

Ken Overberg, S.J.
Seventh Sunday, Feb 24, 2019

Because Lent is relatively late this year, we get to hear Sunday readings that we have not heard for 15 years. Important ones too, since we hear part of Like's Sermon on the Plain—"plain" as in level ground! (Matthew's scene for some of this material is the Sermon on the Mount.) Last week we heard the beginning of Jesus' sermon—the list of beatitudes but also of woes. Today Luke's Jesus speaks of mercy and creative nonviolence, love of enemies, and forgiveness.

An example is given in the first reading, from the Book of Samuel. This excerpt is part of the story of King Saul trying to eliminate David whose popularity is growing. David, out of respect for God's anointed (the king), refuses a violent opportunity.

As we continue to hear from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, today's passage contrasts Jesus with Adam, emphasizing that we are formed in the image and likeness of God.

Let's listen to God's word!

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Jesus' wisdom in the Sermon on the Plain turns values, visions, and expectations upside down.

Be nonviolent. An accurate understanding of Jesus' examples helps us to understand that he is not preaching passivity. No, Jesus encourages mercy and creative, nonviolent resistance. What a challenge! Our lives are saturated with violence—from cartoons to crime shows to foreign policy and even to some theology. The message is that violence saves. But Jesus urges us to break old patterns, to interrupt the cycle of violence, to be nonviolent, to be merciful just as God is merciful.

Love your enemies. Who are your enemies? President Trump? Speaker Pelosi? Someone in the church? Someone in your past? Your boss? Your self? Jesus moves beyond his heritage that was expressed in Leviticus and calls us to love our neighbor and our enemies.

Pray for your persecutors. Jesus teaches us that such action best reflects Abba God, who sends rain not only on the just but also on the unjust, who is kind to the good and the wicked. In faith, we come to understand that Jesus reveals more of what human beings can be because there is more to God than we think. Here is a new kind of wisdom: pray for those who mistreat you.

Jesus' vision of life in God's reign challenges our instinctive and common-

sense responses to the many issues and horrors in our world. Jesus calls us to transformed and transforming actions that resist evil nonviolently and promote the flourishing of all life. What in your heart needs to be disarmed?