

7 OTC.19; 1Sam 26:2-9; 1Cor 15:45-49; Luke 6:27-38, *Do you hear him?*

*To you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
... bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.*

Today Jesus asks the impossible. Do you and I *hear* him?

How do we react to these challenging words? Here's one way

One morning, after he had finished his meditation, the old man opened his eyes and saw a scorpion floating helplessly in the water. As the scorpion was washed closer to the tree, the old man quickly stretched himself out on one of the long roots that branched out into the river and reached out to rescue the drowning creature. **As soon as he touched it, the scorpion stung him.** Instinctively the man withdrew his hand. A minute later, after he had regained his balance, the stretched himself out again on the roost to save the scorpion. This time the scorpion stung him so badly with its poisonous tail that his hand

... became swollen and bloody and his face contorted with pain.

At that moment, a passerby saw the old man stretched out on the roots struggling with the scorpion and shouted: *“Hey, stupid old man, what’s wrong with you? Only a fool would risk his life the sake of an ugly, evil creature.*

Don’t you know you could kill yourself trying to save that ungrateful scorpion?”

The old man turned his head. Looking into the stranger’s eyes he said calmly,

“My friend, just because it is the scorpion’s nature to sting,

... that does not change my nature to save.” (Source unk; Henri Nouwen?)

We worship a God who loves us so much that he *became human* for our sake and went the extra mile of love, dying painful & humiliating death on a cross.

Paul reassures us that as we are human and in the likeness of Adam, complete with sin, so we will also take on the divine likeness of Jesus:

***“Just as we have borne the image of the earthly one,
we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one.”***

At first that sounds like a reassuring thought when we read this Gospel, where Jesus describes what he expects from those who follow him. We are called to see with God's eyes. We are called to see our enemies as brothers or sisters and to love them! **We are to return good to those who mistreat us! This is outrageous!**

And, yet, Jesus is serious about this new perspective.

Obviously, Jesus believes we are up to this challenge.

Can we really believe in this? Can we do this? Fortunately, we are not alone.

In David we get a glimpse of *God's ability to transform people*. David, even though he knows that Saul plans to kill him, *saves* Saul when he has the chance to do harm instead. His reverence for God's anointing of Saul is what stays his hand.

**David chooses the higher ground that, centuries later,
2 ... would be taught by his descendant and his Lord, Jesus.**

I am reminded of a Charleston, SC, courtroom in June of 2015. Family members of the women & men shot and killed by gunman Dylann Roof surprised the world as they told the accused murderer that they had chosen to forgive him. Nadine Collier, the daughter of 70 year old Ethel Lance, said at the hearing, *"You took something very precious from me. I will never talk to her again. I will never, ever hold her again. But I forgive you. And have mercy on your soul."* **Paul was right.**

Nadine Collier has a human nature and a divine nature.

Dylann Roof did not expect that the reaction from the victims would be forgiveness. Many of us who watched the news reports of the hearing were just as surprised. It might surprise us to consider who in our lives we can offer forgiveness today, an intentional act of love and healing. Others might say,

... **"We have never seen anything like this."** Mark 2:12

We all fall short of the standards Jesus sets for us, but at other times we might come close, as David did in dealing with Saul. As Nadine and others ... of Emanuel AME Church did in dealing with Dylann Roof.

And Jesus said, **"Do unto others as you would have them do to you."** Loving both our neighbors and our enemies requires more than simply avoiding doing vengeful things to others, as people previously said. Jesus insists on an *active, loving discipleship* where we do good for others, as we would like them to do for us. Because we are **human**, we might not live out these expectations consistently, but if we stay close to Jesus in **a living prayer**, we can trust that he

... is transforming us, step by step, into his own **divine** image.

At this Liturgy of the Union of Human and Divine Natures, we know that God is kind to *the ungrateful and the wicked*. May we follow the wisdom of Jesus who said, ***“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”*** This is the only way to salvation. *Loving the enemy, doing good* to those who harm us is the only way to

SHARE in the mission of Jesus to change this world into the Kingdom.
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once put it this way,

*“Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that.
Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.” Do you hear
Jesus?*