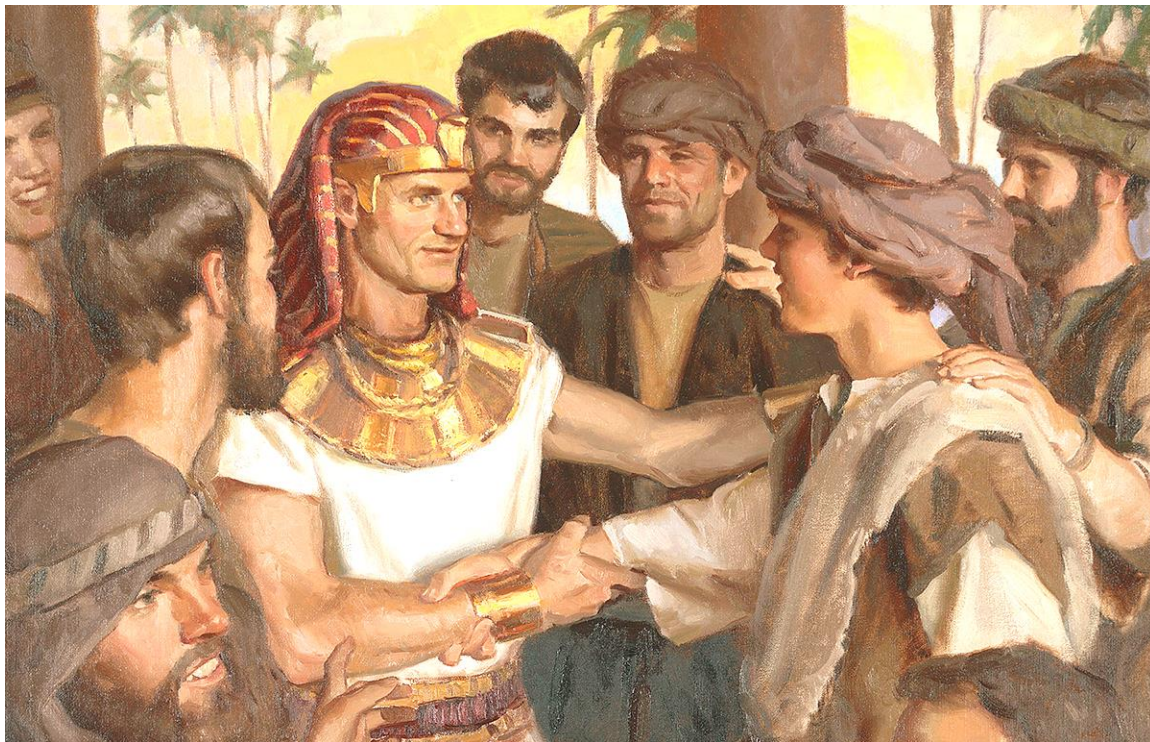


ST. MARK'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

THE SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

February 23, 2025



Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come close to me." When they had done so, he said, "I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance.

Genesis 45:4-7

WELCOME TO ST. MARK'S!

We're delighted to have you worship with us today! Our prayer is that the songs and message from God's Word will fill you with love for our Savior, the One who first loved us.

Please take a moment to turn off your cell phone prior to the start of the service.

TODAY'S WORSHIP THEME

Throughout this season of Epiphany, Jesus has described the governing principles of His kingdom being completely opposite to the governing principles of the world. This week Jesus asks us to befriend our enemies, to love those who hate us, and to repay evil with good. Worldly logic would say that is a recipe for being walked all over. Yet haven't we seen this tactic work in our own lives? When we were Christ's enemies, He loved us to the point of death. He repays our daily wrongs with the daily goodness of His mercy. In doing so, He won us for Himself.

Here is the epiphany we badly need. Following the strategy Jesus lays out—loving our enemies—is not a capitulation to evil. It is a means of conquering it.



WE GATHER FOR WORSHIP

OPENING HYMN

Forgive Our Sins as We Forgive – 493
All hymns this morning are found in the red hymnal.

INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.
Congregation: Amen.

CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION

God invites us to come into His presence and worship Him with humble and penitent hearts. Therefore, let us acknowledge our sinfulness and ask Him to forgive us.

Holy and merciful Father, I confess that I am by nature sinful, and that I have disobeyed You in my thoughts, words, and actions. I have done what is evil and failed to do what is good. For this I deserve Your punishment both now and in eternity. But I am truly sorry for my sins, and trusting in my Savior Jesus Christ, I pray: Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner.

God, our Heavenly Father, has been merciful to us and has given His only Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Therefore, as a called servant of Christ and by His authority, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

PRAYER AND PRAISE

In the peace of forgiveness, let us praise the Lord.

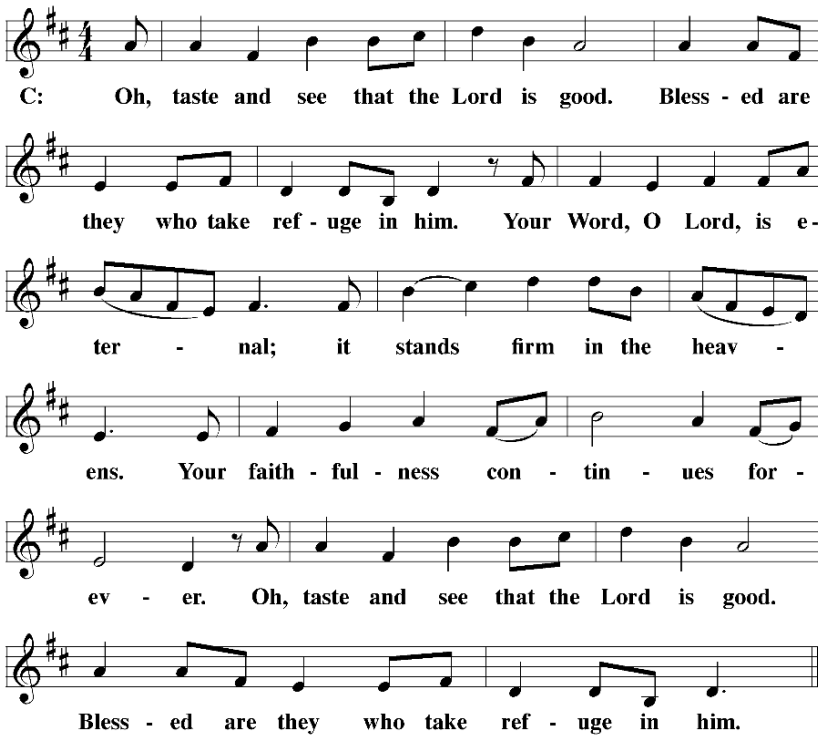
We gather for worship because God has called us. The pastor states this in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The Invocation claims the promise of Jesus that “where two or three gather in My name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:20).

Confession of Sin

We begin with the Invocation to point us to Baptism and the work of the Lord for His people. In Baptism the Lord makes the sign of the cross upon us and we are clothed with Christ by water and the Word (Galatians 3:27). The righteousness we have in Baptism is full; all that we need to get us into heaven. So why do we need to receive forgiveness? Because we still sin, and that sin leads us to unbelief and death. Picture Baptism as a robe of righteousness. As we sin, we are slowly easing ourselves out of that robe. Forgiveness secures the robe back upon us.

Absolution

Because Jesus took away the guilt of the world (John 1:29), He authorized His followers to announce His forgiveness; to “absolve” us. Absolution is a liturgical term that means Christ has set us free from the guilt of our sins.



C: Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Bless - ed are they who take ref - uge in him. Your Word, O Lord, is e - ter - nal; it stands firm in the heav - ens. Your faith - ful - ness con - tin - ues for - ev - er. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good. Bless - ed are they who take ref - uge in him.

God speaks and we respond – that’s the pattern of liturgical worship. In this vibrant song of praise, we rejoice in what God has done for us and in what He continues to do for us through Christ. This is joyous praise that revels in the vast and awesome salvation of our God.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray.

Gracious Father, keep Your family, the Church, always faithful to You, that we may lean on the hope of Your promises and be strong in the power of Your love; through Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



C: A - men.



WE HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

FIRST LESSON

Genesis 45:3-8a, 15

Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will not be plowing and reaping. But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

First Lesson

How quick we are to withhold love when we have been wronged, clinging to anger in a pathetic attempt to make the offender suffer from our displeasure. Praise be to God such treatment is not ours in Christ! Consider Joseph: sold by his brothers, imprisoned, forgotten. Yet he reflected the love of the Lord—revealing himself to his brothers, bringing them to repentance, and providing for their needs. This account of Joseph forgiving his brothers demonstrates the truth that God overcomes evil with good.

PSALM OF THE DAY

Psalm 103

Refrain



I will hear what the Lord pro-claims: peace to his peo - ple.

Psalm tone



**Praise the Lord, ^O my soul;*
all my inmost being, praise His ^holy name.**

**He forgives ^all your sins*
and heals all your di^seases;**

**He redeems your life ^from the grave*
and crowns you with love and com^passion.**



*“I am your brother, Joseph...
GOD SENT ME
before you to preserve life.”*
Genesis 45:4-5

Refrain

**The Lord is compassionate and ^gracious,*
slow to anger, aboun^ding in love.**

**He does not treat us as our ^sins deserve*
or repay us according to our in^iquities.**

**For as high as the heavens are a^bove the earth,*
so great is His love for those who ^fear Him;**

**as far as the east is ^from the west,*
so far has He removed our transgressions ^from us.**

Refrain

**As a father has compassion on his ^children,*
so the Lord has compassion on those who ^fear Him;**

**for He knows how ^we are formed,*
He remembers that ^we are dust.**

**Our days are like grass, like a flower ^of the field;*
the wind blows over it and ^it is gone.**

**But the Lord's love is with those who ^fear Him*
from everlasting to ever^lasting.**

**Glory be to the Father and ^to the Son*
and to the Holy ^Spirit,
as it was in the be^ginning,*
is now, and will be forever. ^Amen.**

Refrain



Psalm 103

The Church sings Psalm 103 in services that emphasize Jesus forgiving our sins and giving us confidence and strength against the devil and the world. Martin Luther said of this psalm: "Psalm 103 is a psalm of thanks. Lovely and finely crafted, it thanks God for all His goodness. He forgives our sins, provides us healthy bodies and souls, satisfies us with all sorts of good things, makes us joyful and confident, and delivers us from enemies and woes. This all happens through Christ, who was promised for just this reason, and has now arrived."



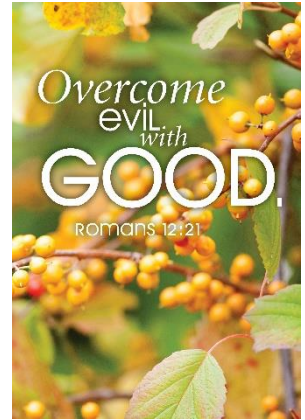
SECOND LESSON

Romans 12:14-21

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 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. On the contrary: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Second Lesson


Paul lived in a Roman empire that operated on the principles of force and aggression. Yet he encourages believers to operate on the principles of grace, forgiveness, and humility.




VERSE OF THE DAY

Matthew 5:44-45


Alleluia. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. Alleluia.




 C: Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!



 These words are writ - ten that we may be - lieve that



 Je - sus is the Christ, the Son of God.



 Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia! Al - le - lu - ia!

GOSPEL OF THE DAY

Luke 6:27-38

“But 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. “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 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.”

After the Gospel, the congregation sings:



HYMN OF THE DAY

Son of God, Eternal Savior – 492

SERMON

Jeremiah 17:5-8

“The Pursuit of Happiness”

The Gospel

In the past soldiers put down their weapons and kings removed their crowns when the Gospel was read. As a sign of special honor to the Savior, we stand for the reading of the Gospel. Here we see the empty cross and tomb. We hear the familiar news that is always new, good, and refreshing.

Luke 6:27-38

After preaching of blessings and woes to the human heart, Jesus continues by contrasting human love and action with His own selfless love. The Christ-imitating Golden Rule finds no greater, no more challenging application than this: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you. Disregard what people deserve. Instead, show the same grace to others that God has shown to you.



CONFESSION OF FAITH

The Apostles' Creed

When you say the Apostles' Creed you are engaging in an act of defiance, for the Christ you confess is the Christ rejected by the world. But here you have the privilege of saying your "No!" to world opinion; you stick out your jaw and say, "This crucified, risen, ascended, and coming Christ is mine, and I acknowledge Him, no matter what you say."

But the creed is defiant in another way. Consider where people come from when they prepare to say the creed. Where have they been the week before? Some of them have been in grief; they have lost a spouse or loved one; or some have had life tumble in on them in disappointments and troubles. And then they say the Apostles' Creed. What are they saying except that "I *still* believe this; things seem to have crumbled, but this is my God and I am still confessing Him." What a privilege to exercise such defiance!

I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried. He descended into hell. The third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty. From there He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting.

Amen.

OFFERING

PRAYER OF THE CHURCH

Eternal Lord, give us peace as we ponder the good news that You forgive our sins in Christ. Lead us to see clearly the path You have laid out for us.

Work in us so that we believe and live the Word we have heard today.

Provide courage and compassion to all who preach and teach Your Word. Fill them with a love like Yours as they proclaim Your grace to us and all people.

Move us to love all ministers of the Word wherever they serve.

Guard and guide the families of our congregation. Lead husbands and wives to love each other with commitment, respect, and patience. Help parents to grasp the eternal value of keeping their children close to Jesus all their lives. Grant joy to those who are single and make them a blessing to others.

Protect us from the temptations that surround us; give us pure hearts and minds.

Provide wisdom and insight to those who make laws and set policies. Give us respect for those who protect us from crime. Lead us to value the rights of our fellow citizens and to defend those who cannot defend themselves.

Bless our land with peace and prosperity so that the Gospel may be proclaimed to all.

Give us passion to share the story of Your love with our family and friends. Overcome unbelief and open the hearts of people everywhere to believe the good news that Jesus has forgiven their sins and opened the gates of heaven.

Fill us with joy over every sinner who repents and comes to trust in You.

Extend Your healing power to those who are sick and suffering in body or mind. Pour out Your special blessing on... Give patience and compassion to all who care for the sick and dying.

Lift the eyes of the distressed to Your love in Christ.

Hear us, Lord, as we pray in silence.

Silent prayer

Gracious God, You govern and direct all things and You love all people. Hear our prayers, spoken and silent, and answer them in Your wisdom and grace. In Jesus' name we ask this, even as we join together to pray...

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into

temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

HYMN

Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us – 486

WE DEPART WITH GOD'S BLESSING

PRAYER

Almighty God, we thank You for teaching us the things You want us to believe and do. Help us by Your Holy Spirit to keep Your Word in pure hearts that we may be strengthened in faith, guided in holiness, and comforted in life and in death, through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.



THE BLESSING

Brothers and sisters, go in peace. Live in harmony with one another. Serve the Lord with gladness.

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you. The Lord look on you with favor and give you peace.



CLOSING HYMN

May the Grace of Christ Our Savior – 326

WE'RE GLAD YOU'RE HERE!

God's grace welcomes you, no matter who you are or where you come from—and so do we. We believe that Jesus Christ is the true Savior of all people. By His perfect life, innocent death, and triumphant resurrection He saves all lost sinners even without our help. Jesus Christ makes us special people, right with God and ready for life! We learn this from the Bible, God's authentic message of grace and guidance for us.

Whether you are a first-time visitor or curious observer, we are delighted to share our worship with you! Please worship with us again!

WE FIRMLY BELIEVE AND TEACH THAT...

...the Bible is the inspired Word of God, His unchanging and inerrant message to men of all times;

...there is only one God. He is three distinct and separate persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;

...God created man holy and without sin. Man, of his own will, fell into sin and so brought sin on the whole human race;

...sin is in all men by nature and reveals itself in every transgression of God's holy will by thought, word, or deed;

...the wages of sin is death and damnation in hell, an eternal agonizing separation from the holy and righteous God;

...God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, to redeem the world;

...Jesus redeemed, that is, justified the whole human race with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death;

...this glorious fact is accepted by faith which is worked in the heart by the Holy Spirit through the Word, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper;

...by faith alone in the atoning work of Christ we are heirs of the glories of heaven. While yet on earth we want to show our love for Him who first loved us;

...at our death we shall inherit the full glories of everlasting life with Christ in heaven, where there shall be no pain or sorrow, and all tears shall be wiped from our eyes.