



DAILY BREAD
LECTIONARY DEVOTIONS
EPIPHANY 7 — YEAR A

INVOCATION

L: In the name of the Father
and of the Son +
and of the Holy Spirit.

G: Amen

PSALM OF THE DAY: PSALM 103

**A: I will hear what the Lord proclaims:
peace to his people.**

L: Praise the LORD, O my soul;

G: all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

L: He forgives all your sins

G: and heals all your diseases;

L: he redeems your life from the grave

G: and crowns you with love and compassion.

L: The LORD is compassionate and gracious,

G: slow to anger, abounding in love.

L: He does not treat us as our sins deserve

G: or repay us according to our iniquities.

L: For as high as the heavens are above the earth,

G: so great is his love for those who fear him;

L: as far as the east is from the west,

**G: so far has he removed our transgressions
from us.**

L: As a father has compassion on his children,

**G: so the LORD has compassion on those who
fear him;**

L: for he knows how we are formed,

G: he remembers that we are dust.

L: Our days are like grass, like a flower of the field;

G: the wind blows over it and it is gone.

L: But the LORD'S love is with those who fear him

G: from everlasting to everlasting.

**A: I will hear what the Lord proclaims:
peace to his people.**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

L: Gracious Father, keep your family, the Church,
always faithful to you, that we may lean on the hope
of your promises and be strong in the power of your
love; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who
lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one
God, now and forever.

READING & MEDITATION

see next page

PRAYER

LORD'S PRAYER

**A: Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those
who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom
and the power and the glory
forever and ever. Amen.**

VERSE OF THE DAY

**A: Be merciful, just as your Father is
merciful. (Luke 6:36)**

BENEDICTION

L: The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ
and the love of God
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all.

A: Amen

READING AND MEDITATION:

Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany: The Savior's Sermon: Love your enemies! What could be more counterintuitive? Yet Christ calls his disciples to a love for our neighbor that models itself after Jesus' love for the world. As Luther said: *Christi sumus in nominativo et genitivo* (We are Christs—with and without the apostrophe). A heart like Christ's has no room for vengeance, but is filled with love for all.

THE GOSPEL: MATTHEW 5:38-48

Our flesh finds Jesus' commands revolting. The human animal snarls when attacked and bites back when bitten. Jesus, however, tells us not to resist evil, to turn the other cheek, to love our enemies. Who would live like this? Only the Son of our heavenly Father. God demonstrated his love for us in this: when we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Jesus himself prayed for his enemies who crucified him. He most certainly was his Father's Son. Now God calls us, his sons, to live like Jesus and love people as perfectly as the Father does. As God makes the sun rise on the evil and the good, so he commands us to shine the light of our love on everyone around us.

My takeaways:

FIRST LESSON: LEVITICUS 19:1, 2, 17, 18

This is the passage that Jesus references in the Gospel. However, some of the Pharisees had changed its interpretation by adding "but hate your enemy" to the phrase "love your neighbor." While that makes sense to our flesh, it is completely out of character with God. The standard for our life is the holiness of God, not our feelings or wants. God's holy standard is clear: love for our neighbor must be equal to the love we have for our very self. Make no room in your hearts for vengeance or grudges, but live with the holiness of God as your standard and your example. Live also with the last sentence as your comfort and motivation: I am the LORD, the God of the covenant, the God of free and faithful love for you.

My takeaways:

SECOND LESSON:

1 CORINTHIANS 3:10, 11, 16-23

This is the sixth in a seven-week series of readings from 1 Corinthians. Paul could have borne a grudge against Apollos or Peter because of the divisions present in the church of Corinth. Instead, he models Christian love for our neighbor and Christian unity with his words and actions. Paul lives and speaks and loves like Christ, seeking only to serve. The world would call it foolishness, but God calls such selfless love the wisdom of God.

My takeaways:

SUPPLEMENTAL FIRST LESSON:

1 SAMUEL 26:(1-6) 7-25

Would anyone have faulted David for killing Saul? Saul had unfairly abused him; Saul had unfairly exiled him; Saul had unfairly tried to kill him. David could have claimed his actions were in self-defense or in fighting a just war or in taking the office to which he had been anointed. Who would have found fault with him? Certainly not the sons of Zeruah! Though unfailingly brave, they could never understand David's lack of pragmatic action (see Abner, Absalom, Shimei, etc.). Yet David showed again that he was a man after God's own heart. David trusted that his reward was with his God, and so he had no need for vengeance. That freed him to be able to love even his enemy Saul.

My takeaways:

SUPPLEMENTAL SECOND LESSON:

ROMANS 12:9-21

In the twelfth chapter of Romans Paul urges us to offer our bodies as living sacrifices to God. In this lesson we find practical examples of how spiritual acts of worship are offered to God through our love for our neighbor. Loving our brothers and sharing with those in need certainly makes sense. But like Jesus, Paul goes further: bless your persecutors and don't take revenge because that is God's domain. Our domain is the opposite of vengeance; our domain is the imitation of Christ. Sons of the Father love their enemies and pray for their persecutors.

My takeaways:

What major theme(s) connect(s) all the lessons?