

20-26 February 2022 Luke 6: 27-38

Measure for measure

Read the passage from Luke. It is written below.

“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the 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, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

Bible notes

Jesus' call to discipleship is never easy. This section of the 'Sermon on the Plain' is among the toughest and most disconcerting things Jesus has to say to us.

'Love your enemies' (v.27) can strike us as such a perverse instruction that we want to do a double-take. Shouldn't we hate our enemies? Or, at the very least, want vengeance or, if they've hurt us, justice?

Perhaps one fruitful way to consider how one might take Jesus' words seriously without attempting to wish them away, is to consider what is covered by the concept of love. We live in an era where love is, much of the time, understood as an emotion or as something that exists firstly in our heads and hearts. It entails being well or affectionately disposed towards another. Jesus' context had a stronger relational, public and practical conception of love. Love was, in part, about being in relationship together in community. To love one's enemies entails acknowledging that they remain part of the community; that they are not other or beyond the pale; that somehow, and at some level, the people of God are diminished without them. It leaves room, however tenuously, for God – in us and in them – to restore and remake the community. For us that might seem impossible, but nothing is impossible in God.

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

When we hear the word 'enemy', who or what comes to mind? In reality, we have all been wounded by someone at some time – we all have, or have had, an enemy. What does it mean to love your enemy? Clearly, it must be more than warm fuzzy feelings – not least when we do not share someone's values, or find ourselves appalled or outraged by their actions. Approaching this from another angle, have we ever stopped to consider that we may be the enemy? The truth is that we hurt others too. How would we want to be treated? And how can we learn to love the enemy within as well as without?

Questions for reflection

You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues of sharing.



Questions

- What challenges does 'love your enemies' pose for you?
- How does this image relate to how you see your inner self?
- What loving 'measures' could you try to live by – for yourself? For others?

Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

Father, we thank you for showing us a better way to live.
When someone wrongs us, our first thought is to take revenge,
to give as good as we got.
But you teach us to take pause for thought,
and by so doing, perhaps make 'them' do likewise.
We praise you, God, for your wisdom,
imparted to us through your Son, Jesus Christ,
and revealed to us by the Holy Spirit –
to whom be all thanks and praise, now and for ever.
Amen.

A prayer to end the Bible study

Lord, thank you that we are loved and forgiven by you.
We know it is hard to love those who have hurt us.
Give us your strength.
Help us to love our enemies.
Help us to do good to those who hate and hurt us.
And help us to know when we have hurt others,
and to repent, and to seek only to do good,
in Jesus' name.
Amen.