

Listening for the Promise

WEEKLY DEVOTIONAL

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany – February 20, 2022

“Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.” (Luke 6:36)

Some people think being a Christian is the same as a being a thinking, caring, sensitive person. We fail to see any difference between America and God’s kingdom. Church is where we come once in a while to bring out our better nature. But Jesus preaches difficult sermons and after listening to this one, we have a head-on collision with our world view.

Jesus said, “Love your enemies. Be good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on the cheek, offer the other. If someone takes your coat, give them your shirt. Give to everyone who asks and don’t demand them back.”

We have prayed, “Thy kingdom come.” But when Jesus came and after hearing this sermon, we wonder if we really wanted God in the first place!

Think of the most loving thing you could do for the very worst person you know. Now think of someone who has been terrible to you. Now picture yourself offering that person your loving hand. See? It really seems absurd to do what Jesus says.

When Jesus tells us to love our enemies, we may say, “That doesn’t really apply to me. I am so nice to other people that I don’t have enemies.” Be honest. If you have lived in this world, you probably have enemies. The better the person you try to be, the more people will react against you. Look at how the world responded to the preacher of this sermon!

This sermon may not be a list of impossible to accomplish dos and don’ts. This sermon is pointing to who God is and what God is up to in the world.

Jesus is saying to us that we should love our enemies and not retaliate when we have been attacked, because that is exactly the way God has reacted to us. Verse 36 is key to this whole passage: “Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.”

We feel the need to evade these commands. These are not suggestions, but actual commands to those who follow Jesus. When it comes to living our lives, deciding how we ought to treat other people and how we are to respond to things that are inflicted upon us, it makes a great deal of difference to know the sort of God we have.

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