

Rev. Derek Fairman

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

In order for society to live in peace, there must be rules that the citizens must follow. Otherwise, there would be chaos and there would be no justice. The virtue of justice is about giving what is due to our neighbor. The virtue of religion is also about giving what we owe to God. However, there is not only the kind of justice that exists in society, the kind of justice between two people, but also a justice that exists within a person. We know that Scripture often speaks about the just person: it is someone who is upright. So the virtue of justice within a person is what makes it possible for a person to give others what is due to them.

In the Gospel, the Lord Jesus speaks about justice, but also points beyond the mere external sense of justice. We hear the Lord speak about what was written in the Old Testament, in the Law of Moses. The Old Law commanded us to not kill, to not commit adultery, and to fulfill all the oaths that we make. The Lord Jesus teaches us that if we want true justice, that is, if we want to be a just person and have the virtue of justice in our souls, we will need more. We will have to go beyond the mere observance of the commandments.

The Lord Jesus requires us to go beyond the Law. In the Old Law, someone could avoid murder but still harbor the kind of anger that leads to murder. Although avoiding murder would fulfill the letter of the Law, the Lord Jesus tells us that anyone who even holds his brother in contempt is liable to judgment. The Lord Jesus recognizes that merely observing the commandment does not get to the source of the problem. The Lord Jesus goes beyond the mere observance of laws to get to the source of the problem: in the human heart.

The Lord Jesus teaches us that it is not enough to avoid killing others. We could avoid actually killing others, but in our hearts we might still want to. In that case, we can still be very angry. Although we might avoid that crime, and thus we would avoid harming others and society in general, we would not be a just person if that anger is still there. What we need to do is to avoid the anger and violence in our hearts that would lead to murder in the first place. We need to recognize what it is within ourselves that would lead to violence. Then, we need to act against it and root it out.

The Lord Jesus teaches us that it is not enough to avoid the actual act of adultery. We could avoid committing adultery, but in our hearts we might still want to. Again, we could avoid harming others, but we would not be a just or pure person. In order to be an upright person, we

