

Luke 6:27-38

February 17, '19

“PLAIN JESUS”

THIS PASSAGE FROM LUKE IS OUR LECTIONARY GOSPEL READING, NOT FOR THIS SUNDAY, BUT FOR NEXT.

I THOUGHT WE MIGHT DO SOMETHING A BIT DIFFERENT NEXT SUNDAY, BUT I *DID* WANT TO USE THIS PASSAGE, SO TODAY SEEMED APPROPRIATE SINCE I *WON'T* BE USING IT *NEXT* WEEK.

AS WE HEAR THIS PASSAGE IN LUKE'S GOSPEL, WE CAN LOOK AT EACH INDIVIDUAL STATEMENT JESUS MAKES HERE – WE CAN CONSIDER EACH CHALLENGE INDIVIDUALLY.

BUT I THINK I'D RATHER JUST LOOK AT THE PASSAGE AS A WHOLE & TRY TO DISCOVER WHAT JESUS IS SUGGESTING HERE.

**I THINK, MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE, HE'S
CHALLENGING US TO A NEW WAY OF LIFE.**

**HE'S CALLING US TO A NEW WAY OF LOOKING AT
THE WORLD – A NEW WAY OF DEALING WITH
OTHERS.**

**THESE WORDS ARE OFFERED FOR OUR OWN
ASSISTANCE AS MUCH AS FOR THE ASSISTANCE OF
THOSE WE LABEL OUR "ENEMIES."**

**JESUS KNOWS THAT, DEEP DOWN INSIDE, NO ONE
REALLY WANTS TO HATE ANOTHER PERSON & WE
LOSE EVERY BIT AS MUCH AS *THEY* DO WHEN WE
FOSTER UNKIND ATTITUDES & ACT IN WAYS THAT
AREN'T LOVING.**

**BUT THESE WORDS DON'T MAKE A LOT OF SENSE,
THOUGH, DO THEY?**

THIS TEACHING ABOUT LOVING OUR ENEMIES IS REALLY PRETTY RIDICULOUS, ISN'T IT?

WE'VE ALL EXPERIENCED TIMES WHEN WE'RE TALKING TO AN EXPERT IN A PARTICULAR AREA & FOUND OURSELVES THINKING OR SAYING, "*I WISH YOU'D JUST USE PLAIN ENGLISH TO EXPLAIN THIS TO ME.*"

MAYBE IT'S A DOCTOR OR A SERVICE REPAIR PERSON OR A FINANCIAL ADVISOR.

THEY'RE USING WORDS THAT WE DON'T UNDERSTAND & CONCEPTS THAT ARE COMPLETELY FOREIGN TO US & ALL WE WANT IS A CLEAR EXPLANATION.

WE WANT IT IN A LANGUAGE WE CAN UNDERSTAND – PLAIN ENGLISH.

THAT'S WHAT JESUS DOES HERE.

HE OFFERS WORDS THAT ARE IN A LANGUAGE WE CAN UNDERSTAND.

WE’LL CALL IT “PLAIN JESUS” AND BECAUSE THESE WORDS ARE TAKEN FROM WHAT WE CALL “THE SERMON ON THE *PLAIN*,” THAT TERM WORKS IN A DUAL SENSE.

BUT WE HEAR THESE WORDS – WORDS THAT SEEM ABSOLUTELY ABSURD – AND WE HAVE A TENDENCY TO QUICKLY DISMISS THEM AS UTTER FOOLISHNESS.

WE’RE INCLINED TO SAY, “*MAYBE THAT WOULD HAVE WORKED IN JESUS’ TIME, BUT NOT OURS!*”

THE TIME OF JESUS – IN THAT REGARD – WAS REALLY NO DIFFERENT THAN OUR OWN.

IN FACT, THE BOOK OF SIRACH THAT’S FOUND IN THE APOCRYPHA AND WAS LOOKED UPON WITH HIGH

**REGARD BY JEWS WAS WRITTEN A LITTLE MORE
THAN A CENTURY BEFORE JESUS.**

**LISTEN TO WHAT IT SAYS ABOUT DEALING WITH
THOSE WHO ARE REGARDED AS ENEMIES:**

***“GIVE TO THE DEVOUT, BUT DO NOT HELP THE
SINNER.***

***DO GOOD TO THE HUMBLE, BUT DO NOT GIVE TO
THE UNGODLY.***

***HOLD BACK THEIR BREAD, AND DO NOT GIVE IT TO
THEM,***

***FOR BY MEANS OF IT THEY MIGHT SUBDUE YOU;
THEN YOU WILL RECEIVE TWICE AS MUCH EVIL FOR
ALL THE GOOD YOU HAVE DONE.”***

**IF THIS IS THE KIND OF TEACHING THAT WOULD
HAVE BEEN ADHERED TO BY JEWS IN THE FIRST**

**CENTURY, THINK OF HOW INCREDIBLY RADICAL THIS
TEACHING OF JESUS WAS!**

**IT WAS AN ABSURD GENEROSITY THAT HE WAS
ADVOCATING – SOMETHING THAT REALLY MADE NO
LOGICAL SENSE AT ALL!**

**IT RAISES A QUESTION IN MY MIND & PERHAPS IN
YOURS.**

**WHY WOULD PEOPLE HAVE FOLLOWED JESUS IN
THE FIRST PLACE?**

**WHY WOULD THEY HAVE CLAMORED TO SEE HIM
& HEAR HIM IF THIS WAS THE KIND OF STUFF HE WAS
TEACHING & PREACHING?**

**WHY LISTEN TO SOMEONE WHO'S GOING TO TELL
YOU TO DO SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T MAKE ANY
SENSE?**

SERIOUSLY.

**DOESN'T IT JUST MAKE YOU SHAKE YOUR HEAD
IN DISBELIEF?**

**WHY WOULD JESUS HAVE HAD ANY FOLLOWERS
AT ALL WITH THAT KIND OF OUTLOOK ON LIFE?**

**BUT, THEN AGAIN, IF WE ASK THAT QUESTION OF
THOSE WHO *FIRST* FOLLOWED JESUS, WE MIGHT
LOGICALLY ASK IT OF OURSELVES AS WELL.**

YOU KNOW THE KIND OF THINGS JESUS SAID.

YOU KNOW THIS IS SOMETHING HE PREACHED.

**THIS “SERMON ON THE PLAIN” IN LUKE’S GOSPEL
CORRESPONDS TO “THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT” IN
MATTHEW – THE MOST FAMOUS SERMON EVER
PREACHED!**

**SO THIS ISN'T SOME HIDDEN, RANDOM THOUGHT
TUCKED AWAY IN THE MIDDLE OF A MIRACLE STORY**

**THAT WE THINK WE CAN DISREGARD BECAUSE IT'S
IRRELEVANT.**

**THIS CHALLENGE – THIS “PLAIN JESUS”
TEACHING LIES AT THE VERY HEART OF HIS
MESSAGE.**

**IT'S IN THE VERY MIDST OF THIS TEACHING THAT
WE GET WHAT WE KNOW AS THE GOLDEN RULE
WHEN HE SAYS, “*DO TO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE
THEM DO TO YOU.*”**

SO, BACK TO THE QUESTION OF “WHY.”

**WHY DO *YOU* FOLLOW JESUS IF HE'S GOING TO
SAY SOMETHING SO RIDICULOUS?**

**WHY DO YOU WANT TO OBEY HIS TEACHINGS IF
HE'S CALLING YOU TO OFFER ABSURD GENEROSITY
TO OTHERS?**

**I THINK IT'S PERHAPS BECAUSE WE ALL KNOW
THAT'S WHAT WE WANT DEEP DOWN INSIDE.**

**WE KNOW THAT – MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE –
WE WANT TO BE CHALLENGED.**

WE WANT TO DO MORE THAN WE'RE DOING.

WE WANT TO GIVE MORE THAN WE'RE GIVING.

**WE WANT TO LOVE MORE DEEPLY THAN WE'RE
LOVING.**

**WE WANT TO RISE ABOVE OUR BASE HUMAN
NATURE & REACH FOR SOMETHING BIGGER &
BETTER.**

**WE WANT “PLAIN JESUS” TO BECOME A WAY OF
LIFE FOR OURSELVES.**

**HAVE YOU EVER HAD THE EXPERIENCE OF BEING
CHALLENGED LIKE THAT IN A RIDICULOUS SORT OF
WAY?**

I REMEMBER TAKING A GYMNASTICS CLASS IN COLLEGE.

I DREADED THE CLASS BECAUSE I WAS THE KLUTZ OF ALL KLUTZES.

WHEN I GOT THE TEXTBOOK FOR THE GYMNASTICS CLASS, I WAS TERRIFIED.

YES, WE HAD A *TEXTBOOK* AND IT WAS WRITTEN BY THE PROFESSOR.

I KNEW I'D NEVER BE ABLE TO DO THE THINGS SUGGESTED IN THAT BOOK.

16 WEEKS LATER, THOUGH, I *COULD*.

I WAS DOING THINGS I NEVER DREAMED POSSIBLE BECAUSE THE PROFESSOR REFUSED TO LET ME BELIEVE I *COULDN'T*.

HE CHALLENGED ME & EVERYONE IN THAT CLASS TO DO THINGS WE NEVER THOUGHT POSSIBLE – AND

**BEFORE LONG, WE ACCEPTED THE CHALLENGE &
ROSE ABOVE OUR LIMITED EXPECTATIONS OF
OURSELVES.**

**WHAT A THRILL IT WAS TO DO THINGS WE NEVER
THOUGHT WE COULD DO.**

**THAT'S WHAT JESUS IS DOING HERE IN THIS
PASSAGE & THAT'S WHY YOU'RE HERE TODAY.**

THAT'S WHY YOU FOLLOW HIM.

THAT'S WHY YOU LISTEN TO HIM.

**DEEP DOWN INSIDE, YOU AREN'T WILLING TO
SETTLE FOR LESS THAN THE BEST OF WHICH YOU'RE
CAPABLE.**

***(FOR THOSE IN OUR CONFIRMATION CLASS, THAT'S
WHY YOU'RE HERE TODAY.***

***THAT'S WHY YOU STOOD IN FRONT OF THIS
CONGREGATION & PROCLAIMED YOUR COMMITMENT
TO JESUS CHRIST.***

***THAT'S WHY "PLAIN JESUS" IS A LANGUAGE YOU
CAN UNDERSTAND.)***

**YOU KNOW THAT A LOVE THAT GOES BEYOND
THE REASONABLE BOUNDS OF LOVE IS SOMETHING
YOU WANT IN YOUR LIFE.**

**YOU DON'T WANT TO LIVE WITH ANGER &
TENSION, FEAR & HOSTILITY INSIDE OF YOU.**

**I'VE OFTEN BELIEVED THIS TEACHING OF JESUS
CAN BE SUMMED UP IN THE PHILOSOPHY THAT SAYS
"DON'T LET SOMEONE ELSE'S BAD BEHAVIOR
DETERMINE WHAT YOUR BEHAVIOR WILL BE."**

ALWAYS BE LOVING.

ALWAYS BE GRACIOUS.

ALWAYS BE KIND.

ALWAYS BE FORGIVING.

I KNOW – IT’S RIDICULOUS.

IT’S JUST “PLAIN JESUS.”

**BUT THINK WHAT THE WORLD WOULD BE LIKE IF
WE PRACTICED IT.**

**OR, IF THAT’S TOO MUCH TO CONSIDER, THINK
HOW DIFFERENT *YOUR* WORLD WOULD BE IF *YOU*
PRACTICED IT. AMEN.**

*The Reverend Dr. Dennis R. Davenport
Eastminster Presbyterian Church
Evansville, Indiana*