

Sermon for the Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

“Shall the potter be regarded as the clay, that the thing made should say of its maker, “He did not make me.”

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Men love to do that which appears to be good. All find shameful things shameful, and all find good things good, that is, if they can be found at all.

Men love to be found doing that which appears to be good, for men are prideful, and above all else, conceited. Men love to be seen, and they love more being seen as virtuous.

But a dilemma arises in the hearts of sinful mankind: most of what is truly good, is not what appears to be good, in that it doesn't appear as anything. Most of what is truly good is not seen by anyone, for they are things that are done quietly, as in secret.

For it is commanded *‘Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, strength, and mind.’* Yet if a great saint possessed such purity of love, would anyone notice?

And again, it is commanded *‘Take not the Lord's name in vain,’* that is, do not pray for that which is ungodly. But who sees you pray, or hears the inner voice of your pious murmurings?

And again, it is commanded, *‘Covet not thy neighbors house.’* And yet again, who shall see your lack of covetousness? One cannot observe that which doesn't happen.

The Law of God, that which we all learn from the Catechism commands all such hidden works of righteousness, and only such works as are hidden, for even as

God, who is righteousness and goodness itself, is invisible, so virtue is made perfect when it is accomplished in the quiet. For this reason, our Lord instructs us *'let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing.'* For this reason, Our Lord became flesh, *and was made man, and considered equality with God not something to be desired, but took the form of a slave.'*

Yet, in our vanity, we do not want to be invisible to the eyes of others, even though to be such is to be like unto God. We want attention; more so, we want praise, even admiration. We seek to make a name for ourselves. We, who are blind, do not want so much to see, for then we would *understand, and repent*, but to be seen.

But in order to do so, we must manifest works that are not hidden, but that can be seen. We must create new good works which can be witnessed, and admired, and spoken of by the people. This will of God that is accomplished as *a thief in the night* will not do.

Rather, we desire to give, *and have the trumpet blown before us*, that all may know our generosity, our kindness, our piety; that we may *receive our reward in this life, for the life of the world to come* is so distant, and to the faithless heart, uncertain.

So we create a new law, and in doing so, we become our own gods, mandating for ourselves, and if we are particularly ambitious, for others, what is right, and in so doing, we become both idolaters, for we worship a created thing, this law of our own making, and we become the idol, for we are the source of the same; that it may be fulfilled what is written in the Prophet Isaiah, *that the thing formed shall say of him who formed it 'He has not understanding.'*

And these new laws, like unto the human idol that invented them in his imagination, is always a thing very visible; something always verifiable, so that we can be seen being righteous, and in being so seen, be praised; praise, which belongs alone to God.

All created moralities are outward, even as we see in our own time, for we

invent laws constantly, and they can all be outwardly observed. We avoid eating meat, to show our love of animals. We recycle, to show our love of nature. We wear our Sunday best, that we might be seen looking best on Sunday. We hang an American flag outside our porch, that all may see that we are patriotic. We place stickers on our cars of charities that we support, so that others may know that we are charitable.

All these things we do, and do outwardly, that they might be seen visibly, even as an idol of stone or wood is seen visibly. And we must do this, for what is inside of us hollow, empty; a rot of base corruption; a feast of vice. *For out of the heart of the man come evil, fornication, theft murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evils come from within, and by them a man is defiled.*

The infinite deity of the Godhead walks in human vesture among the Jews; and His disciples eat with unwashed hands. They have failed to uphold the outward form of piety, and so they are accused by the Pharisees of sacrilege. Christ chastises them briefly.

'This people honor me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'

Indeed, the Lord goes on to accuse them of neglecting their own parents, that they may be seen in public giving to the Temple.

But it is not the Pharisees alone who are guilty of such empty pomp. For *many such things do we do.*

There is none among us who is not an idolater. There is none of us who has not made his own will into an idol. And there is none who does not daily bow down before this man made god.

But there is one who is God made man. And even as He accuses sinful mankind with His left hand by the Law of Moses, yet even now His right hand is at work. It is at work to abolish all idolatry, that the *wisdom of the wise men may perish, and the discernment of our discerning shall be hidden.* That, every

knee should bow, and every tongue confess, that Jesus Christ is the Lord.

This Jesus, whose power is hidden in poverty; whose glory is clothed in *the form of a slave*; He indeed is at

work, that the Gospel might fulfilled in Him, hidden within His Passion and Humiliation, and revealed through word and bread and wine; for about such things men have no regard, and so against such things *there is no law*.

He will hang, even from a cross, and the blood of God shall wet the sinful earth beneath our feet, this earth we once called 'Adam'. For Adam, our first father, was taken out of the earth, and unto the earth he returned, aged and tortured. But though his eyes go dark, and his ears senseless, yet the Lord goes down to deliver him from the grave. To deliver him and all the baptized who die in faith, for *in that day*,

'The deaf shall hear the words of a book, and out of their gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind shall see.'

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*Preached by Pastor
Fields*

*Sermon Texts: Isaiah
29:11-19; Ephesians 5:22-33; Mark 7:1-13.*