

Sermon Text – Sunday, November 2, 2025 – Pastor Paula Kraus

1st Reading: Psalm 149; 2nd Reading: Ephesians 1:11-23
Scripture for Message: Luke 6:20-31 “Trials and Consequences”

Let me read again from Psalm 149 – what our Elder read this morning. “Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment on the peoples, to bind their kings with fetters and their nobles with chains of iron, to execute on them the judgment decreed. This is glory for all his faithful ones. Praise the Lord!” It is the saint’s praise of God that acts like a double-edged sword to execute vengeance. Although, when I read Luke’s record of Jesus’ teachings, I wonder how these words work within our current society. I am, however, reminded that the trials and consequences of a faithful life are a double-edged sword.

Jesus, as he teaches his disciples, declares blessings and woes which are probably meant for all those following him to hear. As we pick up Jesus’ story from Luke’s narrative Jesus has called and named his twelve disciples or the Apostles. He has traveled with them healing the sick and eating with “sinners” for which he is now under close scrutiny by the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Knowing this gives us some context to what Jesus is now teaching. Jesus gives a picture of what their lives will be like and how his followers are to live because of the trials and consequences they will face. Then we can draw comparisons with what Jesus teaches and how we look at the “saints” of the church – those whose lives are examples for us.

We have taken time this morning to honor and remember those we consider saints, members of this church who have entered their eternal rest. What though are the qualities that cause us to consider them saints? Maybe we have looked on their lives and noticed how they have risen above the concerns of this world, knowing they were beloved children of God and knowing that they lived accordingly. Maybe we noticed how they praised God in all circumstances – during the many trials and consequences of living in this world.

I wonder though, do we notice that the lives of those we might consider saints are not much different from our own – each one of us experiences the twists and turns of blessings and woes that Jesus speaks of. The lives of the “saints” are not all blessings; they can serve as warnings to us as well. Warnings to live lives that proclaim God’s kingdom already and not yet. A warning to behave so as not to betray the blessings God bestows – remember that all blessings can and do sometimes suddenly turn into woes. One day you will hunger and be blessed with

Sermon Text – Sunday, November 2, 2025 – Pastor Paula Kraus

satisfaction only to have that satisfaction suddenly turn into hunger once again – the trials and consequences of living in this broken world.

It is not the assertion of scripture that we only count those who are radically holy as saints. God freely blesses each of us before any moral or “holy” behavior – God blesses us without our doing anything to earn those blessings. Saints, and I am not talking about those who the Roman Catholic Church canonizes as Holy Saints, are those among us who, with gratitude, receive God’s blessings – or I should say those who accept God’s unconditional love and blessings and live accordingly. When we consider ourselves or someone a saint, we might consider the burden that goes with the label. “Though the church can rejoice in being the ‘saints of God,’ we should think of this neither as a badge of achievement and virtue, nor as a passport to security in God’s forthcoming rule.”¹ Jesus is teaching how we ought to live our lives in our everydayness.

What Jesus teaches in verses twenty-seven to thirty-one expresses his concern for the radical – even scandalous – love that underscores his mission, the love that goes along with being a ‘saint of God.’ He tells his followers, “love your enemies, do good to those who hate you” and this is not a calling for his followers to be victims nor is it a calling for believers to “whip them with kindness” but to be more Christlike as we deal with the trials and consequences of living in a broken world. This is how believers are to live in this world, this is how believers live holy lives as examples for life in God’s kingdom.

When I recall the words from Psalm 149 – “Let the high praises of God be in their throats and two-edged swords in their hands, to execute vengeance on the nations and punishment of the peoples” I hear Jesus’ words as well – “bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you.” The responses Jesus calls his disciples to give, calls us to give, are the two-edged swords of praise that can defeat evil in the world. Let your praise be the vengeance on the nations that binds kings with fetters and nobles with chains of iron. Jesus’ call to turn the cheek and bless those who curse you are not passive responses but provocative responses to preclude further cause for aggression. Don’t give them reason to persecute you further.

Not only that but his scandalous way of dealing with the world calls for his followers to stop thinking of themselves as victims of persecution shaped and determined by the world’s messiness and atrocities. Jesus knew persecution and knew that those who lived according to his teachings

¹ Stephen I. Wright. “Luke 6:20-31: Connecting the reading to the World” *Connections: Year C, Vol 3* eds. Green, Long, Powery, & Rigby. WJK. 2019. Print. 439-441.

Sermon Text – Sunday, November 2, 2025 – Pastor Paula Kraus

would also suffer persecution at the hands of authorities and religious leaders. Jesus asks his followers to stand in the face of persecution.

The last statement in our reading today is, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Well, if other people at least treated us as Jesus said they should, our lives would be much more pleasant – but they don’t do they. People are mean, people are self-absorbed, people are judgmental – what Jesus’ teaches is not what people instinctually do. I recall an ethics instructor asking this question when it comes to the “Golden Rule” – “What if I don’t want to be treated the way you want to be treated, what do we do then?” What if you don’t treat yourself very well, do you treat others the same way? But Jesus goes deeper than that doesn’t he, he starts with “Love your enemies.”

Luke uses the Greek word for enemies in this context, and the root of that word is “to hate,” according to what Luke is writing, Jesus is asking his followers to “love” those you “hate.” That’s not easy for any of us, I’m sure it wasn’t easy for those we consider “saints” either. Jesus gives us action words – Love your enemies is not just a sentimental statement but a call for action. Do good to those who hate you, do not retaliate when you are treated poorly but pray for those who abuse you. If you feel mistreated or if you are treated unfairly don’t cry foul and seek vengeance – turn the cheek.

Unfortunately, we live in a society where most relationships are built on reciprocity, if you do a good thing for someone you expect good in return and if you have been nasty there will come a time when the axe falls. You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours; this is what “Quid Pro Quo” means in some circles. Jesus’ command is miles away from that sentiment. Jesus knows that we won’t get what we deserve in this world – whether what we deserve is good or bad. We know that many relationships are shattered when the “reciprocity” we expect is not equal to how we are actually treated. Jesus asks his followers to love and pray for those who abuse us in the hope that relationships will be healed. Prayer is the beginning of that healing process – praying for our enemies changes how we look at them.

God created humanity for relationship – Genesis 2:18 “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” God created in relationship with the Spirit and the Son. Jesus put relationship ahead of everything else, do to others as you would have them do to you is about relationship. Jesus command to “love your neighbors” is about relationship.

Furthermore, all the anger and revenge seeking that is prevalent in our world today destroys relationships. Adherence to the “Golden Rule” is about “turning what could continue to destroy persons and communities

Sermon Text – Sunday, November 2, 2025 – Pastor Paula Kraus

into actions that have in them the potential for healing beyond what we can imagine.”² This then becomes a vision of God’s intentions for humanity, a vision of what it might look like to live in God’s kingdom.

The message for the church is for us to live lives of praise, accepting God’s unconditional blessings as freely offered and not earned. Knowing we, through God’s mercy, do not get what we deserve. Be examples of praise and love for the world to follow. Accept the trials and consequences of a faithful life whose reward will be to live with the saints in eternity. That does involve turning the cheek, praying for one’s enemies, and blessing those who abuse and persecute you.

² Melinda A. Quivik. “Luke 6:27-36: Homiletical Perspective” *Feasting on the Gospels: Luke, Vol. 1*. WJK. eds. Jarvis & Johnson. 2014. Print. 165-169