

# THE HOPE JOURNAL

LEARNING TO LOVE, TOGETHER

February 23, 2025



## CONVICTION

*and turning the other cheek*

by Drew Downs

It is easily one of the most misunderstood points of scripture — when Jesus tells his disciples to turn the other cheek when someone hits you, we treat this like retreat. But it is a standing up to an act of violence, a bit of civil disobedience, to offer the other cheek, daring the person to hit you again. This time as an equal. This time in full knowledge of what it means. This time in front of all of these people. Show just what you are made of.

Jesus commands us to love and we are constantly dreaming up excuses to avoid having to. Not because we don't want to exactly, but because we we're afraid to love the undeserving. That they will take advantage of us. But we need not be willing or complicit in any exploitation. Loving evil in front of us takes a willing confrontation, the conviction of our faith. It takes a willingness to protect one another with God's love as the only true response.

# AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2025

## WHAT'S GOING ON

*"You know we've got to find a way  
To bring some loving here today".*

-Marvin Gaye

Disciples, Apostles, and Saints!

### Immigration as Crisis

It doesn't take much to stir a hornets nest, does it? But there is something about the language of crisis that discourages thoughtful and generous conversation. Particularly the nature of why we might construe our conversation itself as a debate between opposing *and* predictable sides. Crisis thinking reduces our options *and* a commitment to the truth.

Some would have us flatten the conversation, to make us consider all immigrants as the same, regardless of status or originating circumstances, regardless of laws or means of doing things "the right way," regardless of international laws, treaties, and relationships, which is way more ideological than wise or honest.

The breadth of scripture offers a remarkably consistent voice of encouragement for the immigrant experience, naming specifically that we are to treat the immigrant *as native born* because we, too, are immigrants (Leviticus 19:34). Few practitioners in modern politics offer such a positive depiction of relationship, nor the willingness to explore such adjustments to laws that would encourage us to practice such a command faithfully.

The siren of simple solutions seduces us when we need to be honoring the complexity. But it is the complexity itself that is revealing. That you and I can get a background check in weeks, but a potential immigrant is on a waiting list for a decade. This isn't a system designed for community — it is designed to prevent us from considering the lived impact of our laws on people just like us.

With love,  
Drew+

# AFTER THE EPIPHANY

2025

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## FOR SUNDAY

*Epiphany 7C*

February 23, 2025

### **Collect**

O Lord, you have taught us that without love whatever we do is worth nothing: Send your Holy Spirit and pour into our hearts your greatest gift, which is love, the true bond of peace and of all virtue, without which whoever lives is accounted dead before you. Grant this for the sake of your only Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

**Amen.**

### **Reading**

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.

# AFTER THE EPIPHANY

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"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."

## Reflection

After describing the relational character of blessing and woe, Jesus pushes deeper into the relational character of living with people in the world, encouraging his disciples to do good things in the world regardless of the cultural headwinds. The familiar command to turn the other cheek starts a list of actions that reflect a counter narrative to cultural priorities *and* the ideological demands of them.

- Jesus commands us to respond to evil, not with evil, but with good. To not respond to conflict with fight/flight/freeze, but without ego. To confront evil without being evil.
- He commands us to love those undeserving of love. To not save love for those who are easy to love, but love even one's enemies.
- He commands us to ditch our transactional relationships. To not love with the expectation of being loved or in order to receive love.
- He commands us not to judge others or else we shall be judged. To not reject others or minimize their humanity for our command is to love them.

While none of this is particularly shocking to modern Christians who are familiar with these ideas, we no less struggle with them than anyone else. Often it is because we resist understanding them. Jesus begins by suggesting we allow evil to reveal itself, not be mimicking it, but by resisting to be cowed by it. Much like we can't hate our way to love or war our way to peace, we must stand up to evil with love. It is who we are.

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