

Mt. 5: 20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

Jesus said to his disciples:

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

**"You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
You shall not kill and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.
But I say to you,
whoever is angry with a brother or sister
will be liable to judgment.**

**"You have heard that it was said,
You shall not commit adultery.
But I say to you,
everyone who looks at a woman with lust
has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

**"Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors,
Do not take a false oath,
but make good to the Lord all that you vow.
But I say to you, do not swear at all.
Let your 'Yes' mean 'Yes,' and your 'No' mean 'No.'
Anything more is from the evil one."**

Meditation:

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

Whoa....is this really Jesus speaking?

**I thought he disagreed with the Pharisees and the way they insisted
on following the letter of the law...**

I thought he got angry when they placed the Law before the needs of the people...

What happened to God's unlimited Mercy and Unconditional Love???

On the surface, read literally

our reading today seems to show a very strict, rule following Jesus...

as a matter of fact, he seems so strict

that it would be impossible that any of us could follow the law...

much less get into heaven...

so ...what's going on here?

What's going on here is not at all about how good or not you follow the rules.

**What's going on here is an attempt to invite people into a change of consciousness
rather than simply being persnickety rule followers.**

**Jesus totally understood the oppression that could
and would follow a fastidious attention to Law...**

**He also knew that many people who appear to extremely concerned with the letter of the
law, do so as a way of controlling their dark, interior thoughts and desires...**

**He knew that it was a transformed heart...a change of consciousness
that saw....that entered the Reign of Heaven..**

So what does that mean?

What is a change of consciousness?

**Well...I think A change in our consciousness sees a more holistic reality...
it sees all life as interrelated, it sees the 'both/and'...
not an either/or...**

**Remember when Jesus said, "Love your neighbor as yourself."?
Most of us hear that as "Love your neighbor as much yourself"...
but that's not what he said:...we are to see ourselves in our neighbors...
they are us and we are they...**

**Jesus knew that this entire cosmos swims in the presence of the Holy....
He understood that there is no 'other'...
that the Spirit of the Divine flows everywhere in all things...
the Holy is in our enemy...
the Holy is in us...
There truly is only One...**

**The only real question is do we see that too? do we understand that?
Are we even open to such a wholehearted knowing?**

**It's NOT question of following the rules or the law,
but it absolutely the question of whether we allow our hearts to be stretched and broken
and grown large...**

**A change of consciousness understands the necessity of integrity, of authenticity,
of wholeheartedness
...of having the inside match the outside...**

**It's not about living a sour kind of life in the straight jacket of rules and laws,
but it is about living a bountiful, abundant life full of joy,
gratitude, beauty, forgiveness and love...**

**Remember how Jesus was criticized for feasting with prostitutes and sinners...
Those that criticized him did so, because he wasn't following the letter of the law...
true...he wasn't...**

**But he was following the Law of the Cosmos...
which is the Law of the Heart...the Law of Love,**

**Love exists beyond any human boundaries we create...
beyond geopolitical boundaries..
beyond religious boundaries,
even beyond species boundaries...**

We are called to Love all that the Holy has and is creating...

**This person,
this animal....
this river....
this mountain...
this planet....
this Cosmos.**

Love is everywhere.

Only a radical change in consciousness understands this.

**Unfortunately there is ample evidence down through the millennia
how many people turned Jesus' words into same old, same old religion...**

**into be good and you will be rewarded in the Next life...in heaven...
be bad and you will be eternally punished in the Next life...in hell...**

**Unfortunately that philosophy seems easier to live than loving large...
especially if you believe that you found the 'right' understanding of God...**

**Most of you know that here at the Center,
we have a long term residential program for men in recovery from their addictions.
and it is based on the tenets of Alcoholics Anonymous.**

**At every open meeting I have attended, the men read parts of the AA philosophy
which includes this line:**

**"We seek spiritual progress, not spiritual perfection."
That, my friends, is a true wisdom statement.**

**If we think we can attain spiritual perfection: we will land up like the Pharisees:
unable to see our hypocrisy and continue to cause harm...**

**But if we seek spiritual progress...
if we seek an inner awareness so that our lives have an sense of integrity...
a wholeness about them and not perfection
If we do our best to align our inner thoughts and desires with the desires of the Holy
then our outer lives will find a flow and peace and a serenity on their own...**

and what are the Divine desires, you might ask?

It is what we heard last week:

release those bound unjustly,

Set free the oppressed,

Share your bread with the hungry,

**shelter the oppressed and the homeless;
and clothe the naked when you see them.**

Get rid of malicious speech...false accusations and any form of oppression.

Yes...my friends...It really is, as my good friend Wiggy would say...

“All about love”

and for that we can breathe a sigh of relief and say,

“Thank you!” amen