

As disciples of Jesus Christ

We are expected to be different

Our readings today point out how different

The world pushes us to perfection in many ways

As an athlete or a student

A spouse or a profession

Taking this desire to the extreme

Makes one a perfectionist

This is not what God is calling us to

He does not desire that we become perfectionists

He calls us to be perfect

As our heavenly Father is perfect

So we need to see the difference in being perfect as our Father is

And being a perfectionist

Our readings show 3 aspects of our call

To be Holy

To be perfect

And to be a temple

In Leviticus we hear the word of the Lord to Moses

Speak to the Israelite community

Be holy, for I the Lord, your God, am holy

We see being Holy is not something God does

It is who He is

Totally Other

Totally set apart

And we are called to participate in that holiness

This is not a matter of following external laws

It is a matter of the heart

Do not bear hatred for your brother or sister in your heart

Love your neighbor as yourself

The problem becomes who is my brother and sister?

Who is my neighbor?

For the Israelites

By the time of Christ

This was a very narrow definition

Only extending to those in the pure line of Judaism

Their law became you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy

But Christ teaches something entirely different

But I say to you, love your enemies

Pray for those who persecute you

That you may become children of your heavenly Father

For he makes the sun rise on the bad and the good

And the rain falls on the just and the unjust

Be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect

This is how we participate in His otherness

In His Holiness

In His perfection

But this is too much to do on our own

We can only do this with his grace

St Paul speaks of this with a metaphor of the temple

We need to grasp what the temple was for the Israelite people

More than a synagogue

The Temple was God's dwelling place

Where heaven and earth met

A place set apart

A microcosm of the universe itself

There was a place for everyone in the temple

Everyone was allowed into the outer courts

But only certain people were allowed into the inner courts

And only the Levitical class was allowed into the area of sacrifice

And only the High priest was allowed into the central altar

The Holy of Holies

And then only at certain times of the year

The holy of holies was that set apart

Even from the rest of the temple area itself

This is what Paul is referring to

Brothers and sisters

Do you not know that you are the temple of God?

That the Holy Spirit dwells in you?

The Holy Spirit dwelling in us

Makes us God's holy temple

The foundation of this eternal Temple is Jesus Christ

The life he describes in the Sermon on the mount is divine life

A life we can only live if we have Him within us

The world has bought the lie of the serpent

That human greatness and liberation can be achieved without God

Paul rejects this

Let no one deceive himself

The wisdom of the world is foolishness in the eyes of God

The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise

And they are vain

In Christ, individual personalities do not divide

They unite in the one dwelling within us

All belong to you and you to Christ, and Christ to God

Christ has made us one with the One who made us

But it is our choice to live this truth

To be building blocks of His Temple

To be holy

To be perfect

God's Holy Temple in the world

Definitely not the way of the world

The world has taken the golden rule

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you

And turned it around

Do unto others before they do unto you

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was a type of justice

What it meant was if your servant lost an eye

You could not demand both eyes of the offender

If you lost a tooth in a fight

You could not demand all the teeth of the offender

But the thinking of the world turned it from justice to revenge

Retribution and paybacks are the way of the world

Anyone can do that

Our invitation is to learn how to love as God loves

And to live this divine life

To turn the other cheek

Not to become a society of weaklings as Friedrich Nietzsche thought

Or to become what Karl Marx thought

A society of doormats

Under the thumb of those that hold power

But to become holy

Perfect as our Father is perfect

Be living temples

Standing up to the wrongs in the world

Out of love for the other

Do you think it is easy to live separately before marriage?

For love of our future spouse

And for the love of the institution of marriage

Do you think it is easy to love the poor?

Even when we think they do not deserve our attention

Is it easy to love the rich?

When we might think they are spending wrongly

Is it easy to love the politically connected?

When they act in ways that might offend me personally

Is it easy to love a brother or sister?

Even a mom or dad when we are hurt or abused?

Is it easy to love someone from St Gabe's or St John's?

When a change affects me personally?

Is it easy to love the one who stabbed me in the back?

That is the love of God

Forgive them Father, they know not what they do

A self-sacrificial love of the other

And for the other

Desiring nothing but the best for that other person

This is the love that stops the cycle of violence

This is the love that Christ offers for us

This is the love that allows us to live the Beatitudes always

This is the love of the divine life

It is how we build God's kingdom in this world

Temples of the Holy Spirit

Set apart

Perfect

Living this love is how we are expected to be different