

Year C 7th Sunday after Epiphany Luke 6:27-38 – Command to love your enemy

<sup>27</sup> ‘But to you who are listening I say: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>bless those who curse you, pray for those who ill-treat you.

We focus on Paul’s teaching on this – Romans 12 – how to treat an enemy?

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse

<sup>17</sup> Do not repay anyone evil for evil.

<sup>18</sup> If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

<sup>19</sup> Do not take revenge, leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

“If your enemy is hungry, feed them;

if they are thirsty, give them something to drink.

In doing this, you will heap burning coals on their head.”

<sup>21</sup> Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Who is our enemy?

It might not be who you think it is. Hold that thought.

There is only one sentence that seems to make sense – the one about heaping coals of fire on your enemy’s head.

Revenge, that would be good wouldn’t it?

My psychologist said that I have revenge “issues”.

“I’ll show him – you just watch”.

Clearly, Paul is not talking about literally putting live hot coals on your enemy’s head. It’s figurative, it’s a picture, but what does he mean?

If someone is rude, or mean, or cruel, or stupid to us our human nature wants revenge, it wants to get even – an eye for an eye.

Our text says: *Do not take revenge...* “*It is mine to avenge; I will repay,*” says the Lord.

Clearly God doesn’t want us to repay evil with evil – revenge, pay back, is God’s business.

God wants us to show the enemy love.

*“If your enemy is hungry, feed them; If they are thirsty, give them a drink”.*

I guess it makes common sense doesn't it?

If we pay back evil with evil then we are we are being evil, and we end up being ruled by evil.

But if we love our enemy, then we overcome the evil with good.

But boy it wouldn't it good to do some proper pay back at times?

Get revenge on that on that person who cut me off.

Get revenge on that scammer, that robber, that telephone person that who calls each night about dinner time.

No pay evil with love.

*"For in so doing good you will heap hot coals on their head".*

This a quote directly from Proverbs 25.

– it is among some similar Proverbs.

*One who takes away a garment in cold weather, And like vinegar on soda, Is one who sings songs to a heavy heart.*

This picture is of physical discomfort and it shows us that trying to make a person happy when they are on mourning - just distresses them more.

The picture of piling hot coals on someone's head describes the sense of shame an enemy may feel when you simply love them.

Unconditional love, food, drink, all those kind things that are mentioned are probably going to feel uncomfortable, maybe a sense of burning shame,.

Hopefully a sense of repentance.

---

Let's change gear here.

Remember repentance is the number one step, the very first step to a saving faith.

Jesus very first word in ministry was "repent" – "repent and believe in the good news"

Jesus very first command, "repent" – remember every command of Jesus has a blessing.

The very first word of John in ministry, "Repent the kingdom of God is near".

If love produces hot coals, or shame that leads to repentance – repentance must be pretty important.

Repentance is a journey led by the spirit from lying and hiding sins deep inside to letting it all out.

Sounds like tough love doesn't it.

Hot Coals are symbolic of purifying and purging from sin.

Remember Isaiah – before the presence of God:

*“Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts.”*

*In the presence of Love repents.*

*Then one of the seraphim flew to me, having in his hand a live coal which he had taken with the tongs from the altar.*

*And he touched my mouth with it, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; Your sin is taken away, you have been cleansed.*

Coals of fire are symbolic of taking sin away – symbolic of cleansing.

*Malachi describes Jesus as the refiners fire – purging and cleansing everyone from sin.’*

*“... who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire ... He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, And purge them as gold and silver, That they may offer to the LORD An offering in righteousness.*

Being kind to our enemies is like “heaping coals of fire on their head” – if it leads them to repentance, it’s their greatest gift – it’s their eternal life.

Listen to this:

Leviticus (16) He took his censer, and filled it with “coals of fire,” and then put the incense on the coals to produce a sweet-smelling aroma.

We know in the days of old sweet-smelling incense is likened to prayers.

You need hot coals to burn the incense to produce the sweet-smelling aroma.

It’s all temple talk isn’t it?

It’s all symbolic – but it means life – it means a cleansed and pure life for an enemy.

That might not be your wish but it is God’s wish – that’s why it is a command of all of us.

It is God’s will that you enemy be saved – not your will.

Goodness I would hate my enemy to be depending on my mercy. No God wants them to be saved hence he privileges us with the command – love your enemy.

---

Getting back to the beginning who is your enemy?

The parking inspector, the school bully, Port Power, the robber.

---

This lesson of Jesus has taught me that the enemy is in here.

The enemy is unresolved sin.

The enemy is the sin in here I am ashamed of – the sin I'm not going to tell.

What has this text taught you?

This text has taught me that for me to “repent” – to get all the rubbish out – you have to love me.

In German says, “Muss und Sollen” you must and will love me.

And I must and will love you.

Are you up to it?

Repentance is dealing with eternal life or death.

There are no feelings involved here – love your enemy – a lifesaving command.

Love you enemy so those hot coals purge them and cleans them to eternal life.

Are you up to it?

Too bad if you're not – It's a command.

Every command of Jesus has a blessing – other wise it would be an abuse.

*Listen to the command again with new ears: ...overcome evil with good.*