

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jul 18th 2014

Jesus makes it clear that he himself is more important than the Temple and even the Law and that he has the power to sweep away all the legalistic accretions that creep into our human behavior and into the laws that we believe that God is imposing on us --- when such additions are actually only human (cf. Matthew 15:6; Mark 7:8; Colossians 2:8).

Just before this passage Jesus calls us: “Come to me all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest.” If we do go to him as he asks he can remove those burdens from us --- but we must truly put ourselves in his hands, not hang back and try to hold on to some things while asking him to change our lives. After all, would we be happy with the results if we hired an interior decorator to turn our living space around and then insisted that there were many old things we would not let him or her touch? We cannot, then, hold back from Christ and then blame him for not giving us that promised rest.

Jesus, and following Jesus, will involve a realigning of our values and principles and a broadening of the rules or the code we live by. This latter may require our going off the accepted and safe rails to follow God in truth and in the Spirit, but for two reasons this new freedom in Christ is far more demanding than merely living such basics as the ten commandments. For one thing, following only Jesus requires that we make sure that it is truly God that we are following and not our own corrupted wills, and for another it demands that we be personally responsible for obeying God, not letting ourselves hide behind a supposedly divine law (cf. Mark 7:9-13).

This way of living, this spirituality, is for the more courageous, the enterprising, those willing to be self-responsible (but not independent of God!). These people have the courage to be wrong sometimes but are robust and trusting enough in God's love to make some mistakes... This is not simply relieving ourselves of the burden of Law only to fall into a self-scrutiny that is even worse, it is falling in love with God and finding life in a responsible, mature, active freedom.

Are these the adult people whom we wish to be?

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