

Chapter 20

What Jesus Taught

“Teacher, do you not care if we perish?...he awoke and rebuked the wind,...and the wind ceased, and there was a great calm...

And they were filled with awe,...‘Who then is this, that even wind and sea obey him?’”

Mark 4: 38-41



Chapter 20

What Jesus Taught



Read

Matthew

5:1 - 7:29

Luke

10:25 - 37

John

6:25 - 71

When Jesus taught, people had strong reactions. Some believed him and gave up everything they had to follow him. Others picked up stones and tried to kill him. But no one could ignore what Jesus was saying. Temple guards sent out to arrest him came back without him, shaking their heads. “No man ever spoke like this man!”¹

Sometimes what Jesus said was so difficult to accept that even many of his followers gave up on him. But the ones who stayed recognized that Jesus was more than just a provocative teacher. He had the truth. “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.”²

Teaching With Authority



Jesus seemed to be a rabbi—a Jewish teacher well educated in the Scriptures. Yet he taught “with authority,” as everyone who heard him remarked.

An ordinary rabbi interpreted Scripture by quoting well-known teachers of the past, then offering his own suggested interpretation. But Jesus simply declared the truth. When he quoted Scripture, he gave an interpretation that didn’t admit of debate. To the poor in spirit, Jesus seemed to be a fountain of comforting truth. To the traditional teachers and intellectuals, he seemed to be an arrogant impostor. But everyone agreed: “No man ever spoke like this man!”³

Parables

Jesus often used “parables” to teach important ideas. A parable is a story or example based on a life experience that illustrates a principle. Most of Jesus’ parables were simple stories or comparisons. But some of them are hard to understand, because the principles they illustrate are hard to understand. And often the parables that seem to be simplest reveal deeper meanings and surprising associations when we look at them carefully.

Here is an example of one of Jesus’ simplest parables:

Every one then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house upon a rock; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And every one who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house upon the sand; and the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell; and great was the fall of it.

(Mt 7: 24-27)

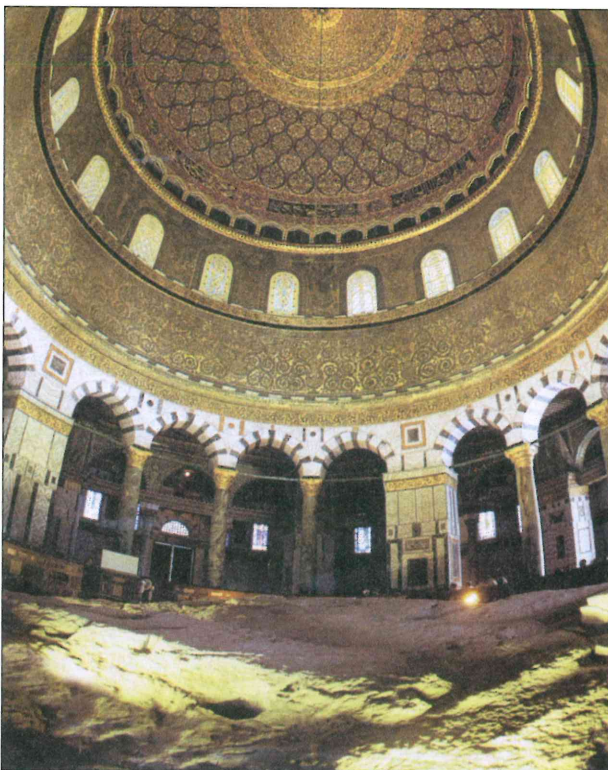
The first layer of meaning is easy to understand. If you do what Jesus says, you will be secure; otherwise, you will be washed away.

But even this short parable reveals more layers of meaning when we look deeper into it. For example, the words “wise man” would instantly remind Jesus’ first audience of King Solomon, the man to whom all wisdom was attributed. And did Solomon build a house? Yes, he did: he built the Lord’s house—that is, the Temple in Jerusalem. And the Lord’s house was built on a famous rock, the Foundation Stone. (Today, a beautiful mosque called the Dome of the Rock, built on that same Foundation Stone, stands on the site of the Temple.) The rock was enormous: local legend had it that the great rock was the gate of the underworld itself—the place of the dead, which the Greeks called “Hades”—sealed off by God’s holy Temple.

So Solomon, the wise man, built the Lord’s House upon a rock. Later in the same Gospel, we come across Peter’s Great Confession: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”⁴ Jesus’ response should remind us of the parable of the wise builder:

And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock [*petra* in Greek] I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.” (Mt 16: 17-18)⁵

When we remember the parable of the wise builder, we understand why Jesus is building his church on a “rock”—that is, on Peter. And when we know that the people who first heard that parable would have thought right away of Solomon’s Temple, built on the Foundation Stone, we understand more of what Jesus is telling us. Solomon, the son of David and the Anointed One, built the Temple



Above: The Sacred Rock of Abraham is the centerpiece of the mosque known as the Dome of the Rock.

on a rock and sealed off the gates of Hades. Jesus, the last Son of David and the perfect Anointed One, will build his church on a rock and seal off the gates of Hades. The Church, the whole community of believers, will replace Solomon's Temple.

Now we see how much we can learn from one little parable—one that takes up only four verses in Matthew.

Jesus' invitation to enter his kingdom comes in the form of *parables*, a characteristic feature of his teaching (cf. Mk 4: 33-34). Through his parables he invites people to the feast of the kingdom, but he also asks for a radical choice: to gain the kingdom, one must give everything (cf. Mt 13: 44-45; 22: 1-14). Words are not enough, deeds are required (cf. Mt 21: 28-32). The parables are like mirrors for man: will he be hard soil or good earth for the word? (cf. Mt 13: 3-9). What use has he made of the talents he has received? (cf. Mt 25: 14-30). Jesus and the presence of the kingdom in this world are secretly at the heart of the parables. One must enter the kingdom, that is, become a disciple of Christ, in order to "know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 13: 11). For those who stay "outside," everything remains enigmatic (Mk 4: 11; cf. Mt 13: 10-15). (CCC 546)

The Kingdom Of God Is At Hand

The first thing we hear from Jesus in Mark's Gospel is this: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel."⁶

That was the theme of everything Jesus taught. The rest of his teachings told us what the Kingdom of God was like, and how to live in it.

To what is the Kingdom of God comparable? In the Kingdom, we obey the spirit of the law, not merely the letter. We act out of love, not obligation. The last shall be first, and the first shall be last. We can never deserve the marvelous reward God has in store for us, but he gives it to us because of his own love for us. The way to the Kingdom is through Jesus Christ. And it is our duty to show everyone the way.

These are easy teachings to hear, but very difficult to understand. Jesus used parables, striking paradoxes, and the example of his own life to help us see what the Kingdom really means.



The Parable of the Blind Leading the Blind - Mt 15: 14

"And if a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."



Plucking Grain on the Sabbath

“On a sabbath, while he was going through the grainfields, his disciples plucked and ate some ears of grain,... But some Pharisees said, ‘Why are you doing what is not lawful to do on the sabbath?’... And he said to them, ‘The Son of man is lord of the sabbath.’” (Lk 6: 1-5)

Born From Above

While Jesus was still in Jerusalem, a certain prominent Pharisee named Nicodemus came to him in secret at night. Most of the Pharisees already hated Jesus, but Nicodemus just couldn't dismiss Jesus the way the other Pharisees had done.

“Rabbi,” he said, “we know that you are a teacher from God, for no one can do these signs that you do, unless God were with him.”

“Rabbi” was the way a student would address a teacher. Nicodemus was talking to Jesus as if he were prepared to be one of Jesus' disciples.

Jesus answered him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (Jn 3: 3)

The word translated “anew” can mean either “again” or “from above.” Nicodemus takes it the first way, and that creates a strange image in his head.

Nicodemus said to him, “How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” (Jn 3: 4-5)

In baptism, we are born “from above” with water and the Holy Spirit. Nicodemus had difficulty understanding what Jesus said at first, but Jesus' words stuck with him. He later would defend Jesus when the rest of the Jerusalem establishment was trying to get rid of him, and finally he had the courage to stand up and identify himself as a disciple of Jesus after Jesus had been executed (see the next chapter of this book).

The Letter Of The Law Is Not Enough

Over and over, Jesus repeats the message of the Old Testament prophets: God desires mercy, not sacrifice. (See Hos 6: 6)

Obeying the letter of the Law isn't enough. The Law was meant to teach us holiness, but the Law of Moses made concessions to our hardness of heart. For example, Moses allowed divorce. But they were concessions, not recommendations.

To be holy, we must obey the spirit of the Law, not the letter. This is what it means that Jesus "fulfills the Law."

From the Sermon on the Mount onwards, Jesus insists on conversion of heart: reconciliation with one's brother before presenting an offering on the altar, love of enemies, and prayer for persecutors, prayer to the Father in secret, not heaping up empty phrases, prayerful forgiveness from the depths of the heart, purity of heart, and seeking the Kingdom before all else (cf. Mt 5: 23-24, 44-45; 6: 7, 14-15, 21, 25, 33). This filial conversion is entirely directed to the Father. (CCC 2608)

Once a lawyer—someone who knew all about the traditional Old Testament Law and all the developments of it—stood up to ask Jesus, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

Jesus knew he was being tested, but he turned the test around and asked the lawyer what he thought. Surprisingly, the lawyer came up with the right answer: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."

Jesus says elsewhere that those two statements sum up the whole Old Testament; see Mark 12: 28-34. "You have answered right," he said; "do this, and you will live."

But the lawyer had one more question: "And who is my neighbor?" He wanted a definitive answer, one that would tell him exactly which of the people around him he had to love and which he was allowed to ignore. He wanted to obey the law to the letter and no more.



In reply, Jesus told a story that every Christian remembers, one that showed perfectly the difference between the letter and the spirit of the Law.

A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was; and when he saw him, he had compassion, and went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; then he set him on his own beast and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back." Which of these three, do you think, proved neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers? (Lk 10: 30-36)



Rabbis sat on the "Seat of Moses" to teach. This Seat of Moses is from the fourth century synagogue in Chorazin, Galilee. Chorazin is "upbraided" by Jesus in Mt 11: 21. "Woe to you, Chorazin!"

The priest and the Levite were people who knew the Law of Moses backwards and forwards. The man by the side of the road looked dead, and touching a dead body would make a Jew ritually impure. That would be dreadfully inconvenient for someone who was out on a business trip. So they walked around the body.

But the Samaritan understood more than the letter of the law. He showed mercy, not mere compliance with the rules. As the prophet Micah had said:

Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?...
He has showed you, O man, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God?
(Mi 6: 7-8)

The lawyer gave the obvious answer to Jesus' question of which was the neighbor:

He said, "The one who showed mercy on him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise." (Lk 10: 37)



Parable of the Workers at the Eleventh Hour - Mt 20: 1-16

"So the last will be first, and the first last." (v. 16)

Love Your Enemies

For most of us, the hardest teaching of Jesus to practice is one of the simplest: Love your enemies.

But I say to you that hear, Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. To him who strikes you on the cheek, offer the other cheek also; and from him who takes away your cloak do not withhold your coat as well....

If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.... But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind to the ungrateful and the selfish. Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful. (Lk 6: 27-29, 32-33, 35-36)

There is no limit to the number of times Christians should show mercy. Peter thought he was being remarkably generous when he asked Jesus, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" But Jesus answered, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven."⁷ In other words, an unlimited number. Jesus also turns the revenge ethic of Lamech on its head:

**"...I have slain a man for wounding me,
a young man for striking me.
If Cain is avenged sevenfold,
truly Lamech seventy-seven-fold." (Gn 4: 24)**

In the Septuagint, "seventy-seven-fold" is translated "seventy times seven." Forgiveness as unlimited as the evil of the world is unlimited: that is what Jesus demands of us.

Deliberate *hatred* is contrary to charity. Hatred of the neighbor is a sin when one deliberately wishes him evil. Hatred of the neighbor is a grave sin when one deliberately desires him grave harm. "But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven" (Mt 5: 44-45). (CCC 2303)

God's Grace Is Undeserved

Be merciful, even as your father is merciful." That was how Jesus told us to treat even our enemies. God is more merciful to us than we could ever deserve.

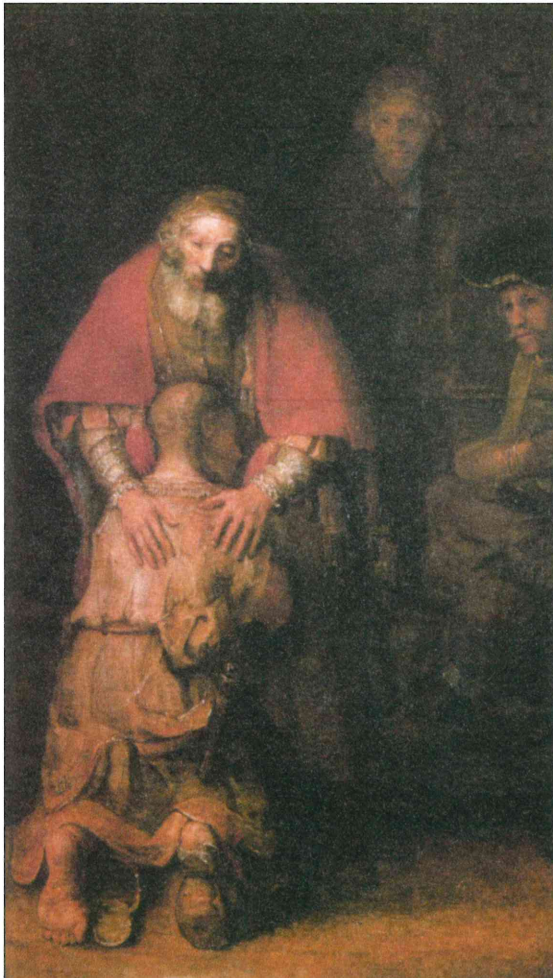
Jesus told several parables to illustrate how unlimited and undeserved God's mercy is. These are simple stories, but even today many people have trouble accepting them.

For example, in the story of the Prodigal Son, one of a rich man's two sons takes his father's money, runs away from home, and spends it all in wild living. When he begins to starve he comes to his senses, and he decides to go back and offer himself as a servant to his father, so he would at least have something to eat.

Now, the young man deserved nothing good from his father. He had wasted all his money, and now he was paying the price.

But the father said to his servants, "Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry; for this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." And they began to make merry. (Lk 15: 22-24)

Meanwhile the other brother had stayed with his father and faithfully served him the whole time. He certainly deserved good treatment. Why was his father giving all this attention to the worthless son who had wasted all his money?



"Behold, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command; yet you never gave me a kid, that I might make merry with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your living with harlots, you killed for him the fatted calf!" (Lk 15: 29-30)

It was a normal human response. And yet nothing had been taken away from the good brother. He had always enjoyed the good things of his father's house. "Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours," his father told him.

We must overcome that normal human desire for strict justice in order to understand God's grace and his mercy. And we also need to learn that we are every bit as undeserving of grace and mercy as anyone else. God gives us his grace not because we deserve it, but because he loves us the way a father loves his children, even when those children don't do the right things.

The New Law is the grace of the Holy Spirit received by faith in Christ, operating through charity. It finds expression above all in the Lord's Sermon on the Mount and uses the sacraments to communicate grace to us. (CCC 1983)

Parable of the Prodigal Son - Lk 15: 11-32

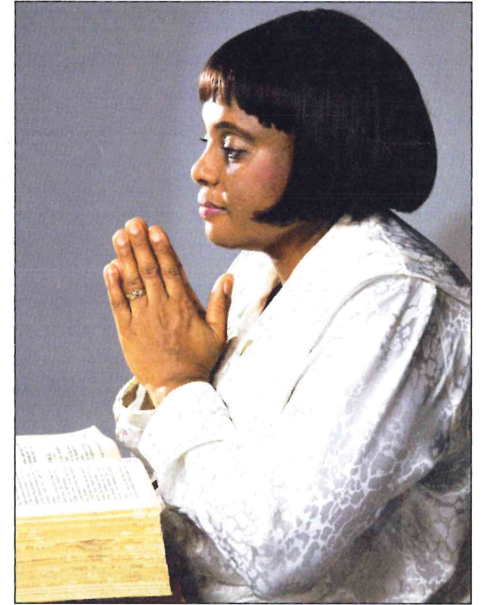
Pray Without Ceasing

Because our Father in heaven is merciful without limit, our prayers really are heard and answered. Jesus himself gave us a model for our prayers.

Our father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
And forgive us our trespasses,
As we also have forgiven those who trespass against us;
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
(Mt 6: 9-13)

First we give glory to God and ask that his will be carried out in all circumstances. Then we ask for what we need. The prayer is simple and humble. We pray not to be seen praying, but to ask for God's mercy.

Our lives should be filled with prayer. Even an ordinary person finds it easier to give in when a friend or neighbor keeps asking for something over and over. How can we doubt, then, that God will give us what we need?



Jesus Is The Bread Of Life

Jesus' most important teaching was the one that was hardest to understand. He told a crowd in a synagogue in Capernaum,

I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst. (Jn 6: 35)

Was Jesus speaking in metaphors? It was hard for the crowds to understand what Jesus meant. But he repeated himself, becoming more and more specific.

I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh. (Jn 6: 51)

Now the crowds were amazed, and probably disgusted. Jesus expected them to eat him? They weren't cannibals! But Jesus persisted.

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father; so he who eats me will live because of me. This is the bread which came down from heaven, not such as the fathers ate and died; he who eats this bread will live forever. (Jn 6: 53-58)

It was shocking enough to cost him many of his disciples. It was even more shocking because the word we translate "eats" was an especially vivid one. There could be no mistake about what Jesus meant; it was like saying "he who munches on my body."

When Jesus saw that many of his followers had left him, he turned to the Twelve.

Jesus said to the Twelve, "Will you also go away?" Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God." (Jn 6: 67-69)

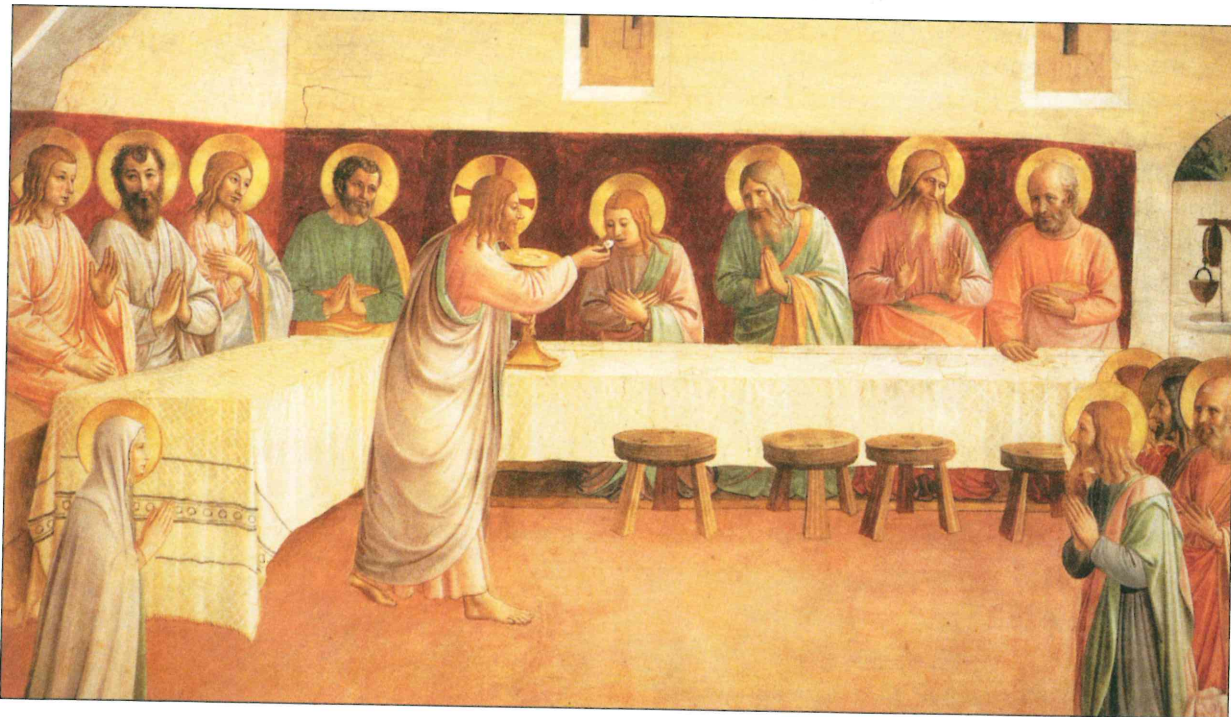
Peter and the rest had faith to stay with Jesus even though they had a hard time understanding this difficult teaching. Only at their last meal together, which we know as the Last Supper, would the full meaning of it be revealed to them. Jesus had made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem in time to celebrate the Passover. As they ate the Passover meal, Jesus showed them what it would mean to eat his body and drink his blood.

And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them, and said, "Take; this is my body." And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. And he said to them, "This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many." (Mk 14: 22-24)

When we consider what Jesus had said in that synagogue in Capernaum, we understand that the bread and wine were more than symbols. He had been very careful to show that his disciples would be eating his true body and drinking his true blood—even though it meant losing a lot of his followers. When we celebrate the Eucharist today, the bread really becomes the body of Christ, and the wine really becomes his blood.

Jesus said: "I am the living bread that came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever;...he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life and... abides in me, and I in him" (Jn 6: 51, 54, 56). (CCC 1406)

The Eucharist is the heart and the summit of the Church's life, for in it Christ associates his Church and all her members with his sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving offered once for all on the cross to his Father; by this sacrifice he pours out the graces of salvation on his Body which is the Church. (CCC 1407)



"Take; this is my body." (Mk 14: 22)

SUPPLEMENTARY READING

John XXIII, Paenitentiam Agere

5. Now we have only to open the sacred books of the Old and New Testament to be assured of one thing: it was never God's will to reveal Himself in any solemn encounter with mortal men—to speak in human terms—without first calling them to prayer and penance. Indeed, Moses refused to give the Hebrews the tables of the Law until they had expiated their crime of idolatry and ingratitude.

6. So too the Prophets; they never wearied of exhorting the Israelites to make their prayers acceptable to God, their supreme Overlord, by offering them in a penitential spirit. Otherwise they would bring about their own exclusion from the plan of divine Providence, according to which God Himself was to be the King of His chosen people.

7. The most deeply impressive of these prophetic utterances is surely that warning of Joel which is constantly ringing in our ears in the course of the Lenten liturgy: "Now therefore, says the LORD, Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning. And rend your hearts and not your garments... Between the porch and the altar the priests, the LORD's ministers, shall weep and say: Spare, O LORD, spare thy people, and give not thy inheritance to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them."

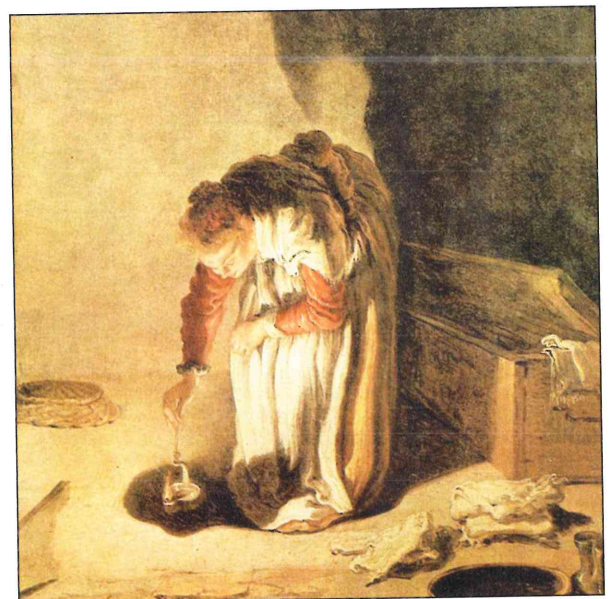
8. Nor did these calls to penance cease when the Son of God became incarnate. On the contrary, they became even more insistent. At the very outset of his preaching, John the Baptist proclaimed: "Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And Jesus inaugurated His saving mission in the same way. He did not begin by revealing the principal truths of the faith. First He insisted that the soul must repent of every trace of sin that could render it impervious to the message of eternal salvation: "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

9. He was even more vehement than were the Prophets in His demands that those who listened to Him should undergo a complete change of heart and submit in perfect sincerity to all the laws of the Supreme God. "For behold," He said "the kingdom of God is within you."

10. Indeed, penance is that counterforce which keeps the forces of concupiscence in check and repels them. In the words of Christ Himself, "the kingdom of heaven has been enduring violent assault, and the violent have been seizing it by force."

Parable of the Lost Coin - Lk 15: 8-10

"Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it?... Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."



VOCABULARY

HADES

Greek for the world of the dead. Similar to "Sheol" in Hebrew.

NICODEMUS

An influential Pharisee who came by night to hear Jesus' teachings. He defended Jesus when the other Pharisees attacked him, and finally became an open disciple of Jesus after the Crucifixion.

OUR FATHER

The prayer Jesus taught his disciples; also called the Lord's Prayer.

PARABLE

A story or example based on a familiar experience that illustrates a principle. It uses familiar ideas to explain unfamiliar ideas.

PARADOX

An apparent contradiction that is really true. Jesus used paradoxes like "the first shall be last" to show how different the Kingdom of Heaven would be from the state of things on earth.

PETER

One of Jesus' disciples, who became the leader of the Twelve and of the Church. Named Simon, Jesus gave him the name Peter, which means "Rock."

PRODIGAL

Wasteful. In the story of the Prodigal Son, a young man wastes his entire inheritance and has to return to his father with nothing.

RABBI

In the Old Testament, it referred to a holder of an office. A rabbi was a teacher of the Jewish Scriptures. It was the name disciples used for their teacher.

SYNAGOGUE

A Jewish house of meeting. Sacrifices could be offered only at the Temple in Jerusalem, but Jews all over the world went to local synagogues to worship and to hear the Scriptures read and interpreted.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is a rabbi?
2. What is a parable?
3. What famous "house" did Solomon build on a rock?
4. On what "rock" did Jesus build his Church?
5. Who is the last Son of David?
6. Who will replace the Solomon's Temple?
7. What is the first thing we learn from St. Mark's Gospel?
8. Who was Nicodemus?
9. How does the Law enable us to become holy?
10. Which two commandments, according to Jesus, sum up the whole Old Testament?
11. What did the Good Samaritan understand that was above the letter of the Law?
12. Why is it harder for people who are attached to worldly things to enter heaven?
13. What is the limitation on Christian mercy?
14. How did Jesus turn the revenge ethic of Lamech on its head?
15. What two things do we accomplish when we pray the Lord's Prayer?
16. What was Jesus referring to when he said "I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst."?
17. When do the apostles finally realize what it would mean to eat Jesus' body and drink his blood?

PRACTICAL EXERCISES

1. Christ's parables comprise an invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven. Explain how his parables call for action on the part of believers. In all of his parables those who behave correctly are rewarded while those who do not encounter insurmountable difficulties. What does this tell us about good works? How does actively living your faith compare to merely professing it?
2. Jesus said, "The kingdom of God is at hand." Was he simply referring to the time when he was on earth? What signs do you see of his kingdom on earth?
3. What is the difference between the letter of the law and the spirit of the law? Which is more important? Which is easier to live?
4. Jesus came to complete and fulfill the law of the Old Testament. Only through imitating the immense love of Christ can we participate in the fullness of the law. Judging from the parable of the Good Samaritan, what does it mean to love your neighbor? How is this love different from the love we often hear about in movies or on TV? Why is such love possible only through the grace of God?

FROM THE CATECHISM

581 The Jewish people and their spiritual leaders viewed Jesus as a rabbi (cf. Jn 11: 28; 3: 2; Mt 22: 23-24, 34-36). He often argued within the framework of rabbinical interpretation of the Law (cf. Mt 12: 5; 9: 12; Mk 2: 23-27; Lk 6: 6-9; Jn 7: 22-23). Yet Jesus could not help but offend the teachers of the Law, for he was not content to propose his interpretation alongside theirs but taught the people "as one who had authority, and not as their scribes" (Mt 7: 28-29). In Jesus, the same Word of God that had resounded on Mount Sinai to give the written Law to Moses, made itself heard anew on the Mount of the Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5: 1). Jesus did not abolish the Law but fulfilled it by giving its ultimate interpretation in a divine way: "You have heard that it was said to the men of old... But I say to you..." (Mt 5: 33-34). With this same divine authority, he disavowed certain human

traditions of the Pharisees that were "making void the word of God" (Mk 7: 13; cf. 3: 8).

1384 The Lord addresses an invitation to us, urging us to receive him in the sacrament of the Eucharist: "Truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you" (Jn 6: 53).

1717 The Beatitudes depict the countenance of Jesus Christ and portray his charity. They express the vocation of the faithful associated with the glory of his Passion and Resurrection; they shed light on the actions and attitudes characteristic of the Christian life; they are the paradoxical promises that sustain hope in the midst of tribulations; they proclaim the blessings and rewards already secured, however dimly, for Christ's disciples; they have begun in the lives of the Virgin Mary and all the saints.

Endnotes

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| 1. Jn 7: 46. | 5. For this illustration, we have used | 6. Mk 1: 15. |
| 2. Jn 6: 68-69. | the literal rendering "the gates of | 7. Mt 18: 21-22. |
| 3. Jn 7: 46. | Hades," given in a footnote in the | |
| 4. Mt 16: 16. | Revised Standard Version. | |