



Sunday, September 30, 2012 Do Unto Others

Cor. 6:16-18

Luke 6:31-36

In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In this morning's Epistle we heard St. Paul say that as a preacher of the Gospel he deserves no particular recognition or glory because he had no choice but to preach the Gospel. "Necessity is laid upon me," he wrote, and "woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

Most of us do not even "preach" the Gospel, not in words or in our examples to others, so what can be said of *us*? Truly, what can be said is exactly what St. Paul wrote in this epistle: "Woe is unto me, if I preach not the Gospel!"

This doesn't mean standing on a street corner or in a city square and preaching—although, frankly, there's nothing wrong with that: it's what St. Paul himself did at the areopogus or market place in Athens!—but it certainly does mean bearing our own quiet witness in the events and contacts we have with others in every day life, beginning right at home, in our own families. This is why St. John Chrysostom said that "a good example is worth a thousand sermons."

This is why I could say (and still do say) of my wife after she died that she was the least judgmental person I had ever known. What an example she set; and what a "sermon" she preached to me and our children and to those who knew her by means of this quiet witness!

This morning's Epistle was followed by and is tied to the appointed Gospel reading for this morning, a Gospel wherein we hear the familiar expression, "do unto others, as you would have them do unto you"—something that we all heard from childhood on and rarely practice; something that we all knew could be found *somewhere* in the Bible but we weren't exactly sure where!

Well, now we know. And this saying is part of the very same "Gospel" that St. Paul preached and which we, in our own lives, are called upon to witness to by our words and deeds. Do you remember what was

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Fr Ambrose Young  
*Entrance of the Theotokos into the Temple Skete*



said in last week's sermon, that we are all called upon to obey the Lord? Well, this is where it starts, with "do unto others, as you would have them do unto you."

Not surprisingly the Lord then continued in this Gospel to instruct as follows: "Love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil."

Now, we all know that it's impossible to have warm *feelings* towards our enemies, our critics, those who make difficulties for us or who slander us, and hurt our feelings. So Christ was clearly not talking about emotions when He ordered us to love our enemies. He was talking about actions, about behavior, and He made this clear when he added that God the Father "is kind to the unthankful and evil."

Jesus was saying that if His Heavenly Father could continue to be kind and tolerant to sinners here on earth, how can *we* do otherwise ourselves?! And so He concludes: "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."

This statement is echoed in so many different ways all throughout the New Testament. For example when we pray The Lord's Prayer and say, "Forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive those who trespass against us.*" In other words, we ask to be forgiven for our sins *to the same degree that we have been forgiving of others.* Now, this is very sobering, brothers and sisters, and should strike us as more than a little frightening, for how often do we say The Lord's Prayer and just sort of skim right over that sentence as though it didn't apply to us or as though we are in fact—when we are NOT, in fact—forgiving of others.

How so? How are we not forgiving?

Whenever we remember the wrongs that others have done against us, ruminate upon them, and especially when we repeat those wrongs to others--then we betray the fact that we have hardened, cold, and unforgiving hearts and memories. And we may be sure that the Lord has not, is not, and will not be forgiving of *our* sins.

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But in another of St. Paul's Epistles we are told: "*Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God: whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and anger and indignation and clamor and blasphemy be put away from you, with all malice. And be ye kind one to another: merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ.*" (Eph. 4:30-32) (As a footnote, this, by the way, was what I heard Fr. Seraphim of Platina say over and over in the sermons he gave during his last year on earth.)

**Think** about how St. Paul began this teaching: "*Grieve NOT the Holy Spirit.*" Do we understand that this means that when we are unforgiving towards others this "grieves" or causes sorrow to the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, God the Holy Spirit? What a sin!

St. Maximus the Confessor wrote that "whoever finds humility receives gentleness..." Brothers and sisters, this is part of the message of today's Gospel, and it is the very same Gospel St. Paul was preaching, the same Gospel that you and I are called upon to preach through our daily witness.

Therefore, let us examine the words of our mouths and the thoughts of our hearts to be sure that *all* we say, think, and do, is covered with mercy, with forgiveness, with humility, and with gentleness, so that we will be able to receive all of these things in return from our Lord and God Jesus Christ on Judgment Day, to Whom be all glory, honor and worship, now and ever, and unto the ages of ages. Amen.

In the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.