

**SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR SUNDAY**  
**February 20, 2022**  
**Seventh Sunday after Epiphany**

**FIRST READING: 1 Corinthians 15:38-38, 42-50 (The Message)**

**38** You could never guess what a tomato would look like by looking at a tomato seed. What we plant in the soil and what grows out of it don't look anything alike. The dead body that we bury in the ground and the resurrection body that comes from it will be dramatically different.

**42** This image of planting a dead seed and raising a live plant is a mere sketch at best, but perhaps it will help in approaching the mystery of the resurrection body - but only if you keep in mind that when we're raised, we're raised for good, alive forever! **43** The corpse that's planted is no beauty, but when it's raised, it's glorious. Put in the ground weak, it comes up powerful. **44** The seed sown is natural; the seed grown is supernatural - same seed, same body, but what a difference from when it goes down in physical mortality to when it is raised up in spiritual immortality! **45** We follow this sequence in Scripture: The First Adam received life, the Last Adam is a life-giving Spirit. **46** Physical life comes first, then spiritual - **47** a firm base shaped from the earth, a final completion coming out of heaven. **48** The First Man was made out of earth, and people since then are earthy; the Second Man was made out of heaven, and people now can be heavenly. **49** In the same way that we've worked from our earthy origins, let's embrace our heavenly ends. **50** I need to emphasize, friends, that our natural, earthy lives don't in themselves lead us by their very nature into the kingdom of God. Their very "nature" is to die, so how could they "naturally" end up in the Life kingdom?

## **GOSPEL: Luke 6:27-38 (The Message)**

**27** "To you who are ready for the truth, I say this: Love your enemies. Let them bring out the best in you, not the worst.

**28** When someone gives you a hard time, respond with the energies of prayer for that person.

**29** If someone slaps you in the face, stand there and take it. If someone grabs your shirt, giftwrap your best coat and make a present of it.

**30** If someone takes unfair advantage of you, use the occasion to practice the servant life. No more tit-for-tat stuff. Live generously.

**31** "Here is a simple rule of thumb for behavior: Ask yourself what you want people to do for you; then grab the initiative and do it for them!

**32** If you only love the lovable, do you expect a pat on the back? Run-of-the-mill sinners do that.

**33** If you only help those who help you, do you expect a medal? Garden-variety sinners do that.

**34** If you only give for what you hope to get out of it, do you think that's charity? The stingiest of pawnbrokers does that.

**35** "I tell you, love your enemies. Help and give without expecting a return. You'll never - I promise - regret it. Live out this God-created identity the way our Father lives toward us, generously and graciously, even when we're at our worst.

**36** Our Father is kind; you be kind.

**37** "Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults - unless, of course, you want the same treatment. Don't condemn those who are down; that hardness can boomerang. Be easy on people; you'll find life a lot easier.

**38** Give away your life; you'll find life given back, but not merely given back - given back with bonus and blessing. Giving, not getting, is the way. Generosity begets generosity."