

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, 20 February 2022

Scriptures: 1 Sam. 26:2-23; 1 Cor. 15:45-49; Luke 6:27-38

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the first reading from the Hebrew Scriptures, King David shows mercy to Saul and thus his uprightness of spirit.

In the second reading from the New Testament, St. Paul explains how we on earth can become heavenly through Jesus Christ.

Then in Luke's Gospel, we find Jesus showing us that love is a power not a weakness.

During Lent and especially in Holy Week, we will hear again the story of the passion when Jesus is struck in the face. He has spoken directly to the high priest, and so a servant, thinking his answer sarcastic, strikes him across the face. Jesus refuses to be intimidated. Even though he knows he is going to his death, he does not allow wrongdoing to go unchecked. He turns to the man who struck him and asks the man to justify what he has done. "If there is something wrong in what I said, point it out; but if there is no offence in it, why do you strike me?" You can almost picture the servant hang his head in shame.

During the entire trial that takes place before the high priest, and later before Pilate, Jesus demonstrates to us the love of enemies. He speaks openly and honestly to the high priest when asked questions. Only when people come forward to tell lies does Jesus remain silent. He refuses to honor their lies with any kind of reply. Before Pilate he speaks as person to person, and when Pilate becomes arrogant saying "Surely you know I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?", then Jesus reminds Pilate where all true power comes from and how it should be used.

Love of enemies does not involve being intimidated by anyone. Love is the great power to deal with every person in an open and honest and respectful manner. It does not need to control others.

Love is the power of human influence that makes people come to their senses.

When Jesus began his public ministry in the years before his trial and suffering, he gave people this somewhat odd if not confusing teaching about "love for enemies". It is an amazing teaching. It is very appealing, attractive, and even beguiling; but, is it for real? Can it possibly be done? In little things we find it easy to forgive one another, to forgive those we love; but to be kind to our enemies seems to be beyond our abilities. Why should we be good to those who hate or hurt us?

The answer is because Jesus is calling us to become something very different. We are being asked to become sons and daughters of the living God. We cannot presume to be people of God if we do not listen to what the Lord is asking us to do. God is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. We are being asked to be like this, to be like God. We are not being asked to give in to others or to their evil ways.

We recall that story of Jesus and the man who struck him on the face. All wrongdoing must be unmasked, challenged, and addressed. The work of justice is vital for us all. But justice is only the beginning of the healing work that is needed.

When a person commits evil, then that person must be brought to justice. But Jesus would seek something beyond retribution. Jesus would call the sinner to repentance, and would call others who can help in the work of rehabilitation.

For loved ones who have been seriously hurt by the actions of others, the pain of loss can bring on the even worse suffering of unending hatred and deep depression. For many, the traumas are too great for us to bear. We need God's grace to help us cope with the evils that are done. We are not meant simply to let things go. We are to name the wrongs that are done, just as Jesus did.

In the end Jesus was put on a cross and prayed that people be forgiven because they do not understand the terrible things they do. A soldier listening nearby was moved to utter, "In truth this

man was a son of God". Compassion—loving and forgiving—is the power that heals.

"Loving and forgiving are you, O Lord, slow to anger, rich in kindness. Loving and forgiving are you, O Lord.

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