



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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February 23, 2014

Epiphany 7

Sermon Text: [1 Samuel 26:7-25](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [1 Samuel 26:7-25](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 103](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 12:9-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 5:38-48](#)

The Sermon of the Lord: Love Your Enemies

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

You just don't understand! When you were a teenager, did you ever spit those words at your parents? If you're a parent, did you ever have a child spit those words at you? It doesn't feel good. I'll grant there are times when there are things we understand and things we don't understand, but one thing I've found in life as I've heard this as a pastor, people come to me and say, "Pastor, you just don't understand. Here is why I had to do what God says I shouldn't do," whether it's cheat on a spouse or abuse some kind of chemical, "you just don't understand." The problem that I see now is that when it comes to sin, I think we all have a greater capacity to understand why someone else would sin than we really care to admit, because we are sinners. So we can understand sin.

But here is the thing...just because we can understand why someone does something doesn't mean that it's right. I think that's the thing that we tend to equate at times. If you can understand why I did it, that must mean its okay. No.

I can understand really easily what Jesus said when he said, "You've heard it said, 'love your friends and hate your enemies.'" That's a piece of cake, right? I can understand that. I have a lot harder time understanding "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." That's a little harder for me to understand because it's not in my nature to do or what is in your nature to do. It's in our nature to do what Jesus said we heard said. It's in our nature to want revenge. It's in our nature to want to get back. It's in our nature to want to inflict as much pain on someone else as they have inflicted on us. That's natural. I can understand it. But my Savior looks me in the eyes today and says, "I don't care if you can understand it. It isn't right." When he comes to us in his sermon and says, "Love your neighbor," that's tough. "Love your enemy," that's tough. As we look at what David did here, maybe we can get a little more insight into what exactly it is our God is talking about when he tells us to love our enemy.

I have a hard time understanding David at times too. What I read to you in sparing Saul's life, I have a hard time understanding that. I can understand something that happened in the chapter right before what I read to you. I think it's Chapter 25. David had been living on the run for quite some time. David had served King Saul. First of all, he came to Saul's attention when he killed Goliath as a teenager. Then he became

a court musician because he was very gifted musically. He composed all those Psalms and the music that went with them. He was playing his harp for the king because the king had an evil spirit inflicting him it said. His advisors recognized that this was a spiritual problem and they brought David in to play music and no doubt sing some of those songs of faith that David wrote, which we call Psalms.

But this evil spirit that Saul was inflicted with...we're told that at times he became so enraged at David because the people would sing "Saul has killed his thousands but David has killed tens of thousands" (later on as David became a general that God granted many victories). Saul would become enraged at various times. That's what this spirit seemed to do to him. A couple times when this happened, we are told that King Saul tried to make a David kabob as he hurled his spear at David while he was playing the harp for him. Saul tried to kill David.

So then David ended up living on the run because Saul was trying to kill him. He had done nothing except serve his king faithfully, kill Goliath, served him as a musician, served him as a general. Yet Saul saw how the people loved David. He knew that the Lord's blessing was on David. So he hated him. He chased him. He chased him from place to place. David, at various times, had to act like he was insane.

I told you he killed Goliath. Goliath was from the town of Gath. One time when David was being chased by Saul, he went and hid in the town of Gath. You can imagine what the people thought. "There's the Goliath killer. He's in our town." So to protect himself from the king of the Philistines in Gath, King Achish, he acted like he was insane. He drooled all over himself and acted nuts so that he wouldn't be killed by the enemies. This is how he was living! Four hundred people, and then later on 600 men were following after him. These guys were also guys that were kind of on the run...guys that aren't going to be the most patient folks around, I'm guessing, because they probably have a little bit of a temper problem also, and that's why they're on the run.

As they were on the run all this time, you can imagine if David has to feed 400 guys that are ornery guys, it got tough at times. So in the chapter right before, they had protected Nabal's shepherds when they were tending their flocks, helping them to make sure they didn't lose the sheep, and protected them from other people that might try to take the sheep from them. Then they heard Nabal sheering his sheep, which means they were going to be slaughtering some of these sheep. So David sent some of the men to say, "Hey! We helped you out. We took good care of you. How about you send a little food our way?" Nabal's name means "fool" and he lived up to the name. He said, "I hear a lot of guys are turning on their masters. Who is David to me? You're just another guy turning on their master. I'm not giving you any food."

Here's where I can understand David. He has 400 cranky guys that are getting upset with him because they are hungry, he's trying to get food, and Nabal says no. So then he says, "May the Lord deal with me be it ever so severely if by this time tonight Nabal

and all the men in his household aren't dead." That I can understand. That's isn't exactly love your enemy. I can understand that. You've hurt me. I'm going to let you have it. I can understand that.

There's something else I can understand. Maybe the rest of you men that are here today can understand this too. You know how the Lord helped David out? How does the Lord often help out a man? This is easy, right? Every woman here is answering it, aren't you? Through a message that came from a woman. From Nabal's wife, Abigail. When she heard what her husband had said to David's men, she prepared a bunch of food and met David when he was coming and reminded David who he was, "You are the Lord's anointed," and whose he was, "You belong to the Lord. The Lord will take care of you. Don't do this because my husband is a fool who is living up to his name. But don't you act the fool in return." David thanked her for reminding him who and whose he was and he didn't kill Nabal. Then 10 days later, the Lord did. "It is mine to avenge" says the Lord, and the Lord blessed David with seeing it happen real quick. Ten days later, Nabal died, and then David took Abigail to be a wife.

It's in that setting then that we find David again coming to a chance where he could take Saul's life. Think of all the rationalizations that David and his men could give on why it was a good idea to kill Saul. This had already happened once before. When they were hiding out in a cave when they were being pursued by Saul. Saul actually came into the cave to relieve himself, and David's men said, "There is the chance. Here's what the Lord had said, that he would deliver your enemy into your hands. Go kill him and then you're going to be king." You have to believe the men are thinking "and we can quit running and living like this." But David said, "No, I can't lift my hand against the Lord's anointed." He cut off a piece of Saul's robe and told Saul that and Saul said, "I'm sorry. I'm wrong" and all the same things he said here and then went on his way. But then he started chasing David again to kill him.

So now this time, Abishai and David...Abishai is the brother of Joab, the commander of David's army later when he becomes king. He seems to be a very practical man, doesn't he? He seems to be a man who has learned and listened to David. He heard David say, "I can't lift my hand against the Lord's anointed. That would be wrong." So Abishai has a real practical solution, doesn't he? "I'll do it." Did you hear that in there? "I'll strike him. If the problem is that you don't want to do it, if you're a little squeamish about killing the Lord's anointed, let me kill him and then it's not on you. It's on me. And then we can quit living like this." I can understand, I can pile up the rationalizations and the excuses why David should do that, and if David would have done it, I don't know if I would have said that was all that terrible what he did. Saul had been trying to kill him. It's self defense. The Lord had deserted Saul and Saul had started doing some very evil things. Some priests at Nob, where Ahimelech had fed David and his men when they were hungry...food, it's a constant thing here, right? When they were hungry, they fed them and gave them the sword of Goliath because he needed a weapon. When an Edomite told King Saul that, King Saul commanded his officials to go kill all those priests. His officials wouldn't do it. They said, "We can't kill the Lord's representatives." So this Edomite went and killed every priest there because they

helped David. So it's obvious that Saul has turned his back on the Lord. Saul was doing evil things. Saul was making widows of the people in Israel just because he had deserted the Lord and was living for himself and his own glory. I can see all the rationalizations for David, for his men, to kill the Lord's anointed, to hate his enemy, take his life, and say "God said he would do it and God has done it. Praise be the Lord!"

But David is always described in Scripture as a man after God's own heart; a man after his own heart. My problem, and I'm guessing your problem at times is that we are a man after our own hearts, not after God's heart. We can understand sin all too well. So David says, "No. If I let you kill him, it's as though I killed him because I am your commander. So we can't do this." He talks to Saul again and says all the same things. He calls him out and Saul says, "I'm wrong. I'm wrong." But he continues to try to kill David.

One of the things you learn is that doing the right thing before God does not mean you are going to be blessed immediately always, but it does mean you will be blessed. I think that's one of the lessons David learned, maybe from the disputes with Nabal, but he learned that you put yourself in the Lord's hands. Even as he said, "if the Lord is going to take his life, the Lord will take his life. Let him do it, but it's not up to me to do it because he is the Lord's anointed, even if he is an evil Lord's anointed man." He loves his enemy in a way that I can't understand, but it's what my Savior would have me aspire to as well.

It doesn't matter that you and I can't understand it or we can't understand sin. What matters is that we live to serve our God and serve our Savior. We don't do it so that he'll love us. This is the love that God has...he loves his enemies. He loved you and me when we were unlovable, when we had nothing to offer him. We could give him nothing from our hand, nothing from our lips, nothing from our actions that would make him love us. He still loved us, promised and then sent the Savior to take away all our sins, to make us his own. You see that the Savior himself loved with that kind of love that loves his enemies. Can you understand Jesus praying "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they are doing" as they are driving the nails into his hands and his feet? I can't, but I want to. I want to love like my Savior wants me to love.

That is one option. The other option is that I serve myself. You hurt me, I hurt you back. I feel good for a minute, but I'm driving a bigger wedge between me and my God. Temporary pleasure or being closer to God? There's a part of me that knows the right answer. I'm sure there's a part of you that knows the right answer. The right answer is to be close to your God. He loves you with an everlasting love. Whatever pain you can inflict on someone else brings to you only a momentary satisfaction. But being close to your Savior forever is an eternity of bliss and joy that I can't understand yet because I'm still a sinner, but I know it's coming. And I can't wait for it.

I can't wait for that day when our Lord takes us to our heavenly home. I can't wait for that day when there are no more effects of sin. I can't wait for that day when there's no

more worrying about who is going to hurt me, and am I going to look like a doormat if I don't answer in kind? You know that temptation? I don't want to be a doormat, so I'm going to let people have it? I don't think anyone would have called David a doormat. The Lord blessed him. He killed Goliath. He chopped his head off and carried it around town by the hair. Who is calling him a doormat? But he loved his Lord and he served his Lord.

But why? Why should you and I do that? One reason I think I've already told you. It's because we love our Savior and we want to honor him and love him who loved us first. We belong to Christ because he bought us, and we are little Christs. We belong to him. We are Christs—with and without the apostrophe (as Luther said). We are also to imitate him. But why do we want to imitate him? I think part of it is in that quotation that was in the Second Lesson. "If your enemy is hungry, feed him;" (back to food again) "if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." Heaping burning coals on his head doesn't mean you'll make him feel bad. I think it's a picture of you'll lead him to repentance, repenting in sack cloth and ashes, coal and ashes. You'll lead him to repent and be right with his God. That's our ultimate purpose.

Our ultimate purpose is to bring others to know Christ as we know Christ and to have them love their Savior who took away their sin. So when I live and love in a way that the world around me does not love...love your friends and hate your enemies, that makes sense. Love your enemies? That makes no sense. Now you're just a doormat. When I love that way, it will stick out like a sore thumb and someone is going to ask me, why do you love that way? Are you just that weak? You can answer no. I'm not that weak. I'm that strong. When I live for my God and I rely on him and his strength and not my strength, when I'm relying on and trusting in him, I'm stronger than I'll ever be on my own. And I'm closer to him, the One who loved me enough to save me and the One who loved me enough to give me heaven. I'd much rather be close to him than close to my own sinful heart.

Our God puts us here so that we love as he loved. Our God puts us here because we are the voice and we are the arms and we are the feet that carry out and do his work in this world. I guarantee you there is joy in doing it. It's just not going to be the joy you might want at the moment, and it might not come at the time you want it, but the Lord does bless us with joy of being close to him and loving him. That's what we're here for. Amen.