

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany, Year C

ECONOMIES AND GENEROSITIES

Luke 6:27-38

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

Analysis by Bruce K Modahl

27 But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. 29 If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. 30 Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. 31 Do 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. 33 If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. 34 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. 35 But 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. 36 Be 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; 38 give, 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."



DIAGNOSIS: No Better than Sinners

Step 1: Initial Diagnosis (External Problem): Regrettable Economies

The author Reynolds Price was a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford when a professor told him about a visit home during his mother's final illness. "He waited with his other muted kin as long as he possibly could before having to return.... [H]e went in to kiss her sleeping head goodbye. She showed no response and he turned to leave quietly. As he touched the latch of her door, though, there came the sudden sound of her voice – 'Nevill.' He turned to see her behind him, half-risen in bed. She lifted a frail hand and pointed toward him strongly. 'Nevill, remember – I only regret my economies'" (*Ardent Spirits*, 286).

The economies she regretted were the times she was frugal with her hospitality, stingy with her affection, and miserly in her help of those in need.

Jesus addresses those who are likewise economical when it comes to those they love, whom they bless and pray for, and the ones they deem worthy of mercy. They practice the sort of hospitality that all sinners practice, inviting to dinner those who return the favor, loving those who love them, lending to those who pay back with interest.

Step 2: Advanced Diagnosis (Internal Problem): Wanting Credit

Penurious gestures reveal miserly hearts. We want credit for our own feeble attempts at doing good. Our credo, our faith, is in our scanty goodness and semi kindnesses meant for the deserving and those able to benefit us in return. We illustrate what it means to be curved in on ourselves. Yet it is on this basis we want credit from others and from God.

Step 3: Final Diagnosis (Eternal Problem): Cursed

We are at odds with God which we know clearly because Jesus stands in opposition to us as he offers his critique. We think we are due credit not only from others but from God, enough credit to put us in God's eternal graces. We look for credit from our own meager store but will not find there enough mercy to turn the curse of death to a blessing. Jesus tells his listeners that they are no better than sinners. We know what sinners must do. We must repent, turn away from ourselves, face God, and look to him for help.

PROGNOSIS: The Good Measure

***Step 4: Initial Prognosis
(Eternal Solution): Enriched***



Turning to Jesus we find one who blesses those who cursed him and from the cross prayed for those who abused him. He loved his enemies. It was out of love that Nevill's mother spoke to him from her sick bed. It was out of love Jesus spoke the words of our text to the crowd. It was out of mercy and love for us that Jesus gave his life on the cross and God the Father spoke Jesus to life in the tomb.

Step 5: Advanced Prognosis (Internal Solution): Giving Credit to Jesus

We hear the good news that Jesus' death and resurrection are for us. We hear that God's economies—life out of death, forgiveness for sinners, and mercy trumping condemnation—work in our favor. As we hear all this good news the Holy Spirit calls us to place our faith in Jesus. Another way of saying it is, we give Jesus all the credit.

Believing in him we receive all his benefits. Jesus was the Son

of the Most High. We are children of the Most High as we abide in Jesus by our baptismal faith. Baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection and believing in him, he gives us all his blessings: mercy, forgiveness, and everlasting life.

Step 6: Final Prognosis (External Solution): Blessed Economies

As recipients of God's blessings, we practice God's economies. In God's kingdom we expect reversal. Therefore, in God's dominion economies are not cut backs but abundance. We are not frugal with our hospitality. We feed anyone who shows up and seek out those who don't with a special invitation. We are not stingy with love but treat everyone in a just manner. We are not miserly with our help for those in need. We are generous, a good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over even as such a bounty has been poured into our laps and lives.