

Today's Gospel is very 'dense'. A concentrated digest of short phrases and maxims each of which helps us enter into the Gospel of Jesus Christ:

- "Love your enemies"
- "Pray for those who hurt you"
- "Turn the other cheek"
- "Be compassionate"
- "Do not judge"
- "Give"

It's so concentrated that it can be rather overwhelming.

But before we deal with that let's look at the strange goings on on the first reading, as this may help us with the Gospel.

King Saul is jealous of David (who will of course become King David). King Saul is a bit dull whereas David is charismatic, musical, great in battle and so on. Saul tries to get rid of David. David flees and Saul pursues him. David sneaks into Saul's camp when they're all asleep. He could have killed Saul with his own spear, but instead he steals the King's spear, runs back across the valley and then brandishes it as proof of bloodless victory. 'I could have killed the King but I didn't.'

1. David did not roll over and let himself be walked over by Saul.
2. To have killed Saul would have been the quick, easy way out.
3. David finds a different way, a creative way, that avoids killing Saul. A way that demands effort.

This helps us with the Gospel. Doing good and being compassionate to those who hurt us doesn't mean being walked over. It means putting in the effort to find a creative, different way of engaging with the person or persons we find difficult. It means avoiding the easy way out of just having a row and fighting fire with fire. Turning the other cheek is not necessarily a passive action, it can be a challenge too. A non combative response can often be a way to surprise and challenge another.

We've all been there: repeating over and over, 'I'm not going to lose my temper'. Choosing how and when to have a difficult conversation – **the effort involved is love**. Love and compassion is the act, the choice, the effort to make the attempt to do it differently.