

Hospitality in the Scriptures

Love Your Enemies: Luke 6:27-38

“But 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 (also) your Father is merciful.”

Reflection

This passage is directed to Jesus' would be disciples. Love your enemy is a radical kind of love. It begins at home and expands outward. The kind of love that is referred to in this reading is called *agapan*, which is an action. The action looks at the best we can do for others. In the first sentence we are told how to carry out the love towards our enemies: do good, bless, and pray. We may not feel love for an enemy, but we can act in love towards them. Verse 31 speaks simply what loving action is about: “Do to others, as you would have them do to you.”

- What word or phrase struck you the most?
- What does this say to us as ministers of hospitality?
- Think for a moment of those who are your “enemies” and fill in the blank
“Do good to _____, (*who hate you*)
Bless _____, (*who curse you*)
and pray for _____ (*who mistreats you*)”
- If we are to “do to others, as you would have them do to you,” what might that look like at the parish? In our ministry?

Love is... 1 Corinthians 13:1-8

“If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, (love) is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails.”

Reflection: The Corinthians quest for spiritual gifts and power is in question. Paul is trying to make the point that speaking prophetically means nothing unless one has love. While knowing all things, reflecting, and praying, there is more. Actions speak loud when grounded in love.

- When you think of love songs, which one comes to mind? What is it about the song that you like or dislike?
- What are the seven characteristics of love? What is love not?
- What is love when reflecting on the ministry of hospitality?
- Love is....
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is...
- Love is not...

Zacchaeus Luke 19:1-10

“He came to Jericho and intended to pass through the town. Now a man there named Zacchaeus, who was a chief tax collector and also a wealthy man, was seeking to see who Jesus was; but he could not see him because of the crowd, for he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree in order to see Jesus, who was about to pass that way. When he reached the place, Jesus looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down quickly, for today I must stay at your house." And he came down quickly and received him with joy. When they all saw this, they began to grumble, saying, "He has gone to stay at the house of a sinner." But Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, "Behold, half of my possessions, Lord, I shall give to the poor, and if I have extorted anything from anyone I shall repay it four times over." And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham. For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save what was lost."

Reflection

The name Zacchaeus means clean. He is a rich toll collector who would have been considered unclean in the Jewish culture because he worked for the Romans and was considered a sinner overcharging the Jewish people. In the story, he responds generously to God's call and is promised salvation. The folks gathering around him murmur when they hear Jesus invite himself to the "unclean" home for dinner. This murmur meant that they did not approve of Jesus eating with someone unclean. Jesus crosses or changes the culture boundary by welcoming saints and sinners into the kingdom of God.

- What word or phrase in this story jumped out at you?
- Imagine being the person who is guilty of many sins, unclean so to speak. How would it feel to have Jesus invite himself to your house?
- We are invited in many ways throughout our day into the company of others. How inviting and hospitable are we?
 - How might you rate yourself on a scale of 1-10 in this area? Why?

Martha and Mary Luke 10:38-42

As they continued their journey he entered a village where a woman whose name was Martha welcomed him. She had a sister named Mary (who) sat beside the Lord at his feet listening to him speak. Martha, burdened with much serving, came to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me by myself to do the serving? Tell her to help me." The Lord said to her in reply, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and worried about many things. There is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part and it will not be taken from her."

Reflection

In view is household Christianity where women host the church in their houses. Sitting at the feet of Jesus is a sign of a disciple. The serving refers to *diakonein* and is about Christian ministry. The lesson is not about what one should be serving but rather the underlying attitude in service. That attitude must be nurtured by listening to God's word. Then we can serve others graciously and lovingly without complaint.

- What word or phrase struck you as you read this story?
- What kinds of things do you currently do to nurture your spirit?
- Think about things you could do spiritually to prepare your heart to do the ministry of hospitality with a generous and loving attitude. The following are a few ideas:
 - Read the Sunday readings ahead of time.
 - Take 5 minutes of silent time prior to serving.
 - Read a reflection from one of the daily reflection books.

Matthew 10:40

"Anyone who welcomes you welcomes me; and those who welcome me welcome the one who sent me."

Reflection: This verse is important because when we freely receive and welcome Christ into our hearts our discipleship is firm in God. We represent God to others and need to be welcoming as God is welcoming to us.

- Who was one of the most unusual houseguest you or your family has ever entertained?
- How welcoming of a person are you? Does anyone make you uncomfortable?
- How might the parish be more welcoming?

Jesus washes his disciple's feet John 13: 1-17

“Before the feast of Passover, Jesus knew that his hour had come to pass from this world to the Father. He loved his own in the world and he loved them to the end. The devil had already induced Judas, son of Simon the Iscariot, to hand him over. So, during supper, fully aware that the Father had put everything into his power and that he had come from God and was returning to God, he rose from supper and took off his outer garments. He took a towel and tied it around his waist. Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and dry them with the towel around his waist. He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Master, are you going to wash my feet?" Jesus answered and said to him, "What I am doing, you do not understand now, but you will understand later." Peter said to him, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "Unless I wash you, you will have no inheritance with me." Simon Peter said to him, Master, then not only my feet, but my hands and head as well." Jesus said to him, "Whoever has bathed has no need except to have his feet washed, for he is clean all over; so you are clean, but not all." For he knew who would betray him; for this reason, he said, "Not all of you are clean." So when he had washed their feet (and) put his garments back on and reclined at table again, he said to them, "Do you realize what I have done for you? You call me 'teacher' and 'master,' and rightly so, for indeed I am. If I, therefore, the master and teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another's feet. I have given you a model to follow, so that as I have done for you, you should also do. Amen, amen, I say to you, no slave is greater than his master nor any messenger greater than the one who sent him. If you understand this, blessed are you if you do it.”

Reflection:

Foot washing was a sign of hospitality. Sometimes it was performed by the master's slaves when welcoming an important person into the house. Abraham and Isaac wash the feet of the angelic visitor, Michael. The disciples are challenged to follow the example of Jesus after he departs. We too, are called to wash feet (metaphorically speaking) as Disciples of Christ.

- What word or phrase of this story struck you the most?
- Think about people in your home, work, or community who practice the meaning of foot washing? What do they do? What is their attitude?
- Why do you think people in church sometimes do not want to do anything as intimate as the equivalent of washing feet?
- As ministers of hospitality, what does foot washing mean to you?

Prayer

Welcoming and gracious God,
whose love and compassion are boundless,
place in us a desire
to greet each person we meet
with the same love, compassion, and respect
we would show to you.
Help us to see your face
in every person,
and to serve your people
with dignity and care.
Bless us as we seek to love as you loved,
and serve as you served.
We ask this through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen

Handout B