

7th Sunday, Cycle C, February 23, 2025.

The Golden Rule of Jesus Christ - Love Your Enemies.

First reading: 1 Samuel 26:2-23. (New International Version)

In those days, So Saul went down to the Desert of Ziph, with his three thousand select Israelite troops, to search there for David. David and Abishai went to the army by night, and there was Saul, lying asleep inside the camp with his spear stuck in the ground near his head. Abner and the soldiers were lying around him.

Abishai said to David, “Today God has delivered your enemy into your hands. Now let me pin him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I won’t strike him twice.” But David said to Abishai, “Don’t destroy him! Who can lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed and be guiltless? So David took the spear and water jug near Saul’s head, and they left. No one saw or knew about it, nor did anyone wake up. They were all sleeping, because the Lord had put them into a deep sleep.

Then David crossed over to the other side and stood on top of the hill some distance away; there was a wide space between them. He called out to the army and to Abner son of Ner, “Look around you. Where are the king’s spear and water jug that were near his head? Here is the king’s spear, Let one of your young men come over and get it. The Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The Lord delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the Lord’s anointed.

Gospel (Luke 6: 27-38) The Golden Rule of Christ - Love Your Enemies.

Jesus said to His disciples: “To you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, 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? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.” (Luke 6: 27-38. New International Version)

Reflections:

Last week, Jesus laid down some spiritually high standards for his friends and close disciples. He continues with those very difficult teachings today. Remember that these hard sayings actually turned away many of the immediate audience from Jesus that very day. I talk to you just as I talk to myself also. This isn't easy, especially when the hurts are very deep and many. How could you possibly think of loving people who resist you, or contradict you, or cross you, or those who antagonize you? One can find such people among one's friends, within the family circle, at the place of work, or on social media.

Tears and Torture: 33 Days in Kidnappers Den, by Fr. Stephen Ojapah, MSP. (September 6, 2024)

FR. MARTIN EZEIHUAKU, MSP. Homily 7th Sunday in Ordinary time Year C

After 33 days in the hands of their abductors, Fr. Stephen Ojapah, Fr. Oliver Okpara, Mr. Hassan Hassan and Ms. Ummie Hassan who were abducted by gunmen at midnight of 25th May 2022, in the rectory of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, Gidan Maikambo, Kafur LGA of Katsina State, Nigeria. Fr. Stephen reflected with hope on his time in captivity. "I didn't think I could ever forgive my abductors, but after a few weeks, I did, and doing so deepened my love for Jesus," he added: "Religious people say God's ways are inscrutable. God writes straight on a crooked line." This is a story crying to be heard. In Northern Nigeria, men and women are subjected to barbarism - abduction, torture, humiliation, and death. Fr. Stephen Ojapah, my former student and a good friend, brings a strong message of pain and forgiveness from a land torn by violence. I am extremely moved by this book and highly recommend it. This book is on amazon. Fr. Stephen's heroism in the face of his captors is inspirational. His story is new, but also very old.

David refused to take revenge on king Saul even though Saul was out with three thousand soldiers to kill David. In the words of David; "The Lord rewards everyone for their righteousness and faithfulness. The Lord delivered you into my hands today, but I would not lay a hand on the Lord's anointed" (taken from our first text: 1 Samuel 26:2-23). French Jesuit priest - Isaac Jogues who took Christianity to the Iroquois was killed (1646). Other stories of forgiveness included that of Immaculée Ilibagiza from Rwanda and Fr Lawrence Jenco in Lebanon - these people were all able to forgive their kidnappers and enjoyed their freedom. Lucy Amina Chaves shares an amazing story of hurting and forgiveness, how she lost her reputation due to some rumors spread by her closest friend. Lucy Amina Chaves is a missionary with Society of Anglican Missionaries.

Think about this.

Jesus was not talking about having affection for one's enemies; he is talking about choosing a conscious attitude toward them. You cannot fall into this kind of love – it takes an act of the will. Loving our enemies means setting aside violence and revenge and acting in their best interests. We can have compassion for them, pray for them, and try to understand them. God loves the whole world, even though the world is in rebellion against God. Jesus tells us to follow his example by loving our enemies. Grant our enemies the same respect and rights we desire for ourselves.

A forgiving spirit shows that a person has received God's forgiveness. If we remain critical of others rather than compassion, we will also receive criticism. If we treat others generously, graciously, and compassionately, however, this treatment will come back to us in full measure. We are to love others, not judge them.

There are two central lessons for all of us today:

(1) The way of radical love: "Love your enemies...Do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you and pray for those who maltreat you."

(2) The way of graceful forgiveness instead of harboring revenge and planning retaliation. Forgiveness is a gift that actually benefits me the giver. It brings inner peace, healing and true freedom.

Jesus said to His disciples: "*To you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you*".

JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU FOR MERCY.
JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU TO FORGIVE.
JESUS, I TRUST IN YOU EVERY DAY. AMEN.

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