

Doing What We Need To Do

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

February 12, 2017

We are now in our third week on the Sermon on the Mount. Five years ago Arlene and I were at the site where Jesus gave this instruction. What a beautiful place, high on a mountain overlooking the Sea of Galilee. Today there is a church there and a wonderful garden to commemorate this event. Father Jim, two weeks ago, called this sermon, "You've got to be kidding." You've got to be kidding that Jesus would preach to his disciples this way. How can we possibly live this way? I would like to take this in another direction. Often in life we do what we want to do rather than what we need to do. We want to play games on our smart phone when we really need to study. We want to watch TV when we know we need to get up and exercise to be healthy. We want to sleep in when we know that we need to come to church and be fed by God. We want to work at our favorite hobby when we know that we should take our spouse for a ride, dinner or a movie. ***Yes, there are many other examples of what we want to do versus what we need to do.***

In his Sermon on the Mount Jesus, I would suggest, is telling us what we need to do. He knows about our natural tendency to do what we want to do, to take the easy route, to at times get into ourselves. Jesus knew that if you never even got angry with your brother you would never need to worry about harming him. He knew that if you forgave your brother or sister for what they did to you your heart and your conscience would be clear. How many of us sitting in this church harbor a hurt inflicted by someone else and have not dealt with it? He knew that harboring the injury and getting revenge, getting back, was not healthy for us, not healthy for society. Jesus knew that we need to avoid temptation. If we do we will be much less likely to sin. In the Gospel he used the example of lust. If we want to treat a woman with the dignity and respect that she deserves then we must avoid even the temptation to treat her as an object or with disrespect. That is exactly what pornography does. And finally in the Gospel today we are challenged to make our yes mean yes and our no mean no. Mean what you say and say what you mean. ***Although we here have passages Jesus certainly would not have limited his expectations to these examples. He is calling us to go way beyond and do what we need to do.***

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So on this weekend where we celebrate marriage day we are challenged to raise our expectations. Couples, you made the commitment one, five, ten or fifty years ago to each other. Today we call upon you to renew your covenant, your sacrifice, your romance, your profound respect for each other. In a few moments we will ask you to renew your vows and give you a special blessing to help you live our your example of God's love on this earth. ***As we celebrate Valentine's day this next week make that a very special day between the two of you.***

Secondly, we call upon all of us in this church to throw away the anger and revenge tools out of our personal toolbox. If someone has wronged us we will take the time to forgive them, forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.

Finally, pornography is rampant in our society and there may be some in this very church who participate in this travesty. I implore you, as requested by Jesus himself, to stop the practice immediately. Get it off your phone, your computer, get the magazines out of your home. Put filters on your devices and get accountable to someone you trust. If you cannot do that then throw your smart phone or computer away. People in our society deserve and need to be treated with dignity and respect.

So from the Gospel of the Sermon on the Mount we are challenged to what we need to do and not what we want to do. Let our want be to do only do what God wants us to do. Let our yes mean yes and our no mean no. God bless all of you.

RESOURCES FOR PREACHING

World Marriage Sunday

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Sir 15:15-20

Ps 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

1 Cor 2:6-10

Mt 5: 17-37 or Mt 5:20-22a, 27-28, 33-34a, 37

World Marriage Sunday this year offers the opportunity to reflect on the radical call to faithfulness in marriage spoken of by Jesus in the Gospel, and the joy all Christians receive when following the Lord's commandments. Below are suggestions for preaching.

Possible themes, with further resources

☒ With the help of God's grace, it is always possible to follow his law (Sir 15:15), including his teachings about marriage. God's commandments are given for our good and lead to our happiness and salvation (Ps 119).

o Pope Benedict XVI: "The 'commandment' of love is only possible because it is more than a requirement. Love can be 'commanded' because it has first been given" (Deus Caritas Est, no. 14).

o Pope Francis: "For the law is itself a gift of God which points out the way, a gift for everyone without exception; it can be followed with the help of grace" (Amoris Laetitia, no. 295).

☒ God gives us wisdom and strength to do what is good, not what is popular (the "wisdom of this age," 1 Cor 2:6). Today, standing up for the truth about marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman is not popular, but it is good.

o Visit Marriage: Unique for a Reason for videos, study guides, and catechesis

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about the authentic meaning of marriage.

o Pope Francis: “In order to avoid all misunderstanding, I would point out that in no way must the Church desist from proposing the full ideal of marriage, God’s plan in all its grandeur” (Amoris Laetitia, no. 307).

☒ Reconciliation and forgiveness are at the heart of good relationships with other people, and also prepare us to offer fitting worship to God (Mt 5:23-24). Strained relationships are particularly difficult in marriages and families; we can ask God for the grace to forgive those who hurt us and to seek reconciliation with others.

o Pope Francis: “One cannot live without seeking forgiveness, or at least, one cannot live at peace, especially in the family. We wrong one another every day. ... What we are asked to do is to promptly heal the wounds that we cause, to immediately reweave the bonds that break within the family” (General Audience, Nov. 4, 2015).

o Article: “Forgiveness Fundamentals” on For Your Marriage.

☒ Christ came not to “abolish the law or the prophets...but to fulfill” them (Mt 5:17). Rather than discounting the commandments as unimportant, he deepens them, asking his followers to apply them not just to their actions but to their hearts, too. Let us deepen our understanding of what Christ-like love asks of us.

o Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation Amoris Laetitia, Chapter 4: the exegesis of 1 Cor 13 is an excellent resource for married couples seeking to grow in love.

o St. John Paul II, Catecheses on the Theology of the Body, nos. 24-59: an extended reflection on Jesus’s words in Mt 5 about the human heart and “historical man.”

☒ Christ is clear about the demands of the Gospel regarding anger (Mt 5:21-26), lust (Mt 5:27-30) and divorce (Mt 5:31-32). God gives us strength to follow his teachings, and the Church offers support to those seeking to live holy, chaste, and faithful marriages.

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o On anger – Pope Francis: “Christians cannot ignore the persistent admonition of God’s word not to nurture anger...My advice is never to let the day end without making peace in the family” (Amoris Laetitia, no. 104).

o On lust and pornography – USCCB: Create in Me a Clean Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography (2015) and Clean Heart series of pamphlets (2016).

o On marriages in crisis – For Your Marriage list of ministries that help married couples in difficulty or crisis.

o On divorce – USCCB: “Divorce and the Church’s Healing Ministry” (2010).

☐ Jesus promises greatness to his faithful ones: “Whoever obeys and teaches these commandments will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:19). Parishioners who teach the faith as parents, godparents, catechists, etc., should be thanked and praised. Married couples who live their vocation faithfully provide an invaluable witness to the entire community.

o Pope Francis: “Faithfulness to promises is a true masterpiece of humanity! If we look at its bold beauty, we are frightened, but if we disregard its courageous tenacity, we are lost. No relationship of love – no friendship, no form of loving, no happiness in the common good – reaches the height of our desire and of our hope, if this miracle does not come to dwell in the soul” (General Audience, October 21, 2015).

o Pope Francis: “With inner joy and deep comfort, the Church looks to families who remain faithful to the teachings of the Gospel, encouraging them and thanking them for the testimony they offer. For they bear witness, in a credible way, to the beauty of marriage as indissoluble and perpetually faithful (Amoris

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Lectionary: 76

Reading 1 SIR 15:15-20

If you choose you can keep the commandments, they will save you;
if you trust in God, you too shall live;
he has set before you fire and water
to whichever you choose, stretch forth your hand.
Before man are life and death, good and evil,
whichever he chooses shall be given him.
Immense is the wisdom of the Lord;
he is mighty in power, and all-seeing.
The eyes of God are on those who fear him;
he understands man's every deed.
No one does he command to act unjustly,
to none does he give license to sin.

Responsorial Psalm PS 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34

R. (1b) Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Blessed are they whose way is blameless,
who walk in the law of the LORD.

Blessed are they who observe his decrees,
who seek him with all their heart.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

You have commanded that your precepts
be diligently kept.

Oh, that I might be firm in the ways
of keeping your statutes!

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Be good to your servant, that I may live
and keep your words.

Open my eyes, that I may consider
the wonders of your law.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Instruct me, O LORD, in the way of your statutes,
that I may exactly observe them.

Give me discernment, that I may observe your law
and keep it with all my heart.

R. Blessed are they who follow the law of the Lord!

Reading 21 COR 2:6-10

Brothers and sisters:

We speak a wisdom to those who are mature,

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not a wisdom of this age,
nor of the rulers of this age who are passing away.
Rather, we speak God's wisdom, mysterious, hidden,
which God predetermined before the ages for our glory,
and which none of the rulers of this age knew;
for, if they had known it,
they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
But as it is written:
*What eye has not seen, and ear has not heard,
and what has not entered the human heart,
what God has prepared for those who love him,*
this God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

For the Spirit scrutinizes everything, even the depths of God.

AlleluiaCF. **MT 11:25**

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Blessed are you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth;
you have revealed to little ones the mysteries of the kingdom.

R. **Alleluia, alleluia.**

Gospel **MT 5:17-37**

Jesus said to his disciples:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.

I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away,

not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter

will pass from the law,

until all things have taken place.

Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments

and teaches others to do so

will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever obeys and teaches these commandments

will be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

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 his brother

will be liable to judgment;

and whoever says to his brother, 'Raqa,'

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will be answerable to the Sanhedrin;
and whoever says, 'You fool,'
will be liable to fiery Gehenna.
Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar,
and there recall that your brother
has anything against you,
leave your gift there at the altar,
go first and be reconciled with your brother,
and then come and offer your gift.
Settle with your opponent quickly while on the way to court.
Otherwise your opponent will hand you over to the judge,
and the judge will hand you over to the guard,
and you will be thrown into prison.
Amen, I say to you,
you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.

"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.
If your right eye causes you to sin,
tear it out and throw it away.
It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body thrown into Gehenna.
And if your right hand causes you to sin,
cut it off and throw it away.
It is better for you to lose one of your members
than to have your whole body go into Gehenna.

"It was also said,
Whoever divorces his wife must give her a bill of divorce.
But I say to you,
whoever divorces his wife - unless the marriage is unlawful -
causes her to commit adultery,
and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

"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;
not by heaven, for it is God's throne;
nor by the earth, for it is his footstool;
nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.
Do not swear by your head,
for you cannot make a single hair white or black.

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Anything more is from the evil one."

OrMT 5:20-22A, 27-28, 33-34A, 37

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