

Wednesday, February 24

Today's Reading: Matthew Chapter 5:17-48

Today's Devotional Message is by Pastor Paul Baehmann

"If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect." Matthew 5:47-48

Have you ever been in a position where you felt that someone was expecting and demanding more of you than you were capable of producing? Yet that's exactly what Jesus is asking of us in the whole passage. He summarizes it all in the last verse when He says that we must be perfect in the same way that God is perfect. Come on now; who hasn't had times of anger, impure thoughts, withheld forgiveness for a period of time from a person who sinned against them? Who hasn't wanted to take revenge and get even in some way? How often have we been willing to let people take advantage of us or how often have we found it easy to love our enemies and to treat them with kindness and generosity?

We need to realize that that is exactly what God is asking and expecting of us who are His children. He knows that we will not measure up to His expectations and that's why Jesus had to come and suffer and die. You and I might be good people but we can never measure up to God's standards, unless God Himself takes our place and dies an undeserved death so that our sin might be forgiven. Jesus, in this sense, gives us His perfection so that because we believe in Jesus and accept Him as our Lord and Savior, God the Father sees us as possessing Jesus' holiness; so in a very real sense we stand before our God without any hint of sin.

Does this mean that we don't have to even try to become more perfect in our living? By no means; the expectation is laid on each of us daily to die to the sin of yesterday and rise today to live a new life, a life in which we struggle with God's help to overcome the sins that plague us. Knowing that Jesus' forgiveness awaits us should not keep us from fighting hard every day. Striving for holiness should be the goal of every Christian. Why? Because our God who loves us so much, and has sacrificed so much for us is asking this of us and we as His thankful children now strive to please Him by continuing this daily struggle.

Prayer: Thank You Jesus for dying for me. Help me today as I try to live for You. Amen