

He's Kidding, Right? Not for Wusses

Intro. After reading this gospel, I thought of the TV show and movie, “Mission Impossible.” At the start, instructions are given about the mission; then the team must accept or refuse the mission. In this gospel we receive the instructions for *our* mission and instead of accepting we might be tempted to just erase them and go for coffee instead.

I. Last week’s gospel of the Beatitudes was good news for the people who didn’t *have* much and didn’t *hope* for much. This week the Lord speaks to the newly-minted apostles and those who accept his teaching. This news is *not* so good. The standards of behavior for disciples are high. The word love in “love your enemies” is *not* the emotion, but an *attitude* to “will the

good of others,” act well toward our enemies. [L.T.Johnson, *Sacra Pagina*]. The Lord challenged the practice of measuring *our* generosity to equal what we have received. A relationship is shaky if the people give just fifty percent and hope for fifty in return. The Lord said people with little faith do that. He said several times that is a low standard, too easy to meet. He encouraged his disciples *not* to be average, to go beyond the usual, “Do unto others *before* they do unto us.” God’s standard is that he is kind to both the ungrateful *and* the wicked. If we are honest, we are sometimes both and we still experience God’s kindness. That doesn’t make any more sense than treating our enemies with dignity. Making sense isn’t the point since a lot of what we doesn’t always make

sense. For disciples it's about being merciful as the Father is merciful.

Concl. This does sound like Mission Impossible. And by ourselves maybe it is. Imagine if *just two or three* of us at work or school are practicing these responses to bad behavior and refusing to be victims [M.McGlone, *NCR*]. Then six or twelve more join in. If more people refuse to retaliate or seek revenge or judge or condemn, these signs of God's kingdom might get a little easier to do and even stop some of the violence in our schools and country. Retaliation seems to be a major cause. We have to do something different. Rather than the ominous warning from the Impossible Mission boss about failure, "If you or any of your team is caught, the secretary will

disavow any knowledge of you," the Lord will never disavow knowledge of us but rather he will forgive in the same measure we forgive others. It's really easy. We get to choose the measure: a thimble, an eight ounce cup, a five gallon bucket or a truck load. **How will we measure up this week?**

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February 24, 2019