

Monday, February 22, 2010

Well, it's all right here, isn't it?

From the Psalm [19: 7-14]: "The commandment of the lord is clear and gives light to the eyes." —to—Leviticus.

Leviticus [19: 1-2, 11-18] has the richest seams of Old Testament ethics. It includes and expands all of the 10 Commandments and also condenses them into what Jesus called the second great commandment of the law, and Paul regarded as its very essence: "Love your neighbor as yourself." —and to Matthew—

Matthew [25: 31-46] is often described as a parable, but it is not an illustrative story, but a vision of the future. This passage is often understood to teach that ultimate salvation is based on acts of kindness alone, so that there is nothing specifically Christian about this criterion for judgment. But that is to ignore the important description of the recipients of this kindness as the least of those brothers of mine. This phrase suggests that it not just anyone that the righteous have helped (and the others have ignored), it is disciples in need. The phrase "the least" reminds us of "the little ones" mentioned in other gospel references [Matthew 10:42; 18:6; 10,14] and as we have seen above that this the term for Jesus' disciples.

When Jesus says: "You did it for me..." it recalls the principle where to receive the disciples is to receive Jesus, and it is a cup of water given to "one of these little ones because he is my disciple" which will be rewarded. In this use, the criterion for judgment is not mere philanthropy (good as it is) but people's responses to the kingdom of heaven as they have met it in Jesus' "brothers." So I am telling myself that I should be downstairs at the Water Ministry tending to the second great commandment and my salvation. As Archbishop Rowan Williams said recently: "The Gospels give us a good picture of what the good life looks like." [NYTIMES 1.29.2010.]

I like Lent. I like the way it is structured to simplify my daily life and focus my mind on my salvation. I like the way that Lent give me a time to practice trusting in God. I like what St. Columba's does to equip us for the spiritual quest --- to help me on the path of discovery. I like Lent's comforting message of God's presence in the world and that this in not an unsettling place to be.

"For what I have done, and for what I have left undone." " O Lord my strength and my Redeemer."