

**Holy Trinity Lutheran Church  
Des Moines, Wash.  
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*Luke 6:27-38*

**Why Would the Christian Act Differently  
Toward His Enemy?**

1. *He knows how God treated him*
2. *He know his enemy will notice*
3. *He knows he will lack nothing*

**Hymns: 79 (1-4) – CWS: 709 –  
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*Luke 6:27-38 – I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*

*If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

*If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 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. 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 sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful....*

*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."*

Do you have an enemy?

When I was in grade school, I had an enemy. My enemy was two years older than me.

When I was in fifth grade, he was in seventh grade.

I did not choose to have an enemy. He picked me, for some reason. He was bigger and older than me, so keeping my head up during recess and around school was a wise thing for me to do. I remember one day I came out of the school building after the school day and found that I had two flat bike tires. I didn't think that it happened to two different tires by chance. Although I didn't see who did it, I have a good idea.

At that time, if I would have read the Scripture verses that are in front of us today I would have struggled with them. Your eyebrows might also have gone up as we read through these verses today. It might cause us to wonder, **"Why Would a Christian Act Differently Toward His Enemy?"** Let's see three answers that Jesus gives us in Luke 6.

**1** – Our text began by saying, *"I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you."*

To understand the first answer that Jesus gives us today, we need to focus in on the main word in these verses: Love. The Greek word for "love" here is a word you may have learned about in a Bible study at some time. It is not the word for the love of a husband and wife. It is not the word for love among friends. It is AGAPE, Christian love. AGAPE has the background of:

- Loving something that doesn't necessarily deserve to be loved. Loving just because. We might think of a stray cat or dog that shows up at your backdoor and your heart goes out to the cute little

creature. You can't help but give it a little food and perhaps it sticks around and becomes part of the family. But it did nothing to merit your love.

- Love that is shown in action. It does not merely say it loves, but shows it.
- Love that doesn't have an agenda in showing love. It's not looking for favors or payback. It simply wants to give.

With that in mind, let's look at our relationship with God. Colossians 1 tells us, *"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior."* We also read in James 4, *"You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."* Looking back to the word "enemy," where we began today, we see that this describes our relationship with God very well.

Some of you might have an interest in military history and strategy. If an enemy's intelligence finds out that the other side does not want them to attack in an air strike, what will they do? Attack in an air strike! If they find out they don't want a ground attack from the west, what will they do? Attack on the ground from the west. You do exactly what your enemy does not want and try to attack their vulnerable points.

When it comes to our treatment of God and his laws, we must admit that we have done the same. Our first parents followed that pattern, doing the opposite of the one command God had given them. We have followed suit in our behavior. We have done what we thought was best for us, despite God's commands. We've selfishly put our satisfaction before what our Lord tells us to do. We were God's enemies.

Yet what was God's reaction to our disobedience and sin? Colossians 1 tells us, *"But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy*

*in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation."* God's reaction was AGAPE. He made a plan for our salvation so we wouldn't have to suffer in a damned existence away from his presence forever. He sent his Son as our Savior to die for our sins and pay the punishment we deserved. And in the most ironic twist of all, he would accomplish this in mankind's rejection. When his Son and ambassador came into the world, he was rejected, arrested, and condemned. He was tortured and crucified. Yet in these acts of rejection, God chose to win our salvation and show us love despite it all!

This helps us answer the question, **"Why Would a Christian Act Differently Toward His Enemy?"** **He knows how God treated him.** God's love will lead him to act like his heavenly Father has acted toward him.

It can often be that way even in an earthly family, can't it? The son often looks to his father as an example, imitating his mannerisms, his speech, and his values. This is what the Christian does as well. He looks to his heavenly Father and:

- Loves his enemies
- Does good to those who hate him
- Blesses those who curse him
- Prays for those who mistreat him
- Turns the other cheek to those who strike him
- Gives his shirt to the one who takes his cloak
- Gives to everyone who asks him
- Does not demand what someone has taken from him
- Does to others as he would have them do to him

That's a pretty tall order, isn't it?! Is it even possible? These words have raised the eyebrows of some Christians down through the years. They wonder how a Christian could ever do this without violating other principles of life. Perhaps it would be helpful to remember what God is NOT commanding us to do in these verses.

These commands have to do with personal retaliation. God tells us not to lash back with a vengeful heart. God is not telling us:

- That the mouth cannot speak up when we are wronged. In fact, if we look at Jesus' own example of turning the other cheek, we see the perfect attitude in this. When Jesus was struck in the high priest's court, he did not strike back. However, he did say, "If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (John 18:23) Martin Luther talked about this distinction also, and wrote, "**One must strictly distinguish between the hand and the mouth. The mouth must never concede the wrong; but the hand must be held quiet and not revenge itself.**" One may speak up about the wrongs committed against them, but to do it only in the spirit of "clamoring for my stuff" is not teaching the lesson that God would teach.
- God is not telling us to expose ourselves or our loved ones to disaster
- God is not telling us that the justice of the land is to be thrown out, or that we are to encourage lawlessness.
- God is not telling us to encourage laziness in our generosity. The dictum in 2 Thessalonians 3:10 still stands: "*If a man will not work, he shall not eat.*"

God is telling us that personal retaliation for revenge is wrong and, as Romans 12 says, "*If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*" **The Christian knows that this is how God has treated him!**

**2** — Jesus teaches us a second reason we would act differently toward our enemy in Luke 6. He also taught, "*If you love those who love*

*you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even 'sinners' do that. 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.*"

Jesus mentions that the world looks at this differently than the Christian. Even sayings have been popular down through the years concerning how to view "getting back" at others. Can you finish off these statements?

- Don't get mad, \_\_\_\_\_.
- Revenge is \_\_\_\_\_.

Going back to my grade school days, I could have thought like the world did concerning my enemy. Perhaps I could have devised clever ways to get my revenge on my enemy. And the world encourages us to be creative in our plans! If I were creative, I could plot something where it seemed I was innocent and uninvolved so my enemy would be unsuspecting and clueless!

Jesus, however, tells us that the Christian knows something different. By his behavior, the Christian will show different behavior from the world. And the enemy will notice. Jesus also taught in Matthew 5, "*Let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.*" Proverbs 25 says, "*If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the LORD will reward you.*" It reminds us of the old saying, "**The only Bible some people will ever read is another Christian's life.**"

Why does the Christian act differently toward his enemy? **The Christian knows that his enemy will notice.** The reaction is different from what he sees normally:

- When the enemy mistreats, he is met with... love? Blessing? And prayer?
- When he wants to take you to court for your shirt, he is not met with

“Gimme back!” but “So what? There’s more important things in life than clothes”?

- When he is a “taker,” he sees someone who has given in return?

What a novel idea! And in it all he has seen the heart of your heavenly Father, whom he needs to learn about also. The purpose of your actions is to free your enemy from hate. Will your hostility serve to do this? Will you be successful in showing your Christian witness if you’re shoving your way into his garage to forcibly take your weed eater back? **May we remember that our enemy will notice, and that our actions will witness to our heavenly Father’s love!**

**3** – One more lesson lies in these verses. Jesus also said, *“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 sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked... 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.”*

Jesus pictures our last lesson by using the illustration of grain. How will he give grain to the one who is generous? He won’t give a cursory dump of grain and send you on your way. He will pour it in generously, shake it to settle the grain in every part, press it down, and keep pouring it until it is running over. We have everyday illustrations of the same concept. God doesn’t give you a half a tank of gas, but tops you off generously.

This is the third lesson our Lord teaches us: **The Christian knows he will lack nothing.**

A familiar section of Scripture that many remember is from Matthew 6: *“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will*

*wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”*

Will we lose everything? Will we survive? Will God let us starve? Will we miss out? God tells us otherwise. **The Christian knows he will lack nothing.**

In the end, God even tells us that proper vengeance will not even be lacking. Romans 12 says, *“Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.”* If vengeance is called for, God will take care of that situation himself. Our hasty revenge will not give him honor and may interfere with his due vengeance that will come at the proper time.

As we close our look at Jesus’ difficult words today, we should ask, “So who’s your enemy?” Is it a neighbor? A co-worker? A former friend? A distant relative?

And what will you do? Will you take your revenge? Will you raise your fist? May Jesus’ words today show us the proper attitude toward our enemy. **Why will the Christian act differently toward his enemy?**

- 1. He knows how God treated him**
- 2. He knows that his enemy will notice**
- 3. He knows he will lack nothing**

May Jesus give us the power to follow his commands, difficult as they may be. And may the love of God shine forth through us as we love our enemies! Amen.