

February 23, 2020 7th Sunday

Love your enemies!

Lev 19:1-2,17-18

Psalms 103:1-4,8+10,12-13

1Corinthians 3:16-23

Matthew 5:38-48

Moses tells the people they are to be holy for the Lord is holy. Although it is permissible for them to reprove a brother they are not to take revenge and incur sin; they are to love neighbors as they love themselves.

The psalmist reminds the readers not to forget all the blessings they have received from the Lord who shows them love and compassion. The Lord is slow to anger and rich in mercy and his anger over our sins, when it comes, will abate over time; he has the same compassion for the faithful as a parent has for a child.

Paul emphasizes to the Corinthians that their corporate identity is the temple of God. For this reason, unity in the community is important, and anyone who disrupts this unity with false teachings will be punished. Those who consider themselves as exemplifying the wisdom of the world are simply foolish in the eyes of God.

In the Gospel Jesus tells his disciples to forego the usual instinctive method of retaliation and not repeat the actions of their enemies. The Father in heaven shares the benefits of the natural world with everyone, be they good or bad, and this serves as an example for the faithful. While it is only natural to love those who are friends and family, Jesus says love and concern must be extended and not limited if the perfection of God is to be imitated.

The Holy Spirit leads us to the Son who brings us to the Father.

Moses reminds the Israelites to love their neighbors while Jesus extends the teaching to loving even enemies. Forget the old ways of retaliation in the face of evil and let good overcome it. Love and non-retaliation are what the people of God, the living temple, are to perfect and this makes for ideal unity in the Christian community. Unity according to Paul is what brings the community to a greater rapport.

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Love *A great thing is love, a great good every way in that it alone lightens every burden and endures in the same way every inequity. It carries a burden without being burdened and makes every bitter thing sweet and savory. The noble love of Jesus urges a man to do great deeds and ever motivates him to desire that which is more perfect. Love motivates one to higher things and refuses to be held back by corrupt things. Love wills to be free and to be detached from all worldly affection, so that its inward spiritual vision is not hampered and that it suffers no entanglement in worldly wealth and confusion in adversity. Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing stronger, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in heaven and on earth; for love is from God¹ and cannot rest but in God, above all created things.*

(Adapted from Book 3, Chapter 5 of Thomas of Kempis', "Imitation of Christ")

<https://melkplace.com>

¹ 1John 4:7