

2nd Sunday of Luke (Luke 6:31-36)

2. Only God is good by nature, but with God's help man can become good through careful attention to his way of life. He transforms himself into what he is not when his soul, by devoting its attention to true delight, unites itself to God, in so far as its energized power desires this. For it is written: 'Be good and merciful as is your Father in heaven' (cf. **Luke 6:36**; Matt. 5:48). [V1] 253 *St Diadochos of Photiki On Spiritual Knowledge and Discrimination One Hundred Texts*

32. There are three things that impel us towards what is holy: natural instincts, angelic powers and probity of intention. Natural instincts impel us when, for example, we do to others what we would wish them to do to us (cf. **Luke 6:31**), or when we see someone suffering deprivation or in need and naturally feel compassion. Angelic powers impel us when, being ourselves impelled to something worthwhile, we find we are providentially helped and guided. We are impelled by probity of intention when, discriminating between good and evil, we choose the good. [V2] 71 *St Maximos the Confessor Four Hundred Texts on Love Second Century*

9. When the intelligence is not dominated by the senses, the natural law persuades all men instinctively to embrace what is akin to them and of the same species, since nature itself teaches men to help those in need. In addition, the natural law persuades every man to wish for everybody else whatever he considers agreeable when done to him by others. This is what the Lord teaches when He says, 'Treat others as you want them to treat you' (**Luke 6:31**). [V2] 262 *St Maximos the Confessor Various Texts on Theology, the Divine Economy, and Virtue and Vice Fifth Century*

What health and sickness are to the body, virtue and wickedness are to the soul, and knowledge and ignorance to the intellect. The greater our devotion to the practice of the virtues, the more our intellect is illumined by knowledge. It is in this way that we are accounted worthy of mercy, that is, through the fifth commandment: 'Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy' (Matt. 5:7). The merciful person is he who gives to others what he has himself received from God, whether it be money, or food, or strength, a helpful word, a prayer, or anything else that he has through which he can express his compassion for those in need. At the same time he considers himself a debtor, since he has received more than he is asked to give. By Christ's grace, both in the present world and in the world to come, before the whole of creation he is called merciful, just as God is called merciful (cf. **Luke 6:36**). Through his brother, it is God Himself who has need of him, and in this way God has become his debtor. Although his needy brother can live without him giving what he is asked for, he himself can neither live nor be saved if he does not do what he can to show mercy. If he is not willing to show mercy to his own kind, how can he ask God to show mercy to him? Bearing these and many other things in mind, the person to whom it is granted to keep the commandments gives not only his possessions but even his very life for his neighbor. This is perfect mercy; for just as Christ endured death on our behalf, giving to all an example and a model, so we should die for one another, and not only for our friends, but for our enemies as well, should the occasion call for it. [V3] 97 *St Peter of Damaskos Book 1 A Treasury of Divine Knowledge The Seven Commandments*

Such a man is not like us: for though we may for a while be slightly stirred by the Scriptures, we are again plunged into darkness by laziness, forgetfulness and ignorance, and become obdurate because of our passions. But he who has been purified of the passions through inward grief perceives the hidden mysteries in all the Scriptures and is astonished by them all, especially by the words and actions recorded in the Holy Gospels. He is amazed to see how the wisdom of God renders what is difficult easy, so that gradually it deifies man. He is filled with goodness, so that he loves his enemies; he is merciful, as his Father is merciful (cf. **Luke 6:36**); he is dispassionate, as God is dispassionate; he is endowed with every virtue and is perfect, as the Father is perfect (cf. Matt. 5:48). In short, the Holy Bible teaches us that what befits God befits man as well, so that he becomes god by divine adoption. [V3] 124 *St Peter of Damaskos Book 1 A Treasury of Divine Knowledge The Fourth Stage of Contemplation*

Such are the souls of the saints: they love their enemies more than themselves, and in this age and in the age to come they put their neighbor first in all things, even though because of his ill-will he may be their enemy. They do not seek recompense from those whom they love, but because they have themselves received they rejoice in giving to others all that they have, so that they may conform to their Benefactor and imitate His compassion to the best of their ability; 'for He is bountiful to the thankless and to sinners' (cf. Luke 6:35). Indeed, the more a man is found worthy to receive God's gifts, the more he ought to consider himself a debtor to God, who has raised him from the earth and bestowed on dust the privilege of imitating to some degree its Creator and God. For to endure injustice with joy, patiently to do good to one's enemies, to lay down one's own life for one's neighbor, and so on, are gifts from God, bestowed on those who are resolved to receive them from Him through their solicitude in cultivating and protecting what has been entrusted to them, as Adam was commanded to do (cf. Gen. 2:15). In this way they hold fast to the gifts through their gratitude towards their Benefactor. For we have never achieved anything good on our own, but all good things are ours from God by grace, and come as it were from nothingness into being. For 'what do you have which you did not receive?' asks St Paul - receive, that is, freely from God; 'and if you received it, why do you boast as if you had not received it' (1 Cor. 4:7), but had achieved it by yourself? Yet by yourself you cannot achieve anything, for the Lord has said: 'Without Me, you can do nothing' (John 15:5). [V3] 176 *St Peter of Damaskos Book 1 A Treasury of Divine Knowledge How It Is Impossible to be Saved Without Humility*

“He who alone fashioned our hearts, who understands all our works: (cf. Ps. 33:15Lxx), who was manifested to us through flesh and deigned to become our teacher, seeks from us, now that He is re-making us, the very things which He originally put in our souls when He created them, but which have been spoilt. In the beginning He formed us in a manner that was appropriate to His future teaching, and later He renders that teaching suitable for the way we were originally made, so all he was doing was cleansing His creature’s beauty which had been obscured by the addition of sin. Nothing shows this more clearly than the words of today’s Gospel reading, which we propose to elucidate: As ye would’, it says, “that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (**Luke 6:31**). The prophet Isaiah did well to prophesy that, “The Lord will give a brief word upon the earth” (Isa. 10:23 Lxx). For in this short pronouncement He included every virtue, every commandment, and virtually every good deed and thought. That is why, according to the evangelist Matthew, when the Lord had said these words, He added, “for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12). Elsewhere, summing up His teaching, He said that all the law and the prophets hung on the two commandments to love God and love our neighbor (Matt. 22:37-40). Now, however, He has gathered everything into one and included not only the righteousness found in the law and the prophets, but absolutely every type of good deed done among men, since He is not making laws now for just one race, but for the whole world, or rather, for all those who come to Him through faith from every nation under heaven.

Not only did He encompass in these words each of the commandments He had given us, He also showed that every one of them is innate in us. This is what James the Lord’s brother is referring to when he exhorts us to “Lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls” (Jas. 1:21). And it is this that God declared beforehand through the prophet Jeremiah, saying, “I will make a new covenant with them; I will put my laws in their mind” (cf. Jer. 31:31,33), for the exercise of will based on judgement is a function of the mind. Now that the Lord has revealed that all the gospel precepts are inscribed within us, He commands and ordains that we should order our lives in accordance with them. Being the lover of goodness and friend of man, He has put into our nature the knowledge of how we should act.

When He said, “As ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise” (Luke 6:31), the Lord was demonstrating through this summary of His counsel that every gospel commandment was not only innate in human nature, but also just, easy and to our advantage, readily comprehensible to all and self-evident. What do I mean? Surely you are aware that it is bad to be angry with your brother and pour abuse on him, especially without cause, and that you yourself are unwilling to be the object of his anger or rebuke? Nor is this an opinion that you reach after some thought; rather, you are immediately vexed when anger and insults are directed at you, and you try to avoid them in any way you can, refusing to accept them because they are obviously evil, wrong and unprofitable. You feel the same when another man looks at your wife with passion and curiosity, or when someone tells you lies, not only to harm you, but on any subject at all. In short, we feel the same about everything the gospel commandments forbid. What needs to be said about

those sinful acts which the ancient law had already prohibited: murder, adultery, breaking oaths, injustice, and the like? Or about their opposite virtues and our satisfaction with people who practice them towards us? Do you see that you know for yourself each one of the commandments, and consider it just and beneficial? Not only that, but you also deem it to be easy. Otherwise you would not think that anyone who was angry with you, told lies or schemed against you in some way, deserved much blame, if you really did suppose that it was difficult or impossible for him to abstain from each of these evils.

Let it not be the case that when you are badly treated by someone else, but being insulted, deceived or harmed, you make a correct judgement, but when you yourself insult your neighbor, treat him unjustly and attempt to cheat him, you form a judgement without reaching the same verdict on identical actions. As a fair judge you should not do to anyone whatever obvious evils you do not wish to suffer at his hands, and whatever good things you wish to experience from another person, let him be treated in that same way by you. Perhaps you are asking someone for assistance, or something else you need, and you really want to receive it, as you consider it beneficial? Why not? So when someone desires something from you, strive to appear self-consistent, think it good that he should receive something from you, and put it into action. What, however, if he wants from you more than you have? By means of what you do have, show that if you possessed more you would give it.

St. Gregory Palamas - From Homily 45 – on Luke 6:31