
WORD MADE FLESH

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time **The Fulfilment of the Law***

Sirach 15:15-20, 1Cor. 2:6-10, Matthew 5:17-37

The Sermon on the Mount. Every time in the Bible when we are given a discourse from a mountain it calls us to glimpse life from above, to glimpse life in its totality.

Today's texts are unfashionable. They concern law. Often, we shy away from these texts because they reveal the shadows of our experience. Often, we flee the essential meaning of these texts by invoking them in judgement on our brothers and sisters, our friends and enemies. Which-ever, we skirt the light of the texts and linger only in the shadows we think they cast.

In Sirach we are told that our choice to act according to the commandment, according to that which is life-giving, is paramount. We will choose either life or death in all situations and the Creator longs only for us to have life. Commandment, as all Jews know so well, is to bind us to life, not condemn us to death. Saint Paul in the letter to the Corinthians says that the wisdom of the mature disciple, in tune with God's wisdom, is "secret and hidden, which God decreed before the ages for our glory." Mature wisdom is the gift of the Holy Spirit and expresses the very depth of God. The mature disciple has no need of the judgements of death, living solely out of the depth of God, faithful to life and the giver of life. In the Gospel, Jesus has gathered his disciples to teach them. "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets: I have come not to abolish but to fulfil." The Sermon on the Mount is such an extraordinary text. Here Jesus Christ sets up parallels showing the difference in living according to the law and being transformed so that the fullness of life (which is the fulfilment of the law), the fullness of the Kingdom, is how one is present in the world.

He speaks about murder, how it is against the law. "But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister..." if you insult, or if you call them "fool, you will be liable to the hell of fire." No judgement here. Rather it is Jesus Christ pointing to the estrangement, the pain and death that is wrought by anger, and insults, wrought by the denial of another person. Anger and insult create a landscape of death in the world. As such they are estrangement from God, from life. Life is where the presence of the kingdom flourishes, where the Divine lover of all people calls even the "fool" and the fool's executioner into life.

"You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Again, Jesus Christ points us to the power of intention, the power of imagination, and shows how impossible it is to live the fullness of life, the life of the kingdom, solely on moral and legal grounds. Rather, we are called to a transformation, a re-birth into the fullness of life, a way of being, healed of fantasy, in which the disposition and intentions of our hearts are for the nurture of life as loving communion.

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