**Reflections 27 February – 1 March**

**Bible study on Luke 6:27-38**

**Begin with an opening prayer**

Lord, fill us with expectation that:
as we worship, you will meet us;
as we worship, you will speak your words into our hearts;
as we worship, you will challenge us and change us.
Lord, we are here and we worship you.
**Amen.**

**Read the passage**

*Consider different ways to read the text. For example, hearing it in more than one version of the Bible.*

**27**“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, **28**bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. **29**If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. **30**Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. **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? Even sinners love those who love them. **33**And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. **34**And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. **35**But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and 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 and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”

**Explore and respond to the text**

*Start by reading the Bible notes below. You may want to read them more than once or pause after each paragraph to reflect on what you have read.*

###  **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.

**Reflection**

*Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.*

Do we get what we deserve? Maybe we have had a ‘lucky escape’ when the consequences of our actions have been more positive than we would have expected. Generosity shown to us can lead to opportunities for self-reflection and growth as well as gratitude. Is Luke showing us responses opposite to our expectations to encourage us to show generosity to others, echoing God’s generosity to us? The Gospel reading encourages us to treat others as we would like to be treated, as our actions influence the lives of others. God responds to us with mercy, love and generosity. Can we do the same?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* 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?

**A prayer to end the Bible study**

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.**