

24 Readings: no. 81, p. 673; BG, p. 379 1st Reading: 1 Samuel 26.2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-25++ 2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15.45-49 Gospel: Luke 6.27-38

7th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

As a young man living in Canada's High Arctic, I learnt the beautiful Inuit expression for forgiveness. It's a twenty-four letter word, I won't even try to pronounce. "But it means, "Not being able to think about it anymore". Saul, as we heard in our first reading, is however, definitely from a warmer climate. For a third time, enraged by envy he throws a spear at David. The young and very popular musician dodges, but it's enough to convince him, it's time to get out of there! The king issues a warrant for David's arrest and reports are, the lad is hiding in the hills. With a posse of around three thousand, against a band of a few outlaws, they meet again one cold, dark night. David, we remember has a pretty good shot with a sling and stone, but, this night he can't even bring himself to fire.

He has every reason and all the opportunity in the world to put Saul away, but his heart won't let him. Saul's entire posse is sound asleep and the lethal weapon giftwrapped before them. Just pin the inadequate feeling king and hightail out of there. Put him out of his worry!

I wonder, what steps in the way of David's nature to prevent him from eliminating this obvious enemy? We can only imagine, sisters and brothers, it is Loyalty, Mercy, and David's holy anointing that are his true strength.

St Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, also contrasts two very different natures in the human condition. Natural Adam is earthly, comes from the earth, is composed of the earth and will return to earth. Second Adam is spirit, comes from heaven and returns to heaven. Second Adam is of course, God's very self in the person of Jesus our Christ. It is second Adam, David honours and who graces him with the strength to overcome natural David who might rather have just finished Saul off, as he did Goliath, earlier in his youth.

Luke's Gospel passage today, further illustrates these two dynamics of humankind. It's another of Jesus' inside/out teachings that seemly showcase our spiritual versus natural inclinations against each other. Could there be anymore **unnatural** response than to love one's enemies? He's not talking about occasionally cracking a smile their way. Jesus is talking about loving them.

Isn't it hard enough to love your wife or husband or your children and parents, never mind the one who is waving at you on the Deerfoot using only a single of their five available digits? This isn't a teaching for the faint of heart. In a world turned inside out, as is ours, it's difficult enough to even distinguish sometimes, who is friend and who is foe. It all sounds foolish to love and then do good to one's enemies. Doesn't that simply enable them to hurt even more?

To understand Jesus' teaching we must backup and realize that love is more than a transaction of emotion, or even a quality or characteristic of God. Love friends is the very essence of God, and as Pope Francis reminds us is named is Mercy.

If we believe, we are brought into being by God, we can well imagine we belong in this community of Love and Mercy. Humankind is really only finite in as much as it cuts itself off from this, its truest Lover. If we believe that God is love, then it follows, we must have a part to play in an eternal, awesome and beautiful Trinitarian relationship. Jesus who came to reveal the Father does indeed invite us today, to participate in this great Trinitarian love affair.

The Father who speaks all into existence, the Son who is Word, Sentence, and Book of the Father, The Holy Spirit who enables Perfect Love and brothers and sisters, you and I who are like little Words of God. The Perfect and Complete Lover, that is our God really then desires only to empty God's Self into the hearts of His beloved.

Henri Nouwen wrote, "Do not hesitate to love and to love deeply. The more you have loved and allowed yourself to suffer because of your love, the more you will be able to let your heart grow wider and deeper." It seems to me that anyone who truly loves their enemies, steps towards the cross and learns quickly about suffering.

A just people do not punish a cold blooded murdered the same way it disciplines a single mom who takes a loaf of bread to feed her hungry children. The point friends is that mercy must always guide our decisions and take precedence over judgement. Bless therefore, pray, and yes love even the most difficult among us. It is what prevents David from terminating Saul's life and it is love and mercy that identifies us as children of the Most High. Put it away friends and don't think about it anymore!

Amen