

## Sunday Lesson – February 20, 2022

### GOSPEL: Luke 6: 27-38

*“Love Your Enemies”*

#### Context

“Jesus explains that the central demand of neighbourly law is that we love unreasonably. As with the Sinai covenant, the demands of the Law expose our need for a righteousness that is given as a gift of grace rather than a righteousness earned by obedience. There is a sense where the demands of the law guide the life of a child of God, but above all, they force a reliance on the fundamental truth of the covenant, as revealed to Abraham, that the promised blessings of the covenant are realised by grace through faith. So, in fulfilling/completing the Law, Jesus expounds the law of love in the terms of an ideal, an ideal which exposes sin and thus drives the hearer to rest in faith on God's mercy.” *(Excerpts from [lectionarystudies.com/studyg/studyn/sunday7cgn.html](http://lectionarystudies.com/studyg/studyn/sunday7cgn.html))*

#### Insight

“Jesus exhorts the disciples to replace old-age qualities of behavior with those that are characteristic of the Realm. Indeed, in so doing, the disciples imitate God who is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. To be “kind” does not mean to approve but means to seek the best interest. God wants even the ungrateful and the wicked to repent and become a part of the movement to the Realm. Indeed, the word “kind,” *chrestos*, is related to the word “grace,” *charis*.

Christians sometimes mistake the admonition to stop judging and condemning in Luke 6:37 to mean that the church should never make a moral judgment. Rather, the saying likely means that the church should not act like it knows the final verdict on those who oppose the Realm of God. Human perception is



always finite. Moreover, enemies have the opportunity to repent until the apocalypse.

To be unforgiven and unforgiving is to be imprisoned by the lack of forgiveness. In the security of the Realm, it is possible to forgive, which releases both those who forgive and those who are forgiven.” *(Excerpts from [workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/sixth-sunday-after-epiphany-3/commentary-on-luke-617-26](http://workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/sixth-sunday-after-epiphany-3/commentary-on-luke-617-26) by Ronald J. Allen)*

#### Gospel Reading

“To you who are ready for the truth, I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst. When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the supple moves of prayer for that person. If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it. If someone grabs your shirt, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it. If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more payback. Live generously. “Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for *them!* If you only love the lovable, do you expect a pat on the back? Run-of-the-mill sinners do that. If you only help those who help you, do you expect a medal? Garden-variety sinners do that. If you only give for what you hope to get out of it, do you think that’s charity? The stingiest of pawnbrokers does that. “I tell you, love your enemies. Help and give without expecting a return. You’ll never—I promise—regret it. Live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously, even when we’re at our worst. Our Father is kind; you be kind. “Don’t pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don’t condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you’ll find life a lot easier. Give away your life; you’ll find life given back, but not merely

given back—given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity.” The Message

### **What It Could Mean?**

“The thriving of all creatures in God’s realm requires a different ethos from those customarily in place. Jesus quickly lists a bunch of plural imperatives that describe behavior for those still listening. The very first imperative, “love,” is followed by some quite concrete examples. Do good; don’t just think well of, but do good too. Pray for, bless, give, do. This is a constructive ethos of behavior that will be summed up in verse 36 which is the basis for the examples Jesus puts forward, sums them up and is itself a touchstone for questions about how to live in God’s realm.

Those who follow Jesus are to live as God lives, mercifully and generous beyond expectation, beyond comprehension. The norm for the world is what “sinners” do very well indeed: they love, lend, and do good. In our own day, it would be a joy if even the way of sinners was broadly lived out! But for disciples, for God’s people, loving, lending, and doing good are all about generosity that does not draw boundaries based on the recipients’ responses. It is good to keep in mind that love in this passage is about willing the good for another and acting on that will.

The golden rule is insufficient for those in covenant relationship with God. One’s own wishes for oneself are no measure for one’s treatment of others. Rather, God’s mercy is to be the measure for God’s people’s behavior. All gifts flow from God’s “tender mercy” and fidelity to promises made. In Luke 6, we see that generous healing, restoration, and hope flow through Jesus. Jesus makes sure we who are listening know that it is our calling as well.

God’s power is present, a promise that the realm of God is no chimera or fantasy, but that it is being lived out on a level-

playing field, indeed, a leveling playing field in the world of Jesus.

This longing for relationship is not something unique to the ancient world. Longing for a faithful relationship, where promises are kept, and roots can go deep, a relationship that can be healing and produce joy is not something we can relegate to the past. Jesus’ words to those who continue to listen, who “give heed” in that old-fashioned phrase, promise that we have a part in that relationship too. We are called to live in God’s realm in accord with God’s character and the power is there for us to do it, to be caught up, to be healed, to lose the hostile spirits that hold us captive, to receive and live mercy. There is no dearth of realities needing our best, most thoughtful mercy now.” *(Excerpts from workingpreacher.org, Revised Common Lectionary, by Sarah Henrich)*

### **Readings for Further Study**

- [Matthew 5:44](#) *Pray for those who persecute you*
- [Romans 13:10/1 John 4:11](#) *Love does no wrong to a neighbor/we also ought to love one another*

### **Thought for the Day**

“Do not waste time bothering whether you ‘love’ your neighbor; act as if you did. As soon as we do this we find one of the great secrets. When you are behaving as if you loved someone, you will presently come to love him.” ~ C.S. Lewis, from his book “*Mere Christianity*”

### **A Prayer**

“Father, bless me with the wonderful power of forgiveness. Give me the grace to unconditionally forgive those who have done me wrong. Give me the strength to let go of all ill-will, to forgive myself of my own failings and sins, knowing that you have already forgiven me. Grant me Your favor wherever I go, so that if I have done wrong to my brother in the Lord, I may receive his forgiveness in return.” **Amen.**