

generous and gracious,
just like our Dad.

So where are you
tempted to get even?
Who are you tempted to
get even with, or to
make look silly because
they've done it to you?

Where are you tempted
to simply respond to
what is annoying you,
or who is frustrating
you? Is it your children,
your spouse's annoying
habit, someone you
work with or who is
overly aggressive on
your sporting team?

Where have you the
opportunity to grow to
greater maturity as you
seek with Jesus, in the

power of the Holy
Spirit to live out your
new nature?

And when you live true
to your new nature in
Christ, your new family
character, guess what
you'll see on our
Father's face. A smile
from ear to ear as he
sees one of his precious
children growing-up,
and developing their
family character.

Will the other person
stop being annoying or
bullying you, or stop
that habit that totally
frustrates you? Maybe,
maybe not. Hopefully
for their benefit there'll
be change and a
healthier relationship

will grow. But that's
not why we are called
to act the way we do. I
act because of my faith
in my Dad, and my life
revolves around my
Dad and my brother
Jesus, enjoying and
discovering life
together with them and
the rest of the family.

Let us pray.
Jesus fill us with the
Holy Spirit that we
have the courage,
wisdom and love to live
true to who we are in
you in all
circumstances of life.
May the way we live
always bring a smile to
Dad's face. Amen.

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
Pastor: Tim 0427326553



Jesus' Disciples, who grow disciples, who grow disciples...

20 February 2011

LIVING IN JESUS' KINGDOM—4

Matthew 5:38-48



I've got a few scenarios
I'd like you to consider.
If I have a hungry
rabbit and put it in a
cage with a carrot, what
will I find in the
morning? One rabbit
and no carrot. If I put a
male and female rabbit
together for a year what
would I find? Lots and
lots of rabbits. If I'd put
a male and female
elephant together for
the same amount of
time what would be the
outcome? With a bit of
luck, three elephants.
Why the difference?

Obviously you can't
expect elephants to act
like rabbits – their
burrows would be
seriously dangerous.
And you wouldn't
expect rabbits to act
like elephants. You'd
expect each to live true
to their nature. Rabbits
would do what rabbits
do, and elephants
would do what

elephants do. My
expectation is that each
would live true to their
nature.

I believe that is Jesus'
message to us today. As
a citizen of heaven,
Jesus' expectation is
that we live true to who
we are. As the Father's
child, whom he loves
and is well pleased with
(Matt. 3:17), the Father
would hope we live true
to who we are.

If all that I am is angry,
hurt, confused,
frustrated, lost, how
would you expect me to
act, especially is
something stressful
occurs. I wouldn't be
surprised to see bit of
an explosion of that
anger, hurt, confusion,
and frustration.

When stressed Jesus
wants us to let our true
nature in him come out.
So when faced with a

stressful situation, let
what is inside come to
the surface. Be true to
who you are; a citizen
of heaven, one of the
Father's children whom
he loves and is well
pleased with. Live true
to your new nature in
Christ.

That's why Jesus says;
"But I tell you, do not
resist an evil person. If
anyone slaps you on the
right cheek, turn to
them the other
also." (Matt. 5:39)
Which sounds crazy.
As crazy as asking an
elephant to dig a
burrow. But that would
be quite natural for a
rabbit. Hurt people
hurt. Unloved people
lash out. Lost people
have no bearings to live
from. But in Christ we
have a new nature. So
when faced with a
difficult life situation,
like someone hitting
me, I am now able to

respond Jesus' way, because I'm in him and that is my new nature.

So if I simply lash out and try and hit the guy as hard as he hit me, I'm out of character. It's not my new nature in Christ at work, but I'm living by faith in the other person's violence.

Thankfully we can live by placing our faith in what Jesus has done for us, and who he has created us to be. In Jesus we

do have the power and ability to live according to our new nature. Thank God for that.

Cause if all I do is meet violence with greater violence what have I helped create? A scared person, a violent community. In the end I help create the very thing I was opposed to.

This is one of the devil's most common temptations. He gets us to simply respond to what has happened to

us; and he makes it look like it's only fair. After all isn't it fair to defend yourself! As usual the devil makes it all sound so right. Surely I should be allowed to defend myself. Isn't it my right, even my responsibility. Go on girl, just do it.

What does Jesus say?

But if all I'm doing is responding to what you've done to me, I'm actually letting you shape who I am. I'm not defending myself, I'm losing myself. I'm becoming the very thing I was reacting against. Do you notice how subtle that trap is? I become the very thing I was reacting against because I thought it unfair, even wrong! But as I hit you because you hit me I'm living the wrong, I'm becoming the wrong I rejected.

I'm being shaped into the wrong sort of person, the person I was opposed to.

What does Jesus say: "Here's what I (Jesus) propose: 'Don't hit back at all.' If someone strikes you, stand there and take it. If someone drags you into court and sues for the shirt

off your back, gift-wrap your best coat and make a present of it. And if someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the

occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously." (Matt. 5:39-42 Message)

Or in other words, stay true to who you are. Let faith in Jesus shape you, not your faith in what has hurt you.

I wonder why often there is the thought that greater pain will change those who are in pain. Is it that we confuse disciple with hurting another person.

Disciple isn't designed to retaliate, but to let someone feel the consequences of their actions so they'll be able to make wise choices.

I'm sure that's why I was always told to never disciple one of my children when I was angry. Then it stopped being disciple, which is for the other person's good, and it became a response to my frustration and annoyance. There's a big difference, wouldn't you agree?

Jesus isn't giving us a new law so that we can become better people, better than those who don't do what we do. That's exactly what Jesus is against, me feeling superior because I would never do such a terrible thing. Again here is one of the devil's subtle traps. Instead of using what Jesus says to help us grow and stay true to who we are, we are

tempted to use what Jesus says to judge us as good and the other person as bad. Or else we just give ourselves an inferiority complex. Either extreme, the devil celebrates.

Rather Jesus is showing us how we can live true to our new nature in him. The nature he has

'You're kingdom subjects. Now live it'

created through his death and resurrection. Here we find freedom and not slavery. For in Jesus I know who I am, and together with him I can begin to discover that wonderful unique identity I have in Christ.

That's why Jesus can call us to love our enemy, because in Jesus that is our new nature. To do anything else would go against who we are. All of life now becomes a

wonderful opportunity to express our new nature in Jesus through acts of love. When we are faced with an enemy that new nature just has the wonderful opportunity to shine and grow more.

That's why Jesus finishes off with; "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is

perfect." (Matt.5:48) Because our new nature is a reflection of his nature.

In the Message this verse is paraphrased like this; "You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you." (Matt 5:48 Msg) In Jesus it is now my new nature to be