

TRINITY NEWS

Pentecost 20 They Do Not Practice What They Teach

The things that people wish that can't be, and things that can be that people don't see. The desperate need to be recognized, and the eventual recognition that much of it was an “urn full of ashes” rather than a pot of gold. “The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; do whatever they teach and follow it; but do not do as they do, they do not practice what they teach.” The scribes and Pharisees knew the teaching of Moses when he sat and talked to Moses’ people. He talked about holy instruction (Torah) and 10 Commandments, and the wisdom of God, and the end-time prophet of Israel who would be awesome in stature and be like him. When they also talked about these things they were speaking luminous words which would always carry weight. But Jesus said that they did not practice what they taught. Christian teachers and preachers and priests and prophets sit in the seat of Jesus, as he once sat on a hill in Galilee giving a number of messages that we call the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus talked about the reign of God on earth, the heart of God in heaven, loving God and loving neighbor. We have one instructor, the Messiah, the Christ.

Whatever we wear, whatever title we have, whatever honours we are accorded, we are only servants of our heavenly father. The father of a family is properly called a father; the priest is called the father of the community. God is called the Father of everyone. No one on this earth can be called the Father in heaven. And Abba is distinctive for God when applied to God. This surely what Jesus indicates here. Paul says that “You have 10,000 instructors in Christ, but you do not have many fathers” (I Corinthians 4:15). The father leads not by authority but by example. God the Father sent his beloved Son to show us what sacrificial love is really like. Love is always a risk. The Son can walk away free, not bound. Instead, he holds out his hands. He has heard the truth within, and what is happening matches the prediction of the inner whispers, so gentle and compelling, with the harsh voices of those who seize him and their violent actions. And so he is led away. He looks back once: at Peter. Peter breaks down. The depth of sadness is too great.

Virgilio S. Almario in Seven Mountains of the Imagination writes of the legendary jungle creature that *tikbalang*: “Hopelessly naïve, often he is lonely and miserable like a child. All he wants to do is play. You might even have fun playing with him. Trouble is, he won't just let you be. Your time will be spent playing hide and seek with him, and you will run out of ideas of how to hide so he won't find you easily.” Some things start out being fun, and then they can be exhausting. This discourse of Jesus with the Pharisees and the scribes must have left him exhausted. It was deadly serious, but it was like playing endless hide and seek in which the prize was never found.

What do we learn from the Teacher of teachers, the Messiah, in this passage?

- i. Achievement is wonderful but it is not the master of our destiny.
- ii. Honours do not define us, they define those who bestow them. What are their motives? Good or manipulative? However, truly rejoicing in the achievements of others, without agendas, nurtures the soul. It is a sure sign of a generous spirit.
- iii. The love of applause from others massages the ego and erodes the loving capacity of the soul.
- iv. Humility is not playing down significant achievements. Humility is having it all and giving the praise to God. Those who humble themselves in this way will be exalted. Exalting oneself before God and others is a fast-track to self-destruction.

The Teacher is speaking. He says a hard thing. We must practice what we teach. A child knows that about us. But for adult disciples and younger ones, it is never easy. Remember, the Master is standing there, not with a scowl, but with a gentle smile of encouragement.

Bishop Arthur Jones

THIS WEEK:

Oct. 31 & Nov. 1, Monday & Tuesday. Non-working holiday.
[office closed]

Nov. 2, Wednesday. **ALL SOUL'S DAY Eucharist, 7pm.**

NEXT WEEK'S READINGS:

- Amos 5:7,10-15
- Psalm 70
- 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18
- Matthew 25:1-13

TO PLAN:

Nov. 13, Remembrance Sunday,
9:30am service.

Nov. 20, Thanksgiving Ecumenical
Service, 7:30pm.