

St Pius & St Anthony 23rd Sunday Ordinary Time Year C(2025) Luke

Have you ever been through the surgery ‘pre-op’ registration process, maybe some scans/tests too, and somewhere along the way, a clipboard is put in front of you with a pen attached, as you are advised about how it will go, and were told about the “rare but serious side effects, ***some fatal...***” And out of all the pages read you, you heard nothing else, but, that one word. You got my attention at **‘FATAL.’** What?

Or I recall in seminary I had one professor who outlined for us, the week before our Final Oral Exam, how it was going to be conducted. He said, “Guys, on exam day, you’ll report to this classroom as usual. We’ll sit in a circle of desks, and I’ll go around the circle. I’m going to call on each of you (No books), give you one question for you to answer and if you’re wrong, you fail – F for the exam!” Bet on it, he had our attention at **‘FAIL.’**

I suspect something similar to that just happened while we read today’s gospel. Of all Jesus just said, one word is still ringing in our ears: is **“HATE”**.

So we have to address this right up front. What does Jesus mean by that? Really? Hate? We know just back in Luke 6:27, He taught us to “Love your enemies and *do good to those who hate you.*” So is He teaching us there to not give back ‘hate’ even to those dishing it out to us? But then here, unprovoked, we should ***hate on*** “father, mother, wife, children, brothers, sisters and self” (Lk 14:26)? Did I miss something? But, I’m hung on the word ‘hate’. I want to say back, “*Jesus, you got my attention, okay, then, talk to me, talk to me -- what are you saying?*”

A good start, toward getting to the bottom of what Jesus is up to, is to see how a gospel writer-a coworker of Luke, his fellow evangelist Matthew: How did he hear and record this same teaching of Jesus. So, if we go over, into Matthew’s gospel, his parallel passage in Matthew 10:37, -- we hear Jesus over there, say, “*Whoever loves father or mother **more than** me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter **more than** me is not worthy of me.*” Oh, I’m hearing this a little differently now and more in tune with everything else Jesus has ever taught. It is about understanding that word ‘hate’! In Greek the word is ‘miseo’, and it means, ‘*to love less than*’ as when we prioritize something, it doesn’t have all the emotional baggage connoting ‘mean-spiritedness’ and ‘vitriol’ that infects the word ‘hate’ in English. The Greek word ‘miseo’ to a person of Jesus’ generation meant ‘there can only be one, number One’. It is about preference & priority. There’s **only one** love at the core. Everything else impedes and interferes with that One, so it’s hated. But it doesn’t mean to despise and go attack #2, #3, & #4. No, it just means that the ONE is preeminent. So the best way of hearing Jesus say ‘hate’, is to translate it as a proper ordering, translating it as simply ‘to love others **less than**’ that One. We are talking about “prioritizing’ similar to having a primary allegiance, all else aside, or a primary loyalty, to which other loyalties are less.

This is not really any different than Jesus' teaching about the Greatest (the One Great) Commandment, that he taught earlier in Luke 10:27. There, Jesus confirms the answer, "You shall love the Lord your God, with **all your heart**, with **all your being**, with **all your strength**, and with **all your mind**..." With all that 'all' it doesn't leave much love left over to work with loving....until we consider just who that First Love--God is-- 1 John 4:7 announces that God "Love itself" (*when Jesus adds to the greatest commandment, the 'love your neighbor as self' part, notice that that is a prioritizing sequencing of loves 1-God 2-Neighbor & 3-Self*)

So we should not be hung up on the word hate itself, Jesus is just saying that until we have God in the center, God above all God into all- that we must START with God, until then, we aren't loving anyway. We may call what we do 'love' and think we are, but we'd only be loving with our own selfishly invented ideas, our own self-motivated interest version of love. If I haven't put God first then what am I working out of? If it's just me, that is not going to last?

For argument's sake, let's just imagine that we do love something greater than God first – what would that mean? if I put anyone, even father mother brother or sister, over God, and supposedly love them more than God, well, wait, I just put them in God's place - I made them GOD. To which I bet, they would jerk back responding, 'Don't put that on me.' They'd say, '*I want you to love God first, then get around to me.*' That other person will want you to have God first in your love, and then to love them through that love from God. They'd say, "You are going to be better to me, when you are full of God than you would on your own"

This reminds me of the person who might gently say to me, "Have you been praying enough today, because you kind of have a rough edge? Maybe you need to go spend more time with God-pray more-you are not yourself today!" So, Jesus is saying that when we prioritize our love, giving all to God first, then our direction is true and love is pure, and then we can start loving the other loves, whoever and whatever, **properly** in order and as God loves them – love them with God's love. Imagine this supreme God focus up front, as viewing everything through the God Lens first, to even know how to love others best and properly. I have to see them 'through God-as God sees them' In order to love them best. Again, this confirms our correcting adjustment to that word 'HATE', because we have to recall that anyone, anything Jesus refers us to hate, that He made them too, He's never going to intend evil, spiteful harm to them. He loves them too, as he loves me. In fact, He, cares for them and wants their best just the same as my own. So our best way of handling this, 'attention-getting' mention of 'hate' (it serve that purpose too didn't it?) is to understand that Jesus is saying 'first things first'. God first, and then everything else falls into place properly. For us to accomplish anything else for good and with God, we have to begin with Him and **Him completely**. That is His point of the further examples of the tower construction & the military planning. To succeed means beginning with everything in place properly. Full Preparation

and Full Commitment. So, Jesus-God wants first, our undivided attention, undivided loyalty. It is going to take stocking up on God first, to get on and got through the proper loving of everyone and everything else afterward. In his examples, the builder first calculates the cost and assembles the materials for the job. And the military planner takes stock of troop size and readiness before ever marching into battle. So, the same with Jesus, He wants our eyes on Him first, before taking up our additional loves.

Jesus wants our 'whole heart, whole mind, whole body, whole strength'—to love Him above all and 'love less' all other people or things in the beginning (hate) But please hear me, that doesn't put the others down, because if I don't have God to begin with, I'm only going to mess over any love of them, trying to put them above God. Jesus says 'God first' then everything else finds its God given place. Again, God made them all too, He loves them. That is what Jesus wants—their best too—and I'm not that-God Is. He wants us to love them, **with His Love**. And we have to get that love of Him in this heart of mine first and only, before I loo to any other. If we start & go with Him, He will take care of our lesser loves (everything else) for His sake!