

June 17, 2024

Daily Reflections



Center for Spiritual Development

ABOVE AND BEYOND

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Context

Today's Gospel is from Matthew's account of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, a sermon addressed not only to the disciples but to "the crowds." Chapter 5 opens with the Beatitudes and in most of the chapter, Jesus gives examples of how he did not "come to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them." (Mt 5:17) Prior to the selection for today's reflection, Jesus teaches about law, anger, adultery, divorce, and oaths. He introduces most of the sections by saying, "you have heard it said" (Mt 5:21) and then offers his perspective on the particular topic, "but I say to you..." (Mt 5:22) Today's selection is about retaliation.

Today's Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples:

"You have heard that it was said,

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.

But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil.

*When someone strikes you on your right cheek,
turn the other one to him as well.
If anyone wants to go to law with you over your tunic,
hand him your cloak as well.
Should anyone press you into service for one mile,
go with him for two miles.
Give to the one who asks of you,
and do not turn your back on one who wants to borrow."*

MATTHEW 5:38-42

Reflection

When he says, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," Jesus is quoting Leviticus 24:20; this Old Testament commandment was meant to moderate vengeance, to mandate a response that was in proportion to the crime. Jesus moves beyond that: offer no resistance, turn the other cheek, hand him your cloak as well, go with him for two miles, do not turn your back on the one who wants to borrow.

Jesus models this liberality—this going "above and beyond" in his self-emptying. According to Paul, Jesus

*though he was in the form of God,
did not regard equality with God something to be grasped.
Rather, he emptied himself,
taking the form of a slave,
coming in human likeness,
and found human in appearance,
he humbled himself,
becoming obedient to death,
even death on a cross.*

PHILIPPIANS 2:6-8

Jesus gave himself—he gave himself for us, he gave himself in all his words and actions, in bread and wine, in washing feet, in loving his disciples and us "to the end" (John 13:1). Jesus gave himself on the cross, forgiving those who were responsible for his death, saying, "Father, forgive them, they do not know what they do" (Luke 23: 34).



Person Taking Photo of Clouds
Photo by Quang Nguyen Vinh

For Pondering

- When have I “gone beyond” the minimum? The expected?
 - What was the “cost” to me?
 - What was the result of that “going beyond?”
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For Prayer

*Teach us, good Lord, to serve you as you deserve;
to give, and not to count the cost,
to fight, and not to heed the wounds,
to toil, and not to seek for rest,
to labor, and not to ask for reward,
except that of knowing that we are doing your will.*

ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA (1491-1556)

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