

7th Sunday in Ordinary Time, February 24th, 2019, Year C

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

This book is the story of the rise and fall of Saul, the first king of Israel. Anointed king by the prophet Samuel, Saul proved himself a capable military leader against Israel's neighbors, the Philistines. But he was consumed with jealousy for David, his younger contemporary, whose military successes and popularity at first rivaled and then surpassed his own. Saul's jealousy only increased with time, hurling him past the point of madness. He and his sons died pursuing his vain vendetta against David. At the time of our reading, Samuel has already anointed David who would be king of Israel after Saul and Saul cannot bear this thought. In an insane rage he is seeking to kill David whom he sees as a threat to his kingship. Today we have David presented with the opportunity to slaughter Saul together with his whole battalion. And it is not out of respect for Saul that David does not. What stays David's hand is his belief that Saul is under God's protection for he is an anointed king and to kill one of God's anointed would truly be an offense against God and despite Saul's relentless campaign of violence against him, David sees Saul worthy of respect.⁸ This reading compliments the gospel message to "Love your enemies."

2In those days, Saul went down to the desert of Ziph. This was the desolate hill country of Judah, west of the Dead Sea. David was staying in this wilderness area where, as a native, he had the advantage. **with three thousand picked men of Israel, to search for David in the desert of Ziph.** David had just 600 men.

7So David and Abishai. This aide to David was also his nephew, his sister's son, who later became the commander of David's army.⁵ **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.** The spear was 4 to 6 feet long in the handle with a metal point. It was placed butt end in the ground to indicate the quarters of the king.⁵ **and Abner.** Abner was the commander of Saul's army. His father and Saul's father were brothers.⁵ **and his men sleeping around him.** Abner and the king's bodyguard are asleep when they should be watching over the king; it is David in fact who protects Saul's life.⁷

8Abishai 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!"

9But David said to Abishai, "Do not harm him, for who can lay hands on the Lord's anointed and remain unpunished?" David is determined to leave Saul's fate up to God. This shows David's compassion and mercy. We can see in him the future king, because mercy is a perfection proper to God and therefore a virtue to be expected of any representative of his and of everyone who wants to be like God.⁷

12So David took the spear and the water jug from their place at Saul's head, Taking the royal spear was a particularly daring act. **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.

13 Going across to an opposite slope, David stood on a remote hilltop at a great distance from Abner, son of Ner, and the troops.

22 He said: "Here is the king's spear. Let an attendant come over to get it. David foreshadows what he will be later on: a model of a king faithful to God. He will be faithful in his exploits, faithful in his prayer, faithful in his repentance. His personality will crystallize the elements of the Messianic hope, and Jesus, *son of David*, will be a descendant in his line.⁹

23 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." Such magnanimous actions seem beyond human possibility, but the grace of God makes even forgiveness of one's enemies possible.⁴ David believes that God's anointing was effective and enduring. We find a similar understanding in the Church's teaching that the Sacraments retain their effect even if the priest or bishop who celebrates them is unworthy.²

1 Corinthians 15:45-49

This passage is easier to understand if you know an interpretation of Genesis that was common at the time Paul was writing. The philosopher Philo attempted to reconcile the two accounts of creation (chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis) by suggesting that the creation of Adam in chapter one was the creation of the ideal or heavenly man, while the creation in chapter two was the creation of historical or earthly man. Paul uses this language, but he reverses Philo's pattern and insists that the heavenly Adam comes after the earthly, for the heavenly Adam is Christ. He is the true spiritual man, and Christians who share his life also share his spiritual nature. All this is part of Paul's answer to the question, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come back?"⁴

Brothers and sisters:

45 It is written, the first man, Adam, became a living being, the last Adam (Christ) a life-giving spirit. The contrast between Adam and Christ shows that by nature we get a body from Adam that is physical, earthly, and mortal; and by grace we expect a body from Christ that is spiritual, heavenly, and immortal.¹¹

46 But the spiritual was not first; rather the natural (Adam) and then the spiritual (Christ).

47 The first man was from the earth, earthly; the second man, from heaven. The Resurrection of Christ was not the restoration of a deceased person to the conditions of the present life but rather, the conferring upon the deceased of a new and permanent form of life.⁵

48 As was the earthly one, so also are the earthly, and as is the heavenly one, so also are the heavenly. Earlier in chapter 15, Paul wrote, "What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. And what you sow is not the body which is to be, but a bare kernel. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.

The dead will be raised imperishable. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable and this mortal nature must put on immortality.”

49Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one, Our present bodies resemble Adam. **we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.** Our resurrected bodies will resemble Christ. These risen persons will still be of the same human species and still the same individuals they were in their earthly bodies.¹⁰ Beginning in the Middle Ages, European artists often painted a skull at the foot of Christ’s cross. The skull represents Adam’s mortality and death conquered by the Savior nailed above it. The scene, repeated many thousands of times over the centuries translates the substance of Paul’s comparison into a powerful image testifying to what Christ accomplished for the human race.⁸ The CCC also points out that all the dead will rise, those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of judgment.⁶ (CCC 998) Fr. John Hardon goes on to explain, “Since the Council of Trent, four terms have been officially used to identify the qualities of the risen body: *impassibility* or immunity from death and pain; *subtlety* or freedom from restraint by matter (Jesus was able to pass through closed doors) *agility*, or obedience to the spirit with relation to movement and space (which means being able to move through space with the speed of thought;) and *clarity* or refulgent beauty of the soul manifested in the body (as when Jesus was transfigured on Mount Tabor).¹⁰

Luke 6:27-38

This is a continuation of the Sermon on the Plain from last week.

Jesus said to his disciples:

27“**To you who hear I say, love your enemies,** This is a revolutionary commandment for under the Old Covenant, loving one’s neighbor meant loving everyone within the covenant family of Israel. Jesus widens the scope of charity in the New, commanding a radical love that reaches out to everyone, even our enemies.¹⁴ Barclay clarifies this by saying, “We cannot love our enemies as we love our nearest and dearest. To do so would be unnatural, impossible and even wrong. But we can see to it that, no matter what a man does to us, even if he insults, ill-treats and injures us, we will seek nothing but his highest good. This love towards our enemies is something which by the grace of Christ we WILL ourselves to do.”¹¹ He is not talking about feelings, but about the use of our will. We make a choice to love someone with our mind. We also make a choice to forgive someone with our mind.¹³ **do good to those who hate you,** Jesus Christ teaches us by example that this is a real precept and not just a pious recommendation for even when nailed to the Cross he prayed: “Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.”¹² Followers of Jesus must love others to an heroic degree and by following the example of Jesus, they become “children of the Most High.”³

28 bless those who curse you, This “curse” would include spite, jealousy and bad will.³ **pray for those who mistreat you.** Love is an attitude and a mode of action rather than an emotion. It means to will the good to another. Here Jesus says it three different ways: “do good to them,” “bless them” and “pray for them.” It is not in our power not to feel or to forget an offense but the heart that offers itself to the Holy Spirit turns injury into compassion and purifies the memory in transforming the hurt into intercession.

29 **To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well,** St. Thomas comments that Christ did not offer the other cheek to be struck in the house of Annas nor did St. Paul when, as we are told in the Acts of the Apostles, he was beaten in Philippi. Therefore, we should not take it that Christ literally meant that you should offer the other cheek to someone to hit you; what he was referring to was your interior disposition; that is, if necessary we should be ready not to be intolerant of anyone who hurts us; and we should be ready to put up with this kind of treatment, or even things that are worse.¹² **and from the person who takes your cloak, (outer garment used for sleeping outdoors) do not withhold even your tunic (inner garment worn next to the skin).** This is a warning against retaliation. Even when robbed of one’s clothing, Christians must fight the impulse to get personal revenge on their oppressors and be willing to part with belongings in the face of persecution.¹⁴ Christian prayer extends to the forgiveness of enemies and in this way the disciples (us) are changed to be like the master. Forgiveness is a high point of Christian prayer. It also bears witness to the fact that love is stronger than sin.

30 **Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back.**

31 **Do to others as you would have them do to you.** The “Golden Rule” summarizes the moral law of the New Covenant but here Jesus asks them to go beyond that to do unto others as God would do! The reason for this is that hate multiplies like a seed but if the hatred ends, it is never passed on.

32 **For 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 do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same.**

34 **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.** The bottom line is that if there is no difference between how Christians behave and how non-Christians behave, where is the evidence that Christianity is different?

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35 **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.** All the kinds of behavior mentioned here can be summed up in one kind of behavior: God-like behavior.¹ From a Hebrew perspective, parents reproduce character

traits in the children who bear their image. Jesus applies this same logic to the family of God: as the Father is forgiving and loving, even toward the unfaithful and undeserving, so his children must imitate his kindness toward all without discrimination.¹⁴

36 Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. The model of mercy which Christ sets before us is God himself. The first quality of this virtue is that it makes men like God.¹² The Church helps by giving us a series of corporal works of mercy as guidelines (feeding the hungry, sheltering the homeless, clothing the naked, visiting the sick and imprisoned, burying the dead and giving alms to the poor) and a series of spiritual works of mercy (instructing, advising, consoling, comforting, forgiving and bearing wrongs patiently).⁶ (CCC 2447)

37 Stop judging and you will not be judged. Love impels us to proclaim to all men the truth which saves but we must distinguish between the error (which must always be rejected) and the person in error. God alone is the judge and the searcher of hearts and he forbids us to pass judgment on the INNER guilt of others.¹² **Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven.** To withhold forgiveness is like drinking poison and hoping the other person will die of it.

38 Give and gifts will be given to you; We have the example of the widow of 5. Zarephath who gave food to Elijah even though she had very little left and God rewarded her generosity by constantly renewing her supply of meal and oil. There is also the case of the boy who supplied the five loaves and two fish which Jesus multiplied to feed a huge crowd of people. This is an example of what God does when we give him whatever we have, even if it does not amount to much. God cannot be outdone in generosity.¹² **a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap.** By folding one's cloak over the belt, a pouch could be formed to carry grain from the marketplace. When grain was shaken and running over, the buyer was guaranteed a full and honest amount.¹⁴ **For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.** Thus, a "fine" measure, and the one by which 'God responds to those who give and forgive. This reminds us of the Our Father where we pray: "forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us."¹⁵ Calvary was the price Christ paid for this Sermon.

Some of the material for this commentary has been taken from: (1) "Workbook For Lectors and Gospel Readers: 1995" by Aelred Rosser, (2) The Commentary Notes of Sean Innerst and Tim Gray, (3) "The Jerome Biblical Commentary," (4) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers" by Lawrence E. Mick, (5) "Dictionary of the Bible" by John L. McKenzie, S.J., (6) "Catechism of the Catholic Church," (7) "The Navarre Bible: Joshua – Kings," (8) "Workbook for lectors and gospel readers: 2007" by James L. Weaver, (9) "Saint Joseph Commentary On The Sunday Readings" by Achille Degeest, O.F.M., (10) "Catholic Replies 2" by James J. Drumme, (11) "The Gospel of Luke" by William Barclay, (12) "The Navarre Bible: St. Luke," (13) "The Bread of Life Catholic Bible Study" by Deacon Ken & Marie

Finn, (14)“Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of Luke,” and “The Gospel of Luke” by Luke Timothy Johnson.

In loving memory of Peg Schneller, who compiled these commentaries.