

February 20, 2022
7th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Luke 6:27-38

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 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 also 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:

In last week's gospel, Jesus inverted the expected ways of looking at the world. The text described Jesus' first teaching to the newly named twelve. While the other disciples and a great crowd were present, Jesus addressed the twelve. He gave them instructions 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 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 the society of the day.

Jesus' expectation is that his disciples love even their enemies. This is radically different from the Pharisees of the day who believed the path to holiness was found in separating that which was unclean from that which was ritually clean, holy, and of God. Jesus 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 are being treated with any sense of retaliation that was normative at the time. 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 others as God does, God 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 motivation, they are reminded in the last two verses that the way that they treat others is the way they can expect God will treat them.

Reflection questions:

1. When you think of "enemy," what other words might be helpful here? (i.e. opponent, critic...)
2. When you think about enemies, as in your personal enemies, who or what comes to mind?
3. Who might consider you an enemy?
4. Who have been the people that treated you cruelly, or poorly?
5. When you hear Jesus' exhortation to love your enemies, what goes on in your insides?
6. Do you know people who have worked to forgive significant offenses of another?
7. Who are the people who have taken steps toward loving their enemies in history, in the church, and in your own life?
8. What steps have you taken in your life to love those who are difficult, or who have offended you?

9. When you reflect on asking God to forgive you as you have forgiven, and God asks you to forgive others as God has forgiven you, what arises within you?
10. Can you take some time to talk honestly about your own experience of loving those who are difficult to love, your desire to know that you have been forgiven by God, or 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

Our Gospel Reflections are hosted by the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity. Their homepage is <https://fscs-calledtobe.org/>. One link there is labeled Franciscan Gospel Reflections. A click on the icon will take you to the Gospel reflections for the upcoming Sunday. By following this link, you will be able to blog or comment on the reflection questions. The material will be posted on Fridays and will be available until the following Friday when the new material is posted.

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Excerpts from the readings for February 2, 2022, 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's 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

From Joe:

Friends,

Here are the gospel background and reflection questions for February 20th, as prepared by Franciscan spiritual director Fr. Paul Gallagher. In the Gospel from Luke, Jesus speaks about kindness and mercy, and about doing good and expecting nothing in return--about what it takes to love your enemies. "Do good to those who hate you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other. Even sinners love those who love them. Lend, expecting nothing back; then your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High." The other readings also refer to bestowing kindness, mercy, and love, even to enemies. Some of these are specific examples, and some are more general. In the first reading from 1 Samuel, David goes with Abishai at night, among Saul and Abner his soldiers, all of them asleep. They find Saul, with his spear beside him, and Abishai offers to slay this enemy of David with one thrust of the spear. David replies, "Do not harm him, for who can lay hands on the Lord's anointed. The Lord will reward each man for his justice." Psalm 103 proclaims, "The Lord is kind and merciful. He redeems your life from destruction; he crowns you with kindness and has compassion, as a father has compassion on his children." In the second reading, continuing from 1 Corinthians, Paul writes, "Just as we have borne the image of the earthly Adam, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one."