

THE SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY

Text: St. Matthew 5:17-26

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

Whoever sets aside the Law of God, whoever sets aside even the *“least of these commandments”* is setting aside God—FATHER, SON, and HOLY SPIRIT. Whoever sets aside God will be set aside by Him, having become His enemy. For to set aside the Law of God is to set aside the Word of God, and to set aside the Word of God is to set aside God Himself, making Him one’s adversary. Such foolishness only results in being thrown into the fiery prison of Hell where one will stay until he has paid the last penny for even the least of his sins.

But how does one pay his debts when he has been cast into debtor’s prison and how can one reconcile with his brother when he has already been judged and cast into the fires of hell? Thus, for those who cast aside the Law of God and do not repent of their folly, for those who do not reconcile with their Adversary before they are handed over to the Judge and thrown into prison, there is no hope.

You may believe that our LORD’s warning this morning does not apply to you. After all, you love the LORD; you work hard to live a chaste and decent life. You are here nearly every LORD’s Day and Feast Day and you have done so all your life. You outwardly keep the commandments, not having murdered anyone, stolen from anyone, gossiped about anyone. You have kept your body and mind pure. Please believe me when I say I understand your piety when you express such things and I also agree that you should want to please the LORD. However, there is only one problem. You have deceived yourself.

The Holy Word of God tells us that all have sinned. St. Paul writes thus in his epistle to the Christian congregation in Rome: *“...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,”* and again, *“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned....”* It is in the same vein that the prophet Isaiah writes: *“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way....”*

You have not simply wandered off, straying away from the Good Shepherd; you have turned your back on God and set aside His Law when and where it has pleased you. You have cherry-picked the Law of God choosing for yourself those things you will do and those things you will not bother with, as though the Ten Commandments are written on an á la carte menu and you are at your favorite eating establishment.

Even now your inner self, that old adversary, your old Adam, is crying out that this is just not so, that Pastor has somehow gotten you all wrong, but if you will not believe me, at least believe the Word of our God who sent me, where He has caused it to be written: *“There is none*

righteous, no, not one; There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God. They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one. Their throat is an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit; The poison of asps is under their lips; Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; Destruction and misery are in their ways; And the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

Then, St. Paul goes on to say, *“Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”* To believe otherwise about yourself means that your righteousness is no better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees.

So as our LORD declares, the Law of God remains—every jot and every tittle. Even down to the smallest letter and period. Therefore, there is no way around it. The Law cannot be ignored. It must be fulfilled. You are obligated to keep it—*every part of it*—right on down to the smallest detail.

But take note... God’s Law does not state what one is required to do if one is to fulfill its demands, as though fulfilling the demands of the Law can save you or make your righteousness any greater than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. Instead, it states what one must *be* in order to stand in the presence of the Almighty God—holy. The Law of God declares what is meet, right, and salutary, what is good, what is holy, and what is holy is always a part of the being of God.

So, if you are a sinner, and believe me, you are, and if you cannot hope to fulfill God’s Law, and you cannot, if your righteousness does not exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, and it does not, what hope is there for you? What hope is there for any of us? *“Who then can be saved?”* Who then will save us from this body of death?

“With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.” There is nothing too hard or impossible for our God, even saving you and me, and there is no sin so overwhelming that our LORD has not overcome it.

For God has done what *your* doing of the Law could not do. Again St. Paul writes: *“For the Law of the Spirit of life in CHRIST JESUS has made me free from the Law of sin and death. For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the SPIRIT. For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the SPIRIT, the things of the SPIRIT.”*

Therefore, the one who believes in JESUS, the one who confesses with his mouth the LORD JESUS and believes in his heart that God has raised Him from the dead, will be saved, for he has been set free from the condemnation of the Law. This means that despite your sins, despite your inability to fulfill the demands of the Law, through faith in CHRIST and His promise

to fulfill the Law in your place you are made righteous, having been sanctified, that is, having been made holy by the Blood JESUS poured out upon the Cross to reconcile you to our God.

Therefore, your righteousness does exceed all righteousness, even that of the Scribes and the Pharisees. For yours is not righteousness of your own, it is the righteousness of CHRIST. In this way, every jot and tittle of the Law that nailed JESUS to the Cross has been satisfied.

No longer, then, is there a debt to be paid. Your Brother no longer has anything against you. The doors to your prison cell have been burst wide open, thrown aside, and you are free. JESUS' Blood made peace with the FATHER, satisfying and fulfilling every demand of the Law, and paid the price you could never hope to begin to pay, and the scales of justice are in balance. CHRIST JESUS is risen, and death is dead! There is no one left to accuse you. Therefore, it is finished, the Law is fulfilled, and Life lives.

Holiness, perfection, righteousness, these are the demands of the Law. Anything less than that will not do. The Law cannot be set aside, and half measures will not suffice. Your works and your merit, your *“doing”* of the Law just will not cut it. Your righteousness is nothing more than filthy rags. In this life you still fail, you still fall. Your spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak. You strive to overcome sin and please God, but you find yourself falling on your face time after time.

But you do not have to rely on your holiness, your perfection, your righteousness. You have received a righteousness that far exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees—that far exceeds any demands made by the Law. It is the righteousness of JESUS, the CHRIST, the SON of the living God.

Therefore, you no longer need to fear the Judge, for you have already been judged in the crucible of Good Friday and have been found innocent of all charges. The officer is satisfied, and the fires of hell cannot harm you. Every last penny has been paid and you have been redeemed by CHRIST JESUS, reconciled to His FATHER and ours, through faith spoken into you by the HOLY SPIRIT.

So, return to the altar and receive a gift vastly greater than any you can offer. Receive the forgiveness of sins in JESUS' very Body and Blood given and shed for you and hear JESUS speak the words that only His righteousness can bestow: *“I forgive you all your sins.”*

IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE ✠ SON, AND OF THE HOLY SPIRIT. AMEN.

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