

## **WELCOME 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2019 – Transfiguration '19 C**

Luke 6:27-36 & 46-49

Good morning! Welcome to worship today! We are so glad you are here doing what we were made to do...offer God all that we are among his people... Please stay with us through to morning tea & beyond...all sorts of good things...

You hear it in the change rooms, courts & grounds of all major sports - "The best defence is a good offense." Who's going to argue? If you score more points, tries or goals than your opponent, you win. But Jesus takes THAT to a whole new level when it comes to advancing the Gospel in this world...living the life of his Kingdom now. *But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 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. 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...Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

In Jesus life isn't about winning/losing "Seeing your enemies driven before & hearing the lamentations of their women" but about mercy, grace & living in imitation of the Father who gives life & joy and shows love & compassion to those who don't deserve it. In a world all too ready to win at any cost, Jesus shows a way forward that gives life, breathes hope, multiplies joy, spreads peace...And forgives even the worst so that all can be embraced by the Father...And he did that for you so that you can live in his presence & advance his kingdom of love in a way that is radically countercultural...and transforms everything it touches...

We'll explore & experience that together today...

Let's pray...

### **PRAYER OF THE DAY**

*God of grace and wonder, to this needy world, reveal your presence. To each of us living in our own brand of darkness, open our eyes to see Jesus, the light of the world. To those we know who live in the shadows, may the light of your love shine. Today let your word speak to us and grant us the gift of your Holy Spirit, that we may boldly live the good news of Christ's life freely given and make us radiant with your transforming glory...through Jesus Christ...Amen*

## TRANSFIGURATION '19 C – WAYPOINTS: THE WAY FORWARD

- FAITH CHAT:** 1. For whom do you really enjoy buying gifts? Why?  
2. How does this description of love challenge you?

The best defense is a good offense. A penny saved is a penny earned. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure. Stay on the front foot. You snooze you lose.

Seems like our grandmothers, sports coaches, & business gurus all give similar advice...Be Proactive! Get ahead of the curve. Act 1<sup>st</sup> Act fast. Why? Well Steven Covey 7 Habits of Highly Effective People puts that as the 1<sup>st</sup> habit because he said THAT is the key to effectiveness success influence achievement building the future you want to build conquering problems you want conquered. No surprise really

That's the way the world we live in operates...This is the way of the world. The kingdom of the world says you should look out for #1. Life is meant to be lived, finally & always for your benefit...your advantage profit gain...quid pro quo. And to do that...Take before you are taken. Strike before you are struck. Love those who love you. Hate those who hate you. Fmr US President "punch back twice as hard." The dominant guiding principle/thought of this world is scarcity – there is not enough so get yours first – get in early before there is no more...& that leads % fail to cut-throat competition & a corresponding cycle of adversarial relationships violence or at least win-at-any-cost living. From families to foreign policy...win-at-any-cost is the order of the day. So what are we to do then with...Jesus...

*But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 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. 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...Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. What do we do with THAT? That's crazy talk*

One thing I guess we can do is dismiss/ignore it...It's too hard. No one can do that. It's an impossible command which is only given to show me how far short I am from what God wants & therefore cling to grace. Or we can dismiss it as naïve...out of touch with the realities of this world...a dream as real as fairies unicorns & pots of gold at the end of the rainbow. Or I can dismiss it by deluding myself into thinking I actually do that pretty well...or at least better than you & if you were any sort of a Christian you'd treat me better...or at least as well as I do...

But what would happen if I were to take it seriously? What if we were to see this not as a new set of rules by which we get ahead in this world...a set of divine habits of highly effective/successful people but as an invitation into a whole new world? A world that is not about measuring counting weighing competing judging payback hating... But a world governed by mercy. A world spinning on the axis of love. A world illuminated by the Father's joy/delight in His Creation. Love for those who love you... Love for those who don't. Love even for those who hate you. Love expressed in all kinds of creative ways, but mostly by compassion – care - help & comfort to those in need & most clearly...by forgiveness – not payback not revenge but by releasing one's claim on another & opening up a future where a relationship of love is rebuilt.

Think about it like this...throughout the NT Jesus is called many names: Messiah, Saviour, Lord, Redeemer, Son of God, Son of Man...but the name the 12 used? Rabbi ...teacher. They were disciples...students. Jesus essentially led a school without walls, & its curriculum was love. There were "lectures"...Jesus taught his followers & preached to multitudes & had small group discussions now & again... But he always demonstrated what those words meant: by healing the sick, casting out demons, embracing the outcasts, challenging the powerful, & bearing the cross. Even the "signs/wonders/miracles" pointed not to his majesty but to the Father's desire that all things be drawn back to him through the Son...the Father's intent that sin be defeated darkness driven out by light brokenness healed & the devil sent packing...He showed them the outworking of the Father's love & then said, "Now...your do it."

He didn't quiz them — "How many demons are in a legion?" He just sent them out to actually bless people – to give witness to life in His Kingdom — with instructions to restore broken lives & drive back darkness with the light of his love radiant in them. And when the crowds were hungry, he told them: *You give them something to eat.*

You know that if you work hard enough & muster enough brainpower there's a ton of stuff you can master...math...a bunch of the sciences...but music, a sport, driving, sewing, pottery...Those are more than brain training. Those can only be mastered in the doing & doing again & doing again. Love is like that...On the night of his betrayal Jesus the Rabbi gave his students their final exam: *So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other. Your love for one another will prove to the world that you are my disciples.*

That's not a written test...That's a road test.

Love can't be learned by rote. It is not a subject to be memorized or even a concept to be understood. It is a skill to be mastered. It requires practice. It's not a kind disposition toward someone or a feeling that leads you to do something nice. Love is consciously working for the highest good of someone else at your own expense. How did Jesus say it? *There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. Jn 15:13 And this is what that looks like...*

*Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 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. 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...Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. This isn't about becoming the world's doormat. The easy mark for every con. The quick victim of every vile scheme...It's about unleashing a power that is greater than any on earth...love.*

*Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable... Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads." Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. Rom 15:17-21*

I know I'm not the first to notice this...but Jesus never planted churches. He planted disciples who lived his love & his life every day of their lives & the churches grew up like weeds & good news spread like bushfire. When the mercy/compassion/love of Jesus, is lived through our lives, we see the gospel transforming lives, claiming communities & impacting the world like never before. Grudges are transformed by grace; fractured relationships are restored through forgiveness & hard hearts are broken open by love. All the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, and to fellowship, and to sharing in meals (including the Lord's Supper[a]), and to prayer.

*A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders. And all the believers met together in one place and shared everything they had. They sold their property and possessions and shared the money with those in need. They worshiped together at the Temple each day, met in homes for the Lord's Supper, and shared their meals with great joy and generosity all the while praising God and enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved. Acts 2:42-47...I love the last bit: the Lord added... When the pagan world experienced in the early believers what they experienced nowhere else in the world they flocked to it in droves...What's changed? Certainly not the call/invitation of Jesus...maybe it's us...I keep coming back to CS Lewis...*

*"...Christ did not come to make us better or to make us nice. He came to make us new...The whole offer which Christianity makes is this: that we can, if we let God have His way, come to share in the life of Christ...Every Christian is to become a little Christ. The whole purpose of becoming a Christian is simply nothing else... The Church exists for nothing else but to draw men into Christ, to make them little Christs. If they are not doing that, all the cathedrals, clergy, missions, sermons, even the Bible itself, are simply a waste of time. God became Man for no other purpose."*  
CS Lewis

What's changed? Certainly not the call/invitation of Jesus...maybe it's us...maybe we, the disciples have bought into the world's system of success achievement influence & given up the real power that makes all things new. Don't hear this like a command - YOU MUST – that's just more fear/threat/browbeating & who needs that? That's not Jesus...Hear this as a promise...a promise that we don't have to have a dog-eat-dog winner-take-all win-at-any-cost world...a promise that in us the power that raised Jesus from the dead, that allowed him with his dying breaths to forgive those who whipped stripped taunted betrayed abandoned & nailed him to the cross can in fact come alive in every circumstance of our lives...a promise that Christ is alive & ruling over all things & alive & seeks to rule in us...

*Fix your thoughts on what is true, & honourable, & right, & pure, & lovely, & admirable. Think about things that are excellent & worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned & received from me — everything you heard from me & saw me doing. Then the God of peace will be with you. — Php 4:8-9 Love is in the doing over & over again as that presence power & peace of God fills & guides...*

*Give & you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full—pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, & poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back." — Lk 6:38 And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. God's abundance is never exhausted...Php 4:19*

Love...bless...pray...forgive...conquer evil by doing good...Life in Christ isn't about winning/losing/success/influence/achievement...but about mercy, grace & living in imitation of the Father who gives life & joy and shows love & compassion to those who don't deserve it. In a world all too ready to win at any cost, Jesus invites us into his love...a way of living that gives life, breathes hope, multiplies joy, spreads peace And forgives even

the worst so that all can be embraced by the Father...And he did that for you so that you can live in his presence & advance his kingdom of love in a way that transforms everything it touches...

Let's pray with that in mind...***Lord Jesus, we don't want more enemies, but we do want to love the ones we have. We don't seek more insult or persecution, but we do seek to love those who do that now. Grow your life and your love in us so that in all things, in all times, and in every situation, the world sees you alive in us. For your glory, for the sake of your kingdom, and for the harvest you commission through us, we pray in your Name. Amen.***