**Cycle C Feb. 24, 2019**

**The 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time**

For-giving Makes Room for More

 **Title: Mercy and Forgiveness Opens the Flow to Gifts of God that Pour Forth Endlessly into our Laps.**

![Title: The Recognition of Joseph by His Brothers [Click for larger image view]]()**Title: The Recognization of Joseph by his brothers, Date: 1816-1817 Artist: Peter von Cornelius Building:** [**Deutsche Akademie Villa Massimo**](http://diglib.library.vanderbilt.edu/act-processquery.pl?SID=20190209982399127&code=ACT&code=act&SubjectBuildingName=Deutsche+Akademie+Villa+Massimo&SortOrder=Title&=phrase) **Medium: Painted Fresco Place: Rome, Italy**

**Story from Hebrew Scriptures:** Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence. Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt...I will provide for you there--since there are five more years of famine to come--so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.' And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

**Sunday Gospel**

[**LK 6:27-38**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/bible/luke/6%3A27)

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.”

Making the Connections for Parents and Catechists:

Can you imagine being one of Jesus’ disciples on this day. To be a disciple both then and today means that you first have an encounter with Jesus, then you if compelled you listen to him and follow him to understand more clearly what his message and teaching is all about. After taking some time to do this, you then decide to change your way of life and go in a completely new way. Just like the apostles who dropped their nets to follow Jesus. To be a disciple means that you figuratively have “dropped your nets”, your life and whole orientation seeks to walk in the way of Jesus. To walk in the way of Jesus is to learn the way of the heavenly Father, and to grow in the nature of God. Christians then as disciples of Jesus are able to be God-like in the world today. It’s important to note here that Jesus is talking to his disciples, otherwise to the crowds as it does to the many of us today these words are preposterous. To be a disciple is to grow in the character of God. In this reading we hear about what the character of God is like, and are invited to follow Jesus with our hearts, lives and whole beings. When we walk in God’s likeness Jesus says so much more comes back to us beyond measure, more than what our hearts and laps can hold.

Our children’s story, ***My Little Gifts – A Book about Sharing,*** can help us to open up to what Jesus is inviting here. In the beginning of the gospel Jesus says if someone strikes you to turn the other cheek and let them strike you again. Can you imagine, how could a person ever do that. In the time of Jesus, the Mediterranean mindset was a limited good society. Meaning that if a person, family or country took more of a good, that left the other with less. Our children’s story begins with a family on Christmas morning exchanging gifts. The boy gets a red suitcase and he is very happy about it. His sister runs over and wants to take part in his joy and takes the suitcase. The boy yanks it back and a big fight ensues. This is his suitcase, if she takes it he will be left without what he loves. The people in the Middle East at the time of Jesus thought the same way. If there is one coat only one person can have it and the other goes without. Jesus says no that is not the way of the Father. And the Father in the story says no, you don’t have to give it away, but you can invite your sister into your joy but sharing and including her. You won’t lose out as the story goes on to say, you will gain more by sharing. When we understand this concept of giving and sharing we step into God’s flow of love and life and it is endless.

This can be hard to understand how it works thus it is always helpful to look at nature as God’s creation to understand how God works. Nature like ourselves is God’s work of art. If we look at a field of wheat, farmers plant the wheat in the faith that it will grow and bring forth food, a harvest. But who makes the wheat grow. A loving and caring Creator who wants to give to us all that we need. We do the work but the life, the grace to Grow things comes from God. We must rely on God for this. God doesn’t just grow wheat for the saints but for the sinners as well. We all are cared for by a loving Father who provides fruits from the earth to nourish us. Both saints and sinners alike. God wants us to love and to give with the same non- judging generosity because that is the nature of God, to love and to give. And to forgive.

To understand what happens to us when we don’t forgive we might imagine the winter on this wheat field when the ground if frozen. Often when we get hurt our first response is to want to get even. In the time of Jesus people believed in ‘an eye for an eye’, if your eye got plucked out in a fight then you take out the other guys. Jesus completely turns this around in this teaching. He says that if you don’t forgive and offer mercy you stop the growth, not just for the person that hurt you but for yourself as well. God doesn’t want that, he wants his love and grace to flow abundantly through out the world, this is the ‘secret’ to bringing heaven, the kingdom of God, to earth.

 When we choose not to forgive our hearts become like the frozen ground in the wheat field. We can stay in winter for many years. When we forgive the ground softens and life can grow again, we will be fed and so will the person who hurt us along with many many others. And the amazing thing is that the wheat then grows and grows and grows, forever and ever. Then we have so much wheat we can’t ever use it for ourselves, it flows and flows and flows into our laps a hundredfold. And then gifts of God pour forth into all whom we meet along with the person who hurt us and all whom they love and are close to and beyond. Again, we can look at nature, God’ love becomes like a force, an abundant waterfall that just keeps flowing, flowing and flowing satisfying our deepest thirsts forever, and ever.

But like the brother and sister learn in our story we must keep our hearts soft, open and receptive to giving and receiving. Then the spirit and joy of Christmas moves from under the tree to recess, to cakes, best friends, to learning, to kisses, friendship gifts, to food, to creating, to suitcases for everyone! When gifts of forgiveness and mercy come from open and receptive hearts…. “gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap.” There will forever be so much to share and so much to give, for all!!

Bullet Points for Parents:

* Some people encounter Jesus and go the other way, others follow him to learn more about his message, and some drop everything (their nets) to become like Jesus, they are disciples.
* It is important to note that this message is for Jesus’ disciples, those that desire to learn to do as he does, as does his heavenly Father. This seems preposterous, unless we get that this way leads us to become channels of God’s flow of love and life in the world.
* What a hard message it is for the people to hear as the Middle East operated as a limited goods society. There is only one coat thus if one person has it there is none for another. Jesus wants his disciples to understand that God’s life and love is unbounding and limitless.
* In our children’s story it’s Christmas morning and the boy gets a red suitcase and the sister wants it. He says no, and a fight ensues, the Dad runs over, and the boy thinks he is going to get in trouble, instead the Father embraces him and says no, yet you can share.
* Jesus calls us to the same and more, to turn the other cheek after you have been struck. Jesus points to the way that keeps channels open for God’s love and abundance to flow. The channels are us. For God’s love to flow, our hearts need to stay soft and open.
* Unforgiveness is like a frozen wheat field in the winter, it does not allow God’s life to come forth to feed the many. When we forgive and offer mercy, we are acting like our heavenly father who does the same for us. Through God’s life and provision, the wheat fields are planted in the spring, but it is God’s grace that makes the wheat grow. If the soil is open and receptive the seeds can grow into abundance, it is the same with our hearts.
* When we forgive the ground softens and life can grow again. We will be fed and so will the person who hurt us along with many others. The amazing thing is the wheat then grows and grows and grows, forever and ever it flows and flows into our laps a hundredfold.
* Jesus’ warning here like the father to the brother and sister in our story, we must keep our hearts soft, open and receptive to giving and receiving. Then the spirit and joy of Christmas moves from under the tree to recess, to cakes, best friends, to learning, to kisses, friendship gifts, to food, to creating, to suitcases for everyone!
* When gifts of forgiveness and mercy come from open and receptive hearts…. “gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap.” v.
* There will forever be so much to share and so much to give, for all!! That’s Jesus point of this whole mission! Wow, truly out of this world, to transform this world. Now, will you drop your nets? From here it’s all up to us.

Making the Connections for Children:

1. What was your favorite gift you received this Christmas?
2. Did you want to share it?
3. Did any fights break out with your brothers or sisters?
4. How were they resolved?
5. What does the father in the story teach us about sharing?
6. What are the results of learning to care and to share for the children in the story?
7. Have you ever been hurt by someone; how did you respond?
8. How does Jesus tell his disciples that they should respond when someone hurts them? Does that sound crazy?
9. What does Jesus promise will be the results if we love our enemies?
10. In what ways is Jesus asking us to love the way God loves, and to give the way God gives?
11. If we don’t forgive what happens to us? How are we like God when we do forgive?
12. When we forgive like God does what are the results? How does it make a difference, not just for us and the person that hurt us but for all the people in both our lives?
13. Jesus says that God’s gifts and his love are limitless, “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” Forgiveness starts the flow.
14. For the kids in the story what joys does giving and sharing bring to them?
15. What joys does forgiving, giving and sharing bring to you and your family?

 

**Question of the Week:** Talk about as a family when someone hurt you and how your reacted? What does Jesus ask of his disciples and why? When we forgive and give like God does what is the result? Talk about examples when you have seen results of ‘good measure pouring forth into peoples laps’?

**Gospel Character Traits: Mercy Giving like God Does**

**Additional Family Activity:** As a family learn more about sheep and how they give their wool over and over again to keep us warm. How do they give like God gives? Look for more animals and examples in nature that give to human beings for them to be taken care of. How do they act in God’s ways? 2) Listen to the rap song, Blessings, by Chance the Rapper. What are his thoughts on how to keep the flow of blessings in yours and others lap alive? Write your own Blessings song or poem as a family.

**Biblical Background Cycle C The 7th Sunday in Ordinary Time** [**LK 6:27-38**](http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/bible/luke/6%3A27)

**Geographical Settings:** Jesus is a healing, preaching teacher. He uses healings to draw large crowds into his company. Once they gather he engages them as a preacher, stirring their hearts toward a deeper commitment to himself and the message. All this is done in preparation for the opportunity to teach them about what life will be like as his students in the new kingdom of God. Jesus the healer and preacher transitions to Jesus the teacher in this section of the Sermon on the Plain. The plain is a big open area in Galilee where large crowds can gather and stay for a time. Thus, Jesus begins to open up some of his more difficult teachings as the crowd will have more time and space stay awhile to process it. This section is being taught to those who have already committed to following him as a disciple. As a disciple they are now learning what it means to become like Jesus and walk in the ways of his Father. Jesus reveals his skill as a preacher as he uses powerful statements of challenge to draw potential disciples into a deeper relationship.

**Terms: Love/Hate:** Jesus the teacher begins by laying down his command that if they are going to be his disciples then they are going to have to love their enemies and do good to those who hate them. He expects his disciples to bless those who curse them and pray for those who mistreat them. The Biblical idea of love differs from our modern and western understanding of the same word. In the Bible you demonstrate love by remaining attached and in relationship with others, typically to members of your family group. Conversely when someone hates in the Biblical world they have detached themselves from an inter-personal relationship. Love means to be and stay connected. Hate means to break that same connection. Recall the challenging teaching of Jesus that to be his disciple we will have to love him and hate our parents. (Luke 14:26ff) On the surface this would seem absurd. The true meaning of the teaching of Jesus is an invitation is to detach yourself (hate) from parental provision and attach (love) yourself to Jesus as your teacher .

**Cultural Insight:** Jesus says to the person who strikes you on the cheek turn to him the other. Don’t retaliate; allow time for another person to intervene. Keep the peace. If someone wants to take your cloak do not refuse him your tunic (an inner garment) as well. If anyone takes from you what is yours do not demand it back. These are the very high expectations Jesus envisions for those who want to follow him. Jesus is most likely referencing members of the Roman military who rule ancient Israel with an iron fist! Roman soldiers could strike you at any time. Don’t fight back. They could demand your cloak. If they do embarrass them by offering your inner garment as well. They can force you out of your way for a distance of a single mile, offer to go two! Double down. Stay connected! Be a witness to the way gratituous love of God at all times.

Then Jesus teaches about the “Golden Rule”. Do to others as you would have them do to you. This calling is high. Jesus reminds the disciples that sinners love sinners and to what credit? Why should you be honored if you only love those who already love you? Jesus wants his followers to love their enemies, even if they are Roman military overlords who act as agents of aggression and oppression. They are to do good to the very same enemies that hate you! This is a high calling. It is a challenge issued by Jesus to men and women who have experienced Jesus as healer and preacher. Now they know him as a teacher and one who teaches with a unique authority.

**Insight into Meaning**: Stop judging. Stop condemning and you will not be judged and condemned yourself. Forgive and you will be forgiven. This will be an on-going challenge for Christians throughout the course of history. It seems that the early church needed continual reminding that Jesus came into the world embrace sinners and chastise the righteous. That was his calling and by extension it becomes ours as well. It is easy to fall into a habit of judgment and condemnation. When we judge and condemn we shut out the Holy Spirit and deprive the same Holy Spirit of an opportunity to break through old barriers to shine a new light in the world. In Christ our one time enemies can become our new brothers, sisters and our friends. The Gospel ends with an admonition to give to others knowing when you give generously to others God will be inclined to gift gifts generously to you! Get rid of the judging so the forgiving, grace and growth can flow.