

Grace and peace are yours from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

The Holy Scriptures today paint a collective image for us that we are human beings who see, recognize, and experience the sinful nature of what we are... while at the same time reminding us of the pure and holy nature of who we are. Again, we are provided with the contrast of being; saint and sinner, human and divine. Last week we considered the child-like nature and the adult wisdom with regard to the Kingdom of God and today we look at the dichotomy of being both poor and wealthy all at the same time.

The gospel narrative reveals a devout Jew approaching Jesus; we know the man is Jewish because he refers to the Law, which was given only to Israel. For Israel, the Law is everything and staying on the right side of the Law also kept you in the right side of society and in good standing within the Temple and its structures of authority, politics, and power. Jesus has expressed His frustration with the scribes and Pharisees over their lack of understanding and compassion when it comes to the Law. In the gospel passage today we see the impact of temple teaching on the faithful people within the Jewish society.

Jesus shares with the man (and us in life-together with one another today) there is more to life than staying on the right side of the law. We must move past what we hold onto ‘dearly in life’ for the sake of what others ‘dearly hold out for’.

*For 34 years, LouAnn worked as a flight attendant. But at the age of 58, she received a diagnosis of pancreatic cancer. Soon, the vivacious mother of two and grandmother-to-be was making plans for hospice care. Her older brother Rex was flying to see his sister when he asked the flight attendant—an old colleague of LouAnn’s, as it turned out—if he could speak to the passengers. He talked about his sister, even passed his phone around the plane so they could see photos of her. He then handed out napkins and asked if they’d write a little something for her. Ninety-six passengers responded. Some drew pictures. One man and his seatmate created flowers out of napkins and swizzle sticks. But mostly, there were warm words: “Your brother made me love you, and I don’t even know you.” And “My favorite quote from when I had two brain tumors: ‘You’re braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.’” LouAnn died in April of this year, but Rex never forgot the compassion shown that day. “I’m just amazed that given the opportunity, even total strangers will reach out and show a lot of empathy and concern,” he said. Source: Arizona Republic<sup>1</sup>*

There is more to life than staying on the right side of the law. We must move past what we hold onto ‘dearly in life’ for the sake of what others ‘dearly hold out for’. The man that approached Jesus is following the Law, knows about the Kingdom of God, and wants to achieve a goal by human means. The answer AND truth to this is simple and plain: it is impossible for humankind to achieve the means to enter the Kingdom of God by their own means. This is because as humans we have sinned before God and fallen from grace. We do not have the means to achieve our own forgiveness in the sight of God because we knowingly and willingly disobeyed God. We live each day with the knowledge that we committed sin and continue to do so... because we are human.

It is impossible for us to forget that we are human, even though through forgiveness God remembers our sin NO MORE. What is impossible for us is not the end of the story, but it is the end of our sinful nature. With God all things are possible including granting us the promise and hope of arriving at a place of peace and understanding at a place where sin and sorrow are all too present.

*Brenda Jones, a 69-year-old great-grandmother, had spent a long year on the donor list waiting to receive a liver. Then, on July 18, a hospital in North Texas called—they had a viable liver for her. Meanwhile,*

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.rd.com/true-stories/inspiring/extraordinary-generosity/>

*23-year-old Abigail Flores also needed a liver. Her situation was more urgent than Jones's. Without a transplant, doctors feared Flores had maybe one more day to live. So they asked Jones to give up her spot so that Flores could get the precious organ. Jones agreed. "In my heart, I wouldn't have been able to live with the liver if I had let this little girl die," she told WFAA. Jones was placed back at the top of the donor list and got a new liver days later.<sup>2</sup>*

Life is abundant my friends wherever there is compassion, care, and love. Jesus fulfilled the Law through acts of love, mercy, and kindness towards us and not merely through obedience to observing the rules and Law. Love is what is at the heart of the gospel message; love is what is at the heart of God, and love is what endures all things.

Life and love reveal compassionate acts in real-time and in hindsight:

*Rebekka could feel the passengers' eyes rolling as she walked toward her seat carrying her newborn, Rylee. They were flying from Michigan, to Fort Rucker, Alabama, where Rebekka's husband was stationed. Minutes into the flight, Rylee wailed. A nearby couple glared, so Rebekka moved. Rylee was still crying when their seatmate, Nyfasha, asked if she could try holding her. Rylee quickly fell asleep in Miller's arms and stayed that way throughout the flight. "Nyfasha, you will never understand how happy this act of kindness has made my family," Rebekka wrote on Facebook. "You could've just been irritated like everyone else, but you held Rylee the entire flight and let me get some rest and peace of mind." Source: CBS News*

We must move past what we hold onto 'dearly in life' for the sake of what others 'dearly hold out for'. Our acts of kindness and compassion have a collateral effect on others and the benefit is real. Our actions are both witness and testimony to the presence of the Living Word of God within our very hearts. When we act from the heart our Lord Jesus Christ is revealed to others as the Prince of Peace in a stormy world that dearly needs a place of respite, tranquility, and rest.

Compassion is not available at any cost, but free to all from God and free to offer one another through Jesus Christ. Money and wealth is not the focus of the gospel text nor is it at the heart of the message; but giving away 'all' that we have been given for the sake of others remains an essential truth in the Kingdom of God. Yes, the world we live in functions within its financial boundaries, rules, and laws. We are called to live responsibly, faithfully, and compassionately in this world as we bring Christ to the stranger, neighbor, and visitor; as we welcome *them* into the Kingdom of God.

You see my dear friends in Christ, we serve not out of mere obedience to God to bring the Good News to the world and to reveal the love of God through Christ to others; we serve out of love and compassion for the life, holiness, and value we all have in the sight of an Almighty and ever generous God who sustains us *all* with a wealth of life beyond our imagination.

In the wake of the physical storms that have impacted our lives, families, friends, and neighbors, when we are asked to help with resources, finances, supplies, and participation, we help out because we care, not because the law demands. We give all that we have, not for financial benefit, but to ensure the peace we have come to know is also the peace that passes all understanding for all God's people to keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

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<sup>2</sup> ibid