

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Jun 19th 2015

Today's Gospel-reading is a continuation of the Sermon on the Hill. We have heard the scriptural texts which are for the Mass of Ash Wednesday concerning the triple actions of Lent. They speak of almsgiving, fasting and praying in our 'inner room'.

After Jesus' teaching about the basic way to address God, and about what to ask, He has some very challenging images about our hearts and our eyes in today's Reading. Basically, He says your eye will be watching for what will intensify the heart's treasure. What you want the most, you will look for with the greatest watchfulness.

The "Kingdom" of which Jesus speaks is contrasted with the Roman kingdom based on wealth, power and domination. His listeners do not have any chance to enter that kingdom except through their dreams, desires and joining up. Jesus will remind them that that kingdom is temporary, though it looks as if it will last for eternity. Jesus urges a treasure which is eternal, enduring and assured. He is saying, "Keep your heart on your eyes." Your eye can get diseased, becoming dark to the soul, by lusting after what attracts the body to the earth. The heart will never really be satisfied by that which the bodily eye finds fulfilling.

If the eye replaces the heart, it will be blinded by what it sees, by what attracts it. The eye-candy is for the immediate grasping, but like cotton candy, Jesus says, there's not much to it. The heart longs for that which lasts from now to forever. This "kingdom" is referred to in the prayer Jesus taught His listeners in the verses preceding our reading for today. We all have desires to be of the Roman kingdom as well as desires for a more long-lasting one. Again, as is His want, Jesus is putting His followers and listeners into a tension.

The 'black-eye' or the 'hungry eye' sees what it wants to see and gives the information that what it sees is what it really is. It sees shape, color and sends that information to the hungry ego which is always singing the old song with Elvis, "It's now or never." The ego is never satisfied and so says to the eye-of-darkness, "Keep looking, and keep your eye out for some thing or person which will be 'all I'll ever need'."

The Light, Who is Jesus, speaks to the inner-eye, the heart. The "eye-heart" holds fast to what any one thing or person really is and sees them for what they are; gifts to be revered now for how they lead to the Holy-Then. The heart loves what a thing and a person is and also loves what things and person cannot be. They cannot be aids to establish their own little personal kingdoms, but rather some kind of "daily bread" to nourish the heart for the establishment of the Kingdom of Light. So Jesus puts it this way. The eyes-of-light are "sacramental-eyes." The eyes-of-darkness are "sacrilegious-eyes." Matthew's Gospel is set up for the on-going conversion of the hearts of the disciples. We long to be disciples, and we will be, as long as we keep our eyes on our hearts.

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