

The Still Point
A Time of Meditation and Reflection
The Seventh Sunday after the Epiphany

... At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance...

T.S. Eliot, *Burnt Norton*

Peace on each one who comes in need;
Peace on each one who comes in joy.
Peace on each one who offers prayers;
Peace on each one who offers song.
Peace of the Maker, Peace of the Son,
Peace of the Spirit, the Triune One.

Opening Prayer

Spirit of energy, Spirit of change, in whose power Jesus is anointed to be the hope of the nations: pour yourself also upon us, without reserve or distinction, that we may have confidence and strength to plant your justice on the earth, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

The Gospel

Luke 6:27-38

Jesus said, "I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. Do to others as you would have them do to you." If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If 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. But 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. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, 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."

Poem: "This Morning I Pray for My Enemies"

By Joy Harjo (b 1951)

And whom do I call my enemy?

An enemy must be worthy of engagement.

I turn in the direction of the sun and keep walking.

It's the heart that asks the question, not my furious mind.

The heart is the smaller cousin of the sun.

It sees and knows everything.

It hears the gnashing even as it hears the blessing.

The door to the mind should only open from the heart.

An enemy who gets in, risks the danger of becoming a friend.

Meditation

Jesus challenges us over and over in his parables, sermons, and actions. But "love your enemies" must be one of the most difficult teachings to hear, let alone to obey. After all, he's not just asking us to ignore or tolerate our enemies, but to actively love them, do good for them, and bless them. In other words, we are to bless the very people whose actions provoked Jesus's "woe" statements last week. Today, more than ever, our many divisions draw multiple lines in the sand between "us" and "them." Harjo's poem reminds us that we all are under the same sun's light, and by extension created by the same God. She also suggests that we create enemies in our mind, often without consulting the heart first.

Questions for Reflection

What do you find most challenging about Jesus's teachings in today's reading?

Has your heart ever conflicted with your mind? What practices do you follow to re-orient toward the heart?

Picture someone you often see as an enemy. Imagine this person sharing the same sunlight as you and created by the same God. What does this image do to the way you perceive this person? Reading Jesus's words again, how do you feel called to act?

Prayers

We bring before God someone whom we have met or remembered today

We bring to God someone who is hurting tonight and needs our prayer

We bring to God a troubled situation in our world

We bring to God, silently, someone whom we find hard to forgive or trust

We bring ourselves to God that we might grow in generosity of spirit, clarity of mind, and warmth of affection

We offer our thanks to God for the blessings in our lives

We name before God those who have died.

Gracious God, you hear all our prayers: those we speak aloud, those we hold in our hearts, and those prayers for which we have no words. Hear the prayers of your people, and grant them as may be best for us, for the sake of your holy name. **Amen.**

Accept our thanks for all you have done, O God. Our hands were empty, and you filled them.

May Christ's holy, healing, enabling Spirit be with us every step of the way, and be our guide as our road changes and turns, and the blessing of God our Creator, Redeemer and Giver of life be among us now and remain with us forever. **Amen.**

Poem and Reflections this month offered by: Matt Bentley