

8 am Sunday Homily 3<sup>rd</sup> July

In the first reading this morning we hear about Cain murdering Able and the terrible consequences of his actions – separation from God and all his family and friends. But in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading we hear from Jesus who tells us that we not only have to obey the law but that we have to obey – the letter of the law –but even beyond that – not just in our actions but that our thoughts and heart matters too.

The bible says, "As a person thinks in his/her heart so they become."

Jesus is saying: "Be careful what you say it reveals the condition of your heart." You may have never murdered anyone, but what about the motives of your heart. Jesus is saying, "What matters is not merely the letter of the law but the spirit." The law says, "You shall not commit murder." Jesus says, "If you are angry in your heart with a brother without cause you are guilty under God's law of murder. To hate, to feel bitter, to have this unpleasant, unkind feeling of resentment toward a person without a cause is murder.

So this morning we are thinking about;

How to deal with our anger?

How do we forgive people?

How to be people of integrity?

1. We are called to be positive not negative toward other people. There are some people who have the view: "If you can't say something bad about someone body keep quiet."

What is it that causes us to get angry? Today the world seems to be obsessed with 'rights' and what each of us deserves. And when we don't – we get angry.

Jesus says, "Whoever is angry with his brother without cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Anger without cause is nothing more or less than an adult temper tantrum designed to control or manipulate someone else.

So, what do you do with anger? Be sure you are getting angry at the right things. Jesus is our model in dealing with the emotion of anger. Jesus knew what

it was like to be the subject of anger. Anger nailed Jesus to the cross.

Jesus understood the emotion anger from the inside. Jesus was on His way to visit the temple in Jerusalem. Upturned tables.

Jesus is clearly an example of anger with cause. Jesus would not tolerate injustices. Jesus hated sin, but loved those who committed sin.

The Apostle Paul gave sound teaching in Ephesians 4:26 "Be angry and do not sin." He didn't say, "don't get angry." He said, "do not sin." Do not get angry for the wrong reasons or wrong causes.

## 2. Forgiveness is an Act of Worship.

In Matthew 5:23-24, Jesus teaches that forgiveness is an act of worship.

Forgiveness in fact is a gift more valuable than worship. In fact before you can adequately worship God you need to ask for those you have wronged to forgive you.

A bitter heart separates a person from God as well as that person

In the Lord's prayer in Matthew 6:12, we pray: "Jesus forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." To refuse to forgive others forfeits our rights to be forgiven. We need to remember that our debt to God is beyond our ability to ever repay.

Ephesians 4:31-32 God's Word says: "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice; and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you." Forgiving and being forgiven are cut out of the same cloth. They cannot be separated.

George Herbert has written: "He that cannot forgive others breaks the bridge over which he himself must pass if he would ever reach heaven, for everyone has need to be forgiven."

How do we forgive? Not in our own strength. Forgiveness is only possible through a cross. Forgiveness is simply accepting what Jesus has already accomplished for us on the cross. I John 1:9 is a powerful verse: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Forgiveness cancels the effects of sin.

One of the greatest gifts we can give to Jesus is by our living a life of forgiveness.

3.A person of integrity is validated by their words and their deeds.

If we are pure in heart we can be pure in action. Integrity is making my daily actions line up with my heart's values.

Mark Twain said: Speaking honestly is better. It takes a lot of stress out of our lives.

If you tell the truth you don't have to remember anything, but if you don't tell the truth you have to remember what you said.

In a society without moral absolutes anything goes.

When people can choose what is right and wrong without having a standard, how do you decide which way to go?

The fact is that God's Word has pretty clear instructions for each of us.

If we do what God says and apply what we learn to our lives, we will be people of integrity.

We will have hope, guidance, security and protection.

We are called to have our Yes mean Yes and our No mean No!

Have you ever heard the phrase, Everybody else is doing it?

To be a person of integrity means that you are willing to go against the crowd if the crowd is wrong.

It means being willing to stand alone, if necessary, for what is right. It means peer-pressure is no pressure for you.

Jesus makes it clear in Matthew 5 that whenever we make a promise we do so in the presence of God.

When we break a promise, we are not just lying to others or ourselves. We are also lying to God.

The World is looking for authenticity wherever they can find it.

Our own integrity and the integrity of the church demand nothing less.