

February 18, 2018 – Soli Deo Gloria  
By Wayne J. Schneider

### **“Standing in the Need . . . .”**

Genesis 45:1-15; Luke 6:27-38

Is Karma real? If someone is mean to you does that cruelty come back to them someday? Is the reverse also true? If you are generous, does that generosity return to you?

The story of Isaac and Rebekah’s twins, Jacob and Esau, may provide an answer here. Esau the eldest’s name, means ‘red or ruddy.’ Jacob’s name means ‘trickster or heel.’ Jacob’s lifestyle reveals that his name was spot-on. He cheated Esau out of his birthright and fooled his father out of a blessing.

Life goes on and Jacob has twelve sons, the youngest named Joseph, is his favorite son. Jacob gives him a beautiful, multi-colored coat. Like his father, Joseph is insufferable. One day, his brothers in a rage beat him up, throw him in a pit, tear up his coat, soak it in animal blood, sell him into slavery, and take the bloody coat to his father. Believing his son to be dead, Jacob weeps.

Years go by and an immense “reversal of fortune” takes place. Joseph moves from slave, to servant, to prisoner, to prime minister of Egypt. And, when famine hits the land of Canaan, Joseph’s brothers arrive in Egypt to purchase food. They do not recognize their brother. Clearing the room of all but his brothers, Joseph reveals himself.

Terror strikes their hearts. They drop to the floor, horror fills them, certain that, because they sold their brother into slavery, he was going to have them executed. Why? Because ‘what goes around comes around?’ No. Joseph does not believe in karma. Rather, he gives them life. *“Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good, in order to preserve a numerous people.”* (Genesis 50:20)

This is not the way of the world. If someone pays for your latte at a Starbucks

drive-thru, you 'pay-it-forward.' If someone slaps your face, you slap them back. But I hear Jesus teaching us in the Beatitudes and showing us the way to live and believe.

We are now in the Season of Lent, and it is ironic that today in our text, we hear Jesus caution us to give up judging others. You may protest thinking, Isn't Jesus saying, "*What goes around comes around?*" He said, "*the measure you use is the measure you will receive?*" And, '*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you?*' What is happening here?

Jesus hangs on the cross conscious of the fact that what goes around often does come around. He is aware of this. He knows the way we judge others is often the ruthless manner in which we are judged. This is the reason St. Paul writes to the bitterly divided church at Corinth, that love keeps no record of wrongs.

The ledger of life will always be there, the good, the bad, the brutal, and the lovely. Someone has written "*Love says, "I will leave the ledger unbalanced."*" That is perfect! "Followers of the Way" know there is another way to live. To submit our wills to God's will, to receive from God the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

A result of this daily submission is a Spirit-directed, grace-filled life: empowered to meet insensitivity with compassion, Energy to meet another's hate, not with angry words or bitter rhetoric, but with kindness. As we walk this way, we no longer see people from a dualistic framework: colored or white, poor or rich, simple or sophisticated. Instead, we see people for whom Jesus died, people God loves, children, women, and men created in the image of God.

Certainly, God willing, we serve and long that our shared love and grace will come back to us. But, this is not the way of Jesus. Our Lord gave a larger-than-life love and grace, than he received on Good Friday and in death. The holy season of Lent brings to mind sacrifice.

What if my cynicism, my sarcasm, my insensitivities, my sin, and yours, come back around? If that gives us pause, then we understand why we need a Savior. Alleluia. Amen.