

Expansive Grace  
Luke 6:27-38

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7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany; February 20, 2022

Have you been able to watch much of the Olympics? I hope so. It seems like they always have something for everyone. Certainly, I enjoyed what I was able to see.

One thing I noticed this year in particular were all the rules. Ever notice them? If you're playing hockey, you can't pick up the puck and throw it into the net. You have to use your stick. If you ski inside this line, you're good. If you ski outside this line, you've broken a rule. You can have this kind of drug in your system but not that kind of drug. Rules. And breaking the rules has consequences.

If you watched the Super Bowl last week, you'll remember after Cincinnati scored their first touchdown some character who wasn't in uniform ran out onto the field and started celebrating with the players. You can't do that. It's against the rules. Cincinnati was penalized for it.

Rules matter. In sports, business, driving down the highway, manufacturing a new product. Living has rules.

We even have rules for treating people. They're not written down. They tend to be informal. Shake hands when you first meet someone. Be polite to strangers. Don't trust anyone with those clothes or those tattoos or those body piercings or who votes differently than we do. Oh yes, we have rules for how we treat each other, and they matter. They matter a lot.

So, it would be natural for us to think in our Scripture lesson, Jesus is giving us more rules. It seems Jesus is giving us rules for how to treat each other. Pray for your enemies. Bless those who curse you. Give to anyone who begs. OK. We can do that. Pray, bless, give. We can do that. Drive on the right, don't throw the puck into the net, pay your taxes on time. Pray, bless, give. Got it.

But I don't think Jesus is actually giving us rules. I don't think Jesus is giving us a rulebook for how to behave and all we need to do is follow it.

No. What I think Jesus is doing is he's describing a style of life. Jesus is describing a way of living. He's not telling us what to do so much as describing how to live. He's describing a life of expansive grace. Expansive grace. Expansive, broad, expanding, all-encompassing grace. Jesus is describing what it looks like to live lives of expansive grace.

Expansive grace, of course, is not confined. It's not confined to our family. We don't limit grace to people in our church or our denomination. We don't reserve our grace for people who agree with our politics or hold our views on immigration, Ukraine, gun control or climate change.

Grace is for everyone. That's what Jesus is getting at. Grace is for everyone – even those who cheat us at our business. Grace is for everyone – even those who betray our most intimate relationships. Grace is for everyone – even those who neglect us when we're suffering and stab us in the back when we really, really need their help.

What Jesus is doing is not just laying out some rules we should follow, boxes we can check and be OK with God. Jesus is talking about a lot more than peace signs and 'love your enemies' and all those feel-good things we like to do. Jesus is talking about a way of life. A 24/7, 365 way of living. The way of expansive grace.

Does that sound hard to you? Sounds hard to me. Sounds real hard, actually. Almost enough to make you not want to try.

But before we give up on expansive grace and settle for just following the rules, let's remember this. Let's remember this.

First of all, the good news of God, and with God there's always good news, the good news of God is we're not doing this alone. God is giving us power for living lives of expansive grace. The power of God to raise a man from the dead, the power of resurrection itself, is with us, helping us give and pray and bless.

And second of all, the good news of God is this is how God loves us. This is how God loves us. God loves us with an expansive grace. God does good to us even when we betray God by mistreating the impoverished and the powerless. God gives generously, not stingily but generously, when we ask for

forgiveness. God is kind to us, even when we are ungrateful and wicked to those we don't like or don't understand.

How Jesus tells us to treat one another that is how God treats us, because this is how much God loves us. Thanks be to God!  
Amen!