without restraint. That's an action where we love our enemy with overwhelming generosity. If we live this way and love generously without expecting anything in return, we will be the ones rewarded. So how do we do this? Identify Your Enemies and pray for them and act generously toward them. Who is your enemy? Anybody who needs your mercy In Luke 6, we get an insight into this. Luke 6, verse 27, "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 mistreat you. Whoever hits you on the cheek, offer him the other also; whoever takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt from him either. Give to everyone who asks of you, and whoever takes away what

is yours, do not demand it back. Treat others the same way you want them to treat you..Jesus' own life demonstrated the power of this love. Let's bow in prayer.

Our Father, we come to You at the end of this hour today feeling like we've been taught a new lesson by Jesus.. We are so blessed by your love. The Bible says .“And greater love has no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends.” We thank You that You laid down Your life for us whom you love. . May we be known for our love; not only our love for each other, but our love for those who are considered our enemies. Jesus is giving us another chance. Find comfort and strength in God's eternal love for you and know that God loves each of us even with our imperfections. Amen