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The Sixth Sunday after Trinity
Sunday, July 11, 2021
Matthew 5:20–26

Our Lord teaches us today about reconciliation. In the Gospel reading He says that it was said to those of old You shall not murder. This is the Fifth Commandment. Whoever unlawfully takes the life of someone will be liable to judgment. The judgment is the judgment of God. His judgment is a life for a life. If you end someone's life your life deserves to be taken.

But do we hear the commandment to not murder and rest assured we are safe? Do we think that we have not broken this commandment? Jesus says if you are angry with your brother or sister in Christ you are under the judgment of God. If you are holding something against your fellow Christian how can you think you have love for God? Are you angry with someone because they have sinned against you? Do you treat them with disdain because of their words or actions? You need to reconcile with them. You cannot be at peace with God if you are not at peace with your fellow Christians.

Jesus shows how this is done. He gives the example of a person bringing their gift to the altar. The altar is the place of sacrifice. The priest presided there to offer sacrifices on behalf of God's people. God's judgment against sinners is clear, eternal dmanaiton. So how could they come out from under this judgment? When God's people sinned He would require sacrifice to reconcile Himself with them. We are under His eternal judgment for our sin. But God offers forgiveness through sacrifice.

If the person were bringing their gift to the altar and remembered that someone has something against him he should leave his gift and go first to the brother or sister in Christ he has sinned against. He should not think he will be reconciled with God if he is not reconciled with his fellow Christian.

The altar is no longer the place of sacrifice. An animal is not sliced and blood is not spilled. But the altar is assuredly still the place where reconciliation occurs. And that is because you are not bringing a gift but receiving one. The priest who presided at the altar was the intercessor between God and His people. He would offer the sacrifice of the animal to God. Now the presiding minister at the Sacrament of the Altar is not offering up a sacrifice but giving Christ's body and blood which He sacrificed on the cross.

God demands sacrifice for there to be reconciliation between Him and us. The sacrifice He accepts is the one of His very own Son. The animals offered on the altar were to be unblemished and the best of the flock. Nevertheless they were not pure, as nothing in this life is pure because

everything has been corrupted by sin. But Christ, God's own Son, is pure and undefiled. He who was without sin was sacrificed for us who are defiled with sin.

Christ's own body and blood are given us to eat and drink. This immeasurable gift of our God Himself is the testament that God is reconciled with us. He is at peace with us despite our sin. He forgives our sin. The altar is the place of reconciliation and therefore we need to come prepared. We need to recognize our sin and our need for forgiveness. We need to repent of our sin. This includes reconciliation with those we have sinned against. As the one remembered he had sinned against his fellow believer we need to go to the one we have sinned against and ask for forgiveness.

Of course we don't just interact with our fellow members of the holy Christian Church. We will sin against the non-Christians in our lives as well. Jesus says in the Gospel reading that when someone is taking you to court you should make friends with him beforehand. Otherwise you will stand before the judge and end up in prison and you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Now we can't be certain that those who are not Christians will forgive us when we seek to reconcile with them. But what we can do is seek to make amends with them and ask for forgiveness. Even if they refuse to forgive us we will know that God forgives us because we have repented of our sin and asked Him for forgiveness. We have seen that it is at the altar He speaks clearly to you what He desires with you, to be reconciled with you.

Reconciliation is brought about through sacrifice. All the sacrifices offered before Christ pointed to the once for all sacrifice of Christ on the cross. His body He offered up at Calvary and His blood He shed at Calvary are His one sacrifice He gives you here at the altar. You are forgiven and now the sacrifice extends out as you then offer up yourself as a living sacrifice. When you go from the altar you sacrifice yourself in your daily life for the sake of peace rather than holding things against others. When you graciously forgive others as you have been forgiven you are a sacrifice pleasing and holy to God. Instead of breaking the Fifth Commandment you love others with the sacrificial love of Christ. Amen.

SDG

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