

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A

Sirach 15: 15-20 + 1st Corinthians 2: 6-10 + Matthew 5:17-37

Holy Spirit Parish: February 16, 2020

We get a lot of instructions from Jesus today, part of his continued commentary on the Beatitudes which we might have heard on the 4th Sunday of Ordinary Time had we not celebrated the Feast of the Purification two weekends past.

Matthew is really clever with the way he starts this section,

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the law, BUT.”

That word, “but”, is a really clever way of teasing our expectations.

It makes us stayed tuned for what is to follow.

Yet, when he goes on, I’m left scratching my head over

what it means to fulfill, and that is exactly where Matthew wants us to be today:

wondering about what it means to fulfill the law.

Perhaps we might think about it this way.

Most of us think that when we are obeying the law, whatever law it is,

we are doing the right thing and doing what is expected.

That is what the Scribes and Pharisees thought and taught; just keep the law. That is why they got so bent of shape when Jesus cured someone

in a synagogue on the Sabbath. He broke two laws!

He did some work on the sabbath, and he touched someone who was sick.

The conflict that gets in your face over this is whether or not just keeping the law is fulfilling the law,

since the purpose of the law is to express the Will of God.

What this Word of God calls into question is the minimalism of keeping the law when there are greater needs.

A law is fulfilled when we do more than the law requires.

The fulfillment comes from recognizing that doing the minimum is not enough.

It’s just enough to squeak by and not be accused of anything,

certainly to be accused of any greatness.

The law says: “Do not steal.” Well, ok; I don’t take anything that isn’t mine. What greatness is there in that? How does that fulfill the law?

How about not stealing, but at the same time giving something away to someone who might steal because of their need?

The law says: "Do not Kill." Well, OK.

It doesn't look as though there is anyone who has murdered in here, but does that fulfill the law?

How about giving life, or doing something that makes life more bearable for someone on the margins of life?

Is it really God's will that we just pass through this life on earth and never kill anyone? Is that all God asks of us? We know better.

Matthew knew that in every religious community there are scribes and Pharisees, learned but self-serving people.

Matthew warns against such hypocrites whose external religious masks can hide an irreligious heart.

We are a people called and taught to surpass the scribes and Pharisees.

There is a call here to righteousness that is not achieved by just keeping the rules. There is only one Righteous One. It is God. In seeking righteousness, we are on a path to become like God.

At the beginning of this chapter, Jesus revealed to us what God is like and how we might become like God – by practicing and living in Beatitude. That is why when you come into church you see the 10 commandments on the granite monument by the front door, and then when you leave, you see the Beatitudes on the same monument.

When we become poor in spirit, meek, merciful, and clean of heart, the law will be fulfilled, and there will be no more killing, no more infidelity, lust, lies, or broken promises.

Best of all, we will be living without anger, and will be at peace with ourselves and with one another just as God intended.

Fr. Joseph A. Jacobi