

Dear All,

I cannot help observing that Pilate and the High Priest were the two embodiments of law and order in the world of first century Palestine. When they conspired in the death of Jesus they did so in the name of those laws and that order. The resurrection of Jesus, then, represents God's ultimate and definitive rejection of such law and order thinking and acting.

This should not surprise us. If you have been paying attention to the various trials getting national attention these days you will know that there are all different shades and kinds of names for taking the life of another [curiously, *abortion* is no longer called taking the life of another]. That's because laws need ordering/ranking if we are not going to make every offense and capital one. This is what lay behind the Pharisee's query to Jesus about 'the greatest commandment'. It was that same divine rejection of this mindset that led Jesus to answer as he did: *You shall love God ... and your neighbor.*

If we take Jesus' answer for granted, a profound revolution must happen in the minds and hearts of Christians. It is not enough to know what is commanded or what is forbidden by this that or another commandment issuing from this that or another legislator. Obedience must be an act of love or it fails the test of the greatest commandment; and thus, in the name of the greatest commandment, love demands that we disobey or actively seek a change in the commandment.

This reading of Jesus' teaching and the Father's intent in the resurrection will really put us in a new moral universe. There we will have to set aside concerns for such matters as security, justice, retribution, reparations and so on. Whether we are wrongdoers or wronged, we will have to ask what is the most loving thing to do. And the answer will always break and break open our hearts so that love can get in or get out of them.

Moreover, the answer will always assume that God is already doing the most loving thing; thus, killing the killer will be off the menu; and retaliatory military action will go by the board, as well; and forgiveness will be the normal way of dealing with criminals. Why? Because that seems to be the way that God acts!

I would not like to be accused of being soft on wrongdoing or wrongdoers. But let me suggest that innocent virtue finds its utter perfection in gracious forgiveness. And is it so bad to ask even more holiness from the saints? It is, you see, on them that the law of love falls hardest.

Remember Jesus; remember Dismas; weep with Peter; weep for Judas. Never think that anyone should die but yourself; or that anyone should suffer for another, but yourself; or that anyone should do more, but yourself; or that there is another standard of right, but God alone.

Really and truly and imperfectly yours,

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