

## The Sixth Sunday after Trinity

Hymns: 27, 409, 379, 50

The INTROIT

(Ps.28:8,9,1)

*P: The Lord is the Strength of His people;*

**C: He is the saving Strength of His anointed.**

*P: Save Thy people and bless Thine inheritance;*

**C: feed them also and lift them up forever.**

*P: Unto Thee will I cry, O Lord, my Rock; be not silent unto me;*

**C: lest, if Thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.**

The COLLECT

Lord of all power and might, who art the Author and Giver of all good things, graft in our hearts the love of Thy name, increase in us true religion, nourish us with all goodness, and of Thy great mercy keep us in the same; through Jesus Christ, Thy Son, our Lord, who liveth and reigneth with Thee and the Holy Ghost, ever one God, world without end.

The FIRST LESSON

Exodus 20:1-17

And God spake all these words, saying, I *am* the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness *of any thing* that *is* in heaven above, or that *is* in the earth beneath, or that *is* in the water under the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God *am* a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth *generation* of them that hate me; And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.

Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the LORD thy God: *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: For *in* six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that *is* thy neighbour's.

The GRADUAL

(Ps.90:13:1; 31:1,2)

*P: Return, O Lord, how long?*

**C: And let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants.**

*P: Lord, Thou hast been our Dwelling place in all generations.*

**C: Hallelujah! Hallelujah!**

*P: In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed:*

**C: deliver me in Thy righteousness; bow down Thine ear to me, deliver me speedily.  
Hallelujah!**

## The EPISTLE

**Romans 6:3-11**

Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also *in the likeness* of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

The SENTENCE for the Season

(Ps. 119:124)

*P: Hallelujah! O Lord, deal with Thy servant according unto Thy mercy and teach me Thy statutes. I am Thy servant, give me understanding:*

**C: that I may know Thy testimonies. Hallelujah!**

## The HOLY GOSPEL

**St. Matthew 5:20-26**

For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.

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## Matthew 5:20-26 — “The Righteousness of You-all”

### INTRODUCTION

I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF YOU-ALL

II. BEING PROVOKED WITHOUT CAUSE

III. IF, THEREFORE, YOU SHOULD BRING THE GIFT OF YOU UNTO THE ALTAR

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### Matthew 5:20-26 — “The Righteousness of You-all”

Grace, mercy, and peace to you all from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.  
Amen.

The Gospel reading appointed for the Sixth Sunday after Trinity, Matthew 5:20-26:

**For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.**

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

#### INTRODUCTION

Today’s text is a portion of what we call the sermon on the mount. St. Matthew records for us the words of the Lord Jesus to the multitudes regarding the blessedness of the communion of the righteousness by which we enter the kingdom of heaven. In this portion the Lord Jesus explains the absolute necessity for forgiveness. In the next chapter He teaches the same when He gives the Our Father, or what we call the Lord’s Prayer. The righteousness by which we enter into the kingdom of heaven and remain members of the kingdom of heaven is the righteousness that comes through forgiveness. This is the message of the Gospel. This is the rock upon which the Church is built.

#### I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF YOU-ALL

**For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.**

St. Matthew gives the fullest accounting of this episode in the ministry of the Lord Jesus. Matthew is the only one that the Holy Spirit moved to record this particular statement. In this matter it is worthy of note that Matthew was the publican, the wretched tax collector whom the Lord Jesus called to repentance. He was a man who had fallen away from the faith. He was not in any way seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness. For whatever reason, he had

turned away from the faith in which he had been catechized. Perhaps it was the hypocrisy of the scribes and Pharisees that had worked to kill his soul.

The scribes were meticulous about the transcription of the Holy Scriptures. They devoted their lives to the careful recording and transmission of the Scriptures. The Pharisees devoted their lives to teaching people how to live. They worked diligently to catechize the people and to press the commandments upon the people, seeking to take the commandments and to divide them into subsets of rules and regulations by which they sought to make the people good people. “Do this” and “Do not do that!” They had carried this even to the point of determining the number of steps that a person could take on the Sabbath. How to dress properly as a son of Israel and how much to give to the work of the Lord and under what circumstances divorce is permitted, these and a multitude of other stipulations were lifted from the Scriptures through the interpretation of the Pharisees.

Matthew, or Levi, became disillusioned and despaired of living according to such stipulations. No one could live by the full measure of these rules, especially since there was not 100% agreement even among the Pharisees regarding the strictness of the rules. But the Lord Jesus came to Levi and called to Him in love with the forgiveness that comes from above, saying, **“*akolouthei moi,*”** that is, **“Follow Me!”**

Levi, the name of the tribe through which God called his servants of the Word and through whom God called priests to serve the Word and the means of grace to the people, heard the sweet words of the Gospel through the lips of Immanuel. God came to Levi in the same way as He came to Adam thousands of years before, reaching out to a son of God who had chosen the way of everlasting lostness and hopelessness, calling him back into the way of faith and hope.

Yet Matthew does not record the event of being called by Jesus as an apostle until chapter nine. Nevertheless, Matthew gives the fullest accounting of the sermon on the mount, recording it in chapter five of his Gospel account. Apparently these words became embedded in his heart, mind, and soul.

**For I say unto you-all that if should not exceed the righteousness of you-all the greater portion of the scribes and Pharisees, by no means should you ever enter into the kingdom of heaven.**

The greater portion of the scribes and Pharisees knew nothing whatsoever of this righteousness. Their righteousness was not by grace through faith, but through their attempts to control their lives. Their righteousness was not the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven but of themselves. Their righteousness was not through faith in the promise of the Seed of the woman but through their manipulation of the words of the Scriptures. They lifted the words of Scriptures and selected portions that they thought that they could use to prove themselves worthy. They fashioned their lives and their worship after making certain sacrifices and offerings of prayers and such. Then they pressed these burdens upon the people as well, teaching them to be good people according to these standards.

But the Lord Jesus came and taught not with such drivel, but with the authority that is His as the very Son of God. He spoke not merely of works of righteousness, but as the Word by which righteousness is given. He spoke not of the requirement of sacrifices, but as the sacrifice that is required. He spoke not of works of righteousness that sinners must do, but as the One who works righteousness for sinners. He spoke not of striving to be good people, but as the One who is good in whom people receive all good things.

## II. BEING PROVOKED WITHOUT CAUSE

Immediately upon declaring the righteousness of the greater portion of the scribes and Pharisees to fall short of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus explains why this is so.

**Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.**

Behold the contrast between works and faith. Here the Lord Jesus teaches us that faith is not a work that we do, but rather, faith produces the works that we do. We hear the commandment “**Thou shalt not kill**” and we imagine that as long as we do not pull out a gun and shoot the inconsiderate morons who nearly run us off the road that we have kept the commandment. Yet the Lord Jesus warns us that the action is merely the evidence of what we have already worked in our heart and mind. Murder does not just happen. It is the result of evil intentions or neglect. On the one hand we deliberately plot evil in our heart and mind. On the other hand we choose to allow evil through not acting on another’s behalf and by not taking care regarding what we think, say, and do. If we neglect to keep our vehicle in safe driving condition so that the brakes fail, the injury or death of our neighbor is our doing. If we neglect to prune the storm damage from our trees so that a large bough falls through the neighbor’s roof while he watches TV, the injury or death of our neighbor is our doing.

However, the Lord Jesus warns us that murder is even more of a factor in our lives than this. He says that anger falls under the same judgment as murder. He says, “**Everyone being provoked toward the brother of him without cause liable is to the judgment!**”

The word for provoked is a present passive participle. It is equivalent to our saying, “**You are making me angry.**” We treat our anger as though someone else forced it upon us. Thus we ignore the real cause of our anger. We make the other person the cause of our anger rather than taking our own sin into account.

What cause do we have for being angry? What possible cause do we sinners have for being angry with others? When does it fit to say that we have cause for being angry?

The only time that we have cause for being angry is when God commands it. When does God command us to be angry and to act upon that anger? Parents and those appointed to positions of authority are obligated to act with anger regarding wrongdoing. Pastors are ordained to act with anger against false doctrine and practice by those who infiltrate the congregation. But even in these special roles one must be extremely careful not to act with one’s own judgment. For we have no business judging from our own sinful hearts. We have no cause for being angry with a fellow sinner, and especially with a brother in the Lord. No. To this the Lord Jesus says that with the measure that we administer we shall likewise be judged.

How can we know? What measure should be used to determine whether anger is with proper cause? The Lord Jesus answers this in the next statements.

### III. IF, THEREFORE, YOU SHOULD BRING THE GIFT OF YOU UNTO THE ALTAR

**Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.**

Jesus explains this even further in chapter seven. But notice the starting point of this preaching from our Lord. With whom are we to begin our judgment and anger? And what brings this to our awareness? It begins with our own sin. It begins with coming to the Lord with our approaching His altar with a thank offering for His merciful forgiveness. As we approach, reflecting upon the grace of our God in Christ, as we bring ourselves to His altar, we bring to Him that which He comes to receive from us, our sins. He is the Lamb who takes the sin of the world. And as we kneel before His altar to receive His forgiveness, we will surely become aware of what we owe our brother in the Lord. If we have caused a brother to be angry with us, the Holy Spirit will not allow us to ignore this but will bring it to our remembrance. Then we will go to our brother to ask forgiveness so that both we and he may be free of this burden.

This is why Jesus speaks of going to our adversary or accuser quickly. For if our brother is angry, how can he come to God with a clean conscience? And if we have done wrong to a brother, how can our conscience be set on God's forgiveness? When we go to our angry brother, we go both to ask and to grant forgiveness. For the angry brother sins also. We both are in danger of judgment. We both need to hear the warning of our Lord who says regarding the prayer He taught us: **"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."** (Matthew 6:14-15)

Before we can come to our offended brother to ask forgiveness, we must first be humbled so as to forgive him. How often are we hindered in such things by our unwillingness to forgive our brother for being angry at us for what we did wrong? How can we even begin to consider our own sin against our brother while we are angry at him for his anger? And how can we possibly come to God and trust His forgiveness while we ourselves are angry and unwilling to be reconciled to our brother? How can we truly trust God to receive us and to be reconciled to us if our brother, for whom God also died and whom God also desires to receive in forgiveness, is kept at a distance by our refusal or neglect?

As the last act of His preparation to redeem us, what did the Lord Jesus command? He said to love one another as He has loved us, and He commanded that we do something often. He commanded that we partake of the unity of His body and of the forgiveness of His blood. Notice that He instituted this in such a way as to make it impossible to do without our brothers in the Lord. No one can partake of the Holy Communion by himself. No one can come and partake of the Eucharist as an individual. The Lord's Supper can only be received alongside of our brethren. The forgiveness of the Lord's blood and the unity of His body can only be received by those who are gathered into the oneness of His body together. This means that forgiveness and reconciliation will always be the very nature and foundation of the Church. This is by God's design. This is for our everlasting good.

## CONCLUSION

If we abide in the Holy Communion of God's grace in Christ Jesus, if we truly live in and by God's forgiveness, what cause do we have for anger? Will anger rule our hearts and minds or will the peace of God that surpasses all understanding rule our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus? When we gather, will we concern ourselves with what we think that we want, or will we seek that which the Lord declares that we need? As we come to the altar, will we be thinking as individuals or as the body of Christ? As we confess our sins, will we be concerned only regarding our own peace or will we earnestly desire God's peace for our brothers and sisters as well? This is what the Lord Jesus is teaching us. This is how His love works in His Church. This is what His forgiveness accomplishes. This is not what we do but what He provides to all who know His forgiveness and love. This is the reason that we gather. This is what produces our songs of praise and our hymns and our prayers and our thanksgivings. This is what joins us in perfect unity in His peace. This is the righteousness that exceeds all righteousness of men. This is the righteousness that God declares to be ours for Christ's sake. In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

The peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus forever. Amen.