

Luke 6:27-38

Having a generous spirit

Jesus continues his teaching on how to behave as God’s children. He challenges his hearers to not only love those who treat them well but to go beyond this and to love their enemies.



Bible notes



This passage follows on from last week’s pronouncing of blessings and woes. Surrounded by a crowd of diverse people from a wide geographical area, all seeking teaching and healing, Jesus speaks directly to his disciples. Whether these teachings were presented in this manifesto-like way, or whether Luke has drawn together the key threads that were repeated through Jesus’ ministry, these provide key elements of what it means to live as the people of God. At their heart is the generosity that comes from extreme love for all, without boundaries.

From the outset, the intention was that the people of God would live differently and attract others to a relationship with God. We see this contrast in the comparison between what is being instructed here and the behaviour of ‘sinners’ – those out of step with God. An enemy, in this context, is one who rejects or denounces those who follow Jesus. In fact, Jesus is not suggesting anything new here. The Hebrew Bible instructs that God’s people should ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ (Leviticus 19:18). But as with the telling of the Good Samaritan’s story a few chapters later, Jesus is providing some clarity around this and removing the misplaced perspective that this applies only to those who are ‘like me’. ‘Do to others as you would have them do to you’ (v.31) means all others, including foreigners and those who don’t follow God. Being the people of God entails reflecting God’s generosity. We need to make our own judgements about what this looks like in different situations, but these verses provide some practical examples. This behaviour is not just a nice idea, but an obligation.



‘Treat people in the same way that you want them to treat you’ (CEB). Think of two people in your life, perhaps someone you see regularly and someone you are not as close to. Make a plan to treat them generously this week.

First impressions

- What stops us being generous?
- Have you ever been generous to someone who had wronged you? What was the result?
- Which ‘enemies’ can you be generous to in the coming week?



REFLECT

Sometimes we find it difficult to have the generous spirit Jesus talks about in the Gospel passage, as we still hold on to past resentments and frustrations with someone. In the Old Testament reading (Genesis 45:3-11,15), we see how Joseph has let go of his resentment and anger with the brothers who sold him into slavery.

You will need: a bowl of water and a bowl of ice cubes. Think of a person or a situation that is frustrating you. Put an ice cube in the water and, as you watch it melt, hold the problem, issue or challenge before God, asking him to help you to be generous and let the frustration melt away.

Pray

Help me to be forgiving when others are unfair or unkind or unfriendly.
Help me to show a generosity of spirit in the way I respond to others,
for that is how you treat me. Amen.



LISTEN



Listen to the song ‘Walk a mile in my shoes’ by Joe South. When someone causes you harm or upsets you, what steps could you take to try to understand them better?

LOOK

Look at today’s newspaper or an online news website. Are there situations which make you angry, upset or frustrated? Pray for the people involved.