

Daily Office Devotional, Wednesday, April 28, 2021
The week of the fourth Sunday of Easter
The Rev. David W. Perkins, Th.D.

Daily Office Lectionary readings

AM Psalm 119:49-72; PM Psalm 49, [53]

Wisdom 4:16-5:8; Colossians 1:24-2:7; Luke 6:27-38

Morning Prayer, Rite 2, page 75, *Book of Common Prayer*

Evening Prayer, Rite 2, page 115, *Book of Common Prayer*

Compline (Night Prayer), Page 127, *Book of Common Prayer*

Daily Office Gospel, Luke 6:27-38

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.'

David's Reflections

Just what IS love anyway? It certainly sounds like a good word; it just has the
misfortune of traveling in bad company--all sorts of casual and careless usages cling
to it like sticky notes to a refrigerator door. Jesus here defines love in terms of
actions. Love for enemies gets described in very concrete life situations--not trading

insults, being defrauded, lending to those who probably won't repay, avoiding judgmentalism, being generous.

The model for this kind of loving action comes from God. We are to be merciful just as God shows mercy. Does God love God's own enemies? Does God refrain from returning insults? Does God give to those who will not repay? Is God generous? Luke's point is that God loves with merciful actions no matter whether we love in return, whether we are friends or enemies of God.

Jesus himself modeled this kind of unconditional love, love that reaches out to us with no regard for any beauty or any goodness in us. He loved his enemies to the point of praying for the forgiveness of his executioners as he is dying at their hands. "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do," he said from the cross.

In all candor, passages like this one create powerful anxiety, bringing to mind all the ways my own capacities for love appear like pebbles before the mountain of God's merciful and persistent loving. Others have been wounded by my inadequacy in loving. Yet, it is that stretching effect of Jesus' teaching and lived life of love that calls me and you to be more than we are, to acknowledge the dark shadow of emotional violence and destructiveness that lurks in our souls, and to seek freedom in the warm, safe sun of God's love.

And, Jesus' loving us enables us. With Jesus as companion, friend, example, and strength, we can live into a larger place and become freer to act in loving and merciful ways with less regard for the beauty and goodness of those whose presence calls forth our love. Rather than seeing ourselves as incapable of loving, we can see ourselves as people who can become more loving.

"Love is a life force, integral to our human nature. Just as the life force pushes up through the roots of the trees, so love surges through our being, splitting the seeds of the self and pushing out into interpersonal union." [Ralph W. Sockman, *Man's First Love: The Great Commandment* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), pp. 20-21.]

Collect of the Day, The Fourth Sunday of Easter

O God, whose Son Jesus is the good shepherd of your people; Grant that when we hear his voice we may know him who calls us each by name, and follow where he leads; who, with you and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever.
Amen. (BCP, 225)

Collect of the Weekdays of Easter

Almighty and everlasting God, you have given your Church the great joy of the resurrection of Jesus Christ: Give us also the greater joy of the kingdom of your elect, when the flock of your Son will share in the final victory of its Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. *Amen.*

A Collect for Grace

Lord God, almighty and everlasting Father, you have brought us in safety to this new day: Preserve us with your mighty power, that we may not fall into sin, nor be overcome by adversity; and in all we do, direct us to the fulfilling of your purpose; through Jesus Christ our Lord. *Amen.* (BCP, 100)

A Collect for Protection

O God, the life of all who live, the light of the faithful, the strength of those who labor, and the repose of the dead: We thank you for the blessings of the day that is past, and humbly ask for your protection through the coming night. Bring us in safety to the morning hours; through him who died and rose again for us, your Son our Savior Jesus Christ. *Amen.* (BCP, 124)

A Prayer for Light

Lighten our darkness, we beseech you, O Lord; and by your great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night; for the love of your only Son, Jesus Christ, *Amen.* (BCP, 111)

A Collect for Mission

Lord Jesus Christ, you stretched out your arms of love on the hard wood of the cross that everyone might come within the reach of your saving embrace: So clothe us in your Spirit that we, reaching forth our hands in love, may bring those who do not know you to the knowledge and love of you; for the honor of your Name. *Amen.* (BCP, 101)