

Luke 9: 49-56; John 3:16-21; A Christian Perspective of Others I. Christian Charity II. Christian Prudence III. Christian Patience

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how are we to view others around us? Should we view them as allies or enemies? How do we know who is against us? Well, as Christians we tend to draw very sharp and close lines. If you look like this, you are in. Everyone else is out. But we need a proper Christian perspective as we look at this world. On the one hand, we see the antithesis- the battle between good and evil evident in this world. But on the other hand, we know that Christ is victorious and He has won the victory- His Kingdom is come! So today we see that Jesus Christ gives us the Christian perspective necessary to see this world rightly. Our text comes in the context of disciples' pride- you will remember that they were vying for position and a place of prominence- they wanted honor and glory in the Kingdom of God. But Jesus calls for humility and service. So we see today that Jesus gives us the Christian perspective to see this world rightly.

### **I. Christian Charity**

We start with the call to Christian Charity- charity in the sense of a kind view of others. The disciples in v. 49 had met and outsider who was casting out demons. He was not one of the 12 disciples- he was an independent. And in view of the greatness that they were pursuing in the previous verses- the disciples forbid this man from doing this work. If the 12 were the first in the Kingdom of God- then there was no room for this outsider- we don't need his help since he does not follow with our group. But Jesus rebukes them for this selfish and prideful act- do not rebuke him for he is doing kingdom work. If they are not against you, they are for you! Don't view this outsider as competition- but as an ally! Putting this in today's context- have your children ever asked you while driving down the road- dad- is that a good church or a bad church? How do we view and speak of others when it comes to work in the kingdom of God? This man had welcomed Jesus because he was serving the little ones in Jesus name- as v. 48 spoke of. He was aligned with Christ- and thus not to be rebuked or rejected! At issue here is this- who is our enemy and who is our friend? Where do we draw the line? Well- these disciples had a very close line- we are in- everyone else is out. If someone steps on our turf- or tries to do what we do- then they are competing with us. They are stepping on my territory. But

Jesus says- you are viewing them all wrong! The fact is, differences in church polity or church structure does not make a person an enemy! This man was an independent- outside the close group of Jesus's disciples. Also- someone who does work different than I do- or even different individuals within the church- are not the enemy but are part of our family. Someone who has a different approach to a ministry or service within the church does not mean that God is not pleased with it- and that others are not blessed by it! Ministries of mercy brought by Baptist- or the preaching done by Lutherans- are a blessing to those who receive them. That often affects our view of others- in their preaching or their works of mercy- is often our petty pride. Christian Charity means that we take the best view of others- even praising God when the ministries of others flourish! Even if we are not able to have organic unity with these other churches, we are able to acknowledge that God can still work through them for His Glory and the good of other people! I don't know about you- but I understand where the Disciples are coming from! It is hard to praise God for His blessings given to others! It is easier to try and protect our little corner of the kingdom! Let me be clear, the Christians I speak of are not living in sin- but they are genuinely seeking to glorify God and be a blessing to others- even if they go about it way that we would not agree with. So Jesus calls us exercise Christian Charity when other churches grow- not resentment! Do not hinder them or speak ill of them- for if they are not against us they are for us! See them as a fellow saint- and rejoice that God is working through them!

## **II. Christian Prudence**

But as our passage continues- we find that not all are to be considered as allies and friends. Some are in fact opposed to the gospel- and these enemies of Christ will reject and persecute His people. This is why Jesus said we need to be as innocent as doves, but as shrewd as snakes. What is our response when we come face to face with someone who is not for Christ- but against Him. As Jesus would later say in ch. 11:23- whoever is not with me is against me. Whoever does not gather scatters. The fact is- there is no neutrality- either you are for the truth or you are against it! You are in the church and united to Christ by faith- or you are one of the world. As v. 53 says- some refused to receive Jesus. Now remember what we read last week in v. 48- if you receive a little one in the name of Jesus you receive Jesus and the Father. Well- now we find a group of people that clearly refuse to receive him. There are enemies in this world-

fallen man is not a friend to grace and has no love for the church. Not everyone is for us- they may put up with the church for a time but given the opportunity they would love to seize it as prey. Jesus would have us know this- and remember that we are pilgrim in a hostile world! Prudence- vigilance- is the Christian response to this fact. Lets remember why these Samaritans were so opposed to Jesus. Specifically, they rejected Jesus because of his ethnicity and His destination. As a whole, Samaritans hated the Jews and the Jews hated the Samaritans. These two people groups were opposed to each other- each seeing the other as invaders. The second reason they were opposed to Jesus- as v. 53 says- is because Jesus had his heart set on going to Jerusalem. At the 3 major Jewish festivals, many Jewish people would travel to Jerusalem. These were unwanted guests in Samaria- which was just to the North. As John 4 recounts- the Samaritans worshiped at Mt. Gerizim- the Jews on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. They had different religions with different holy cities. It would be like a Muslim seeking refuge in a Christian church while on his way to Mecca! This blending was not welcomed in Samaria! But salvation is from the Jews as Jesus taught. Indeed- as v. 51 says- He has set his face towards Jerusalem- the face of Jesus as like flint- hard as a rock- refusing to be distracted or to stray from His mission. The Cross loomed large in all of His discussions and travels. Jesus is going to lay down his life for His sheep- and nothing can dissuade Him! Although Jesus will receive no welcome here- remember where He is going! The truth is- the cross is offensive- even today! That is why the world by in large- rejects Christ! No one wants to confess their need for blood atonement! The cross is extremely humbling for us- to see our need and His great sacrifice- by nature men recoil at the thought! But Jesus set His face- and would not depart from this path! A proper perspective of the world- is to remember that by nature we all go astray! We need to view this world properly- as both an enemy to the truth in its teaching- but also a mission field to be reached! Remember that the gospel was going to spread- after Jesus rose- going from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria- to Samaria! The good news is for the Samaritans as well- for those who reject the church and persecute us- they need to hear as well! We should view them with pity- even compassion. Remember what Rachel Denhollendar said to Larry Nassar at his hearing- the gospel extends grace, hope and mercy where none should be found. Instead of viewing our enemies with hatred and fear- we pray for them and hope the Spirit softens their hearts. The world is a mission cause- we need the vision of

Christ to view those who reject us properly. Not surprised when rejection comes- but responding by doing them good and praying for their conversion. As we read in John 3- Jesus came into the world so that the world might be saved through Him.

### **III. Christian Patience**

But instead of showing grace- James and John- those sons of thunder- ask Jesus if they should call down fire from heaven to consume that village in v. 54. The rejection by these Samaritans is too much for these brothers- they want to see that city destroyed at once. Perhaps thinking of the ministry of Elijah- as II Kings 1 records when Elijah called fire to come down from heaven which then burned up Ahaziah's troops that had been sent to arrest him. In any case, these disciples are asking for permission to kill the wicked ones and purge the land. However, Jesus rebukes them in v. 55. This rebuke is very telling- those who follow in the footsteps of Jesus will not take up the sword against their enemies. As Jesus warned Peter- those who live by the sword die by the sword. The crusader like vengeance is not the calling of a Christian in this life, our mission is not to cleanse the world from all the wicked people. No, our mission is to carry the sword of the Spirit- to bring down lofty towers of false teaching and to expose the lie. We know that God is just- and in the end the wicked will be dealt with. A Christian learns patience, to wait for God's justice in His time! We are to wait on the Lord- and leave room for His vengeance in His time. Never to repay evil with evil, but to leave it to the wrath of God. Vengeance is mine, I will repay as Rom. 12 says. We can be patient with the timing of recompense- until then we wait in the hope of our enemy being converted by the power of the Holy Spirit. John and James failed to take into account the Great Commission- that would soon be upon them.

To conclude, in our text Jesus gives us the right perspective to view the world around us. Charity towards our fellow man- viewing other Christians as fellow saints and viewing those hostile to the church as a reason for outreach. In this way, the heart of humility and patience is cultivated within us. So let us learn to view those around us properly- not as a threat but an opportunity.