

2/24/19 Luke 6:27-38 & 1 Sam. 26: 7-9, 12-13, 22-23

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Fr. Robert Beck (subscription)

Stone, Naomi. [Choosing Love as a way of Life](#)

Rolheiser, Fr. Ron. [Measuring ourselves in Love](#)

[Monastery Sunday Homilies](#)

ENTERING THE SCENE:

When his advancing army stormed into a small town the general called his scouts before him. "Where are the citizens of this village?" he demanded.

"They have all fled in fear," the scouts replied.

"Is there no one left to pay tribute?" the general shouted.

"No one but the priest. He remains in the temple."

Quickly the general marched to the temple, burst through the doors and demanded to see the priest. After a search, the priest was found reading quietly in his study. The general, angry that the cleric refused to greet him as conqueror, shouted, "Don't you know that you are looking at one who can run you through without batting an eye?"

"Don't you know," the priest replied, "that you are looking at one who can be run through without batting an eye?"

For the moment the soldier stared in disbelief at the priest. Then, slowly, a smile danced on his lips. He bowed low and left the temple.

Lk. 6:27-38

27 But I tell **you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good** to those who hate you, 28 **bless** those who curse you, **pray** for those who mistreat you. 29 If someone strikes you on one **cheek**, turn to him the

other also. If someone takes your **cloak**, do not stop him from taking your **tunic**. 30 **Give** to everyone who asks you, and if anyone **takes** what belongs to you, do not **demand** it back. 31 Do to others as you would have them do to you. 32 If you love those who love you, what **credit** is that to you? Even '**sinners**' love those who love them. 33 And if you **do good** to those who are good to you, what **credit** is that to you? Even '**sinners**' do that. 34 And if you **lend** to those from whom you **expect repayment**, what **credit** is that to you? Even '**sinners**' lend to '**sinners**,' expecting to be **repaid** in full. 35 But **love your enemies, do good** to them, and **lend** to them without **expecting** to get anything back. Then your **reward** will be great, and you will be **sons of the Most High**, because he is kind to the **ungrateful** and **wicked**. 36 Be **merciful**, just as your **Father** is **merciful**. 37 **Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned.** Forgive, **and you will be forgiven**. 38 Give, **and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."**

DISCUSSION QUESTION: Jesus reveals a God unlike any God the people have ever known before. Are you attracted or repulsed by these words?

PRAYER: Compassionate Jesus, you will ultimately go the cross to live out these words in full. I think you knew all along that once you revealed God for who you knew God to be, the agents of power would start to align themselves against you. Yet you wanted us to know God as you know God and were willing to love your enemies and pray that they be forgiven. Help me to rejoice in this all forgiving love and give me the help I need to model this love. Amen.

WORD STUDY AND QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

YOU WHO HEAR ME: Jesus is addressing those who have the ability to listen.

What is the difference between hearing and listening? What makes me able to listen to Jesus' words today?

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES: This is the way God has chosen to overthrow evil in the world.

Have I ever experienced this working in your my life? What gave me the courage to try this method of overcoming evil?

DO GOOD / BLESS / PRAY: This way offers a studied and deliberate way of seizing the initiative and overthrowing evil by the force of its own momentum.

Could this work without God's power behind it? What does this tell me about God?

CHEEK: Being struck by someone's fist implies an equality of status. Being backhanded on the face is one way the oppressor can demean and discount a subordinate. By turning the other cheek a person can nonviolently demand recognition of equality.

Are there any situations in my own life that I might find a nonviolent way to make an unjust superior recognize my dignity as a child of the same Father? Does that way also give them the chance to change and retain their own dignity?

CLOAK /TUNIC: Without cloak or tunic a person is naked before their oppressor. In a culture where nakedness was outrageously shameful, the oppressor's cruelty would be exposed.

In what ways could I learn from this example, as I search for nonviolent ways to confront oppression? What risks would this method entail for me?

TAKES /DEMANDS: Luke positions this passage in the context of armed robbery. Our instinct in the face of such a situation is either to take flight or fight. Jesus offers another possibility of taking nonviolent direct action.

What is the difference between nonviolent direct action and passive/aggressive action?

CREDIT: We show confidence in a person's ability and intention to pay when we entrust them with goods or services without needing immediate repayment.

How is God giving me credit these days? How do I recognize my dependence on God's love and mercy by the way I are with others?

SINNERS: To sin is to miss the mark.

How are my methods of overcoming evil missing the mark today?

LEND / REPAY/ REPAID/ REPAYMENT: All these terms describe some kind of give and take transactions.

How does God's ways differ from my human ways? What is Jesus asking of me in this scripture passage?

EXPECT-ING: To expect is to look for with reason or justification.

What is this passage asking of me regarding my expectations? Does it challenge me to move to a God's eye view of reality? How?

REWARD: A reward is often offered when someone or something is lost and is used as an inducement to having others help in finding that which is lost.

When I am able to change an oppressive situation into one that is liberating, do I experience a sense of being rewarded? Do I then see things as Jesus' God sees things?

SONS OF THE MOST HIGH - FATHER: Jesus is challenging his disciples to become like their heavenly Father. To see things in the same way as the Most High sees things.

In what ways do I still cling to seeing things as 'the world' sees?

UNGRATEFUL /WICKED: In order to be wicked it seems necessary that we also be ungrateful.

Why do I think these attributes are linked together?

MERCIFUL: God is all-inclusive (full of mercy) and Jesus challenges the listeners to be all-inclusive. This overthrows the old understanding of God that only rewards the good and punishes the bad.

Does this way of understanding God upset or confuse me? Why? How?

JUDGE-D / CONDEMN-ED: Jesus' followers are to leave the judgment to God, and it follows that no one is to condemn another.

In what ways does this free me to grasp Jesus' understanding of God?

GIVE / FORGIVE-N: Jesus liberates the oppressed even as he frees the oppressor from sin. It is a way of opposing evil without becoming evil in the process.

Do I appreciate it that God is fore giving me even before I ask for forgiveness? Is it OK that God does this with everyone?

POURED / MEASURED: To pour or measure something means that the capacity to be filled needs to be estimated.

How large is my capacity to receive God's unconditional love?

PRESSED DOWN / SHAKEN TOGETHER / RUNNING OVER: God's mercy (steadfast love) is packed tightly and even spilling over for those who are able to see with a God's eye view.

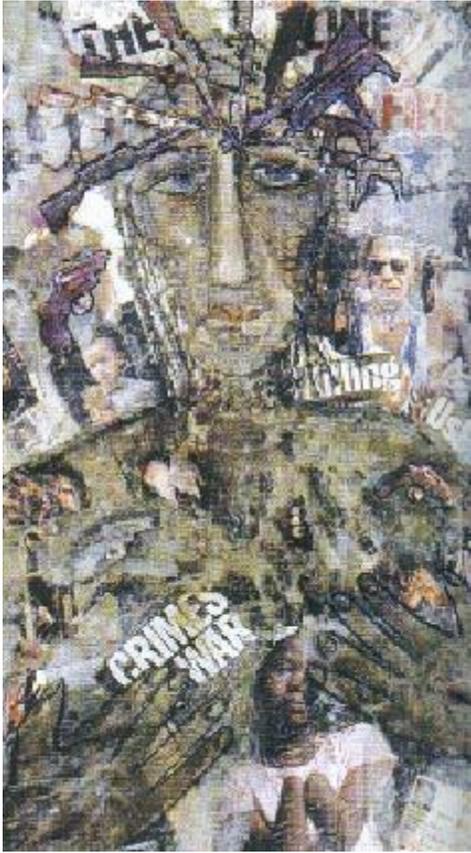
With this assurance in mind, do you think that loving my 'enemy' is within reach?

PARALLEL TEXTS: Lk. 6:27 // Mt. 5:44; Lk. 6:28 // 1 Pt. 3:9; Lk. 6:29f // Mt. 5; 39-42; Lk. 6:31 // Mt. 7:12; Lk. 6:32 // Mt. 5:46; Lk. 6:34 // Dt. 15:8; Mt. 5:42; Lk. 6:38 // Mk. 4:24; Lk. 6: 36 // Mt. 7:1; James 2:13; Lk. 6; 38 // Mk. 4:24;

OTHER TEXTS OF THE WEEK:

1 Sam. 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23; [Ps. 103: 1-4, 8,10, 12-13](#); 1 Cor. 15:45-49; Lk. 6:27-38;

Revised Common Lectionary: Gen. 45:3-11, 15; [Ps. 37:1-11, 39-40](#); 1 Cor. 15:42-50; Lk. 6: 27-38;



SUPPORTIVE INFORMATION:

“By His wounds We Are Healed” by Jean Mormon Unsworth, Chicago
(A winner in an art contest designed to image Christ in the 21st Century)

By choosing to forgive, we stand in awe of the horrors that can happen to people in this world, and we decide neither to participate in them nor to repay them. Rev. Lyndon Harris

There is a story of Gandhi that reveals how profound and daring his sense of compassion was. It occurred during one of his famous hunger strikes. A man whose daughter was killed came in anguish, saying to Gandhi that he would stop fighting if the great soul would eat. But Gandhi knew the healing was deeper than just stopping the violence, and so he told the man he would eat only when the tormented father embraced the man who killed his daughter. Nepo, Mark. *The Book of Awakening*. Berkeley, CA. Conari Press. 2000. P-179

When Christ said: “Forgive them for they know not what they do,” He was speaking of an ignorance that excuses sin. Most of the time when we sin – we do know what we are doing, **but we don’t know how much God loves us** – hence we are still innocent through ignorance. Karl Rahner, *Prayers for a Lifetime 181*

He who thinks that loving one’s enemies is impractical doesn’t take into account the practical Consequences of hating one’s enemies. Erich Fried

“Christians have, on the whole, simply ignored this teaching. (Lk. 6:29-30) It has seemed impractical, masochistic, suicidal – an invitation to bullies and spouse-batters to wipe up the floor with their supine Christian victims. Some who have tried to follow Jesus’ words have understood it to mean nonresistance: let the oppressor perpetrate evil unopposed. Even scholars have swallowed the eat-humble-pie reading of this text: “It is better to surrender everything and go through life naked than to insist on one’s legal rights,” to cite only one of the scores of these commentators from Augustine right up to the present. Interpreted thus, the passage has become the basis for systematic

training in cowardice, as Christians are taught to acquiesce to evil. Cowardice is scarcely a term one associates with Jesus. Either he failed to make himself clear, or we have misunderstood them. There is plenty of cause to believe the latter.”

Wink, Walter. *Engaging the Powers*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN. 1992. Pg. 175.

Lk. 6.27–36: Avoiding violence (Mt 5.38–48; 7.12). 27: Love your enemies, Jewish teaching commands helping enemies (see e.g., Ex 23.4–5; Prov 24.17; 25.21); rabbinic commentary speaks of aiding (not “loving”) enemies in order to “subdue the evil inclination” (b. B. Metz. 32b). See “Parable of the Good Samaritan” p. 123. 28: Pray for those who abuse, see 23.34. 29: Takes away your coat, Mt 5.40 suggest a lawsuit; Luke suggests robbery. 30: Give to everyone, Luke sanctions voluntary poverty (see also 6.24n. 12.33; 18.22); rabbinic sources do not, as personal impoverishment would create greater hardships for the community. Jewish sources mandate the giving of alms (“tzedakah”); see e.g., Deut 15.11. Rav Assi (third century) called almsgiving “equal in value to all other commandments” (b. B. Bat. 9a). 31: Do to others, compare Hillel’s “What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else” (b. Shabb. 31a; Tob 4.15). 32–34: What credit, Luke reflects the reciprocal system of benefaction. 35: Expecting nothing in return, Ex 22.25; Lev 25.36–37. Children of the Most High, see 1.32,35; 8.28. 36: Be merciful, compare Mt 5.48, where the injunction is perfection; for imitating divine compassion (Ex 34.6), see b. Shabb. 133b; Mek. 15.2; Sifre Deut. 11.22; 49 (“As God is called compassionate and gracious, so you too must be compassionate and gracious, giving gifts freely”). 6.37–42: Judging (Mt 7.1–5; 12.36–37; 15.14; Mk 4.24–25). 37: Do not judge, see b. Rosh Ha-Shanah 16b; b. Meg. 28a. 41–42: Pgs. 113-114. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

Matthew deals with this same issue a bit differently:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also;⁴⁰ and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well;⁴¹ and if one forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.⁴² Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect. Pg. 12. [The Jewish Annotated New Testament](#)

For a good summary of the place of honor and shame in the time of Luke’s gospel go to pages 168ff where he deals with conflict resolution in Luke-Acts. Beck, Robert. [Jesus and his Enemies](#).

Rabbi Akiba, who was killed by the Romans in 132 CE, taught that the commandment "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" was "the great principle of the Torah." To show disrespect to any human being who had been created in God's image was seen by the

rabbis as a denial of God himself and tantamount to atheism. Murder was a sacrilege: "Scripture instructs us that whatsoever sheds human blood is regarded as if he had diminished the divine image." Pg. 180. Armstrong, Karen. The Battle for God. NY. Ballantine Book. 2000.

God is a compassionate God. That is the good news brought to us in and through Jesus Christ. He is God-with us, who finds nothing human alien and who lives in solidarity with us. He is a servant God who washes our feet and heals our wounds, and he is an obedient God who listens and responds to his divine Father with unlimited love. In fellowship with Jesus Christ, we are called to be compassionate as our Father is compassionate. In and through him, it becomes possible to be effective witnesses to God's compassion and to be signs of hope in the midst of a despairing world. Pg. 45. Nouwen, Henri, et al. Compassion. NY. Image Books. 1983.

Lk. 6:32 // 2 Clement 13:4. "God said, "It is no credit to you if you love those who love you; but it is a credit to you if you love your enemies and those who hate you."

Lk. 6:35 // Gospel of Thomas (95) Jesus said, "If you have money, do not lend it at interest, but give it to one from whom you will not get it back."

Lk. 6:36 // Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: "My people, children of Israel, as your Father is merciful in heaven, so shall you be merciful on earth."

Rabbi Hillel: "Whatever is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else; that is the whole Law, all else is commentary. Go and learn it" (Babylonian Talmud, Sabbath 31a).

In the dialogue between science and religion today, there is much interest in the origins of extending love and concern (altruism) beyond the immediate family or clan/tribe. Hubert Meisinger, addresses this issue in his article Sociobiology: The Conversation Continues Zygon, vol 35, no 4 (December 2000, pages 745ff. The subtitle of the article, translated by our own Dr. Alfred Kracher of ISU in Ames, IA is; Christian Love and Biological Altruism. On page 751 we find: "A purely biological consideration of human beings is incomplete; only by crossing the border between biological and cultural evolution can altruistic behavior toward non-kin individuals be explained.

The teaching in today's gospel is quoted frequently in writings of the early church. Athenagoras (177 CE) used it in defending Christians from persecution. He pleaded that they should be judged on their behavior not their name. (68) Justin, in his dialogue with Trypso, used it when he was trying to convince him to convert to Christianity. (114) In the mid second century, in a sermon called Second Clement, it appears again as the author preached to former pagans in order to remind them of the need of repentance and the need to return to upright moral behavior in the light of the coming day of judgment. Pg. 367.

Ehrman, Bart. After the New Testament. NY. Oxford Univ. Press. 1998.

In an article titled East Meets West: The Uncanny Parallels in the Lives of Buddha and Jesus Bible Review October 1999 pages 18ff) we find the Buddha (6B.C.) saying: "Hatreds do not ever cease in this world by hating, but by love; this is an eternal truth... Overcome anger by love, overcome evil by good. Overcome the miser by giving, overcome the liar by truth. (Dhammapada 1.5 and 17.3)

Reconciliation is much more than a one-time event by which a conflict is resolved and peace established. A ministry of reconciliation goes far beyond problem solving, mediation, and peace agreements. There is not a moment in our lives without the need for reconciliation. When we dare to look at the myriad hostile feelings and thoughts in our hearts and minds, we will immediately recognize the many little and big wars in which we take part. Our enemy can be a parent, a child, a "friendly" neighbor, people with different lifestyles, people who do not think as we think, speak as we speak, or act as we act. They all can become "them." Right there is where reconciliation is needed. Reconciliation touches the most hidden parts of our souls. God gave reconciliation to us as a ministry that never ends. Henri Nouwen

Forgiveness is the key that unlocks the door of resentment and the handcuffs of hate. It is a power that breaks the chains of bitterness and the shackles of selfishness- Corrie ten Boom

Forgiveness is the name of love practiced among people who love poorly. - Henri J.M. Nouwen

He who cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass. - Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648)

SUGGESTED READINGS:

Links to all the books mentioned in this guide are on The Ark web site: www.theark1.com

White, William. Stories for Telling. Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. 1986. **AN EYE FOR AN EYE**. Pgs. 122-3.

Hays, Edward. The Ethiopian Tattoo Shop. Forest of Peace Books, Easton, KS. **THE MEDICINE MAN**: Page 105f.

Aurelio, John R. Fables for God's People. Crossroad, NY. 1988. **THE SACK**: Pages 25-27

William R. White. Stories for the Journey. Augsburg Pub. House, Minneapolis, MN. 1988. **WITHOUT BATTING AN EYE**: Page 95.