

The Seventh Sunday of Ordinary Time
(Year C)

<i>First Reading</i>	1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23
<i>Response</i>	Blessed are they who hope in the Lord.
<i>Psalm</i>	Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13
<i>Second Reading</i>	1 Corinthians 15:45-49
<i>Gospel Acclamation</i>	I give you a new commandment, says the Lord: love one another as I have loved you.
<i>Gospel</i>	Luke 6:27-38

The 7th Sunday for Ordinary Time in Year C takes us to the second part of Luke's account of Jesus' sermon on the side of the mountain. It's usually called the Sermon on the Plain, you'll hear me refer to that as the "Sermon on the Plain", but as I mentioned earlier, it's really a sermon on a level place which appears to be on a mountainside. So it's also the Sermon on the Mount, but in Luke's version. Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount is shorter than Matthew's. So the church, as she's walking through the Gospel of Luke, doesn't spend as much time on the sermon as she does in Year A (when she's walking through the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew, because in Matthew's gospel, it's three long chapters) and so we spend (I think) 5 or 6 weeks moving through the Sermon on the Mount in Year A (for Matthew).

In this case, we're just going to spend (I think) 3 weeks looking at the Sermon on the Plain in the Gospel of Luke, yet it's still very powerful and very important material (very important teachings from Jesus), and so today what we're looking at is Jesus' teaching toward the end of the sermon on the love of enemies, in particular. This is a tough, tough, section of Jesus' teaching, at least, if you ever tried to put it into practice. So let's see what he has to say, and we'll try to shed some light on it, and also look at it in light of the Old Testament reading for today. Luke 6:27-38 is the reading for today, and it picks up right after The Beatitudes that we were looking at on the previous Sunday, looking at the blessings and curses. So right after Jesus says, "Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you", he now (in verse 27) says this:

“But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from him who takes away your cloak do not withhold your coat as well. Give to every one who begs from you; and of him who takes away your goods do not ask them again. And as you wish that men would do to you, do so to them.

“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For 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? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.

“Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”¹

Okay, a lot going on in this passage here. So I just want to walk through it and try to unpack Jesus’ teachings. The first teaching (the obvious one; the striking one) is “Love your enemies”. The Greek work for love here, *agapao*, in its nominal form (as a noun) is *agape*. You’ve probably heard about *agape* before, it’s a standard word for love but it also connotes a kind of complete love (total love, sacrificial love, it has different connotations in different contexts), but it’s the kind of love that God shows towards us (for example, especially in the Gospel of John). It’s at the heart of Jesus’ mission and at the heart of his message. In this passage though, Jesus says something that is unprecedented (really unprecedented). You have, in the Old Testament, Moses will tell the Israelites, “You will love the Lord, your God” (same verb, *agapao* in the Greek Septuagint), “with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and all your strength, and you’ll love your neighbor as your-

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Bible citations/quotations herein are from *The Holy Bible: Revised Standard Version, Catholic Edition*. New York: National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA, 1994.

self”. That’s from the book of Leviticus. But what no one had ever said before was that you would love your enemies. That you would “love your enemies”. And here Jesus takes that word (*agapao*) and he says, “I want you to love your enemies.” Now the immediate reaction that people probably had back then and which, I know people have today was, “How can I love someone who has hurt me? What does that mean? What does it look like to love?” This is particularly difficult for us as modern people because in modern English, the word “love” has become so wrapped up with our emotions; our passions, our feelings toward another person. So when we say we love someone, what we mean is that we have “good feelings” towards someone. It isn’t just that we want good things for that person, but that person makes us happy. That person makes us feel good about ourselves. We delight in their presence. We delight in their company. So there tends to be an emphasis on feeling when we talk about love — to say nothing of the fact that love is frequently associated with romantic love. If I say, “I’m in love with someone”, it means a romantic love. Well, how can you have romantic love for your enemies? It’s ridiculous. Jesus isn’t using the word love in the way that we would use it with the primary emphasis on a connotation of feelings. And you can see that by what he says. So concretely, how does he want us to love? What are the actions that would express love? That’s where his emphasis falls. So if you look, he unpacks what loving your enemies looks like with very specific instructions.

First, “loving my enemies” entails good actions. So if I love an enemy, I will do good to someone who hates me. So even though they hate me, I don’t return “eye for eye” or “tooth for tooth” (I don’t return evil with evil), but they give me evil and I return it with a good action. So the first way we show love for our enemies is to do good to them. It doesn’t say anything about feelings. The emphasis is on actions here.

A second thing, if someone curses us, we are to bless them. A blessing there is not just to do good towards somebody, but to speak good to somebody. So you bless with your mouth, you act (obviously) with your actions through all kinds of different ways. If someone curses me, they speak evil against me. You’re verbalizing that they would wish harm upon you (that’s what a curse is). So to bless is to verbalize a desire for good upon the person. So if someone curses me, I bless them. That’s the second way to show them that I love them.

A third way (and this one’s really important), “pray for those who abuse you.” I think this one’s very crucial because, whereas the other two (the blessing and the

good actions) seem to imply a certain amount of interaction (and one of the things people will often ask me is, “Dr. Pitre, how can I love this person whose hurt me? I don’t even want to be in their presence.” Or “it’s dangerous for me to be in their presence” or whatever it might be), I always like to stress, “even if you don’t come into contact with someone who’s an enemy, or who hates you, or hurts you, you can always, always pray for a person.” And what is the prayer? The prayer is for God to bless that person. You’re asking for good to be done to someone who wishes harm to you; that is “loving your enemies”, praying for those who persecute you – and it’s really, really counter-intuitive. It’s not going to come natural to you to say, “This person that I’m an enemy with, this person that I hate, I’m going to devote an hour of prayer to them. I’m going to say a rosary (I’m offering an entire rosary) for this person who betrayed me or stole my job, or whatever it might be (or hurt my family).” So prayer is an expression of love, because *agape* (in its deepest sense), *agape*, that kind of love is to “will the good of another”; to act in such a way as to bring good to another. It’s not primarily rooted in the emotions. It’s rooted in the will; it’s rooted in the choices that you make: to do good, to say good, and to pray for your enemies. Those are the three (kind of) concrete actions that Jesus gives here as he’s unpacking the verb for love. Now it doesn’t cite there: he also gives some parabolic expressions or examples of this that are really striking (literally striking). “If somebody strikes you on the cheek, you offer him the other also. If somebody steals your cloak, say ‘hey wait! Don’t leave, you forgot my coat’” (which would be the other garment as well). “Give to everyone who begs from you and of him who takes away your goods, don’t ask them back again.”

Now, every one of those, the image of non-resistance, the idea of giving alms to everyone (I mean, that’s crazy, right? What are they going to do with my money? They might use it to do something bad), the idea of lending to someone who you know isn’t going to pay you back; those all seem irrational at first glance, but what Jesus is saying to us is that “it’s not irrational (he wouldn’t have said it this way, but this is how I am articulating it), it’s super-rational.” It’s kind of like the blessings and the woes. It seems irrational, earlier in the sermon, for Jesus to say, “Blessed are you who mourn. Blessed are you who are hungry. Blessed are you who are poor.” No, no, no. Those are the people who are cursed. Those are the people who are punished. Those are the people who are suffering. But no, there’s a paradox built into this. It’s unexpected; it’s surprising. It seems irrational, but that’s because it’s not operating according to the logic of this world. It’s the logic of the kingdom of heaven. It’s the logic of the Son of God, who comes into this world to be struck on the cheek in his Passion, and not to fight back. Who comes into this

world, who is rich, but became poor for our sake, so that we might be saved. Who gives to everyone; who gives his life for everyone, even the ones he knows are going to reject him and not give him a return. Who will not accept the gift of salvation; he still gives it to them. It's the logic of the kingdom; it's the logic of the cross. That's what Jesus is talking about here with "love your enemies".

So we saw he was teaching us the mystery of the cross in The Beatitudes and the woes, and now he's just teaching the same mystery in the command to love your enemies, because the ultimate act of love for one's enemies is Calvary. "While we were yet enemies," Paul says in Romans, "God loves us." And that's the case. And he shows it on Calvary.

So, I bring this up because I think in context there's a lot more radical interpretation of the golden rule than we tend to give it. So notice, after he said all that, then he says, "As you wish that men would do to you, do so to them." Now what do we usually interpret the golden rule to mean? It's kind of like "reverse tit-for-tat." In other words, "I wouldn't want you to do this to me so I'm not going to do it to you" or "I would like it if you did that to me so I will do it to you", and that's of course true, that's part of it, but I think it goes way beyond that when you look at it in context, because ultimately, I want God to show me the kind of gratuitous love he shows me on the cross and that's really what Jesus is calling us to here. This is a radical love, so the golden rule here is (in its context) really striking. "As you would have men do to you," in other words, would you want them to pray for you even when you hurt them? Would you want them to do good to you even if you do evil to them? Would you want them to bless you even if you curse them? If you've ever fallen into any one of those sins, if you struggle with anger for example, or resentment, then you want people to love you even when you act like an enemy to them. I think that's the context Jesus is giving us here. It's a radical love that he's calling for in the golden rule. It is counter-intuitive. It is not irrational; it's super-rational, because it's supernatural. It's the logic of the kingdom. It's the love of the kingdom.

And if you have any doubts about that, just go to the next part where Jesus makes sure we understand that this isn't like natural love. It's not like natural goodness. It's not like natural virtue. You'll see, Catholic theologians will actually make this distinction (it was really helpful the first time I started studying it): Sometimes, people will say, "I should be able to go to heaven, I'm a good person, I didn't kill anybody. I do good, I try to love people, I try to love my neighbor" and that's all

good, but in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not calling us to purely natural virtue. You see natural virtues on display throughout all human cultures. You see natural virtues on display outside of the church (for sure) in the lives of human beings who are “made good” (made in the image and likeness of God, even though they’re sinful, they’re not completely depraved), and you’ll see all kinds of natural virtues operative. But Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount says, “I’m calling you to much more than just natural virtue,” and you can see this when he says, “if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?”

So what kind of love is this? It’s natural love. Even sinners (in Judaism remember, a sinner is a public sinner, so an adulterer or a tax collector, or an idolater like a gentile), well they love those who love them. That’s natural love. And he says, “What credit is that to you?” The implication is none. He also says, “What about natural good?” He says, “If you do good to those that do good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do the same.” So this is like “you scratch my back, I’ll scratch yours” – it’s just an exchange of natural goods. There’s nothing particularly surprising or supernatural about the fact that even the most wicked people have their friends and they do good to one another, but that doesn’t make them holy. It certainly doesn’t make them disciples of Jesus.

Same thing: what about lending money? Natural almsgivers; well, even sinners (Jesus is saying) will give money to people that they know are going to give back to them. They’re going to give if they know they’re going to get something out of it. That’s a natural good. But he says, “That’s not what I’m calling to you. I’m calling you to love your enemies, to do good, and lend even when you know you’re not going to get anything back.” Now who does that? Really, who does that? Have you ever heard anyone say “I should get into heaven because I always love my enemies”, “I give to everyone who asks from me”, “I give even when I know I’m not going to get anything back”, “I prayed for all my persecutors” – those are supernatural virtues. You really actually can’t do those apart from God’s grace. You’re not naturally inclined to love the person who gets you fired from your career (from your job of 30 years); who betrays you or lies about you. You’re not naturally inclined to pray for someone who slanders you and publicly defames you. You’re not naturally inclined to bless the person who commits adultery against you (with your spouse). Those are not natural inclinations, but that’s actually the love that Christ is calling us to, because that’s the love he showed toward us. “Because while we were yet enemies, he loved us and died for us on the cross.”

So, he's teaching us the way of the cross in these teachings about love of enemies, and he's saying to us, "Look. If you do this, your reward will be great." He's not talking about earthly reward. Your reward will be great, where? In Heaven. "And you will be sons of God." In other words, you'll be like The Son, because he loved his enemies, he did good to his enemies, he prayed for his enemies. He's going to do that in Luke, right? He's hanging on the cross. What's he going to say? "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." So he blesses his enemies, he prays for his enemies.

"You'll be like sons of the most high, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish." So what's God like? He's kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. You might think, "Oh, really?" Well, yeah. Think about it. Has he been kind to you? Are you ungrateful? Are you selfish? Then you fit the bill. If God has ever showed you any kindness in your life (and the fact that you're in existence right now is proof-positive that he has, because if he stopped sustaining you, you would disappear; he gives you your being itself), then that's the kind of love you have to show toward others.

If you have any doubts that God's good like he says in Matthew's account, "He makes the sun shine on the righteous and the wicked alike." So did the sun come up today? If it did, there's your proof that God has that kind of love toward his enemies, because the world's filled with his enemies and yet the sun's shining.

In this case though there's a twist. There's a little twist. In Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says "Be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect" (and you can watch those videos if you want to find out what that's all about), but in Luke's account Jesus says "Be merciful, as your heavenly father is merciful." Now the Greek word here for mercy is a weird word. It's a very unusual word: *oiktirmon* is the word. It tends to connote "compassionate". And in this case it goes back to a famous summary in the Old Testament. In the book of Exodus when God reveals himself to Moses, he says "the Lord God, slow to anger, abounding and steadfast love, compassionate and merciful." It's (kind of) one of the summary statements about God's character, which is ironic, because everyone says, "The God of the Old Testament is angry and a vengeful God," when in fact, in the Old Testament itself, God describes himself as "merciful and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love." But I don't expect anyone to actually read the Old Testament, so that's going to go lost on all the Marcionites running around in the world today (Marcion was an early Christian heretic who setup

this dichotomy between the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament is the God of wrath, the New Testament is the God of Love, which is just patently false, and can only be sustained if don't actually read the Old Testament and look at it in the light of the whole). Anyway, sorry; little rant, but I think it's important because Jesus is drawing on an Old Testament image of God as merciful and he's saying "that's what you're called to." *Imitatio dei*. "You be merciful like your father is merciful."

And then in the next verse, it is the final verses for this passage, he unpacks that. I think that's really important because this is the modern world's favorite verse. If you go out into the modern secular world, people who don't know anything about the Bible, who don't know anything about Jesus of Nazareth, who don't know anything about the Church and its history, they know the verse, "Judge not lest ye be judged." Or "Judge not and you will not be judged." Now why do they know that verse? Well because it gets utilized in our contemporary context as a kind of biblical proof-text for relativism (or the idea that, "Hey, you're okay. I'm okay. Let's not judge one another"). It gets used to justify not judging people's actions, because for whatever reason (strange), the very same secular world which professes that "this world is all that there is and that there is no heaven and there is no hell", gets really, really upset if you say that some action merits eternal separation from God. It's bizarre. Why would you care if I say, "if you do that, you'll be eternally separated from God" when you don't believe in God and you don't believe in eternity? It's (kind of) an odd thing.

In any case, this verse gets taken out of context to be used as a (kind of) rebuttal to Christians. So if Christians take a stand on moral issues, within a secular society, secular critics will often respond by saying, "well the bible says 'judge not lest you be judged.'" So what does it mean? Well, in context it's really clear here that Jesus does not mean you cannot judge the moral value of an action, but that you cannot pass judgment on a person (in a sense of pass judgment of the state of their soul or on the destiny of their soul). And you can see this if you just look at it in context, because it's juxtaposed with the second verse (which is pretty standard in Hebrew culture that you have what's called "synonymous parallelism" where you have two lines next to one another and they interpret one another) where he says, "judge not lest ye be judged, condemn not, and you will not be condemned." So, "judgment" is a little more ambiguous - it can be applied to a person or an action, but "condemn" makes it really clear that he's talking about judging a person and (in other

words) pronouncing the final verdict on a person. The only person who can condemn is God. God is the final judge of human beings, the final judge of humanity.

And so he continues to say, “forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, it will be given to you.” So he lays out (basically) four elements here. First, we need to be merciful towards others. So our first response to other people’s sinfulness should actually be compassion and mercy towards them because that’s what God does with us, he’s merciful toward us. It’s also prudent because we don’t know everything about another person. We can’t plumb the depths of their soul and (basically) judge the human heart. It is only God who can do that. And the reality too is that when we make rash judgments, we risk bringing condemnation down upon ourselves, and when we make rash condemnations, we risk being condemned ourselves. So Jesus here is warning us. This is a stern warning. Judge not or you will be judged. Condemn not and you will not be condemned. Now I don’t know about you, but I’d like not to be judged and I’d like not to be condemned by God. This sets up a pretty gratuitous level of the mercy I should show toward other people. In fact, we should be going around flinging mercy in every direction just out of our own self-interest. The idea, “if I’m merciful to others, I’ll be treated with mercy. If I’m compassionate toward others, I’ll be treated with compassion.” And again, this is parallel - this is exactly what Jesus teaches in Matthew. It’s in the Lord’s Prayer: “forgive us our debts as we forgive those indebted to us.” So there’s a parallelism of the measure I’m giving others being given to me, which, in our day and time, there’s a real danger here.

If I might speak to the contemporary setting for just a second. One of the things you’ll notice on social media nowadays (and I’ve seen this, I’ve paid attention). On social media, you have lots of Christians engaged in social media and one of the things that’s been most striking to me (as I enter into the world of social media) is the amount of rash judgment and condemnation that is cast about in the social media world (in the virtual world), because you don’t have the kind of repercussions that you have when you’re speaking with somebody face-to-face. There’s this distance that allows you to just condemn and make judgments rashly. That’s really a spiritually dangerous situation. That’s a spiritually dangerous habit to cultivate, because Jesus is really clear: that if you judge others, you’ll be judged. And if you condemn others, you’ll be condemned. And that the measure you give to others is the measure you’re going to be measured with. So think about your measure. Think about the bar you’re setting for others next time you’re judging and condemning

and realize that's going to be applied to you. It's sobering. It's really, really sobering.

In fact, the image here that he uses at the end (I should explain that), "a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be put into your lap." What's that? What's he talking about? The image that he's using here is (the Greek word is) *metron* (like we get a "meter" from that), it's basically a term for a measuring bowl that would be used to measure out grain in the marketplace. So if I'm selling grain to somebody, the *metron* would be a bowl. Now you can just pour some grain in it and say, "here, that'll be two shekels" or whatever, but a "good measure" is where you fill it with the grain, and then you press down the grain, and then you shake the grain, and when it says "running over", what they would do is that they would have a cloth on their lap and if any spilled over you would catch it. So the idea is that if you'd take a *metron*, and you filled it with grain, you press it down and you shake it, you're trying to get as full a measure as possible. You're getting the most for your money so-to-speak. That's the measure you want to show people. You want to give a good measure. If you give a good measure to others, if you're abundant in your mercy toward others, then God will show abundant mercy to you. And I don't know about you, but I would like for God to show abundant mercy to me. So that's what Jesus is calling us to in this passage: be merciful as your father is merciful, because he gives us a good measure. He always gives us a good measure.

One last point just before we move on. Another reason that the modern secular interpretation of "Judge not lest ye be judged" is wrong, clearly can't be correct in context, is that, in the next line, when Jesus (after saying "condemn not") says "forgive", well the idea of forgiveness presupposes that someone has done something morally wrong, that they've broken a standard. You can't forgive if someone has not committed a sin. You can't forgive if someone has not done something wrong. So the very language of forgiveness presupposes absolute moral standards. Jesus is not a relativist. He's a Jew. And he knows that there are commandments of God, and that to break those commandments is sinful, and to abide by those commandments is righteous. So, in context, the notion of forgiving someone else clearly presupposes right and wrong and the ability to judge actions; meaning, the ability to judge whether an action is right or wrong and in need of forgiveness or not.

Okay, I forgot all about the first readings so let's go back to 1st Samuel 26 (real quickly), it's a brief text, but it's worth looking at here. In the 1 Samuel 26 the

Church has given us this Old Testament reading just as an example of compassion (an example of mercy). In this case, the mercy that David shows to King Saul, who has been acting as his enemy and seeking to kill David at every possible opportunity. And one of the Christ-like features of David in the Old Testament is that he actually shows love toward his enemy. He shows love toward King Saul. He has compassion on Saul and he spares Saul when he could have taken his life. So in this famous story, 1st Samuel 26 – the verses that the lectionary picks are kind of selective, so I'll just read though them. 1 Samuel 26:2 and following says:

So Saul arose and went down to the wilderness of Ziph, with three thousand chosen men of Israel, to seek David in the wilderness of Ziph...

Pause there. Saul is taking three thousand men to go and kill David. That's the context here. So there are enemies and then there are enemies. If somebody came after you with three thousand armed soldiers and a desire to kill you, that constitutes a pretty serious enmity. So that's what's going on here. Saul is David's enemy. Now pick up in verse 7:

So David and Abi'shail went to the army by night; and there lay Saul sleeping within the encampment, with his spear stuck in the ground at his head; and Abner and the army lay around him. Then said Abi'shail to David, "God has given your enemy into your hand this day; now therefore let me pin him to the earth with one stroke of the spear, and I will not strike him twice." But David said to Abi'shail, "Do not destroy him; for who can put forth his hand against the Lord's anointed, and be guiltless?"

Now it skips down to verse 12:

So David took the spear and the jar of water from Saul's head; and they went away. No man saw it, or knew it, nor did any awake; for they were all asleep, because a deep sleep from the Lord had fallen upon them. Then David went over to the other side, and stood afar off on the top of the mountain, with a great space between them... And David made answer, "Here is the spear, O king! Let one of the young men come over and fetch it. The Lord rewards every man for his righteousness and his faithfulness; for the Lord gave you into my hand today, and I would not put forth my hand against the Lord's anointed.

Now there's a lot more in the story if you want to go back and read the full event; that was (kind of) like excerpts from 1 Samuel 26. The essence of the story is this: Saul is David's enemy. He has both the opportunity (and frankly) the right to strike back. Saul has already initiated an attack on David, he could have killed him, but in the night when he had this opportunity to do so, instead of striking his enemy, David had mercy on Saul. He had compassion on Saul and he did not take his life. And then he takes (of course) the spear over to the other side of the mountain in order to (kind of) show, as a proof to Saul, that he had the opportunity to kill him but that he didn't. So it's just an example of doing good to one's enemies and having compassion on one's enemies. Although I will say this, and you'll notice, that the reason David won't strike Saul, is because Saul is the Lord's anointed. The word anointed there, *ma-shi'ach*, is the Hebrew word for "messiah", from which we get the English word "messiah". So there's also a bit of an irony here too that Saul, the wicked king is the one called the *ma-shi'ach* (the messiah). Now David, eventually, will take Saul's place and he too will be called *ma-shi'ach*, but in this instance David is respecting the office of Saul as king, but he's also showing mercy on his enemy by refusing to take his life.

With that in mind then, the theme of mercy crops up in Psalm 103, which is the Psalm for today, the Responsorial Psalm:

Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name!

And in verse 8, we hear that (kind of) summary I was talking about earlier:

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

So what kind of God is the Old Testament God? Merciful, compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. Can you say that of yourself? Slow to anger? Merciful? Compassionate? That's what God's like in the Old Testament. Of course, that's what he's like in the New Testament as well. That's the theme of mercy that the Church wants us to ponder today. In fact, in that very psalm (in verse 10) it says, "He doesn't deal with us according to our sins." In other words, he doesn't give us what we deserve. Don't ever pray for God to give you what you deserve if you're a sinner. Pray for mercy. That's what the psalm is doing today.

I'm going to close (as always) with an insight from *The Living Tradition*, from the tradition of the Church. In this case, I want to cite a teaching of Pope Francis. A

few years ago Pope Francis called for a year of mercy, and in his letter on the year of mercy, a beautiful letter called “The Face of Mercy”, he articulates and interprets that verse “Judge not lest ye be judged” (I keep saying “ye be judged” because it’s the King James Version), “Judge not and you will not be judged”. Luke 6:37-38. This is what Pope Francis says about that verse:

The Lord asks us above all *not to judge* and *not to condemn*. *If anyone wishes to avoid God’s judgement, he should not make himself the judge of his brother or sister*. Human beings, whenever they judge, look no farther than the surface, whereas the Father looks into the very depths of the soul. How much harm words do when they are motivated by feelings of jealousy and envy! To speak ill of others puts them in a bad light, undermines their reputation and leaves them prey to the whims of gossip. To refrain from judgement and condemnation means, in a positive sense, to know how to accept the good in every person and to spare him any suffering that might be caused by our partial judgment, our presumption to know everything about him. But this is still not sufficient to express mercy. Jesus asks us also to *forgive* and to *give*. To be instruments of mercy because it was we who first received mercy from God. To be generous with others, knowing that God showers his goodness upon us with immense generosity. *Merciful like the Father*, therefore, is the “motto” of this Holy Year. ²

So I’ll end with that. That’s our model. Our model is the Father’s compassion. What kind of mercy should we have? Mercy like the Father. What kind of love should we show? Love like the Father. And who makes that mercy and that love visible to us? It’s Christ himself, especially Christ crucified.

² Pope Francis, The Face of Mercy, no. 14