

We are in our third installment, if you will, of the Sermon on the Mount, St. Matthew's account of the primary teachings of Jesus the Christ.

In order to live the Sermon on the Mount, in its fullness, we must change our attitudes toward meekness, humility, mourning and peacekeeping.

We must step out of our comfort zones and season our surroundings with charity, flavor society with zeal and be a beacon of hope to those who are lost and searching to find their way..... to be readily identifiable as being in Christ, in our being "Christed".

Those are the lessons of the past two weeks, but today we are called to the renewing of more than attitudes, more than stepping out of our box and of praiseworthy actions..... we are called to entirely alter our orientation toward all of humanity. We are called to a radical, revolutionary response to righteousness.

Today Our Lord says **"I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven"**.

These are some difficult words indeed.

The former law still holds.... do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal. Not breaking the rules, that was the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. This is the righteousness of the diligent and the scrupulous, completely sufficient under the old covenant, but completely inadequate under the new.

If we would be honest, our conscience already holds the truths of the old law. Most, with effort, never commit adultery. Far fewer take the life of another. Even a less than well-informed conscience can keep clear of these deadly sins, even if it is only for a less noble reason, the fear of getting caught.

The task of living a higher, more full righteousness, one that is not just the satisfying of the minimum, but the fulfilment of all the law embodies is the demand made of us today.

And to see Christ in others, as difficult as that may be ... is enough strength and fortitude to keep the commandments, but today's Gospel requires more.

Recognizing and acting in response to seeing Christ in others is connected to, but completely different than seeing others... as Christ... sees... them.

To live with the heart of Christ and to have

To have the eyes of Christ is

- to see the dignity of others, regardless of how society sees them or how they might see themselves
- to not view another human being as an object that can be used for our pleasure or advantage
- to recognize every one's human potential and to realize our own

To have the heart of Christ is:

- to not be self-righteous
- to not tame but to obliterate our anger and bitterness toward others
- to be not only always ready to forgive, but to live in such a way as to not need the forgiveness of another
- to not hold others in contempt

Brothers and sisters, you and I struggle constantly with these. Maybe not every one every day, but every day at least one.

We are, by our baptism anointed, Christened, that is , "Christed" as Priest, Prophet and King. This is a HUGE and generous mandate AND a great privilege,

yet we cannot, on our own, keep our hearts and minds pure.... our

intentions honorable... and our souls free from stain. We cannot make OURSELVES to be Saints.

Pride, carnal cravings, our appetites for sin cannot be reined in and controlled as we would our desire for chocolate or another piece of cake. It simply doesn't work like that.... and deep down we know that.

We know that to do as Christ calls us to do in today's Gospel... is.....IMPOSSIBLE!

Every effort we make to quell our lusts, quench our prejudices, even to route our hatred is doomed for failure.

All of these things would truly and forever be unreachable, were it not for the One who demands it of us.

Friends, the Good News of Jesus Christ is that we are not meant to do it on our own.

This is made evident in a very hope-filled and joyful way in this week's second reading.

..... St. Paul tells us that today that:

***What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
God has prepared for those who love him***

This is not only a promise for the future, our Crown of Glory for a race well run, but it is a reality in the here and now. God has prepared it in Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ is the one who stood in solidarity with our humanity.

- He is the one who faced the Devil himself, spit in his eye and crushed him.

- He is the one who longs to come to our aid.... and has come to our aid, in the Church, in the Sacraments, especially the use of the Cleansing Grace of the Confessional and in the frequent and worthy reception of the Eucharist

We are meant for Heaven.

We are meant to be Saints.

It is Christ's desire.

Take courage then in knowing:

- There is no Saint in Heaven who has not struggled, up to the day of their Glory, with the worst of sins.
- There is no Saint in Heaven who has not tried to fight these evils on their own and had any chance of winning.
- There is no Saint in Heaven who hasn't had to empty themselves.
- There is no Saint in Heaven that has not had to put their entire selves into the wounds of Christ. or who has not had to cling to the Cross and hold on for life.
- There is no Saint in Heaven that has gotten there by an easy road.
- There is no Saint in Heaven who has not had to LEARN, day by day, to love God, to love their neighbor and to love themselves.
- Take comfort in knowing there are countless Saints in Heaven

So as we journey toward our destiny, toward the Kingdom of Heaven and a place among the Righteous, let our prayer be,

Lord I have not seen, show me with your eyes,

Lord I do not hear, give me your ears

Lord my Heart is sometimes empty, fill it with your love.

