

Sunday Message

SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

THE WORD

Year A • 12 February 2023 • Psalter Week 2



WHERE IS THE LOVE?

(MATTHEW 5:17-37)

Today's Gospel is part of the Sermon on the Mount, which we have been reading over the past two Sundays.

The Sermon on the Mount takes up three whole chapters of Matthew's Gospel (chapters 5-7) and contains the main teaching of Jesus. But it would be wrong to think of it as a single event that took place one sunny afternoon on a mountainside when Jesus was in excellent preaching form. The 105 verses of the Sermon on the Mount are a collection of different pronouncements and sayings of Jesus that Matthew gathered and stitched together into one unit. They are a crash course in Christianity, one powerful statement of what it means to be a follower of Jesus. ■

REFLECT

You probably know the joke about the chicken and the pig. A chicken and a pig are discussing breakfast. The chicken says, "Let's have bacon and eggs." The pig replies, "That's fine for you. You're just making a contribution, but I have to be fully committed."

The poor pig would have to give up everything to provide a good fry for breakfast. He'd have to be fully committed. In a real sense, that's what today's Gospel from the Sermon on the Mount is about too. It's about being fully committed.

There's a big difference between Jesus' teaching and the old Jewish law.

The Pharisees and Jewish religious leaders of the time were focused on keeping the letter of the law. Observe the law, and you were upright in the eyes of God. But Jesus goes beyond that. He says keeping the law is more than just slavishly sticking to rules and regulations – it's about what goes on in our hearts.

You could say that while the Pharisees' view of the law was like that of the chicken, Jesus' view of the law is like that of the pig – it demands total commitment.

We see that contrast played out in today's Gospel. Jesus says: "You have learnt how it was said to our ancestors: You must not kill... But I say this to you: Anyone who is angry with his brother will answer for it before the court..."

"You have learnt how it was said: You must not commit adultery. But I say this to you..."

"You have learnt how it was said: You must not break your oath... but I say this to you..."

Jesus is going beyond the old law. He puts a new interpretation on it and takes it a step further. He is demanding greater commitment from his followers than merely keeping the letter of the law.

It's safe to assume that nobody reading this newsletter has killed anyone, and so, legally speaking, we can say we have kept the letter of the law. We have kept

PRAY

Being a disciple of Jesus is not fashionable. Pray for the strength to follow Jesus faithfully. Pray for our church leaders that they will proclaim the Gospel with conviction.

SAY

Lord, help me to follow you with a full heart and eyes wide open. Help me to integrate my faith into every aspect of my life.

LEARN

Following Jesus involves far more than "keeping" rules and regulations. It is about conversion of mind and heart.

Conversion is something that happens every day.

DO

Think about how you "keep the faith". What does it mean for you to follow Jesus? Is it just about going to Mass and the sacraments regularly, or does it mean much more than that?

the fifth commandment. But see how Jesus interprets that law to include much broader things like anger. He takes one of the commandments and gives it a far more challenging application.

And it is challenging. Take what he says about being angry with your brother or sister. Now think of some of the social and moral debates we have been having in this country. There is so much anger, venom, and sneering contempt directed at individuals and groups. Social media is full of it.

Jesus knows it is possible to keep the law – to avoid committing murder, adultery or false witness – and yet to sin against those commandments by breaking them in spirit. For him, what matters is not external observance but what goes on inside the human heart – our thoughts, our values, our attitudes, our motivations, what guides our whole approach to life. Following Jesus means internalising our faith, making it part of the very air we breathe. It means trying to live the Sermon on the Mount. It means always having an attitude of love. ■

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON

Be my protector, O God,
a mighty stronghold to save me.
For you are my rock, my stronghold!
Lead me, guide me, for the sake of your
name.

GLORIA

Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to people of good will.

We praise you,
we bless you,
we adore you,
we glorify you,
we give you thanks for your great glory,
Lord God, heavenly King,
O God, almighty Father.

Lord Jesus Christ, Only Begotten Son,
Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father,
you take away the sins of the world,
have mercy on us;
you take away the sins of the world,
receive our prayer;
you are seated at the right hand of the Father,
have mercy on us.

For you alone are the Holy One,
you alone are the Lord,
you alone are the Most High, Jesus Christ,
with the Holy Spirit,
in the glory of God the Father.
Amen.

COLLECT

O God, who teach us that you abide
in hearts that are just and true,
grant that we may be so fashioned by your
grace
as to become a dwelling pleasing to you.
Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of
the Holy Spirit,
God, for ever and ever.
Amen.

FIRST READING Ecclesiasticus 15:15-20

A reading from the book of Ecclesiasticus.
If you wish, you can keep the
commandments,
to behave faithfully is within your power.
He has set fire and water before you;
put out your hand to whichever you prefer.
Man has life and death before him;
whichever a man likes better will be given
him.
For vast is the wisdom of the Lord;
he is almighty and all-seeing.
His eyes are on those who fear him,
he notes every action of man.
He never commanded anyone to be godless,
he has given no one permission to sin.
The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM

Psalm 118

Response:

They are happy who follow God's law!

1. They are happy whose life is blameless,
who follow God's law!
They are happy those who do his will,
seeking him with all their hearts. (R.)
2. You have laid down your precepts
to be obeyed with care.
May my footsteps be firm
to obey your statutes. (R.)
3. Bless your servant and I shall live
and obey your word.

Open my eyes that I may consider
the wonders of your law. (R.)

4. Teach me the demands of your statutes
and I will keep them to the end.
Train me to observe your law,
to keep it with my heart. (R.)

SECOND READING 1 Corinthians 2:6-10

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the
Corinthians.

We have a wisdom to offer those who have
reached maturity: not a philosophy of our
age, it is true, still less of the masters of
our age, which are coming to their end.
The hidden wisdom of God which we teach
in our mysteries is the wisdom that God
predestined to be for our glory before the
ages began. It is a wisdom that none of the
masters of this age have ever known, or they
would not have crucified the Lord of Glory;
we teach what scripture calls: the things that
no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things
beyond the mind of man, all that God has
prepared for those who love him.

These are the very things that God has
revealed to us through the Spirit, for the
Spirit reaches the depths of everything, even
the depths of God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Alleluia, Alleluia!

Speak, Lord, your servant is listening:
you have the message of eternal life.
Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:17-37

(For shorter form read between > and <)

A reading from the holy Gospel according to
Matthew.

>Jesus said to his disciples:< "Do not imagine
that I have come to abolish the Law or the
Prophets. I have come not to abolish them
but to complete them. I tell you solemnly, till
heaven and earth disappear, not one dot, one
little stroke, shall disappear from the Law until
its purpose is achieved. Therefore, the man
who infringes even one of the least of these
commandments and teaches others to do
the same will be considered the least in the
kingdom of heaven; but the man who keeps
them and teaches them will be considered
great in the kingdom of heaven.

>"(For) I tell you, if your virtue goes no
deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees,
you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

"You have learnt how it was said to our
ancestors: You must not kill; and if anyone
does kill he must answer for it before the
court. But I say this to you: anyone who is
angry with his brother will answer for it before
the court;< if a man calls his brother 'Fool' he
will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and if
a man calls him 'Renegade' he will answer for
it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your
offering to the altar and there remember that
your brother has something against you, leave
your offering there before the altar, go and be
reconciled with your brother first, and then
come back and present your offering. Come to
terms with your opponent in good time while
you are still on the way to the court with him,
or he may hand you over to the judge and the
judge to the officer, and you will be thrown
into prison. I tell you solemnly, you will not get
out till you have paid the last penny.

>"You have learnt how it was said: You must
not commit adultery. But I say this to you:
if a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has
already committed adultery with her in his
heart.< If your right eye should cause you to
sin, tear it out and throw it away; for it will do
you less harm to lose one part of you than to
have your whole body thrown into hell. And
if your right hand should cause you to sin, cut
it off and throw it away; for it will do you less
harm to lose one part of you than to have your
whole body go to hell.

"It has also been said: Anyone who divorces
his wife must give her a writ of dismissal. But
I say this to you: everyone who divorces his
wife, except for the case of fornication, makes
her an adulteress; and anyone who marries a
divorced woman commits adultery.

>"Again, you have learnt how it was said to
our ancestors: You must not break your oath,
but must fulfil your oaths to the Lord. But I
say this to you: do not swear at all,< either
by heaven, since that is God's throne; or by
the earth, since that is his footstool; or by
Jerusalem, since that is the city of the great
king. Do not swear by your own head either,
since you cannot turn a single hair white or
black.>All you need say is 'Yes' if you mean
yes, 'No' if you mean no; anything more than
this comes from the evil one."

The Gospel of the Lord.<

Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I believe in God,
the Father almighty,
Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
(all bow during the next two lines)

who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried;
he descended into hell;
on the third day he rose again from the dead;
he ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of God the
Father almighty;
from there he will come to judge the living
and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

May this oblation, O Lord, we pray,
cleanse and renew us
and may it become for those who do your will
the source of eternal reward.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON

They ate and had their fill,
and what they craved the Lord gave them;
they were not disappointed in what they
craved.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Having fed upon these heavenly delights,
we pray, O Lord,
that we may always long
for that food by which we truly live.
Through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

