

What's In Your Hand?

Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

March 2, 2019

For the past two weeks in the Gospel we have heard Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount. The sayings here are meant to stretch us, to make us think differently. Jesus came not to change the law but to fulfill the law. Today we hear in the Gospel, "love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you." "Do to others as you would have them do to you." "For if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?" "Forgive and you will be forgiven." "Give, and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap." An entire homily could be given on each of them. Reflecting on them gives deep meaning and purpose to the Christian life. Jesus intended for each of us to have a purpose filled life, a purpose that each and every one of us is given in the kingdom right where we are. Yet we must take these hard sayings to heart. They will not be easy.

We can recall the story of Moses when he encountered the burning bush, an amazing sight. But after their brief encounter what God says to Moses is even more amazing. He says, "What is in your hand?" Moses says, "It's a staff. It's a shepherd's staff." And God says, "Throw it down." He throws it down and it becomes a serpent. And then God says, "Pick it up." And he picks it up by the tail, and it becomes a staff again. And as we recall Moses went on to do great things with that staff as he began his new career of freeing the Israelites from slavery.

According to Rick Warren the author of the purpose driven life, "This staff represented three things about Moses' life. First, it represented his identity; ... I am a shepherd. It's a symbol of his identity, his career, his job. Second, it's a symbol of his income, because all of his assets are tied up in sheep. ... And the third thing: it's a symbol of his influence. What do you do with a shepherd's staff? ... You move sheep from point A to point B with it, by hook or by crook. You pull them or you poke them. So, he's saying, "...You've got identity, you've got income, you've got influence." And he's saying, "If you lay it down (what is your hand), I'll make it come alive. I'll do some things you could never imagine possible."

And so today I ask you what is in your hand? What do you have that you've been given? Talent, opportunities, wealth, ideas, creativity. What are you doing with what you've been given? That is our identity, perhaps our income, and definitely where we have influence. And now put that together with what Jesus lays upon in the Gospel, those sayings that stretch us. God has wired us to do something with our talents and has given the purpose through his challenges. Why would God wire each of us to do something and then not have us do it right where we are planted? Perhaps in your one hand is a child. Then be the best mother and father you can be. If you are good in science be the best engineer or mathematician possible. If you love to do for others then be the best teacher, nurse or store manager with unparalleled service. If you are good with your hands be the best cook, mechanic or machinist ever known. If you are good with words be the best journalist in the world. If you hold music in your hand make the sweetest melody ever. If you hold a paint brush then be the best painter that ever worked over a canvas. If you are in the clergy serve the people of God tirelessly. If you are retired you hold time in your hand. Give that time away generously for the benefit of others by volunteering for good causes. In the other hand hold love and forgiveness. Our influence in this world will happen through the staffs that we hold in our hands. "If you lay them down, I'll make them come alive. I'll do some things you could never imagine possible." So just what are you holding in your hands? And how are we using our influence, our purpose in life, to help bring about the kingdom right where we are at?

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Lectionary: 81

Reading **1 SM 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23**

In those days, Saul went down to the desert of Ziph
with three thousand picked men of Israel,
to search for David in the desert of Ziph.
So David and Abishai went among Saul's soldiers by night
and found Saul lying asleep within the barricade,
with his spear thrust into the ground at his head
and Abner and his men sleeping around him.

Abishai whispered to David:

"God has delivered your enemy into your grasp this day.
Let me nail him to the ground with one thrust of the spear;
I will not need a second thrust!"

But David said to Abishai, "Do not harm him,
for who can lay hands on the LORD's anointed and remain unpunished?"
So David took the spear and the water jug from their place at Saul's head,
and they got away without anyone's seeing or knowing or awakening.
All remained asleep,
because the LORD had put them into a deep slumber.

Going across to an opposite slope,
David stood on a remote hilltop
at a great distance from Abner, son of Ner, and the troops.
He said: "Here is the king's spear.
Let an attendant come over to get it.
The LORD will reward each man for his justice and faithfulness.
Today, though the LORD delivered you into my grasp,
I would not harm the LORD's anointed."

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

R. (8a) The Lord is kind and merciful.

Bless the LORD, O my soul;
and all my being, bless his holy name.
Bless the LORD, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

He pardons all your iniquities,
heals all your ills.
He redeems your life from destruction,
crowns you with kindness and compassion.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

Merciful and gracious is the LORD,
slow to anger and abounding in kindness.
Not according to our sins does he deal with us,

nor does he requite us according to our crimes.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

As far as the east is from the west,
so far has he put our transgressions from us.
As a father has compassion on his children,
so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him.

R. The Lord is kind and merciful.

Reading [21 COR 15:45-49](#)

Brothers and sisters:

It is written, *The first man, Adam, became a living being,*
the last Adam a life-giving spirit.

But the spiritual was not first;
rather the natural and then the spiritual.

The first man was from the earth, earthly;
the second man, from heaven.

As was the earthly one, so also are the earthly,
and as is the heavenly one, so also are the heavenly.

Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one,
we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.

Alleluia [JN 13:34](#)

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

I give you a new commandment, says the Lord:
love one another as I have loved you.

R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel [LK 6:27-38](#)

Jesus said to his disciples:

“To you who hear I say,
love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.

To the person who strikes you on one cheek,
offer the other one as well,

and from the person who takes your cloak,
do not withhold even your tunic.

Give to everyone who asks of you,
and from the one who takes what is yours do not demand it back.

Do to others as you would have them do to you.

For if you love those who love you,
what credit is that to you?

Even sinners love those who love them.

And if you do good to those who do good to you,
what credit is that to you?

Even sinners do the same.

If you lend money to those from whom you expect repayment,

what credit is that to you?
Even sinners lend to sinners,
and get back the same amount.
But rather, love your enemies and do good to them,
and lend expecting nothing back;
then 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.
Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

“Stop judging and you will not be judged.
Stop condemning and you will not be condemned.
Forgive and you will be forgiven.
Give, and gifts will be given to you;
a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing,
will be poured into your lap.
For the measure with which you measure
will in return be measured out to you.”