February 12, 2023 **From the Heart**

The gospel passage for this Sunday is Matthew 5:21-37, Jesus continues to address the multitude in a special way. Now, before we consider the issue of reconciliation, think about Jesus’ audience and what He’s been saying so far. Jesus is addressing the multitudes in general, and his disciples in particular. The message is primarily a message for believers, those who desire to follow Christ and his teachings.

In Matthew chapter 5, Jesus makes one thing clear; that if you’re going to follow Him, then He’s going to hold you to a higher standard. It’s not just wrong to murder someone, it’s wrong to hate him or her. It’s not just wrong to commit adultery, it is wrong to look at someone with lust in your heart. Listen, it is very simple that when we who are called the children of God ought to have higher standards than the one who does not believe in God. The people who follow God ought to be more concerned about who we are and what we do and whom we represent.

Our righteousness ought to exceed the righteousness of the non-Christians, and it is very true that there are people even today, who are not aware of Jesus Christ and his teachings out there, who are living better lives than many of God’s children. So, God is holding all of us to a higher standard. Would this mean that we feel following Jesus is a priority in our life? If it is, then tying up the loose ends will be a priority. How do we reconcile with someone whom we have offended? How do we make a right relationship where we are in the wrong? Well we do it by following the Lord’s instructions.

Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit’s leading, in verses 23-24 we read, “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”. Jesus says if a person has come to worship has come to the house of God with his or her gift, which under the Old Testament Law could have been any number of things.

Christ is dealing with the case where a brother or sister knows there is a problem in a relationship that cannot be covered or forgotten, and in those situations, loose ends need to be tied up and taken care of. Unresolved problems will not strengthen our relationship. God insists that every personal difficulty that arises to be settled. Whatever comes between Christians must be removed. And, as we will see in our text this Sunday, God has provided a method by which this can be accomplished

Most importantly I know because God’s Word assures me that the Holy Spirit is going to be busy with His work of teaching the truth and convicting men and women about the application of that truth in their lives. If we are doing something wrong in our Christian journey, it’s not just some things we come across. It’s the Holy Spirit trying to get your attention and trying to get us to do something about putting the truth into action. Christ says, if we are offering our gift at the altar and we realize that we have done something against our brother or sister, or we realize that we think we have done something, drop your gift and go get the matter straightened out.

David said in Psalm 51:16 -17 “For thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise”. You see, God is not nearly interested in our worship as He is in our personal holiness. We can’t come to Him in worship so long as we know that something needs to be made right in our life and we aren’t willing to do something about it. The Holy Spirit is going to bring it up; our responsibility is to respond in obedience to what Jesus says. Let us be mindful of what is at stake.

We have to be mature enough to act on what we know. God desires for us to enjoy the blessings of relationships that are characterized by unity and oneness. We can have that if we want it, and if the Spirit of God is in us, then He wants us to have what God wants. Unity will not always exist though. We will offend people, what we are to do when we offend someone else or when we know that someone else thinks we’ve offended him or her, even if they completely misunderstand what you’ve done or said. Just plain and simple here it is – grow up and be mature about the standards of Christian life what Jesus Christ is teaching about. If you would like to know more about what the standards of Christian values, please join us in our worship at 11:00 AM on Sunday.

Peace!

Rev. Dr. Christopher Ponnuraj

Minister