

CONCORDIA LUTHERAN CONFERENCE

Daily Devotions

By Carl M. Zorn

for the

Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity

-SATURDAY-

Love your enemies. – Matthew 5:44a

It is against our inherited sinful condition (Psalm 51:5) to love our enemies. But we Christians no longer are what we “*were*” (Ephesians 2:1b) by our natural conception and birth, that condition described so vividly by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 2: “*The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned*” (v. 14). But we Christians, by God’s “*grace*” alone (Ephesians 2:8), have been “*born again*” (John 3:3), have been “*quicken*ed,” have been made spiritually alive (Ephesians 2:1a, 5) by our gracious God through His means of grace, have been called by our merciful God “*out of the darkness [of sin and unbelief] into His marvelous light*” (I Peter 2:9), into the light of His “*finished*” redemption through Christ Jesus (John 19:30), into the light of His objective justification (Romans 3:24) on account of the vicarious “*atonement*” (Romans 5:11) by the “*one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all*” (I Timothy 2:5b-6a). By faith in this dear Savior, according to our “*new man*” (Ephesians 4:24), we are indeed new and we are indeed different, as confirmed by the Apostle Paul’s description in II Corinthians 5: “*Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new*” (v. 17). Now, as converted and born-again children of God “*by faith in Christ Jesus*” (Galatians 3:26), we want to “*follow*” the “*voice*” of our good Shepherd when He speaks to us in His Word (John 10:27) and teaches us to “*love [our] enemies,*” to “*bless them that curse [us], do good to them that hate [us], and pray for them which despitefully use [us] and persecute [us]*” (Matthew 5:44b), ever remembering how our “*God so loved the world [of enemies, which included each of us], that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned*” (John 3:16-18a).

PRAYER – Lord God, dear Heavenly Father, who has made me Thy dear child through Jesus Christ, my Savior, and has given me a new heart through Thy Holy Spirit working through Thy saving and truly comforting Gospel, so that now I know Thy holy will and gladly want to follow that will as revealed in Thy precious Word, help me to grow in loving my enemies and those who hate me, all out of gratitude for Thy undeserved and unmerited love toward me in Christ Jesus when I was Thy enemy. O gracious God, continue to help me, as I confidently and boldly ask this of Thee in the name of my dear Savior. Amen.

Scripture Reading for Saturday: I John 5:1-5 Theme this week: Love