Luke 6:27a But I say to you…..

As I sat and contemplated these words I wondered just how it would be best to start. And then it simply dawned on me, “I need to start with a review of what Law and Gospel are.” That’s right, Law and Gospel. It is something important to know. It is something that every time I run across the lesson in the Catechism I emphasize that this teaching more than any other is at the heart of being a Lutheran. Notice I did not say it is the heart, but is at the heart. The heart of our teaching as Lutheran’s is justification. Justification is the teaching that we are pronounced innocent by the Lord because of the redemption of Jesus. But if you don’t understand Law and Gospel you might not get the utter importance of justification. So, what is Law and Gospel?

The Law is basically God’s dos and don’ts. Now, in the Bible there are three types of law to be found. The first type is called the civil law. Those were the laws that governed the Jewish people as a nation. These laws were for the Jewish people, to make them separate from the heathen nations around them. Civil laws defined them as a nation.

Then there were the ceremonial laws of God. The ceremonial laws were those laws that governed the worship life of the Jews. Things like the office of high priest, the daily sacrifices, the burnt offerings, the wave offerings, the fellowship offerings and so forth. The ceremonial laws said who could be a priest, what the duties of priests were and even regulated how the Temple of the Lord was to be laid out. What I will tell you simply is that the ceremonial laws, with few exceptions, were shadows of the Messiah to come. Almost every aspect of ceremonial law is tied up with the work and wonder of the one who would come and make salvation final and sure.

Finally there were the moral laws of God. The moral laws of God were meant for all people, Jew and Gentile alike. These are the laws that govern our hearts and actions in this world, govern how we are to act and behave toward God and our fellow man. Please note that the Ten Commandments are a summary of the moral law. Did you get that? The Ten Commandments are a summary of God’s moral law. As far as I know, these moral laws have never been cancelled or ended.

But the civil laws have. Once Israel was no longer a nation those laws ended. Much to the credit of modern day Israel, their present day laws are a literally based on these civil laws of God. So if you lived in Israel, you will find you are pretty much under these civil laws, pretty much.

The ceremonial laws have also been ended. These ended when Jesus fulfilled them. That is the point of the words of Colossians 2:16-17. **“Therefore, do not let anyone judge you in regard to food or drink, or in regard to a festival or a New Moon or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things that were coming, but the body belongs to Christ.”** Jesus fulfilled the ceremonial laws. So we don’t need a High Priest because Jesus is our High Priest. We don’t have to make the sacrifices of animals because as Heb. 7:27 makes clear Jesus did that once for all. It says, **“Unlike the other high priest, he does not need to offer sacrifices on a daily basis, first for his own sins and then for the sins of the people. In fact, he sacrificed for sins once and for all when he offered himself.”** The ceremonial laws are completely fulfilled in Jesus.

But the moral laws stand. God’s dos and don’ts. Do note there is only one God. Do use his name with honor and respect. Do worship him on a regular basis since you are his child. Honor your mother and father. Do not steal, kill or commit adultery. Do not speak words that will hurt and harm our neighbor. Understand that God knows every thought and desire and God wants you to keep your mind on the right things. See, that’s the moral law. I gave you the Ten Commandments in a different way. In truth they are a summary of the entire moral law. Remember that.

Then there is the Gospel. The Gospel is the message that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, suffered, died and then rose from the dead for the redemption of your souls. Jesus paid your price for sin. Yet the Gospel is not a free for all. Because of the Gospel, you don’t get to forget and throw out the moral laws of God. Because if there is one thing that is clear it is the fact that the Gospel message requires faith.

Faith produces works of faith (actually, faith itself is a work of faith given to us by the Lord.) This gift of faith has action. The action is this. I understand sin. I am sorry for my sins. I desire and work at stopping my sin. I grasp that for Jesus’ sake my sins are forgiven. Faith is alive and well when all of those things are going on. When you reject the issue of sin you have a problem. When you are no longer sorry for sin but consider sin your right, you have a problem. When you don’t work at stopping sin, but rather indulge in sin all the more, persisting in sin, you have a problem. That’s right, it is a faith problem. You have rejected faith, rejected Jesus as your Lord and Savior.

We can see that true of faith in just a few passages. For instance in Romans 6:1-2, **“What shall we say then? Shall we keep on sinning so that grace may increase? Absolutely not! We died to sin. How can we go on living in it any longer?”** The beauty of that passage is that it is preceded by about three chapters of teaching on sin and redemption. If you read the whole section you will grasp that as God’s children our new man, our faith life will lead us to fight against sin. Or consider the words of Jude 4, **“For certain individuals slipped in secretly, about whom it was written some time ago that they are condemned. They are ungodly people who turn the grace of our God into a license for sin and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ.”** You can’t embrace sin without denying Jesus!

Yep, Jesus died for our sins, but that is not a reason to sin. Jesus dying to sin is your dying to sin as you follow the course of life you are walking. We will struggle, we will falter, we will stumble, we will sin! But we see it, are sorry for it, desire to stop and know Jesus forgives. That is the Gospel wonder of Jesus. He forgives us of His grace and mercy. He died for us. That means something to us.

That was long. But now we are ready to turn our attention to the words of Jesus today. Our theme will be: **BUT I SAY TO YOU.**

Now, don’t make the common mistake so many do and assume that Jesus in these words is teaching us to save ourselves. “If you do these things, you will be saved.” Nope. What you need to grasp is that Jesus is preaching law. Pure, hard, in your face law. He is doing that because he is surrounded by a people who think they KEEP the law. So Jesus is going to teach the law in such a way that not a person around him listening could ever walk away and think: “Wow, what a great child of God I am.”

The fun part of this is how many people out there don’t grasp that Jesus taught law and taught it very powerfully. Everybody assumes that if it is Jesus speaking then it is a gospel message. But they define gospel as what Jesus taught concerning salvation. No, Jesus is the Gospel in action, but as the Son of God in this world Jesus needed to make sure the people around him understood they were sinners, rotten, lowly, kick against God, sinners. He does a great job. Listen

**27“But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. 28Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. 29If someone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other too. If someone takes away your coat, do not withhold your shirt. 30Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes away your things, do not demand them back.**

Now before you ever heard these words of Jesus do you think they were ever anything you gave thought to? Jesus is surrounded by Jewish people, especially the Pharisees and chiefs of the law who thought they were righteous and holy in every way. These were people who walked around with the idea in their head, “Hey, if you want to be Godly, why just be like me!” Yet, they hated the Romans, hated the obvious sinners around them, hated those not like them, and considered it their duty to make sure the sinners of the world got put down whenever they could.

We can be so like that can’t we? That person with the purple Mohawk, especially if they are older, why we just sneer at them. The guy with his pants below his backside, we roll our eyes. The list of ways we look down on people, scorn people and exalt ourselves over people is pretty long. It might even be as simple as looking down on someone because of who they voted for! Please note when you read Jesus’ words there is no room for hatred or for looking down on anyone for anything. And if you do, then you have a sin problem don’t you?

That’s is what Jesus just taught you. You have a sin problem. Do you continue in that sin or do you let Jesus serve as your guide and teacher. Jesus said of those who killed him, **“Father, forgive them, they don’t know what they are doing.”** Jesus was filled with compassion, empathy, care and concern for every soul he met. We are to be just like Jesus? Are you? I am not. I am not even close. I am a sinner who everyday must work hard at keeping the Jesus given me by faith alive and well. How I treat and look at my fellow sinners in this world might be a good indication of how my faith is doing. I can tell you right now that every Jewish person before Jesus knew Jesus had just condemned them of sin!

Next Jesus says, **31“Treat others just as you would want them to treat you. 32If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? To be sure, even the sinners love those who love them. 33And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners do the same thing. 34If you lend to those from whom you expect to be repaid, what credit is that to you? Even the sinners lend to sinners in order to be paid back in full. 35Instead, love your enemies, do good and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the unthankful and the evil. 36Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.**

Do you know how many evils have been perpetrated on mankind in the name of Jesus in the history of the world? It is false churches doing false things but it still hurts Jesus. No wonder people are confused as to what Christian means.

The gist of these words is, **“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”** Only God looks not just at our actions but our words and yes, even our thoughts. Man, these words sting. What Jesus has accused us of here, we must confess is true. We like our little world where you do for me and I do for you. We get uncomfortable if the beggar comes up to us. Please, sit back and think of how many ways these words of Jesus point out prejudice, haughtiness and lack of mercy. Seriously, could you say, “I am merciful just as God is!” Not even close.

Because in truth, the mercy of God extends to us even over great and horrid sins. The pure and holy God loves us though we are rotten to the core. We are like two week old road kill and still God stops to heal, help and save.

Yet in Jesus, we can work at these things. In Jesus we learn mercy. In Jesus we learn love. But first we are to believe and trust in Jesus as God and Lord. He calls the shots. He sets the bar. He determines the truths. That’s the way it is to be and all of us must grasp we fail and need Jesus to forgive and renew.

One last section. **37“Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. 38Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be poured into your lap. In fact, the measure with which you measure will be measured back to you.”**

Now, let’s clear up something real quick. The last line here is important. **“The measure with which you measure will be measured back to you.”** If you use God’s Word for the measure you will never have a fear. I say that because I don’t care who you are you will be measured by the standard of God’s Holy Word and God will be doing the measuring. So measure the right and wrong of things according to God’s Word.

Because when this passage is talking about not judging it is really speaking of not having a condemning, look down your nose, ungodly means of damning people. It is a plea to be fair, to be fair with all people. Tell the sinner of their sin but do it in love not with condemnation. Yet all too often we are going to have to say we falter here. We garner all kinds of attitudes and “I know better than you” mindsets that are scary.

That is not the Jesus way. Compassion, mercy, care and love. That is the Jesus way. Don’t get me wrong, we are allowed to defend ourselves against evil when we need to, but we should not be the evil people have to defend against. Again, just contemplate these words and you will see that Jesus helps us grasp, I am a sinner.

Why? Because He is the Savior. He has come to atone for us. He has come to show the depth of his love. He has come to give you an allotment of God’s inheritance, to declare you forgiven and a child of God. To pour upon you the Holy Spirit and move you to see, to hear, to be different in Jesus. Not because you have to, but because Jesus will and has served as your payment in hell. So in Jesus, we work hard to follow Jesus. In Jesus we work hard at love. In Jesus we practice mercy and Godliness for His sake. We do all things for Jesus, because we know Jesus has saved us from our sins.

Make no mistake. Jesus is a master preacher of the law. He will make you feel and know you are condemned because you do not measure up. But Jesus also offers himself to us. To wrap us in his robe of righteousness. To cleanse us from our sins. To makes us new and holy because of his love. Thank you Jesus. Thank you for being our Savior, yes even the sins you show us. Amen.