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Texts: Genesis 45: 3-11, 15; 1 Corinthians 15: 35-38, 42-50; Luke 6: 27-35

In the name of God, Abba/Imma, Son and Holy Spirit.

How in times such as these could such a text come to the surface—because I don't choose these. I'm just reminding you. I do not make the choices [of Scripture readings].

GK Chesterton said, *“Christian life has not been tried and found wanting; it has been left untried and found difficult.”* Should I quit there? Is that enough? *“Christian life has not been tried and found wanting; it's been left untried and found difficult.”*

Joseph's story—context—you remember? The youngest brother [Joseph], father loved him. Older brothers hated him, threw him in the pit, sold him into slavery, ends up at Egypt, rises through the ranks, becomes an advisor to the Pharaoh. There's famine in the land, the family flees to Egypt hopefully to get food, and there they meet Joseph. Once again, they are in shock. He clears the room, forgives them and begins weeping in their arms.

They are terrified that they're about to get executed, right? And [Joseph] goes on weeping and weeping—so loudly the Pharaoh is notified, *‘We can't take it anymore. He's weeping in there; stop him.’*

I've become aware that many of us have family members who trouble us. (And I'm one of them, too.) I've got family and siblings. I just don't understand what's happened to them, and some mean, and I think harsh, things that they've done. I've made some efforts at forgiveness, but I stopped weeping for them a long time ago.

So what is it about Joseph that touches that heart of his being— to be so delighted and reconciling that he can't stop weeping. I don't get it—I'm moved. Wow. I don't get it.

Paul is speaking in Corinthians today about the Resurrection of the Body. And it's kind of funny how this has gone on troubling—especially the Christian community—for 2,000 years. *‘How does that work? I'm not sure I can believe that part, right? It's just like, that doesn't add up physiologically.’*

It's staring [at] us for 2,000 years in the text. And Paul says, *‘Knock it off. What's wrong with you people? How does this life work? You sow seeds in the earth. Wheat. Apple seeds, Does an apple seed grow? You get a tree—something beyond comprehension.’*  
[1 Corinthians 15: 35-38.]

How does that work? Because for all of our brilliance, no biologist has yet cut a seed with the very finest micro-carving [tool] possible, and found life. [We] can't pinpoint life. We just don't understand how life happens, but we go on utilizing [seeds], because our lives depend upon them. Put the seeds in the ground and something of surprising nature will emerge.

So, Paul says, '*You too! This really shouldn't be a surprise. You, too!*' In the culmination of your days and all that you've lived for—in all that we sow, in that seed in the ground about 6 feet down—something surprising will emerge—in you, through you, in us.

That's why you take this Bulletin cover home and stare at it all week long. '*Oh, I keep forgetting that I'm emerging, that I'm changing, that I'm growing, and I'm part of something so vast I can't comprehend it.*' Okay? It's almost as good as coffee. Try it. Try it.

And then the Gospel for today. Three words. '*Love Your Enemies.*' [Luke 6: 27]  
**Why did [Jesus] have to say that?** There's nobody else in history who has said that. And everybody around the globe knows that he said it, right? Is he an idealist? No. Jesus is the most pragmatic person we will ever meet, because he knows that the future, and our survival, absolutely depend upon us figuring out how to not only love one another, but to love our enemies.

How would this text sound in Gaza and Israel today? Or Ukraine or Sudan? I can go around the world. Is what we're doing working? Ahhh. *It is the sowing of the Seeds of Reconciliation that leads to Resurrection.*

Today, I'm not talking about the body. I'm talking about that reconciling Love, which is resurrecting us and the universe. That's what this is about. How? How do we love enemies, for God's sake? Well, it begins by *nourishing the capacity to forgive*. It seems fairly obvious, don't you think? '*Except that means we have to do the work. Come on, let's fix all the people who are messed up. I've got enough on my plate.*'

*To learn to forgive*—hard work, personal work, deep work, ongoing work, here. Because that's the catalyst to change everything. If my view begins to shift, if I have a fresh start, a fresh beginning, a new atmosphere, a new environment in which to hold my enemy—not just that person or group who has ticked me off.

Forgiveness begins by saying, '*There might be more to the picture. Maybe. And maybe I'm a part of it.*' You see, we need to begin going beneath the surface to realize that maybe our enemies are not all bad. That's one thing we don't want to let go of, isn't it? Oh, and *maybe they too are made in God's image, just like us.*

Truthfully, I'd rather humiliate people than understand them, because I'm much better at humiliating others—kind of comes easily to me. But to understand means things have to change inside of me. And we're invited to love them, because God loves them. No matter how much I object to that, God still loves them. And we're invited to love them—not when they start to change or show signs of improvement—but now. Because God loves them—now.

I don't get it, but I believe that's true. Hmm. So, why, why do we have to love our enemies?

*“Hate begets hate. Darkness begets darkness. It's a descending spiral of destruction.”* said Martin Luther King, *“Hatred destroys victims.”* And there are people who rejoice in those things, those moments and times, right? The destruction of other people, they just feel great. But hatred also destroys the haters, it's like cancer. And hatred destroys values. This is really important—because human beings become mature by incorporating values upon which life and community depend.

And so when we hear these voices of hate these days saying, *‘Lies and truth are the same thing. Truth doesn't matter. There's no truth. Truth is a void, just a cauldron of chaos. Who cares?’* That's what we're objecting to. That's the way we're getting sick, isn't it?

Values matter—and living by them. *So, we are called to love our enemies because that's how we become Sons and Daughters of God.* We don't know what will happen in the process. That's one of the amazing things of sowing Seeds of Reconciliation. We don't know the outcome, but we do know that it is only by loving— only by loving—that we realize and experience who God is. God can only be known by loving. Where reconciliation leads, we do not know.

*The nice thing about hatred is, it's damn predictable. We need that, don't we?*  
But love....

A great story from the days of Apartheid— an Anglican priest received a letter bomb, [which] blew out an eye, an arm, a leg—malformed him for the rest of his life. Years later, the man who sent the letter bomb [and the Anglican priest] met, and they have become fast friends. And today they say, *‘There is no life without each other.’*

That's what we're invited to live into—possibilities—improbable possibilities for the healing of life now. The fancy name for that is called ‘Resurrection’. That's why it's so central to our life. And the creativity of life being made new, here and now, when it's so desperately needed.

Michele is a scientist, and I know she's saying right now, *'I like it, but it's impractical.'* Right? *'Tell the truth, Michele.'* Right, it's impractical. Who's going to believe this? Come on.

Barry's been around the planet. *'It's impractical, isn't it? Why bother? It's pointless. We can't do this. Sounds nice on Sundays, but rest of the week, you know, I got a real life.'* You heard Jim [reading the poem, *'What do the Living Do'* by Marie Howe]. "This is living. Most of us haven't even got the Drano down the drain yet."  
*And you want me to resurrect?*

Ah, okay. Well, I'll tell you, it's practical, people. It's living by hatred and violence and power and war who have destroyed the 24 civilizations preceding ours. And they're all gone. Every one of them.

Shall we try a new pattern? Or, just stick with the old because it's predictable?  
*'We like that. Let's not change.'* And this resurrecting, healing love of enemies is not weak or giving in. It has backbone. Throw physical force at it, and love will respond with Soul Force.

This love will not cooperate with hatred and violence. It will tell the truth. It will object to those whose indiscriminate violence tries to eradicate and exterminate people because they're different, or outsiders, or don't belong here. Love has backbone.

Only love, only love builds up, creates life, heals, transforms. Only love. Only love. It is by loving our enemies and praying for those who persecute us that we release them, and we become Sons and Daughters of God.

Give it all you've got. Sow those seeds deeply. Amen.

The peace, which surpasses all human understanding, keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.