

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 12 February 2023

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

Homily: Fr. Ken

In the first reading from Sirach, in the Hebrew scriptures, readers are taught to keep the commandments, because they are capable of doing it, as it is within their power and possibility to do it.

In the second reading, St. Paul warns the Christians living in Corinth, against basing their faith on human wisdom instead of God's wisdom.

In the Gospel narrative, we find Jesus not explicitly rejecting the Jewish scriptures but rather bringing them back to basics: love of God and love of neighbor. Our lives should reflect this love.

In the Gospel passage, which comes from the famous Sermon on the Mount, Jesus brings us back to the very basics of our religious faith, that is, the love of God and the love of each other.

Jesus says he is not contradicting the Jewish scriptures and the Ten Commandments which give a framework of discipline and order. However, Jesus is opposed to the legalistic type of religion the scribes and Pharisees have built upon them, full of petty rules which have little to do with God's law.

Jesus says that if one's virtue goes no deeper than that of the scribes and Pharisees, then they will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Jesus himself healed the sick on the sabbath day, which was against Jewish law. He also spoke publicly and openly about women, which was also against Jewish customs.

Jesus says that the Pharisees have so defined the Jewish law in their own terms, that they have completely missed the point. And

so Jesus begins to expound the Law as it pertains to various moral issues, including love for one's enemy.

Instead of a litany of more commandments, Jesus looks to the spirit of the Law. He shows that the presence of God's life within us is the real reason the Law commands us not to kill others, and not to lie about them, or steal from them. In other words, we are called to love like God loves. It is the very challenge presented by the Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus himself lived up to this ideal. His life of love and compassion is the kind of life we are all called to live.

Taken together, the three scripture readings suggest that there is a choice to be made by each one of us today. The choice is between what gives life and what brings death.

Becoming a faithful Christian is more than just following rules, including simply attending Mass. Jesus is setting us free to make choices that support, sustain, grow, and nurture life for ourselves and one another. We choose life when we actively care for those who are poor; when we respect the dignity of every human person; and when we protect God's creation. We choose life when we are generous with our time, compassion, and resources.

Would anyone looking at us and listening to us know that God is at the center of our lives? Jesus says that we should love others and the world as God does. We are to be compassionate and passionate—not lukewarm people. The Beatitudes call us to humility, simple living and peace, which often oppose prevailing values in the world. Our human lives are capable of transformation when we reflect something of God's glory and love in our daily lives.

A commitment to justice and peace has long been one of the hallmarks of how the Catholic Church functions on a global, national, and local stage. We need to be part of those efforts.

-end-