

Weekend Readings & Reflections

February 19-20, 2022 – Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

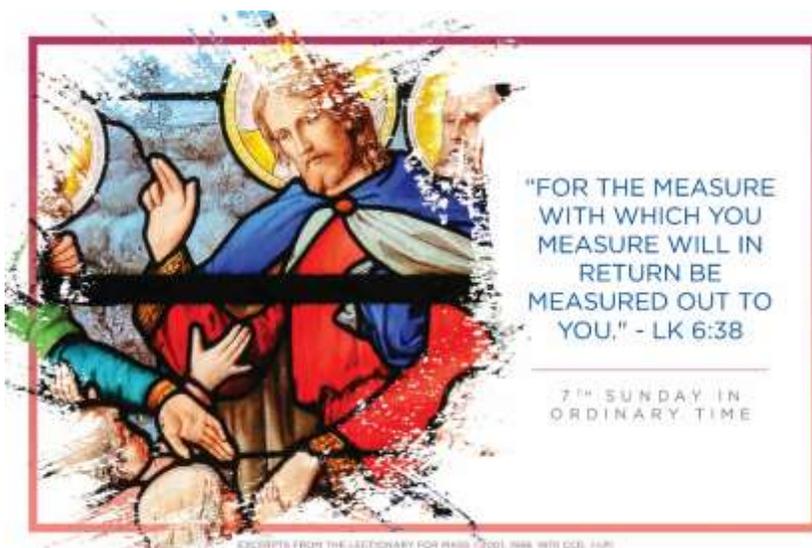
Reflection: The story of David and Saul in today's First Reading functions almost like a parable. Showing mercy to his deadly foe, David gives a concrete example of what Jesus expects to become a way of life for His disciples. The new law Jesus gives in today's Gospel would have us all become "Davids"—loving our enemies, doing good to those who would harm us, extending a line of credit to those who won't ever repay us. The Old Law required only that the Israelites love their fellow countrymen (see [Leviticus 19:18](#)). The new law Jesus brings makes us kin to every man and woman (see also [Luke 10:29-36](#)). His kingdom isn't one of tribe or nationality. It's a family. As followers of Jesus, we're to live as He lived among us—as "children of the Most High" (see [Luke 6:35](#); [1:35](#)). As sons and daughters, we want to walk in the ways of our heavenly Father, to "be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Grateful for His mercy, we're called to forgive others their trespasses because God has forgiven ours. In the context of today's liturgy, we're all "Sauls"—by our sinfulness and pride we make ourselves enemies of God. But we've been spared a death we surely deserved to die because God has loved and shown mercy to His enemies, "the ungrateful and the wicked," as Jesus says. Jesus showed us this love in His Passion, forgiving His enemies as they stripped Him of cloak and tunic, cursed Him and struck Him on the cheek, condemned Him to death on a cross (see [Luke 22:63-65](#); [23:34](#)). "He redeems your life from destruction," David reminds us in today's Psalm. That's the promise, too, of today's Epistle: that we who believe in the "last Adam," Jesus, will rise from the dead in His image, as today we bear the image of the "first Adam," who by his sin made God an enemy and brought death into the world (see [1 Corinthians 15:21-22](#)).

OPENING PRAYER

Leader: Welcome our discussion on the Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, let us begin in prayer:

All: O my God, in union with the Immaculate Heart of Mary, I offer thee the Precious Blood of Jesus from all the altars throughout the world, joining with it the offering of my very thought, word, and action of this day. O my Jesus, I desire today to gain every indulgence and merit I can and I offer them, together with myself, to Mary Immaculate, that she may best apply them in the interests of Thy Most Sacred Heart. Precious Blood of Jesus, save us! Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us! Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us! Amen.

Leader: This week's session is going to focus on loving our enemies. Before we get into all that entails, let us call to mind the words of our Lord from the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Take a moment now to quietly think of someone who has hurt you or offended you in some way. When you have that person in mind, ask yourself this question: Can I love that person as Christ loved his enemies? This week our presenter, Tim Gray, is going to help us to better understand why we are called by Jesus to love our enemies. As we listen to his insights, think about a time when you may have struggled to love someone who hurt you.



(Play the video on FORMED.org - [Opening the Word – Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time \(Year C\)](#))

Digging Deeper

Prayer for Loving your Enemies

If you struggle with how to love an enemy, you can pray the following prayer, filling in the blanks with that person's name:

"Lord, bless _____ and keep _____ and make your face to shine upon _____. Extend your love to _____ and have mercy on me. Amen.

FIRST READING ~ 1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23 ~

In those days, Saul went down to the desert of Ziph with three thousand picked men of Israel, to search for David in the desert of Ziph. So David and Abishai went among Saul's soldiers by night and found Saul lying asleep within the barricade, with his spear thrust into the ground at his head and Abner and his men sleeping around him. Abishai whispered to David: "God has delivered your enemy into your grasp this day. Let me nail him to the ground with one thrust of the spear; I will not need a second thrust!" But David said to Abishai, "Do not harm him, for who can lay hands on the LORD's anointed and remain unpunished?" So David took the spear and the water jug from their place at Saul's head, and they got away without anyone's seeing or knowing or awakening. All remained asleep, because the LORD had put them into a deep slumber. Going across to an opposite slope, David stood on a remote hilltop at a great distance from Abner, son of Ner, and the troops. He said: "Here is the king's spear. Let an attendant come over to get it. The LORD will reward each man for his justice and faithfulness. Today, though the LORD delivered you into my grasp, I would not harm the LORD's anointed.

David and around 600 men are living in caves in the desert of Ziph. King Saul brings 3,000 elite troops to hunt and kill him (Consider reading 1 Samuel as a short story.) After David killed Goliath, Saul kept David close, made him chief commander and his son-in-law. But soon, filled with fear and jealous insecurity he plots to kill David. In this episode, David and Abishai have the chance to kill Saul but David refuses; "I would not harm the Lord's anointed." Contrast David's wisdom, constraint and wit with Abishai, who though brave and faithful is quick to act rashly without thought.

- *Have you ever felt condemned by someone you trusted? How does David deal with his desire for revenge? What qualities does David use that might help us in our relationships with people in authority?*

SECOND READING ~ 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 ~

Brothers and sisters: It is written, *The first man, Adam, became a living being*, the last Adam a life-giving spirit. But the spiritual was not first; rather the natural and then the spiritual. The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven. As was the earthly one, so also are the earthly, and as is the heavenly one, so also are the heavenly. Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.

Continuing his teaching on Resurrection St Paul says that when Jesus rose from the dead, he became 'life-giving spirit' releasing the Holy Spirit for the salvation of the world. Our human body grows throughout life. While not describing our resurrected bodies, Paul makes it clear that real transformation takes place. Remember Paul encountered the resurrected Christ on the road to Damascus and was never the same again. When we enter relationship with God, a real encounter takes place and in some way the mystery of becoming part of the body of Christ transforms us, while also allowing for us to continue to grow more deeply into the perfect image of the 'heavenly one'.

- *As you reflect on that mystery what do you most want to ask God for? What area of your life needs transforming? How do you need to grow, in order to become more like Christ?*

GOSPEL ~ Luke 6:17, 20-26 ~

Jesus said to his disciples: “To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. For 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 do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same. If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, and get back the same amount. But rather, love your enemies and do good to them, and lend expecting 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. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

The sermon on the mount continues with very challenging teaching from Jesus. The Gospel is in some sense acted out in the story of David and Saul.

- *What links do you see between the two readings?*
- *When you reflect on the Gospel what teaching stands out most for you? Talk with God about why that strikes you and what area of your life, God is inviting you to open to His transforming life-giving Spirit?*

The so called ‘golden rule’ says, “Do to others as you would have them do to you.” Abuse in any form is an abomination.

- *How can we adhere to these radical teachings of Christ and still stay safe, respecting our own bodies and needs in the face of violence or abuse? How can we be merciful to those enduring violence and ill treatment?*

The Jews listening to Jesus despised the Romans because they were occupying their land and controlling their freedom. Soldiers routinely insulted Jews demanding they carry their loads, give up their cloaks, and worse. So, the teaching to ‘love your enemies and do good to them’ was profoundly shocking. Jesus explains that our mercy needs to be abundant like God’s. A merchant who gives a ‘good measure’ pours grain into your container, presses it down, shakes it, presses, shakes and fills again. As a result, your contents are compressed. You continue receiving grain until your container is literally running over the sides ‘into your lap.’ You only pay for that one container but it gets filled with far more than seems possible.

- *Use your imagination in prayer and see yourself receiving from God like that. How does it feel? Ask God for the grace to give and forgive like that?*
- *How do you plan to live out your Gospel calling this week?*

MEDITATION

What makes Christians different and what makes Christianity distinct from any other religion? It is *grace* - treating others, not as they deserve, but as God wishes them to be treated - with loving-kindness and mercy. God is good to the unjust as well as the just. His love embraces saint and sinner alike. God seeks our highest good and teaches us to seek the greatest good of others, even those who hate and abuse us. Our love for others, even those who are ungrateful and selfish towards us, must be marked by the same kindness and mercy which God has shown to us. It is easier to show kindness and mercy when we can expect to benefit from doing so. How much harder when we can expect nothing in return.

Augustine of Hippo (354-430 AD) describes Jesus double precept to *give and forgive* as two essential wings of prayer:

Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given you. These are the two wings of prayer on which it flies to God. Pardon the offender what has been committed, and give to the person in need (Sermon 205.3). "Let us graciously and fervently perform these two types of almsgiving, that is, giving and forgiving, for we in turn pray the Lord to give us things and not to repay our evil deeds" (Sermon 206.2).

Our prayer for those who do us ill both breaks the power of revenge and releases the power of love to do good in the face of evil. How can we possibly love those who cause us harm or ill-will? With God all things are possible. He gives power and grace to those who believe in and accept the gift of the Holy Spirit. His love conquers all, even our hurts, fears, prejudices and griefs. Only the cross of Jesus Christ can free us from the tyranny of malice, hatred, revenge, and resentment and gives us the courage to return evil with good. Such love and grace has power to heal and to save from destruction. That is why Paul the Apostle tells those who know the love and mercy of Jesus Christ to "bless and not curse.. nor take revenge.. and to overcome evil with good" (Romans 12:14,17,21).

- *Do you know the power of God's love, mercy, and righteousness (moral goodness) for overcoming evil with good?*
- *How can you possibly love those who cause you harm or ill-will?*

CLOSING PRAYER

Leader: In closing, let us pray together:

ALL: Lord Jesus, your love brings freedom and pardon. Fill me with your Holy Spirit and set my heart free with your merciful love that nothing may make me lose my temper, ruffle my peace, take away my joy, nor make me bitter towards anyone. Amen.

Leader: (if time, let us offer up our intercessions ... St. Michael... Our Father... Hail Mary... Glory Be...)

[Opening reflection was shared from St. Paul Center at <https://stpaulcenter.com/studies-tools/sunday-bible-reflections>]

[video can be found at FORMED.ORG "Opening the Word". Additional reflections can be found at FORMED in "Opening the Word"]

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