

## Loving enemies and not judging

### Introduction:

Have you ever narrated a story only to be reminded by family members or friends *you've told us that before!*

Our Gospel reading today from Luke 6 seems to echo some of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew chapters 5-7. However there are sufficient differences to make us think that Jesus said these words on more than one occasion. For example, Matthew records an event which took place *up on a mountain* (Matthew 5:1) while Luke says that *He (Jesus) went down and stood on a level place.* (Luke 6:17) Luke's account is sometimes known as 'the sermon on the plain'.

One similarity between Matthew and Luke's account is that on both occasions Jesus spoke to his disciples while others listened in.

The account of the life and ministry of Jesus found in the four Gospels gives only a small sample of all that Jesus said and did. As John writes: *Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that by believing you may have life in his name.* (John 20:30-31)

Let's get back then to Luke 6. After Luke had written what appears to be an echo of some of the Beatitudes in which Jesus stated four Blessings and four woes, he then records the words of Jesus which have to do with loving enemies and not judging others.

## Loving enemies and not judging

### 1. Loving enemies:

The natural inclination of people without God in their lives in the first and twenty-first centuries is to hate those who do bad things to them, to harbor resentments, to be bitter, to look for the opportunity to 'pay back' wrong for wrong, to grasp tightly their possessions and bank balances to the point of being stingy to the needy.

Jesus turns such attitudes on their heads by advocating that Christians should live differently.

He says *love your enemies and do good to those who hate you*. We may not have *enemies* as such but we may have people who mock what we believe. Those in business may have unpleasant and dishonest competitors who seek to do our business damage. We may have annoying neighbours. We may even have others at church that drive us up the wall!

The idea of *doing good* to those who hate us or even don't like us may not be easy. But that's the way Jesus exhorts us to live.

He says *bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you*. Wow, that's sure different to how 'the world' operates.

*If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him the other also*. No room for pay-back or revenge here.

## Loving enemies and not judging

*If someone takes your cloak, do not stop him from taking your tunic. Hang on! How does this apply to sheep stealing or shop lifting? It seems from what follows that this 'theft' is by a genuinely needy person, for Jesus went on: Give to everyone who asks you and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.*

The underlying motive for this Christian way of life is one of sacrificial, selfless love, as Jesus illustrates in the next verses in Luke 6:32-36. Such a way of life brings a reward and is demonstrated by God Himself who is *kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*

When God sent the Lord Jesus to suffer and die to pay the penalty for our sins, He demonstrated His mercy towards sinners. As St. Paul wrote to the Romans *God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.* (Romans 5:8) Those who reject what God has done for them in Christ show that they are ungrateful and wicked.

As Christians, we are *sons (and daughters) of the Most High* and should copy His mercy and love in the way that we live every day.

## Loving enemies and not judging

### 2. Judging others:

How quick we sometimes are to sit in judgement on others, perhaps in our minds or even with our words, condemning them.

There are times when it is appropriate to weigh matters up and call people out for wrong behaviour, words and attitudes, particularly when it comes to Christians taking no notice of what God says in the Bible.

In these verses Jesus seems to be speaking about judging our enemies for their behaviour towards us. That's why he says: *Forgive, and you will be forgiven.* And when people are in genuine need: *Give and it will be given to you abundantly.*

Generosity and grace lie behind the practice of forgiving and giving, even when it hurts. How generous our great God is and we are to be like Him.

If we do not forgive others, then the Bible says that God will not forgive us! That's a fairly good motivation for us to forgive. It may take time. We may be tempted to forgive but not forget, which of course is not true forgiveness at all.

### Conclusion:

When we hear from God's Word, we need to pray that God will help us to do what it says.

And so in our passage today we need to love our 'enemies' and refrain from judging others.

## **Loving enemies and not judging**

This is impossible to do without God's help. Let's pray for one another and for ourselves that God might help us live for Him in this area of our lives.