

Luke 6:17-20a, 27-36
NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION

¹⁷ [Jesus] came down with them and stood on a level place with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases, and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And everyone in the crowd was trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them. ...

Then he looked up at his disciples **and said**:

²⁷ “But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; ²⁸ bless those who curse you; pray for those *who mistreat you*. ²⁹ 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. ³⁰ *Give to everyone who asks of you*, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. ³¹ DO TO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO TO YOU.

³² *“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. 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. ³⁶ BE merciful, JUST AS YOUR FATHER IS merciful.*

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

Luke is one of the four gospels. According to tradition it’s written by Luke, a disciple-intern of the apostle Paul. Our reading today comes from the section called “the sermon on the plain” that parallels the telling of the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5-7. Jesus calls his hearers to a radical type of Christian reciprocity, the giving and receiving in relationships: authentic discipleship. The reading is in two blocks of teachings, each ending with a concluding statement. Teaching 1 is v.27-31 and Teaching 2 is v.32-36.

and said :: [Luke 6:20b-26](#) is also in Matthew 5:1-16. It harkens back to what Jesus said in [Luke 4:6-21](#) – a direct quote of Isaiah 61:1-2: “¹The spirit of the Lord God is upon me because the Lord has anointed me; he has sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners, ² to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.”

who mistreat you. :: scholars think this example could envision either a robbery or the commandeering of one’s property by a soldier, which was permitted in the occupied areas of the Roman Empire. As in all the examples, the “victim” refuses to remain a victim. *anyone who takes away your coat* :: For example stripping naked in front of someone, asking for your shirt, would humiliate and shame the perpetrator – turning the tables in the dynamics of the relationship.

STRIKES :: the word represents a slap, with an open hand as opposed to a punch with a closed fist. A slap was an action of shameful violence used with slaves, and lesser-thans, distinguishing class levels. One wouldn’t strike another with their left hand (which was considered unclean), so they’d have to take a step back to hit the second offered cheek and then look the victim in the eyes, forcing the perpetrator to recognize the victim’s humanity and equal standing as a child of God.

give to everyone who asks of you :: the third example speaks to the common daily occurrence of begging, by which the poorest of the poor survived. They had little chance of repaying any gift. Jesus says to give to them generously.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION & EXAMEN:

- What engaged, enraged, or surprised you in the text?
- Jesus lays out a different way of understanding and living human relationships. Where the world is based in patronage, and quid-pro-quo between different classes of people. Jesus invites us to love as God loves. Love is not a positive emotion about our enemies (or others). Love is an action. You can love your enemy without liking your enemy. Feelings have no bearing on our capacity to express love for our enemies. Love of enemy means living in the hope – and acting toward that possibility – that our enemy’s life can be conformed to the goodness God desires for all people.
- How does such love in action transform the person who is actively loved? How might such counter-cultural love transform the one who loves actively?
- Who in your life do you not like? Why? How might God be inviting you to love that person or “group” of people in action?
- This teaching on active non-violent love of one’s enemies is at the heart of the teaching of Gandhi and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Can you see how such acts of love were used to transform the systems of patronage in 20th century India and the Jim Crow South? How might such organized acts of non-violent love address our current situation of anxiety, fear, partisanship, name-calling, fake news, conspiracy telling and blaming “others” for our problems, crime, drug-use, and not having what we think we deserve?
- What invitation do you hear the Spirit of God speaking to you – or to us, – to act, speak, be, or change, through this scripture?

LANGUAGE NOTES & TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS

DO TO OTHERS AS YOU WOULD HAVE THEM DO TO YOU :: This concludes the first block of teaching, shifting the foundation of our behavior from what one *has* experienced from another, to what one *wishes* they would do.

If you love those who love you :: ‘To repay one favor with another is the normal coinage of human relationships, and that is all the more true in the sort of “patronage” system in which both Jesus and Luke lived. In such a system, both one’s social status and one’s economic circumstances would hang on what one owes to other and what one is owed by others.’

BE *merciful*, JUST AS YOUR FATHER IS *merciful* :: “This is a reminder that God too is kind (*merciful* : it’s the common Greek translation of the Hebrew word רַחֵם – *chesed* - which is difficult to translate out of Hebrew because it really has no precise equivalent in English. It’s often translated as “mercy,” “loving-kindness,” “steadfast love,” “compassion,” and even “goodness.” It’s the word in Hebrew used to describe how God loves.). It’s a reminder that God is only kind (*merciful* - *chesed*) to those who are morally good and appropriately pious, but also to the ungrateful and the wicked. In short, one is to live into the image of God in which humankind has been created.” (See [Genesis 1:27](#))”

Most of these notes come from *Feasting on the Gospels. Luke, Volume 1.* Cynthia A. Jarvis and E. Elizabeth Johnson., pp. 158-169