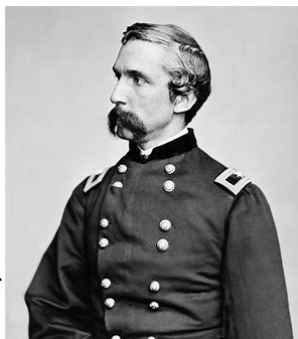


The Bulwark

JUNE 22, 2025

JOSHUA CHAMBERLAIN: MAN OF MERCY

Joshua Chamberlain was an unassuming man. Upon completion of his time at a theological school in Maine it was thought he would enter the ministry. Instead he opted to teach at Bowdin College and then in 1855 he married. When the Civil war broke out, against the objections of his wife, Chamberlain enlisted in the Union army. He was appointed as a lieutenant colonel, of the 20th Maine Volunteer Infantry Regiment. By the time of the Battle of Gettysburg, he had advanced to a full colonel and distinguished himself at Little Round Top. By the time the Civil war drew to a close, he was a brigadier general.



Against that back drop, Chamberlain was in command of the Union army that was in place at Appomattox for the final surrender of the Confederate forces. His soldiers lined up on both sides of the road that the vanquished Confederate soldiers had to march in order to surrender. Tensions were high and any overt act could very have ignited a blood bath, Chamberlain ordered his troops to raise their swords and rifles in salute to their defeated foes. No jeering, no taunting. Peace.

In the 6th chapter of Luke, the words Jesus spoke with respect to peace and forgiveness can be seen. In the words that He spoke, the distinction between people with

grace and those without is clearly on display. *"But I say to you who hear, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you."* (Luke 6:27) Several verses later, Jesus brought forth the following, *"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men."* (v 35)

Christ is calling for those that would follow Him to do what the vast majority of people would find nearly impossible to do, love, extend mercy and grant total forgiveness. Imagine if you will how difficult that must have been for those under Chamberlain's command, to extend such courtesy as mercy upon those who were viewed as enemies just minutes before! A total change of heart.

"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8) In verse ten Paul uses the phrase, *"...while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son..."* Mercy (see Ephesians 2:4-10) and most assuredly we did not deserve what God provided for mankind. *"Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!"* (2Corinthians 9:15)

Imagine the impact in our home

life, workplace and every interaction we have with others, if we would employ what Jesus directed, *"Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."* (Luke 6:36) The healing power of mercy coupled with forgiveness can and will bring about a balm of healing in our relationships.

Think back on the embrace of Esau when Jacob returned, for Jacob was greatly concerned about the reception he would receive considering what had transpired between them (see Genesis 33:4). Or envision the father of the prodigal son, *"...his father saw him, and felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him..."* (Luke 15:20) Take some time and read over James 2:13 and Ephesians 4:32. Mercy (wbe)

A Publication of the Winnetka Ave. Church of Christ

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