

The values of the Kingdom

Today's Gospel reading, Luke 6:27-38, presents one of the most challenging teachings of Jesus: the call to love our enemies, do good to those who hate us, and forgive without limits. At first glance, this passage may seem idealistic, even unattainable. Yet, it is at the heart of what it means to live as a disciple of Christ. Jesus invites us to embrace a radical love that transcends human instincts and societal norms.

This teaching is part of what is often called the "Sermon on the Plain," where Jesus addresses a crowd of disciples and others gathered on a level place. Jesus begins with a revolutionary command: "Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you" (Luke 6:27-28). "If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt" (Luke 6:29). This teaching challenges the natural human tendency to retaliate or seek revenge. This is not a call to passivity but an invitation to break the cycle of hatred and violence by responding with compassion and forgiveness. It is a love that mirrors God's own love for humanity—a love that is unconditional and boundless.

He continues by teaching the Golden Rule: "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (Luke 6:31). This principle is not just about avoiding harm but actively seeking the good of others, even when it is difficult. It calls us to treat others with the same kindness, respect, and generosity that we desire for ourselves.

He calls His followers to imitate God's mercy: "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). This mercy is not earned but freely given, and we are called to extend the same grace to others.

In verses 37-38, Jesus emphasizes forgiveness and generosity: "Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you." He uses the image of a "good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over" to illustrate the abundance of God's blessings for those who live generously.

For many, this passage may feel overwhelming. How can we possibly love our enemies or forgive those who have deeply hurt us? The key lies in recognizing that this kind of love is not something we can achieve on our own. It is only through God's grace and the power of the Holy Spirit that we can live out this radical call to love.

Start small. Begin by praying for those who have wronged you. Ask God to soften your heart and help you see them as He does. Practice acts of kindness, even when it feels difficult. Over time, these small steps can lead to a transformation of the heart.

In conclusion, by loving our enemies, forgiving without limits, and giving generously, we reflect the character of our Heavenly Father, who is "kind to the ungrateful and the wicked" (Luke 6:35). Let us strive to live out this radical love, trusting that God's grace will sustain us and that His blessings will overflow in our lives. Amen.

Fr. Bula