

Pericope Study for Epiphany 7C – Sunday, February 24, 2019

Presented Tuesday, February 19, 2019 by Richard Burgess

Collect / POD (ELW)

O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Collect / POD (LBW)

God of compassion, keep before us the love you have revealed in your Son, who prayed even for his enemies; in our words and deeds help us to be like him through whom we pray, Jesus Christ our Lord. (18)

General Comments:

All three lessons studied here deal significantly with the need for sacrifice / death / loss in order to have life or fuller life. This is not an easy paradigm to live out of day to day. How can we make it easier to die so we can live more fully?

What is given up or lost in forgiveness? Gained or restored? Is it always worth it?

“Forgive and forget.” Is this a good idea? In accounting, forgiveness means writing off a debt. But, as I understand accounting there are no erasers, only ink. And crossing out. But still visible.

Compare and balance mercy vs justice? For whom? By whom? To what end? Who decides?

Possible Sermon Titles for Epiphany 7C:

As usual, use at your own risk.

	Gen	1Cor	Lk
All's Well that Ends Well	X		
God Sends Us to Preserve Life	X		
My Evil is God's Good	X		
Sent to Preserve Life	X		
We Mean Evil; God Means Good	X		
No Life without Death First		X	
Of Earth Today, Of Heaven Tomorrow		X	
Sown in Weakness, Raised in Power		X	
Your Body is Inadequate		X	
Do unto Others			X
Give without Measure			X
No Keeping Track			X
Your Reward Will Be Great			X

Genesis 45:3-11, 15 (NRSV)

³Joseph 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.

⁴Then 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. ⁵And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, ‘Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. ¹⁰You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children’s children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹I 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.’” . . . ¹⁵And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

Notes, Observations, Thought Questions

Joseph sees his slavery in Egypt as God working to save his family, but this eventually led to his family being enslaved for several centuries. What does good mean here?

45.4 *whom you sold into Egypt* Joseph’s brothers objectified him, selling him as they would an object. (Though note it was also sort of mercy – Gen 37.21-27) Conversely, when we forgive because we have to or are supposed to, do we also to some extent objectify the other?

45.5 *to preserve life* (from ḥâyâ, to live, related to words for food or sustenance). How important is “life”, eg, are there limits to what is worth sacrificing to preserve life? Slavery? Killing? (Animal slaughter for food? Killing to defend self or family? Sniping an active shooter?)

45.5, 7 What level of agency do God and Joseph have here? Was it OK for God to cause / allow Joseph to be sold into slavery for the sake of God’s purposes? How does this affect pastoral care for people staying in bad marriages for the sake of the children, or finding / creating meaning in disabling accidents or job losses?

45.7 Who / what are this “remnant” and the “many survivors”?

45.8 *a father to Pharaoh* ie, the prime minister, whose policies protected Pharaoh as a father would.

1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50 (NRSV)

³⁵But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" ³⁶Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

⁴²So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. ⁴⁴It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

⁵⁰What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

Notes, Observations, Thought Questions

15.35 Why does it matter *what kind of body* the raised dead have?

15.36-44 These verses seem to be saying that what humans sow is raised by God. Note God appears to be slightly more accomplished than humans.

15.43 Do your people really know what they mean when they say "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."? (Apostles Creed)

15.45 First Adam was alive. Second Adam (Christ) was life-giving.

15.45 *became a life-giving spirit* When did this "becoming" happen? Does becoming a spirit preclude having a real human body?

15.49 Compare to Gen 1.27 "So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." (NRSV) Is this being created in the image of God different than bearing the images of 1st Adam & 2nd Adam?

15.50 *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.* Is this anti-body? Does Paul mean that our earthly existence must be transformed or redeemed in some way?

Luke 6:27-38 (NRSV)

[Jesus said:] ²⁷“But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. ²⁹If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. ³¹Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³²“If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴If 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. ³⁵But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷“Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸give, and it will be given to you. A 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.”

Notes, Observations, Thought Questions

6.27 Who are our *enemies*?

6.29 Does this unconditional love, pacifistic tendency, etc pertain to all disagreements or infractions? How does this affect current arguments &/o actions for or against President Trump’s wall?

6.29-31 When does turning the other cheek become enabling sin / bad behavior? Codependence? How do people with real self esteem issues hear this passage?

6.31 The Golden Rule elsewhere in the Bible: (NRSV)

- “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” (Lev 19.18)
- “And what you hate, do not do to anyone.” (Tob 4.15)
- “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” (Mt 7.12)

6.31 How does constructive criticism fit in here? What about when I need it but am willfully against it, ie, when “I would not have you do to me”.

6.37 *Do not judge* . . . Is judging different from discernment? Can we not judge egregious public acts (eg, active shooters, public shaming of countries) without tacitly condoning them? Does “hate the sin but love the sinner” work here?

6.37 *Do not judge* . . . Is this not in itself a judgment on judging? ☺

Lk 6.38 *good measure . . . running over*, i.e., generously unmeasured.

6.38 Pros & cons of using this as a stewardship pitch / theme / slogan?

Quotes on Forgiveness:

"Forgiveness means giving up all hope for a better past." (Lily Tomlin)

"The refusal to forgive is a poison you take, hoping someone else will die."
(Seane Corn)

"And forgive us our sins, as we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us." (Lk 11.4 NRSV)

"Forgiveness is the final form of love."
(Reinhold Niebuhr)

"Life becomes easier when you learn to accept an apology you never got."
(Robert Brault)

"Sometimes you forgive people simply because you still want them in your life."
(source unknown)

"To forgive is to put oneself in a larger gravitational field of experience than the one that first seemed to hurt us." (David Whyte, Daily Good for 2/8/16)

"God's brightness does not exclude or deny anything. Divine perfection is precisely the ability to include imperfection; whereas we think we must exclude, deny, and even punish it! The flow of grace is an increasing ability to forgive reality for being what it is— instead of what we want it to be!"
(Richard Rohr, Daily Meditation for Sun 10/7/18)

Easter Proclamation:

"O necessary sin of Adam that is wiped away by the death of Christ! O happy fault that was worthy to have so great a Redeemer!" (LBW: Exultet (Easter Proclamation))

Talent and Sacrifice:

"You still don't get it, do you?"

...
This isn't about you.
It's not about me.

...
You have a talent.
But, it comes with sacrifice, believe me.
And it's time for you to realize,
That this talent,
It doesn't belong to just you anymore."

(Cal Lightman (character) in "Lie to Me", Season 1, Episode 13, towards end of episode)