

# HEARERS OF THE WORD

Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18; Psalm 103 [102]; 1 Cor 3:16-23; Matthew 5:38-48

But I say to you, Love your enemies  
and pray for those who persecute you,  
so that you may be children  
of your Father in heaven

Matt 5:38 [Jesus said:] “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; 40 and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; 41 and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. 42 Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

Matt 5:43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.’

## INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

In the notes for the previous Sunday, an attempt was made to clarify the setting of the six antitheses in Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount. Today, the lectionary offers the final two. We encounter two of the best known and most difficult teachings of Jesus. The sheer idealism and apparent impracticality make these verses challenging reading for anyone at any time.

## KIND OF WRITING

### i. *The fifth antithesis:*

An original rejection of retaliation is

illustrated by five examples: bodily harm, a court case, enforced military service, begging and borrowing. The first three seem to be compulsory while the remaining two come across as voluntary. What unites all five is a firm rejection of worldly standards. Again, the first three call on the disciple to break the cycle of violence by living the values of the Kingdom. The last two challenge the disciple to set aside the calculation of personal advantage and to live, in a radical way, Jesus’ message of compassion and love. This antithesis leads naturally to the final, climatic teaching.

### ii. *The sixth antithesis*

This is in the form of a thesis and argument, laid out in the box on the next page. Considered with care, the sequence of argument is penetrating and powerful. Technically, it is a *chreia* in the form of syllogism, with rhetorical questions to engage the hearers.

## OLD TESTAMENT BACKGROUND

i. *On the lex talionis* (in context, a deterrent to excessive retaliation):

If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, stripe for stripe. (Exodus 21:23–25) Anyone who maims another shall suffer the same injury in return: fracture for fracture, eye for eye, tooth for tooth; the injury inflicted is the injury to be suffered. (Leviticus 24:19–20) Show no pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:21)

### ii. *On loving your enemies:*

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD. (Leviticus 19:18) If

## Thought for the day

Today’s gospel continues the challenge from last week to go deeper into the heart, the seat of hidden thoughts and desires. The call to conversion is a call to give just as we have received: we are loved and so should love; we are forgiven and so should forgive; we are consoled and so should console and so forth. Why is that? Because the love etc. that we have received becomes truly “me” only when I pass it on. Only then have I experienced the message of the prophet: *I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.* (Ezek 36:26)

## Prayer

O God, open our ears to hear the word of Jesus, your Son. Open our hearts, that we may know true conversion from within. Open our hands that we may give just as we have received.

your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the LORD will reward you. (Proverbs 25:21–22; cited ironically by Paul in Rom 12:20!!)

### iii. *On whole-hearted service of God:*

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. (Deuteronomy 6:4–6)

### iv. *On taking the cloak:*

If you lend money to my people, to the poor among you, you shall not deal with them as a creditor; you shall not exact interest from them. If you take your neighbour’s cloak in pawn, you shall restore it before the sun goes down. (Exodus 22:25–26) If the person is poor, you shall not sleep in the garment given you as the pledge. You shall give the pledge back by sunset, so that your neighbour may sleep in the cloak and bless you; and it will be to your credit before the LORD your God. (Deuteronomy

omy 24:12-13)

NEW TESTAMENT FOREGROUND

And a second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Matthew 22:39)

You do well if you really fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (James 2:8)

ST PAUL

The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbour as yourself.” (Romans 13:9)

For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” (Galatians 5:14)

BRIEF COMMENTARY

**Verse 38** The Bible does not command revenge. The *lex talionis* originally was an attempt to restrict vendettas. See Gen 4:23-24!!

**Verse 39** Jesus forbids retaliation of any kind. This needs to be carefully read. The vision of the Kingdom includes a refusal to enter into the cycle of violence, illustrated dramatically by the cases which follow. The first illustration—to turn the other cheek—is a clear invitation to resist the natural reaction of equal retaliation. We should, of course, resist evil but we must not resist evil violently.

**Verse 40** Here again, the person involved is being somehow victimised. It may be noted that it was forbidden, in Biblical law, to deprive the poor man of

his cloak (see Ex 22:25-26 and Dt 12-13). In this case, the victim would be left standing naked. Thus the unjust creditor may in turn be shamed, as the victim takes power to him or herself.

**Verse 41** This example is a reminder of the military occupation of the Holy Land by Roman soldiers. Roman soldiers and officials could oblige natives to carry things for them a certain distance. Once more, the victim takes power and destabilises the oppressor (cf. Paul’s surely humorous version: No, “if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads.” Romans 12:20). So far, the antitheses feature an imbalance of power. The next two show the disciple in the role of “giver.”

**Verse 42** These almost impossible, impractical illustrations are demanding—demanding because it is the attitude *within* the giver which is being challenged. Letting the true well-being of others guide us is the mark of the authentic disciple.

**Verse 43** This is the climax, the sixth and final antithesis. The only place in the Bible it says “hate your enemy” is actually in this very verse (but see Psalm 139:19-22)! However, it is clear from the Old Testament, that when it is commanded to love your neighbour, this really means your Israelite neighbour, not anyone at all. See Lev 19:18; Rom 13:9; Gal 5:14 and James 2:8.

**Verse 44** The deepening of the motivation continues radically here: you *must* love your enemies.

**Verse 45** God himself shows no discrimination in giving his gifts: the sun shines and the rain falls on the evil and

the good. Cf. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.* (Matthew 5:9)

**Verse 46** This is a kind of *a fortiori* argument: to love those who love you is no particular achievement. Rather, it is natural and spontaneous and costs nothing. Reward is a theme in Matthew: see 5:12, 19 and 6:1-18.

**Verse 47** The same instruction in different words.

**Verse 48** Again, an impossible requirement but a constant ideal. The high demands of discipleship come from Matthew’s understanding of God’s kindness and also from Matthew’s clear teaching on God’s rewards to all who respond (Matt 5:12, 46; 6:1-2, 5, 16; 10:41-42; 20:8). Perfect is used one other time in this Gospel: *Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.”* (Matthew 19:21) The meaning is mature or complete, full-grown or fully developed.

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. Jesus tells us to act out of love and says that acting out of love is better than acting out of revenge. What does your experience tell you?
2. Perhaps you have at times hit back in revenge when you have been hurt or offended. What effect did this have on you, on others, and on your relationship with them? Contrast this with the times when you resisted the urge to retaliate. What effect did this have on you, on others, and on your relationship with them...at the time, and in the long-term?
3. From other passages in the gospels, it is clear that Jesus did not mean that we should ignore injustices and never make a stand against others. What lessons have you learned in life on when and how to make a stand? What wisdom would you share with others from your experience?

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, in Christ Jesus you challenge us to renounce violence and to forsake revenge. Teach us to recognise as your children even our enemies and persecutors and to love them without measure or discrimination. We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

<b>Thesis</b>	You should love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (v. 44)
<b>reason</b>	So that you may be children of your Father in heaven. (v. 45a)
<b>Argument</b>	
<b>paradigm</b>	The Father treats just and unjust alike.
<i>analogy</i>	<i>The sun rises on both alike. (v. 45b)</i>
<i>analogy</i>	<i>The rain descends on both alike. (v. 45c)</i>
<b>opposite</b>	To love one’s friends is no distinction (vv. 46-47)
<i>example</i>	<i>Tax collectors manage that much (v. 46)</i>
<i>example</i>	<i>Gentiles manage that much (v. 47)</i>
<b>Conclusion</b>	Therefore you must be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect. (v. 48)

# Everything belongs to you, you belong to Christ, Christ belongs to God

1 Cor 3:16 Do you not know that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? 17 If someone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, which is what you are.

1 Cor 3:18 Guard against self-deception, each of you. If someone among you thinks he is wise in this age, let him become foolish so that he can become wise. 19 For the wisdom of this age is foolishness with God. As it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness.” 20 And again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” 21 So then, no more boasting about mere mortals! For *everything belongs to you*, 22 whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future. *Everything belongs to you*, 23 and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.

## INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Paul is a good teacher, who first affirms and only then challenges (the familiar indicative and imperative). Today’s excerpt illustrates this well. Vv. 16 and 17b affirm the reality of the disciple as God’s holy temple, filled with the Spirit. Vv. 18-21b challenge the same disciple to live that reality fully. In the final verses, Paul returns to warm affirmation of our deep identity in Christ and God.

## CONTEXT IN THE COMMUNITY

The naming of Paul, Apollos, Cephas and even Christ reminds us of the factions in Corinth, the subject of Paul’s consistent reflection throughout chapters 1-4. We may detect in Paul a hint of ordinary human hurt, perhaps even vanity. But he is chiefly concerned that their faith might stand *or indeed fall* on the excellence or otherwise of their preachers and, in this way, not really come *from within*. The same could be said of us today. Our faith should be such that it does not depend on tradition or habit or authority but should truly come from within our own experience. That is why Paul insists so much on the Holy Spirit.

## KIND OF WRITING

The sudden appearance of “temple” language might be a jolt to anyone following the excerpts from 1 Corinthians in the lectionary. Actually, it is not so

sudden because Paul had prepared the way in 1 Cor 3:5-15. V. 5 begins with rhetorical questions, which effectively diminish the significance of the *bearers* of the Good News, whoever they might be. Paul then makes use of a series of metaphors which serve, to use a musical metaphor, to modulate the language from *service* through *agriculture* to *architecture*. The language of building is especially rich in vv. 10-15 (see below) and it paves the way for the emergence of the language of temple.

## RELATED PASSAGES

According to the grace of God given to me, like a *skilled master-builder* I laid a *foundation*, but someone else *builds* on it. And each one must be careful how he *builds*. For no one can lay any *foundation* other than what is being *laid*, which is Jesus Christ. If anyone *builds* on the *foundation* with *gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, or straw*, each *builder’s work* will be plainly seen, for the Day will make it clear, because it will be revealed by fire. And the fire will test what kind of work each has done. If what someone has *built* survives, he will receive a reward. If someone’s *work* is burned up, he will suffer loss. He himself will be saved, but only as through fire. (1 Cor 3:10–15)

Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (1 Cor 6:19)

God takes the wise in their own craftiness; and the schemes of the wily are brought to a quick end. (Job 5:13)

The Lord knows the thoughts of human beings, that they are vain. (Ps 93:11 LXX)

## BRIEF COMMENTARY

**Verse 16** No longer simply God’s building (3:9), the Corinthians are his temple, his dwelling place. The “you” is plural in Greek because Paul is naming the identity of *all the believers*. The indwelling Spirit can be found in many passages in Paul such as Romans 5:1-5 and Romans 8. This is who you *all* are, he is saying to the divided Corinthians.

**Verse 17** The verb *phtheirō* means to corrupt, destroy, to bring to ruin, to defile. It is used metaphorically for the de-

filement of the *ekklesia* and literally for God’s end-time destruction. See 1 Cor 5-6 for a fuller exploration of the holiness of the community.

**Verse 18** The plurals of the previous verse now become singulars: each one has to see to his/her own spiritual state. Paul expects his believers to be self-reflective. The paradoxical advice in v. 18b is a pastoral application of Paul’s teaching about the foolishness of the cross.

**Verses 19-20** As always in Paul, citations of Scripture are probative. The book of Job upsets all normal standards and thus serves Paul well here.

**Verse 21a** Boasting is a colossal moral and theological issue for Paul (Rom 2:17, 23; 5:2-3, 11; 1 Cor 1:29, 31; 3:21; 4:7; 13:3; 2 Cor 5:12; 7:14; 9:2; 10:8, 13, 15-17; 11:12, 16, 18, 30; 12:1, 5-6, 9; Gal 6:13-14; Phil 3:3).

**Verses 21b-23** Paul echoes here a stock phrase of the Stoics (one of the genuinely popular philosophies): “all things are yours.” A favourite syllogism of the Cynic philosophers is also parodied: “The wise are friends of the gods, and friends share what they have. The gods own all things; therefore, the wise have full access to all things.” In both cases, the logic of the philosophers is inverted by Paul. The Corinthians “have all things” not because of natural wisdom or virtue but because *they belong to Christ*. This belonging comes first and not last. Belonging to Christ means that, as a result, all things belong to the believers. The “things” are named and, in a way, relativised. Because all is gift and grace, any boasting in this regard is totally missing the point. There can be no superiority of achievement or in human belonging.

## POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. When did it begin to matter to you that you are the temple of the Spirit?
2. We are called in different areas of life to be reflective practitioners — and the same applies to the life of faith!

## PRAYER

God of every gift and grace, we thank for the gift of your Spirit, who helps us in our weakness and enables us to call you “Abba, Father.” Help us, by your grace, to live abundantly and faithfully, because we belong to Christ and Christ belongs to you. Amen.

# You shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the Lord

Lev. 19:1 The LORD spoke to Moses, saying: 2 Speak to all the congregation of the people of Israel and say to them: You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.

Lev. 19:17 You shall not hate in your heart anyone of your kin; you shall reprove your neighbour, or you will incur guilt yourself. 18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against any of your people, but you shall love your neighbour as yourself: I am the LORD.

## INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

The passage from Leviticus is very probably chosen on account of v. 2. However, it also provides us with the source of Jesus' reply to the lawyer: *Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* (Mt 22:37-40)

## ORIGIN OF THE READING

The book of Leviticus, with its overarching theology of holiness, has this structure:

Lev 1–10: Sacrifices etc.  
Lev 11–16: Purity Laws  
Lev 17–26(+27): The Holiness Code

Our reading comes from the latter section, the Holiness Code. A good question to ask is, what does Leviticus mean by holiness? The book offers two distinct but related understandings.

Firstly, you have the priestly version of holiness. Holiness here refers to the holiness of the tabernacle as the dwelling place of YHWH. Within this view there are three levels of the sacred. First, there is the outer altar. Then there is the outer room, containing the lamp stand, the table and the altar of incense. Finally, there is the Holy of Holies, the inner room, housing the ark of the covenant. This gradual and then intense separation from the ordinary is a way of expressing the otherness of God (*totaliter aliter* in the old tag).

In the understanding of the Holiness Code, this holiness is extended to include the people, who are called to be

holy (cf. 19:2; 20:7-8, 26; 21:8, 23; 22:9, 16, 33). This holiness of the people is achieved through ritual and social practices. Finally, the land itself is holy, as well as the priests, the sacrifices and the very name of God. This may take us back to a very old definition: holiness means to be near God.

As an addendum, the letter to the Hebrews analyses this cultural form of expressing holiness and declares it obsolete in the light of Christ's humanity. In the teaching of Hebrews, Christ is a priest not by means of *separation*, as in the Temple system, but precisely by means of *identification*. Because Jesus is like us in all things but sin he is able to help us. Any going backwards to holiness by separation is a failure to grasp the meaning of the cross, as taught in Hebrews.

## KIND OF WRITING

This is legislation, with very diverse regulations covering all sorts of issues. However, across chapter 19, there is a sense of unity mediated by three interlocking concerns: *faithfulness* in worship, *love* and respect in relationships, *justice* in the market and in the court. That triad can make Leviticus 19 seem suddenly relevant to our concerns today. The first climax is v.18, included in our reading, and the second climax is v. 34, the pinnacle of biblical ethics: *The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself; for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God.* (Leviticus 19:34)

We cannot, of course, be holy as God is holy, but Leviticus 19 offers a series of steps to take us on the path towards that holiness.

## RELATED READINGS

For I am the LORD who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy. (Leviticus 11:45)

You shall be holy to me; for I the LORD am holy, and I have separated you from the other peoples to be mine. (Leviticus 20:26)

So you shall remember and do all my commandments, and you shall be holy to your God. (Numbers 15:40)

## BRIEF COMMENTARY

**Verse 1** A conventional introductory formula, echoing the prophets.

**Verse 2** The message is to the whole congregation. God is always "holy" as we see in: Lev 11:44-45; 20:7, 26; 21:8; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:19; 28:9. God's holiness is essential to his being; for us, holiness is something we grow towards by living well and not sinning etc.

**Verse 17** Hate is a feeling which distorts our view of the other and even infiltrates our inner selves. In such a state, revenge can seem desirable. Reprove here means to establish what is right. There's a hint here of sin of omission: if we fail to do the right we could / should do, then we in turn are responsible.

**Verse 18** Feelings of hatred give rise to bearing a grudge and lead on to taking vengeance. Any such paying back is God's business: (Deut 32:35a; cf. Ps 94). In contrast here, love means a practical attitude of good will towards the fellow Israelite. The word translated "neighbour" means friend, companion, acquaintance, someone part of the same group as oneself. Jesus took this commandment, elevated it as the second of the two great commandments, and expanded the circle of "an acquaintance" to include all fellow humans, particularly anyone in need (Mt 22:39-40; Mk 12:31; Lk 10:25-37; cf. Mt 5:43-47; 19:19; Lk 10:27; Rom 13:9-10; Gal 5:14; Jas 2:8).

## POINTERS FOR PRAYER

**1.** What is my own call to be "holy" — what does it mean to me and what steps am I taking? Keep in mind it is all gift: I can love because I am loved; I am compassionate because God has been compassionate to me and so forth.

**2.** In our Christian tradition, we have widened the commandment to mean the love of anyone in need. But we need to be careful: this love cannot exist as a general feeling of goodwill but must be concrete in particular actions towards particular individual and groups. Otherwise, St James will condemn us!

## PRAYER

Ever loving God, your Son was revealed that he might overcome evil and make us heirs of eternal life. Grant that we who bear this hope in us may purify ourselves as he is pure, that when he appears in power and great glory, we may be made like him, to the honour of your name.

# THE LITURGY

Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18; Psalm 103 [102]; 1 Cor 3:16-23; Matthew 5:38-48

**READINGS 1 AND 3**

The reading prepares really well for the Gospel, with its teaching of the imitation of God.

**THE RESPONSORIAL PSALM**

Psalm 103 (102) portrays God in rich covenant language: *The Lord is compassion and love, slow to anger and rich in mercy.* Here we see the very qualities we must emulate, if we are to be holy as he is holy and be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect.

**SUNDAY INTRODUCTIONS**

**First reading**

*Leviticus 19:1-2, 17-18*

Today we have a rare reading from the book of Leviticus, in two parts. Both parts are penetrating and challenging for us today.

**Second reading**

*1 Corinthians 3:16-23*

Paul is sharply aware of the mystery of God and limits of human language. He delights in presenting this paradoxically and in such a way as to relativise all church factions and divisions.

**Gospel**

*Matthew 5:38-48*

Jesus too delights in the paradoxical and even apparently impractical — and yet, here we have the heart of his proclamation, as penetrating today as it was in his own time.

**WEEKDAY INTRODUCTIONS**

**Monday 20 February**

*Ecclesiasticus 1:1-10*

Wisdom is a great gift and who would not like to wise? The writer is aware of that wisdom is both a mystery and a gift. Ecclesiasticus takes up the traditional feminine imagery of Lady Wisdom, the complement of every human being.

*Mark 9:14-29*

There is a great admission or confession at the heart of this Gospel story: *I do have faith. Help the little faith I have!* That could

be our prayer today: we all have *some* faith — so there is room for growth!

**Tuesday 21 February**

*Ecclesiasticus 2:1-11*

Our reading is both an invitation and warning. A warning first: the spiritual journey will be demanding. Cf. *It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.* (Hebrews 10:31) Then invitation: it is the only journey, full of reward. Ecclesiasticus is deeply reassuring.

*Mark 9:30-37*

In Mark, each of the three passion predictions is linked directly to a misunderstanding of discipleship following by a teaching on how to be a disciple



**ASH WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY**

*Joel 2:12-18*

The passage which opens the journey of Lent is an invitation, an invitation to come back to the Lord with all our heart. The whole community—all of us without distinction—is called to change of heart and life.

*2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2*

Paul's message insists on today, now, as the moment of conversion. The past is over and the future is not yet. All we have is the present moment: let us take hold of it with all our energy.

*Matthew 6:1-6, 16-18*

As Matthew makes clear, it is the movement of the heart that counts! There was a traditional triad in Judaism: almsgiving, prayer and fasting—all really good and necessary. That inherent good can be compromised by the desire for notice and approval. It is enough and more than enough that the Father who sees in secret sees our good deed done in

secret.

**Thursday 23 February**

*Deuteronomy 30:15-20*

Life is full of choices, minor and major. Today, we hear a major choice: life and prosperity or death and disaster. Such sharp alternatives are found also in the wisdom writings of the people, such as today's Psalm 1. We know, of course, that things are often not quite so stark and clear. But even in the minor choices, we are implying greater choices and even a fundamental direction of life.

*Luke 9:22-25*

As usual, a prediction of the passion is joined to a teaching on discipleship. In this Gospel, the death of Jesus casts a long shadow, starting with the words of Simeon to Mary. The immediate context is the question to Peter: who do you say I am? Once we say who Jesus is, we find ourselves also saying who we are.

**Friday 24 February**

*Isaiah 58:1-9*

What is true fasting? What does God require of us? Isaiah does not mince his words. Sure fasting means to live your ordinary life with integrity and justice.

*Matthew 9:14-15*

It looks as if Jesus did not practice fasting (apart from the forty, symbolic days). Naturally, people wondered why not. In the later tradition, disciples did take up fasting and in our Gospel Jesus gives "permission" for that to happen.

**Saturday 25 February**

*Isaiah 58:9-14*

Continuing from yesterday, we are reminded that righteousness—right living from the inside out—is what God hopes for from us. If you listen carefully, this prophecy is strongly against violence of any kind.

*Luke 5:27-32*

Eating was always regarded as a kind of sacred fellowship, a kind of holy communion. Hence the shock of onlookers who saw Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinner, in effect, establishing communion with them.