

Archbishop Thabo Makgoba
Provincial Standing Committee: First Homily
10 September 2009

Luke 6:27-38

²⁷Jesus said, '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.' (NRSV)

Good morning! I hope you are well refreshed.

We have been reflecting on St Luke's gospel at the Synod of Bishops, and we shall continue with this at PSC.

Today we are told to love our enemies, bless those who curse us, and be merciful and generous beyond counting. We are to treat others as we would like to be treated. We are not to judge, we are to forgive in overflowing measure.

Why do we judge? What is judging all about?

I think it often comes from fear – fear of what is different, of what we do not understand; fear of those who are different, whom we don't understand.

We are unsure how to relate to people who are unlike us in some way, and it unsettles us.

Well, within this room, it is hard to imagine a greater collection of differences!

How many languages do we have here? How many cultures? What is the range between oldest and youngest, poorest and richest? What about education

levels? What about our personalities? or our taste in food, or music? [Example of Bishop André ...]

And what about the far more tricky issue of what style of church we call our own, and where we stand on some of our more sensitive church questions, such as sexuality and other issues!

If you have read my latest circulated To the Laos letter, you will know that I see Jesus, as the answer to all of this; and the love of God we share through being in Christ: members together of his body, the Church.

My travelling has helped me catch a glimpse of this church as the Body of Christ, and as a family.

Everywhere I have been, I have found a strong sense of family, and joyful belonging together, that arose from recognising one another as brothers and sisters in Christ, no matter how foreign we were to one another, in other respects.

[Insert quote from Cape Town Diocesan Charge?]

I found myself drawn to take time to get to know those who say they earnestly desire to follow Jesus as Lord, and yet whom I find different, even at times incomprehensible.

I found myself challenged to set aside my prejudices, and be ready to be surprised by encountering Christ at work in their lives – dwelling in them in ways I had not expected, and shaping their words, their actions, their attitudes, their lives.

What I learnt was this: if I am in Christ, and you are in Christ, then no matter how great our other differences, neither of us can be separated from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

And therefore we cannot be separated from each other, within his embrace of love.

Being together 'in Christ', gives us a safe context for addressing our differences, knowing we are bound together by love, as the people of God.

Within our own Province, this means we do not need to be afraid of the diversity among us.

We need to work together if we are to tackle the challenges.

So this is our challenge as we meet this week:

How shall we share God's love – not grudgingly, but wholeheartedly – with every sister and brother across this whole broad, rich, spectrum of our the Anglican Church of Southern Africa, who are each God's gift to me within the body of Christ?

My hope for us today, is that, during our time in groups, we will not only discuss business, but that we will encounter Christ in one another.

Let us have eyes to see him dwelling in people unlike us. Let us have ears to hear how he is at work, in places unlike ours.

And let us find ourselves drawn together in love – the perfect love of Christ that casts out fear; the perfect love, that does not judge, but that works to build one another up, into even greater love.

So let me end by repeating, as a prayer, some words from our Epistle reading, the letter to the Colossians:

Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

I ask all this for God's praise and for God's glory.

Amen.