

LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



SIXTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Year A

15th February 2026

Gospel Text (on separate page)

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

This is a very long reading, which includes the very important introduction in vv. 17-20. Much scholarly ink has been spilt on the first four verses because they seem to put the Law, the Torah, firmly back at the centre of Christian existence. A great deal depends on the interpretation of “fulfil”. It looks as if the Matthean community has made significant adjustments to its observance of the Law and is open to the accusation of having abandoned key elements. Matthew stresses continuity with the first covenant while at the same time holding that fulfilling the Law might include transcending it. The Biblical prophecies have been fulfilled. Because of the Christ event, the ethical requirements have been transcended and deepened.

Thought for the day

It is clear already in the Old Testament that it is not our misdeeds which accuse us before God, but our hearts, fractured and divided as they are. Consistent with Israelite teaching, Jesus insists that we go deeper than our external deeds. The important question is what is going on in our hearts, the source of inner thoughts and motivations? The teaching is presented using various examples, presented sometimes with great simplicity, other times with irony and wit.

KIERAN O'MAHONY – www.tarsus.ie

The passage lends itself to moralizing reading: “Jesus is telling us to...” We must therefore make a special effort to start from our experience as always in *lectio divina*. The readings then become a celebration of moments of grace. Like the whole Sermon on the Mount, this passage describes a conversion experience ‘going deeper than the virtue of the scribes and Pharisees’. Our spiritual journey will affect our commitment to Jesus and the church but also our other commitments – to our families, neighbourhoods, social or political movements we may be involved in.

MICHEL DE VERTEUIL – LECTIO DIVINA

If we live our lives blaming God, our circumstances or others for our behaviour then we are opting out and the very challenging message of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount will make no sense to us. However, the truth that we have free will must also stand with the gift of God’s grace which we receive through the Holy Spirit. Left to ourselves we often fail to do what we know is right and that is why we must sincerely turn to God and seek his help in living the morality of the kingdom which is both a gift and a challenge.

SEAN GOAN – *Let the Reader Understand Year A*

POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. In this section of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus proposes standards that go beyond external ways of behaviour but challenge how we feel in our hearts. When have you found that living out of inner conviction is more life-giving than keeping up appearances?
2. Jesus applies his teaching to feelings of anger and sexual desire. He suggests that if we do not keep an eye on our feelings and thoughts we will not be able to control our actions. Perhaps you have experienced the truth of this. What has helped you to integrate your feelings so that you were able to live in right relationship with yourself and others?
3. For Jesus, persons with genuine authenticity do not need to swear an oath to be convincing. Their 'yes' or 'no' suffices. Recall people who had this kind of credibility for you. When have you found that your simple, direct and honest communication had a positive persuasive force?
4. In recent times public discourse sometimes has little respect for truth. What effect does this have on how you view politicians or other people in the public eye? What helps you to distinguish the truth from fake news?

JOHN BYRNE OSA – *Intercom*

Today, we have several teachings that begin with the formula “You have heard that it was said ... but I say to you...” Jesus is not contradicting the law but strengthening and intensifying it. Not only should we ‘not murder’ – as required by the law – but we are also to avoid anger and insults.

We may be familiar with the commandments and rules of a life of faith, but have we engraved them in our hearts? These teachings of Jesus illustrate what he means by righteousness. If love is at the heart of the law, we will do more than simply obey, but endeavour to act with compassion, respect and self-giving.

Emotions are a central part of our daily lives. Yet we can struggle to process ‘negative’ emotions or even learn to suppress them. Emotions are not good or bad, but our reactions to them can be positive or negative. What would it be like to experience emotions for what they are – as visitors, rather than our whole identity? Reflect on this in the light of today’s Gospel. Note Jesus’ guidance on the potential for reconciliation and inner growth.

TRÍONA DOHERTY & JANE MELLETT – **Go Deeper**

Gospel text

MATTHEW 5:17 [Jesus said:] “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfil. 18 For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. 19 Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, will be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

21 “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. 23 So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. 25 Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 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 for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 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 for your whole body to go into hell. 31 “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33 “Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ 34 But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, 35 or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

The Message translation

“Don’t suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God’s Law or the Prophets. I’m not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama. God’s Law is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God’s Law will be alive and working.

“Trivialize even the smallest item in God’s Law and you will only have trivialized yourself. But take it seriously, show the way for others, and you will find honor in the kingdom. Unless you do far better than the Pharisees in the matters of right living, you won’t know the first thing about entering the kingdom.

“You’re familiar with the command to the ancients, ‘Do not murder.’ I’m telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder. Carelessly call a brother ‘idiot!’ and you just might find yourself hauled into court. Thoughtlessly yell ‘stupid!’ at a sister and you are on the brink of hellfire. The simple moral fact is that words kill.

“This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God.

“Or say you’re out on the street and an old enemy accosts you. Don’t lose a minute. Make the first move; make things right with him. After all, if you leave the first move to him, knowing his track record, you’re likely to end up in court, maybe even jail. If that happens, you won’t get out without a stiff fine.

“You know the next commandment pretty well, too: ‘Don’t go to bed with another’s spouse.’ But don’t think you’ve preserved your virtue simply by staying out of bed. Your *heart* can be corrupted by lust even quicker than your *body*. Those leering looks you think nobody notices—they also corrupt.

“Let’s not pretend this is easier than it really is. If you want to live a morally pure life, here’s what you have to do: You have to blind your right eye the moment you catch it in a lustful leer. You have to choose to live one-eyed or else be dumped on a moral trash pile. And you have to chop off your right hand the moment you notice it raised threateningly. Better a bloody stump than your entire being discarded for good in the dump.

“Remember the Scripture that says, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him do it legally, giving her divorce papers and her legal rights’? Too many of you are using that as a cover for selfishness and whim, pretending to be righteous just because you are ‘legal.’ Please, no more pretending. If you divorce your wife, you’re responsible for making her an adulteress (unless she has already made herself that by sexual promiscuity). And if you marry such a divorced adulteress, you’re automatically an adulterer yourself. You can’t use legal cover to mask a moral failure.

“And don’t say anything you don’t mean. This counsel is embedded deep in our traditions. You only make things worse when you lay down a smoke screen of pious talk, saying, ‘I’ll pray for you,’ and never doing it, or saying, ‘God be with you,’ and not meaning it. You don’t make your words true by embellishing them with religious lace. In making your speech sound more religious, it becomes less true. Just say ‘yes’ and ‘no.’ When you manipulate words to get your own way, you go wrong.
