

February 24, 2019
7th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 6:27-38

[Jesus said to his disciples:] "But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you."

BACKGROUND:

Last week the gospel text described Jesus' first teaching on the plain to the newly named twelve, the disciples, and a great crowd that had come from the surrounding region and coastal region of Tyre and Sidon. But the blessings and woes are directed to his disciples. They are instruction as to what they could expect. "Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude and insult you, and denounce your name as evil on account of the Son of Man... Woe to you when all speak well of you, for their ancestors treated the false prophets in this way." (Luke 6:23 & 26)

In this week's gospel Jesus continues his instruction where last week left off, with the same starkness that characterized last week's text. If the new disciples adopt the radically different view of the world described in the blessings and woes of last week, the way that they treat people will be radically different from the rest of society of the day.

Jesus' expectation is that his disciples love everyone, even their enemies. He says it four ways in the first two verses of this reading: love (verse 27), do good to (verse 27), bless (verse 28), and pray for (verse 28). The disciples are not to react to the way they will be treated with any sense of the retaliation that was the usual response in their day. Jesus is asking them to even move past a neutral non-response to harsh treatment, to positively doing good for, blessing, and praying for one's enemies. Jesus is asking them to treat them as God does, who sends the sun to shine on the good and the bad. "But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust." (Matthew 5:44-45) If being like God is not sufficient enough to motivate, they are reminded in the last two verses that the way they treat others is the way that they can expect God will treat them.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. When you think of your enemies, who or what memories come to mind?
2. If you recall a time when you have been upset by how you were treated...
3. When you hear Jesus' exhortation to love your enemies and do good to those who hate you...
4. Do you know people who have worked to forgive significant offenses of another?
5. Do you also know people who seem to hold on to the offenses of others?
6. When you recall the ways that you have offended others, even people you loved...
7. When you think of the times you have been forgiven by another...
8. Can you take some time to talk honestly about your own experience of loving those who are difficult to love, about your desire to know that you have been forgiven by another or by God, or about some other issue that arose within you from this text?

The gospel background and reflection questions are written by Fr. Paul Gallagher, OFM. They are edited by Sister Anne Marie Lom, OSF and Joe Thiel. The excerpts from the Sunday readings are prepared by Joe Thiel. To be added to the distribution list, send your name and email address to annemarie.lom@gmail.com

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Excerpts from the readings for February 24, 2019, the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

In those days, Saul went down to the desert of Ziph with three thousand picked men of Israel, to search for David. So David and Abishai went among Saul's soldiers by night and found Saul lying asleep within the barricade, with his spear in the ground at his head and Abner and his men sleeping around him. Abishai whispered to David: "God has delivered your enemy into your grasp this day. Let me nail him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I will not need a second thrust!" But David said, "Do not harm him, for who can lay hands on the Lord's anointed and remain unpunished?" So David took the spear and the water jug from their place at Saul's head, and they got away without anyone's awakening, because the Lord had put them into a deep slumber. Going across to an opposite slope, David stood at a great distance. He said: "Here is the king's spear. Let an attendant come over to get it. The Lord will reward each man for his justice and faithfulness. Today, though the Lord delivered you into my grasp, I would not harm the Lord anointed."

The Lord is kind and merciful. Bless the Lord, O my soul; all my being, bless his holy name, and forget not all his benefits. He pardons all your iniquities, heals all your ills. He redeems your life from destruction, crowns you with kindness and compassion. Merciful and gracious is the Lord, slow to anger and abounding in kindness. Not according to our sins does he deal with us, nor does he requite us according to our crimes. As far as the east is from the west, so far has he put our transgressions from us. As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

Brothers and sisters: The first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam a life-giving spirit. But the spiritual was not first; rather the natural and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven. As was the earthly one, so also are the earthly, and as is the heavenly one, so also are the heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.

Jesus said to his disciples: "To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the one who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. Rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing. The measure with which you measure will be measured out to you."

Excerpts from 1 Samuel 26:2-13, 22-23; Psalm 103:1-4, 8-13; 1 Corinthians 15:45-49; and Luke 6:27-38