

February 24, 2019 Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time  
**Love Your Enemies!**

1 Samuel 26:2,7-9,12-13,22-23 Psalm 103:1-4,8,10,12-13 1 Cor 15:45-49 Luke 6:27-38

In the first reading Saul is seeking David to harm him, but David sets a surprising and enlightened example for him. Instead of harming Saul, David takes the spear close to Saul who is sleeping and gets away without anyone in Saul's camp seeing this. He later shouts from a hilltop that he would never harm the Lord's anointed. This incident was possible because the Lord had sent a deep sleep over Saul's camp.

The psalmist blesses the Lord who pardons, heals, redeems, and even crowns with love and compassion. Furthermore the Lord is slow to anger and deals mercifully with our sinfulness. Compassion is given to all who rightly fear the Lord and he does not repay us according to our faults.

In the second reading Paul compares Adam to Jesus; the first being natural and of the earth, the second being spiritual and from heaven. In birth we resemble the first; in rebirth we bear the likeness of the second.

In the Gospel Jesus tells us to be compassionate, generous, and forgiving, and not to be judgmental and condemning. We are to do good at all times and circumstances especially when dealing with those who dislike us, maltreat us, and act more like enemies than friends.



**Love, Do good, and Give**

The theme of our readings emphasizes that we are to set good examples even to those who treat us unfairly. In fact, doing good to those who trouble you is the mark of a righteous person. Jesus, the spiritual man, makes it clear that the Father Most High is good to all, and as sons and daughters we must do likewise. Jesus' advice, "Do to others as you would have them do to you," is the Golden rule found in every world religion. All are called to stop judging and condemning others because love is more effective than hate and love lights more fires than hate extinguishes.

In the Gospel passage Jesus emphasizes that we are to love, do good, and give without expecting repayment. This kind of behavior is expected from the children of God and is a test of discipleship.

*love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ....bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.....give to everyone who asks of you (Luke6:27-30)*

*For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? .....And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? .....If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you?. (Luke 6:32-34)*

*But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting nothing back. (Luke 6:35)*

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# The Golden Rule

*If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty give him something to drink; for by doing so you will heap burning coals upon his head.<sup>1</sup>*

While the first part of this scripture is challenging the second part is somewhat perplexing to say the least, and one could question as to why this passage should relate to the Golden Rule. That is, unless you realize that in the culture of the time an ongoing fire in the hearth was important for heat as well as cooking. If the fire went out, an easy way to get it going again was to visit your neighbor who would put hot coals into an insulated basket that could be carried on the head! This indeed puts a positive connotation to the passage indicating the most powerful effect of doing a good turn, especially to an enemy.

Early in the Old Testament we read: *When you come upon your enemy's ox or ass going astray, see to it that is returned to him. When you notice the ass of one who hates you lying prostrate under its burden, be no means desert him; help him, rather, to raise it up.<sup>2</sup>*

I'm reminded of the story told by a priest who explained that on his way back to the university one weekend he had car trouble and was stranded alongside a busy highway waiting for help. Some colleagues passed him by and later told him they saw him but knew that he would get proper help so they didn't stop. He related the episode to the story of the Good Samaritan, and rightly so, but I imagined the car to be the ass lying prostrate under its load. If we sometimes (even in ignorance or innocence) give so little thought to our friends, how can we ever live up to the expected behavior we are to have for our enemies?



The sage Hillel Ha-Babli (30 BCE) put it this way: *Whatever thou wouldst that men should not do to thee, do not do that to them. This is the whole Law. The rest is only explanation. Even before that time we read: Do not do to others what would anger you if done to you by others.<sup>3</sup>*

In the New Testament the Golden Rule is spelled out clearly: *Do to others whatever you would have them do to you. This is the law and the prophets,<sup>4</sup> and Love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expect 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.<sup>5</sup>*

Besides **Christianity**, the world religions have accepted the Golden Rule as a universal principle of highest aspiration. Consider the following:

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<sup>1</sup> Romans 12:20

<sup>2</sup> Exodus 23:4-5

<sup>3</sup> Isocrates 375 BCE

<sup>4</sup> Matt 7:12

<sup>5</sup> Luke 6:35

**Baha'i:** *Lay not on any soul a load which you would not wish to be laid upon you, and desire not for anyone the things you would not desire for yourself.*

**Buddhism:** *Hurt not others in ways you yourself would find hurtful.*

**Confucianism:** *If there is one maxim which ought to be acted upon throughout one's life, surely it is the maxim of loving kindness. Do not do unto others what you would not have them do unto you. (the Analects)*

**Islam:** *None of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself. (Sunnah)*

**Judaism:** *What is harmful to you do not to your fellow man. (Talmud)*

**Hinduism:** *This is the sum of all true righteousness: deal with others as thou wouldst thyself be dealt by. Do nothing to thy neighbor which thou wouldst not have him do to thee hereafter. (The Mahabharata, 150 BC)*

**Zoroasterism:** *That nature alone is good which refrains from doing unto another whatsoever is not good itself. (Zoroastrian scriptures)*