



***Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast!***  
***February 9, 2020***

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***Upcoming local community events . . .***

- Feb. 15-16, 2020: Raquette Lake Winter Carnival! (cold weather predicted!)

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***Scripture Readings for the 5th Sunday After the Epiphany . . .***

Isaiah 58:1-9a -- After return from the Exile, the people of Judah were discouraged. Life was hard, and it seemed that God was not listening to them. This passage speaks of fasting, but its implications are wider. It chastises the people, but there is hope.

Psalms 112:1-9 – reflective of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5 (“Happy are they who fear the Lord.”)

I Cor. 2:1-12 – Basic spiritual gifts seem to be rare in the church at Corinth. It seems that Paul is telling the Christians there of their immaturity in the faith. They have much to learn to attain the understanding of Christ that mature Christians have.

Matthew 5:13-20 – The famous “you are the salt of the earth” and “you are the light of the world” passages in The Sermon on the Mount.

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***Not a Sermon . . .***

As you will notice below, there is nothing specifically about the lectionary readings from Matthew 5:13-20. There’s so much in chapter 5 to reflect on, and, truth be told, the whole Sermon on the Mount!

Chapter 5 is the longest of the three chapters in the Sermon and is packed full! Verses and topics:

- 1-12: the “Beatitudes.” Here “blessed” means happy, satisfied, honored by God.
- 13-16: salt and light
- 17-20: the law and the prophets
- 21-42: anger, adultery, divorce, oaths, retaliation
- 43-48 (end of chapter 5): love for enemies ending with the famous (and challenging!) phrase “Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

If there was ever a time to review the Sermon verses 38-48, retaliation and revenge, it’s these days, right? “*An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth*”? Nope, we are told. “*Do not resist an evildoer.*”

But here’s the problem. All too often, we encounter people we don’t agree with, and when we express an opinion they don’t agree with, they attack back. Our opinions must be evil, because the other doesn’t agree! And...they must be evil because, not only are their opinions wrong, but they attacked me back, so they are doubly evil! At this point we take a deep breath. Have you seen this happen? Participated in these exchanges yourself? I have!

*“You have heard it said, ‘Love your enemy and hate your neighbor.’ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”*



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I don't think I have specifically read anywhere something that says, "hate your enemies." But, as you know, actions speak louder than words, and most of us have learned in our life experiences, "don't pay attention to my words, but my actions." "Hate your enemies" may not be written anywhere, but people can say one thing and do quite another.

Mahatma Gandhi encountered the Sermon on the Mount while in London, as he had the chance to read the Bible through his Christian contacts there. It's reported that Gandhi had trouble reading from the Old Testament, but when he started reading the New Testament, he said, "... the New Testament produced a different impression, especially the Sermon on the Mount which went straight to my heart."

Gandhi revered the Bible as a sacred book, and on many occasions found consolation, inspiration, and strength in the verses of the Sermon. Gandhi said at one point,

"When I read in the Sermon on the Mount such passages as 'Resist not him that is evil but whosoever smiteth thee on the right cheek turn to him the other also' and 'love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you, that he may be sons of your father which is in heaven,' I was simply overjoyed, and found my own opinion confirmed where I least expected it."

As a result, Gandhi decided to apply Christ's attitude of overcoming evil with good as a principle in his public affairs. The result was revolutionary, as Gandhi was able to lead the world's largest non-violent movement in relation to India's freedom struggle against the brutal weapons of the British.

Dr. P.T. Subrahmanyam, author of "Mahatma Gandhi and the Sermon on the Mount" put so well:

"What Jesus expects in this passage is not tit for tat, but the end of all resentment and retaliation. We must graciously forgive others of their wrong-doings and our goodness must exceed the evil that is there in the world. We must win over the evil by our goodness. That means we must not return evil for evil, but our response to evil must be good. And how to respond to the evil with goodness is a challenge always. Gandhi understood this challenge and loved the noble teaching of Jesus to love your enemy in the Sermon. This meant non-violence, non-retaliation, and non-resistance to the evil and doing further good to the evil ones."

Doing further good to the evil ones.... words of wisdom those.

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### ***Prayers for . . .***

- All people afflicted by the coronavirus in the world, and those afflicted by the flu in our communities.
- Jim (friend from Saranac Lake) who is undergoing cancer treatment.

*God, your love is as wide as the oceans, as deep as the sea, and as tall as the heavens. May your spirit rise like a mighty wave and come and restore those who are ill. You are the water of life; you are a fresh spring; you are healing rain to all those who are in need. Come Lord! Amen.*

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