



THE MISSION OF SAINT MARY MAGDALENE

Father Alan's Blog

For the Eighteenth Sunday After Trinity - October 3, 2021

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment; and the second is like it, namely this, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

St. Mark 12:30-31 (NIV)

At breakfast one morning, a mother was preparing pancakes for her two young sons Kevin, aged 5, and Ryan, aged 3, when, predictably, the boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw a golden opportunity for a moral lesson and said:

"If Jesus were sitting here, He would say 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.'"

Whereupon Kevin turned to his younger brother and said:

"Ryan, you be Jesus."



To be sure, when it comes to the "Summary of the Law" (as found in St. Mark 12:30-31 above), we have no trouble in seeing what the words

mean – as they are perfectly simple, straightforward, words – and (undoubtedly) they strike us as having a distinct and obvious authority. So, clearly, that does not present a problem for us. Rather, the problem is, these 57 words **demand a transformation of our very lives in every aspect:**

- ☞ **a transformation of our attitudes and our standards;**
- ☞ **a transformation of our hopes and our expectations; and**
- ☞ **a transformation of the way we choose to live our lives.**

So, let's make no mistake about it...

Those simple, familiar, timeless, words – first written down by Moses as the “Shema” (in Deuteronomy 6:4-5) nearly 3,500 years ago and reaffirmed by Jesus nearly 2,000 years ago – **demand nothing less than the practical and absolute conversion of our entire lives.**

Moreover, that conversion (as today's Collect reminds us) has two sides to it:

- ✎ *“Lord, we beseech Thee, grant Thy people grace to withstand the temptations of the world, the flesh, and the devil,”*
- ✎ *“And with pure hearts and minds to follow Thee the only God; through Jesus Christ our Lord.”*

Our Christian conversion, then, has two distinct aspects:

- ☝ **A turning away from temptations; and**
- ☝ **A turning towards God...**

Therefore, first, there is a renunciation – a turning of our backs upon “the world, the flesh, and the devil”, for only in so doing will we be able, with pure hearts and minds, to follow God.

As we heard during the Gospel Lesson a few weeks ago on the

Fifteenth Sunday After Trinity, Jesus Himself said (St. Matthew 6:24):

"No one can serve two masters."

What this really boils down to is:

- ☞ **As long as we insist on being followers of the *"world"* (that is to say, as long as we look to the world around us as both the standard and the measure of our lives), we cannot be followers of God; and**
- ☞ **As long as we insist on being followers of the *"flesh"* (that is to say, as long as we measure our lives according to what is immediately pleasant and agreeable to us), we cannot be followers of God; and**
- ☞ **As long as we insist on being followers of the *"devil"* (that is to say, as long as we put ourselves in place of God as the judges of good and of evil), we cannot be followers of God.**

So, mark this down:

There are choices here, practical choices – which must be made by each and every one of us, every day, and in every circumstance.

- † **They are the same choices made for us at our Baptism.**
- † **So, too, they are the same choices we ourselves affirmed at our Confirmation.**
- † **And only in so far as we are prepared to live those choices day by day, in every aspect of our lives, is the Word of God really practical or *"practice-able"* for us.**

Hence, in our Collect today we pray that God Himself - Whose law it is in the first place – will give us grace through His risen Son Jesus Christ to not only withstand temptation, but, also, to follow Him with pure unmixed hearts and minds – for only by the grace of God can we possibly do it.

To this end, in today's Epistle Lesson from 1 Corinthians 1:4-8, St. Paul gives us a glimpse of the practical fulfilment of Christian life and, also, gives thanks for God's grace which has enabled Christian converts in ancient Corinth (and in today's society as well) to live in accordance with the Word of God in and through Jesus Christ when he writes:

"I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in everything ye are enriched by Him, in all utterance and in all knowledge; even as the witness of Christ was confirmed in you; so that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Likewise, St. Paul (in 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13) offers these words of encouragement and promise:

"May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else just as ours does for you. May he strengthen your hearts so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus comes with all his holy ones."

Accordingly, on the Day of our Lord Jesus Christ...

When all is said and done...

And we find ourselves standing before the judgement seat in the presence of all His holy ones...

Could these – will these – same timeless words from St. Paul:

"...so that you will be blameless and holy in the presence of our God and Father..."

Be said of each one of us?

Even when – especially when – pancakes were at stake?



Dearest Reader in Christ:

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