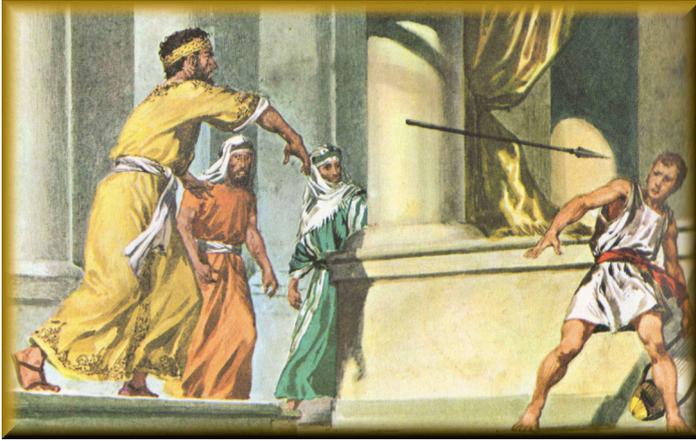




Love Your Enemies – David is a great example



Aim:

- 1) Encourage the class to love each other and more importantly those whom they do not get along with or are distant to.
- 2) To learn to love, bless and pray for your enemies and follow the great example of King David in which the Bible describes him as “the man after God’s heart”.

3) Give the class several good examples from both the Old & New Testament of how to love our enemies.

Memory Verse:

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. ‘But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what rewards have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matt 5:43-48)

Servant Preparation:

1) Try to make peace with whomever you haven’t spoken to in a long time and remember the words of our Saviour, *“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift”* (Matt 5: 23-24)

Activities:

Encourage the class to interact by brainstorming through the following questions:

- 1) When someone wrongs you what is your first reaction? Is it to demand *“an eye for an eye”* or do you *“turn the other cheek”* Matt 5:38-48
- 2) Is it realistic for human beings to love their enemies? Why or why not?
- 3) Jesus says we’re supposed to *“be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* Matt 5:48. What kind of perfection is Jesus talking about?
- 4) When you hurt God by your actions does He ever take revenge on you? Why or why not?
- 5) What is the difference between revenge and discipline?

Introduction:

Who are the unlovables in your life right now? Who are the kids or adults that drive you crazy? Who are the people who you feel like grabbing by the collar and scream at them? What types of personalities or attitudes really annoy you? Who are those people in your life that just bug you? Or worse who are your enemies?

One of the biggest challenges anyone can ever face is learning how to love our enemies. An enemy is the last thing most of us would want to have. Likewise loving an enemy is the last thing most of us would want to do. Loving the unlovable people in our lives requires a motivation and strength from God. How else could we possibly do it?

It is really hard to be around people who irritate you. That is why we need God's grace to transform our weakness to strength. I know that He can give me strength, humility and grace to love others in spite of my weakness. Our teacher St. Paul confirms this, saying, "***I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me***" (Phil 4:13) and furthermore the Bible says, "***God resists the proud, but give grace to the humble***" (Titus 3:2).

Lesson:

I - LOVE YOUR ENEMIES:

a) Who are our enemies?

Encourage the class to read their answers to the activity questions.

What was the relationship between David, Jonathan and King Saul?

Obviously, after David killed Goliath he rose to prominence quickly as an important person among Saul's valiant men. Though David declared he was a son of Saul's servant (1 Samuel 17:58), he rapidly became a close friend of Saul's son, Jonathan. What began as a great relationship between friends became a relationship Saul held in contempt. The problems that existed between Saul and David were instigated by Saul's weak faith and character flaws, not by David.

b) Why should I love my enemies?

- Obey our Saviour's Commandment as mentioned in the memory verse.
- To learn and be like Jesus Christ and not like the Pharisees and tax collectors.
- To be rewarded, "***Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.***" (Matt5:11-12)
- Recognise that we are all created in the image of God, "***So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him....***" (Gen 1:27). Therefore if we are all created in the image of God then we must love and respect all humanity regardless of race or religion. Furthermore follow the example of King David set in the OT, who said, "***The Lord forbid that I should lay a hand on the Lord's anointed.***" (1Sam 26:9)

Why did David love his enemy Saul?

Saul came to hate and fear David, but David only served Saul. Though David had many "self" justifications for despising Saul, David kept only a sense of respect for Saul because King Saul was chosen by God to be Israel's king. Though Saul attempted to provoke and destroy David in numerous ways, **David refused to act as Saul's enemy.**

King Saul was deeply offended by David's reception. He wanted to be seen and honored by the Israelite people as Israel's deliverer. The fact that these Israelite women made David more prominent than King Saul angered the king. From the moment of that incident onward, King Saul looked at David with suspicion.

King Saul's suspicion became jealousy and anger, his jealousy and anger became hate, his hate become imagined danger, and imagined danger made David an enemy to be destroyed. He intended to destroy David before David could destroy King Saul and his family.

It is essential for us to understand that David's attitude toward King Saul was founded on his attitude toward God. David's attitude toward God, although he had two opportunities to kill King Saul:

The first time, David and his men were hiding in the back of a cave — hiding because Saul and his army of 3,000 were pursuing them. Unaware of the presence of David's small band of men, Saul *"went in to relieve himself"* (1Sam.24:3). David's men encouraged him to kill Saul, thinking God had delivered Saul into David's hands. David refused to lift his hand against Saul, but he did cut off a corner of his robe. *"He said to his men, The Lord forbid that I should do such a thing to my master, the Lord's anointed, or lift my hand against him; for he is the anointed of the Lord"* (1Sam.24:6).

The second time, David had an opportunity to kill Saul occurred when Saul was again pursuing him. Saul and his men were encamped in the wilderness not far from David. While they slept, David and a loyal captain, Abishai, crept up close to Saul's camp. Abishai volunteered to kill Saul, but David stopped him, asking, *"Who can lay a hand on the Lord's anointed and be guiltless?"... But the LORD forbid that I should lay a hand on the LORD's anointed. Now get the spear and water jug that are near his head, and let's go."* (1Sam.26:9–11). Instead of killing Saul, David took the spear and water jug near Saul's head.

David was angry that Abner, Saul's military commander, had left Saul exposed to danger while he slept. After David and Abishai reached the hill opposite Saul's camp, *"he called out to the army and to Abner"* (1Sam.26:14). David rebuked Abner, asking: *"You're a man, aren't you?... What you have done is not good. As surely as the Lord lives, you and your men deserve to die, because you did not guard your master, the Lord's anointed. Look around you. Where are the king's spear and water jug that were near his head?"* (1Sam.26:15-16).

II – BLESS THOSE WHO CURSE YOU:

a) How can I do this?

Remember that life is not meant to be trouble free, *"In the world you will have tribulation but be of good cheer I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33). Furthermore as Christians we will be hated by many and, *"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My Name's sake."* (Matt 24:9). However, *"count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing."*(James1:2-4)

We must learn to forgive as we repeat so many times in the Lord's Pray and learn from the advice given in the Book of life. Then Peter came to Him and said, *"Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times? Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."* (Matt 18:21-22).

III – DO GOOD TO THOSE WHO HATES YOU:

a) What is the benefit?

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he thirsts, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head. Do not overcome by evil but overcome evil by good." (Rom 12:20-21).

When your enemy attacks you, he/she is expecting that you will retaliate and repay "evil for evil", but if you offer "the other cheek" or do a good deed then the devil will flee. The devil's nature is pride. It was for this reason that he fell from Heaven and it was for this reason that Judas was unable to repent from his

sins. Therefore to crush Satan and/or reconcile back to the Father, we must humble ourselves just like the prodigal son who was happy to return and be, "treated as one of his father's hired workers".

What did David do to his enemy Saul?

That what David did as he declared that, he could not kill God's anointed (1 Samuel 24:8-12; 26:6-12), but he was concerned for the safety of Saul, ignoring the fact that Saul hunted to kill him & he was careful to seek God's will, not his own will. David trusted in God, knowing that when God is ready He will put him on the throne of Israel. He accepted God's will, even when it hurt.

That shows us that we ***"Do not need to seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord."*** (Lev 19:18) And in the New Testament Jesus made it clear that neighbor did not merely mean people close by as He said in the Sermon on the Mount; ***"You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbour and hate your enemy.'***

In the New Testament it was even clearer. One of the most famous parables: the story of the Good Samaritan. The **whole point** of that story was to answer the question "Who is my neighbour":

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. ***"Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" "What is written in the Law?" he replied. "How do you read it?" He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' " "You have answered correctly," Jesus replied. "Do this and you will live." But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbour?"***

In reply Jesus said:

"A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he travelled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. 'Look after him,' he said, 'and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.'

"Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?" The expert in the law replied, "The one who had mercy on him." Jesus told him, "Go and do likewise." (Luke 10:25-37)

Why was the story so significant? It was not because one man was so compassionate to the man in distress. It was because that man was a Samaritan, a people despised by the Jews:

"(For Jews do not associate with Samaritans)." (John 4:9)

So we see that, for a follower of Jesus, ***'Love Your Neighbour'*** means 'Love all people'. And because our enemies are the hardest people to love, the command especially means, 'Love Your Enemies'.

IV – PRAY FOR THOSE WHO SPITEFULLY USE YOU AND PERSECUTE YOU:

At the time of Jesus' crucifixion when he said, ***"Father forgive them, for they do not know what they do."*** (Luke 23:34)

This is a good example as logically they consider Jesus' enemies. But out of Jesus Love He prayed to His Father to forgive them and that what we should do that pray for everyone even that whom we consider enemies and ask for God's strength and support to do so.

V – WHAT WAS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN KING DAVID & SAUL?

David was the opposite of Saul. David had absolute confidence in God. Saul did not include God as a factor in his decisions (all what King Saul wanted was God's protection; he did not think in terms of honoring God)

David was a man of faith who placed matters in God's hands. Saul was faithless and took matters in his own hands.

David had such confidence in God that he believed God was at work in his dire distress--he often asked for more faith and protection. Saul commonly questioned God's decisions, actions and sought to justify his own.

Though King Saul made David's life miserable, David refused to function as King Saul's enemy. Though King Saul sought opportunity to kill David, David showed nothing but respect for King Saul. Though David had opportunities to kill King Saul, he refused to kill the king and also prevented his followers from killing King Saul.

VI – WHAT ARE PRACTICAL WAYS THAT I CAN DO TO LOVE MY ENEMIES?

- Imitate and be Christ like,
- “Be Holy as I am Holy”,
- Put all your worries, trouble and concerns at the foot of the Cross as Fr. Bishoy Kamel did,
- Remember that Jesus suffered much more tribulation, humiliation and pain for our sake,
- Do not return evil for evil, but evil for good knowing that our heavenly Father will reward your efforts,
- Have a contrite heart like the right thief who was moved with compassion for the Lord's suffering on the cross and like King David who had a heart like God, and
- Pray for God's grace to transform my weakness to strength.

Conclusion:

Let us follow the great examples from the OT and NT like that of David's relationship with King Saul and how he trusted in the Lord and pleaded to Him for strength and increasing his faith that enabled David to refuse to be Saul's enemy. Let us also imitate and follow the example of Jesus Christ who out of His love took the form of a servant and died on the wood of the Cross for our sake. Amidst the pain and suffering He asked His heavenly Father to forgive them as they do not know what they do. The Bible is full of really good examples that teach us to trust in God, to ask for His help, strength and support especially to love, bless and pray for our enemies.