

## Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time (Year C)

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

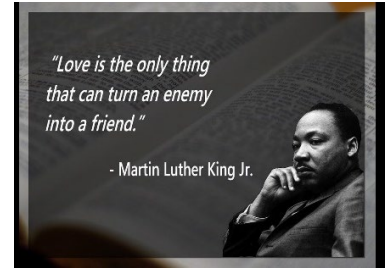
Psalm: 103: 1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13

Reading II: I Corinthians 15: 45-49

Gospel: Luke 6: 27-38

Readings may be found on the US Bishop's website:

[Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time | USCCB](#)



The Sermon on the plain by Jesus gathers the significant teachings on being a disciple. Immediately following the blessings and the woes (Beatitudes), Luke presents Jesus teaching on forgiveness, a central aspect of being a disciple. The discourse continues with teachings on giving to others, loving everyone, and not judging. For most Americans, these are very challenging statements.

Luke's emphasis on the command to love enemies and forgive persecutors seems like a central focus for Christian living in Luke's time. It has not received major attention in subsequent centuries. Martin Luther King Jr gave a solid witness to the importance of this command, and Gandhi said that he did not see Christians following this command. It is one of the unique aspects of Christian teaching, for it challenges us to become more and more like God, who offers forgiveness to all and shows kindness to the bad and good alike. For Jesus' audience, the enemy was the non-Jew, like the Romans who oppressed and treated the people cruelly. Jesus, in the parable of the Good Samaritan, offered a new focus. One's neighbor is the one who is in need. It is no longer what race or religion one has but the bond each person has with a fellow human.

The Passage from Samuel gives a real-life illustration. After killing Goliath, David became a popular figure and gained fame. Saul is jealous and seeks to kill David. David refuses to kill Saul even though he has the chance twice to do so. David chooses not to kill Saul because he is God's anointed. God has chosen him, and David respects that and honors the dignity of Saul.

Forgiveness is a gift - fore (before) and given. It is given before anything is done. One does not earn forgiveness. Any attempt to achieve it makes it ineligible to be a gift. Forgiveness is a person's choice to let go of a wound or an offense. The first aspect of forgiveness is that it frees the one who forgives. The person lets go of the pain, anger, heartache that they hold and allow themselves to be free. Holding on to an injury takes effort and energy. It draws one's attention away from today and keeps one in the past. Forgiving frees a person to go forward with life and use that energy in a new way. It is not easy, but it can greatly impact how a person lives going forward.

There are steps to forgiving. One must first recognize the hurt or action that has injured her or him. It is less than effective to forgive in general. It is valuable to identify the true wound and how this has caused me pain. Secondly, praying for the grace, desire, and strength to forgive is helpful. Forgiving is God's way, and one needs God's help to live forgiveness. Sometimes one may need to pray for the grace to desire to forgive before directly facing the situation. Thirdly, one needs to decide to forgive. It is a choice and not something logical or automatic. One must choose to let go of the hurt, resentment, anger, or desire to get back at the person. Often recognizing one's own mistakes and failures can help me get a perspective on the situation. Everyone has flaws and hurts other people. Finally, one can entrust the other person to God. Jesus teaches that we should pray for those who do wrong to us.

While it may be hard to pray for the person, one can begin by entrusting them to God and asking that God help them and open a better way.

The reason for forgiving another is that they are a child of God and a person loved by God and given dignity by God. It is not that they have earned it or deserve it based on their actions. They deserve forgiveness because God has created them and given them life.

Forgiveness is the first step toward reconciliation, but it does not mean immediate reconciliation. There may be reasons to ensure one's safety or the safety of others that contact is not restored. One can, though, pray for the person asking that God guide and help them. Reconciliation is often a long process and cannot be rushed. There must be mutual movement by both individuals to establish a healthy relationship.

#### Reflection Questions:

When have you experienced the compassion, love, or mercy of God in your life?

Have you ever tried to love an enemy? What happened?

Have you experienced a change when you have experienced the love of another?

What does being merciful mean to you?

#### Themes

God's unconditional love

Mercy

Forgiveness

Love of enemies

#### Prayer Suggestions:

For the Church: that we may be instruments of God's mercy and compassion by sharing the forgiveness that we have received with others

For the grace to forgive: that God will help us to forgive those who have injured us and to pray for them and their needs

For the grace of conversion: that God will reveal to all who are drawn toward hate, violence, or terrorism a new appreciation of life and the dignity of each person

For all who have never experienced forgiveness: that they may encounter the free and healing gift of forgiveness through someone who loves as Jesus taught