

## Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time - Lectionary: 81

### Reading I - [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."

**Responsorial Psalm** [Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13](#) R (8a) **The Lord is kind and merciful.**

### Reading II - [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.

### Gospel - [Luke 6:27-38](#)

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 main theme** in the first reading is David's unwavering respect for Saul, the "Lord's anointed," even when Saul seeks to kill him. This showcases a profound sense of justice and faithfulness, choosing principle over personal vengeance and emphasizes that "The LORD will reward each man for his justice and faithfulness." David reaffirms in the Psalm the kindness, mercy and forgiveness of the Lord.

The second reading helps us to move toward understanding how it is that we could follow the example of David and do as the Lord exhorts us in the Gospel reading. It emphasizes the Christian belief in transformation from our earthly nature to a heavenly, spiritual existence. Christ is described as "the last Adam a life-giving spirit," representing spiritual life and redemption. Believers are destined to "bear the image of the heavenly one," mirroring Christ's spiritual nature.

The readings collectively present a challenge to believers: to transcend natural inclinations towards self-preservation, retaliation, and conditional love, and instead emulate the divine characteristics of restraint, forgiveness, and unconditional love as demonstrated by David and, most profoundly, by Jesus. The ultimate goal is to be transformed and reflect the "image of the heavenly one," embodying God's boundless mercy and kindness.

Our 'natural' selves, inclined to sin as we are, desire to have power over others and to resist the actions of others who exercise power over us. We desire to have the power that having money gives; of being influential, having prestige; of having access to the inside track, 'friends' in high places; of bullying. In general, power is perceived as the ability to force people to do what I want. This power is also about having absolute control of our lives and being able to control others. When this desire, which is also related to the sin of pride, is thwarted, we get impatient, increasingly angry and incapable of giving and receiving authentic love. We feel this toward others as well as God.

However, the Gospel today speaks of another kind of power—the power of love and justice. In this power, both the giver and receiver benefit. Jesus challenges us to embody radical love, forgiveness, and generosity, even towards our perceived enemies, thereby reflecting God's own merciful nature. "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Jesus teaches us by his own example to love as David loved Saul. He invites us to seemingly allow others to trample on our rights and to refrain from responding in any way that is contrary to authentic love. Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you pray for those who mistreat you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again.

God has made every person to be naturally good, but Christ calls us to transcend what it means to be natural human creatures of the earth and to live as supernatural children of heaven. The difference begins at baptism. In that moment, supernatural life entered our souls, and we became capable of this beautiful way of life.

It is important to know that the love of which the scriptures today are speaking, is not about liking or feeling affection but about genuinely wanting the good and the well-being of the other person. I hate the evil; I denounce murder, bodily violence, sexual abuse, exploitation and manipulation, but I am deeply concerned for the conversion and the healing of the perpetrator. We have no real right to sit in judgment on others.

Hitting back, seems perfectly natural and justifiable when struck—justly or unjustly—to give as good as you get when someone uses abusive language against you. How much of our escapist entertainment is centered on this very way of living. Where in the media that demands and receives so much of our attention, do we see images of Jesus, David, and the Saints in the characters. Where do we even see the message of authentic and supernatural hope and love, mercy and justice. We are daily immersed in the formative messages unredeemed wielding of power and told that the way of the disciple of Christ is wimpish and weak.

Yet, far from being wimpish, the implementation of this teaching requires tremendous inner strength and a strong sense of security. It calls for an overwhelming awareness of the inalienable dignity, value and rights of every other person irrespective of how they behave. Revenge wants to destroy. Love wants to restore life, truth, justice and right relationships between people.

What Jesus is saying in the Gospel is really the authentically human way to go. As participants in the divine life our attitudes and convictions will be transformed, if we cooperate with God and the graces given. It becomes possible for us, in Christ, to love those our pride paints as enemies, because the authentic disciple doesn't truly have any, in the sense of people against whom he or she feels deep-seated hatred or resentments.

For us, there are no outsiders. We are called to become like God, of whom Jesus is the living, human image and in whose image, we also are made. To allow this transformation and choose righteousness even though there will be no guarantee of being loved by all in return. Jesus was murdered. Jesus is not offering us an option today, but the only way that makes sense, the only way that is truly human. Jesus himself is our model. As he hangs naked, stripped of all dignity, the victim of unspeakable violence, this moment, contrary to all appearance, is the moment of his triumph—the triumph of love over hate, violence and murder. It is a message our violence-ridden cultures desperately need to hear and to learn.

Today Jesus is giving all of us a road map for what it means to be a Christian. We can't say we are a Christian unless we are loving others as God loves us. The love that Jesus asks us to have for our enemies is *agape*. Agape love is selfless, sacrificial, and unconditional. Agape love transcends mere feelings. It is love that is pure, willful, and intentionally desires the highest good for others. Jesus is calling us to a way of life that is superior to mere natural human life.

## Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time: A Study Guide

**Quiz:** Answer the following questions in 2-3 sentences each.

1. In the first reading, what opportunity does Abishai see regarding Saul, and why does he propose taking action?
2. What is David's reasoning for refusing to harm Saul in the first reading?
3. What two items did David take from Saul as he slept?
4. In the second reading, how does Paul contrast Adam and Christ?
5. According to Paul, which comes first: the natural or the spiritual?
6. What does it mean that we have borne the image of the earthly one, and what does Paul say we shall bear?
7. In the Gospel reading, what does Jesus say about loving one's enemies?
8. According to Jesus, what reward comes from loving enemies and doing good to them?
9. What advice does Jesus give regarding judging and condemning others?
10. What does Jesus say about giving in the Gospel of Luke?

### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Anointed (The Lord's Anointed):** In the Old Testament, especially referring to kings, priests, and prophets who were set apart for sacred service through a ritual of anointing with oil. Implies divine favor and protection.
- **Adam:** The first man, according to the Bible. In Paul's writings, often contrasted with Christ as the originator of sin and death versus the originator of grace and eternal life.
- **Last Adam (Christ):** A term used by Paul to describe Jesus, emphasizing his role as the one who reverses the effects of Adam's sin and brings about salvation and new life.
- **Natural:** Refers to the earthly, physical, and sensual aspects of human existence, often associated with Adam and the consequences of the fall.
- **Spiritual:** Refers to the divine, supernatural, and transformed aspects of human existence, associated with Christ and the Holy Spirit.
- **Justice:** Upholding what is right and fair, often involving punishment for wrongdoing and reward for good deeds.
- **Mercy:** Compassion or forgiveness shown towards someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm.
- **Forgiveness:** To grant pardon for or remission of (an offense, debt, etc.); absolve.
- **Love of Enemies:** A radical teaching of Jesus that challenges followers to extend love, kindness, and forgiveness even to those who hate, persecute, or harm them.
- **Kingdom of God:** The spiritual realm over which God reigns, whether in the hearts of believers, the church, or the future perfected world. It represents God's will being done on earth as it is in heaven.