

Thirteenth Sunday of Luke

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit one God.

This morning's Gospel we hear of a young man coming up to Jesus and saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Our Lord responded to him what was necessary to have eternal life. He basically told him to keep the Commandments.

That is...

- Do not commit adultery.
- Do not kill.
- Do not steal.
- Do not bear false witness.
- Honor your father and mother.

We have all heard these commandments.

Jesus was trying to show this young man how to live. To live the Christian life is not a matter of obeying specific laws but living a spiritual life. Formal observance of the Law does not equal fulfillment of all the commandments of God, which no man could do. As St. Paul wrote to the Romans "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Jesus had previously taught us how to live the spiritual life when he gave what is known as the Sermon on the Mount. There he talked about the kind of life those who seek the Kingdom of God must lead.

He first gave us the Beatitudes in which he describes the joys of true discipleship, the blessed way of life. Jesus then gave us the New Covenant. As the son of God, whose authority is greater than Moses', Jesus proclaimed the New Law, the righteousness leading toward perfection.

Jesus revealed the deeper meaning of several of the Old Testament laws, such as those which he taught the man in today's Gospel.

He tells us that murder now includes anger.

Adultery is no longer merely the unlawful act of sexual relations with someone whom you are not married to, it now includes having the desire to have sex with someone who is not your spouse.

Although divorce was allowed under the old law, it is now only permissible because of sexual immorality, and remarriage to a divorced person is not permitted.

"Perform your oaths to the Lord" is the Old Testament law, but Jesus now tells us to simply say "yes" or "no" without taking an oath and to keep our word.

"An eye for an eye" was the law but now Jesus taught "turn the other cheek" and "love your enemies which is better translated as "do good to your enemies"."

We must not seek vengeance. We must treat others as God treats us, with mercy and grace.

Jesus taught that his followers must give alms and do charitable deeds for the poor in secret, not making a big display.

Prayer should follow the model of the Lord's Prayer, which we should pray every day. In the Didache we are instructed to pray the Lord's Prayer 3 times each day.

He also taught that we must fast. That our fasting must be done for God and not men. We are not to make a show of our fasting.

Jesus was teaching us these things to help us find true wisdom.

How do we find true wisdom?

First, we must love God. We must pursue His righteousness by bringing our treasure as alms to God, our worries in prayer and fasting to Him, and the love of all people and the pursuit of righteous reconciliation with them by submitting our judgment of them to God's mercy.

We must all take time to read and absorb the Sermon on the Mount. What is written in the gospel of Matthew from chapters 5 through 7 gives us the answer to the question what we must do to attain eternal life and how to live the spiritual life.

We must open our minds and our hearts to hearing God's Word and making it who

we are, if we are to live the spiritual life. It is only by the Grace of God that we can live the spiritual life that Jesus has called us to live.

Use these chapters to review your day before going to sleep to see if you are living the life which Christ wants us to live. If not, ask God for His mercy and forgiveness.

After the Fall we are predisposed to self-centered choices directed by the passions rather than choices based on agape. St. Isaac of Syria tells us: ". . . pandering to the flesh, produce(s) in us shameful urges and unseemly fantasies" (Early Fathers from the Philokalia).

The passions spring from the heart of the person. Jesus told us: "For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, fornication, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, licentiousness, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a man" (Mark 7: 21-23).

Passions may predispose individuals to discord from God and mankind. St. Paul's warning applies to the "demon's" attacking our union with God and neighbor:

"Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Galatians 5:19-21).

Sin makes us to be out of communion or what might be called disunion with God and neighbor.

St. John Chrysostom states: "Did you commit sin? Enter the Church and repent for your sin; for here is the physician, not the judge; here one is not investigated, one receives remission of sins" (St. John Chrysostom

If the church is a "physician," then this break with God and neighbor needs healing. It is missing the mark of being centered on God and His Will.

Sin is considered, therefore, to be an illness or infirmity. With healing we are restored to a former condition.

We know this healing takes place in Holy Baptism, the Holy Mystery of Penance, Holy Unction and by worthy reception of the Holy Eucharist: The Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ.

St. John Chrysostom, in his Divine Liturgy reminds us, of all that God did for us: take on our flesh, the cross, the grave and the Resurrection. The end of which is to reconcile us to Him: "when we had fallen away didst not cease to do all things until thou hast brought us back to heaven." Need we be reminded that when Christ gave us the Eucharist, he said; "Take eat, this is my Body which is broken for you for the remission of sins," and "Drink ye all of this, this is my Blood of the New Testament, which is shed for you and for many, for the remission of sins".

Forgiveness is to be reconciled with Christ and all mankind. Jesus tells us in Matthew:

"But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire.

So, if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift." (Matthew 5: 22-26).

This involves an active behavioral effort toward reconciliation.

But what keeps us from repenting or seeking reconciliation with our brothers? St. John of the Ladder points out:

Pride makes us forget our sins ... the remembrance of them leads to humility."

Thus, we must heed the words of St. John: "He must not allow the memory of things that afflict him to be stamped on his intellect lest he inwardly sunders human nature by separating himself from other man although he is a man himself. When a man's will is in union with the principle of nature in this way, God and nature are naturally reconciled.

We must humble ourselves before God and seek forgiveness. Never let yourself think that I have no sin for "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."