

32A 2020 SML
MT 25:1-13

Our country is living in a time of moral laxity, if not moral decay:

- ✓ Big tech vs free speech,
- ✓ free speech vs fact checking every word,
- ✓ election, free and fair vs election tampering . . .

Whether a contestant in a game of pinochle or a presidential election, a sound conscience formed by God always wants to honestly say “I won fair and square.” A self-made conscience, or a society made conscience would be satisfied to say, “I won.” So let’s delve into the understanding of conscience.

An escapist is one who calls religion an “escapism” so he can avoid what he might have to change in his life which religion would require. His favorite expression is “my conscience is at peace.” But his is a self-made and a deceptive conscience.

We cannot make our own conscience. If we could, our conscience would testify to our defense every time, much like an alienist who would testify in court for whatever side that would pay him more. Conscience, therefore, cannot come from within. Conscience also cannot come from society, as that

conscience would never reprove us when society approves us, nor console us when society condemns us.

A sound conscience stands firm:

- ✓ no matter whether we like what it dictates or not
- ✓ no matter whether those around us oppose it or not.

Just as there is no way to know which keys on the piano ought to be played unless you have the musical score in front of you, the very existence of conscience implies there are three in front of us as a Divine Lawmaker:

1. the One Who legislates
2. the One Who witnesses our actions with the law
3. and the One Who judges and passes sentence.

At all times, we feel there is in front of us:

- ✓ an unseen Witness
- ✓ in Whose praise we rejoice
- ✓ and in Whose reproof we feel ashamed.

And this witness is God.

The very word conscience means “knowing with,” knowing with Whom, but God? Conscience is the impact of Divine Truth and Goodness that knows right from wrong.

There are two kinds of consciences. There is the true conscience, the conscience God gave us, and the conscience

we make for ourselves. Guided by the first, we realize God has not only implanted in us a desire to make a journey to Heaven, but that He has given us the map of how to get there.

Following a false or self-made conscience:

- ✓ we deny there is a destiny, namely heaven,
- ✓ we throw away the map because we don't need it, and
- ✓ we call any mood the right mood.

Owners of the conscience they've made for themselves are the ones who are quick to say, "my conscience is at peace."

Peace is a nice word, but like conscience, it has a true and a false sense:

True peace is a gift from Jesus. He spoke of His peace in John Chapter 14.

False peace, like false conscience, is of our own making, or the world's making. Jesus spoke of this peace in the same chapter.

True peace flourishes as our friendship with God flourishes. False peace leads to forgetting God and exalting the self.

True peace is unaffected by adversity.

False peace is shattered by the slightest whim of another.

True peace has no wants.

False peace is covetous.

True peace has a humble estimation of self.

False peace lives in fear of being found inferior.

True peace has a firm trust in God despite past sins.

False peace shrinks from God because it will not put an end to present sins.

The rich man had false peace.

Lazarus true peace.

The foolish virgins in this evening's/morning's gospel slept because they had peace, but theirs was a false peace that found them unprepared.

The foolish steward who kept the one talent buried in the sand was at peace until he was called to accountability, so his was also a false peace.

The man who built his house on sand was at peace, until the storm came, so his was a false peace.

In false peace:

- ✓ the conscience is dead;
- ✓ the eyes of the soul are blind;
- ✓ the ears of the soul are deaf;
- ✓ the fingers of the soul are paralyzed.

If a false conscience possessed a false peace, why would they boast so much about its peace? The healthy do not go around

striking their breasts saying, “I am healthy.” It’s the sick who talk about their health.

It is a psychological fact that a sense of something amiss within oneself makes a person strike their breast whenever he has done wrong. We do it three times when we repeat the words of the Confiteor, “Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault.” The witnesses on Calvary did the same thing:

When all the people who had gathered for this spectacle saw what had happened, they returned home beating their breasts. (LK 23:48)

It is not uncommon that false consciences stop deluding themselves when we admit we will be judged not by our false conscience, but by our true conscience, the conscience God gave us:

- ✓ the conscience of our youth;
- ✓ before it was perverted by sin;
- ✓ the conscience it was before it was warped by liberal education
- ✓ the conscience that considered as wrong the sins we now justify;
- ✓ the conscience we had before we became broadminded and gave to right and wrong equal footing.

Our conscience will speak and say:

I am the conscience God gave you. Look in the mirror. What gravity is to the star, what instinct is to the animal, that I was to you, a law laid down as your roadmap to heaven. I warned you often; I shouted; I whispered; I kept you awake at night; I troubled you in your pleasures; I gave you no rest in your sins; I filled you with a sense of fed-upness and disgust and emptied your inner peace. To escape me, you looked for love in all the wrong places and in your fourth or fifth drink. But I found you. You were taken apart by your shrink but never put back together. You said your conscience was at peace but it was the peace that the world gives, which Our Lord rightly said is no peace at all. You tried to stop worrying when you should have worried; you should have mistrusted yourself when you were certain you were without blame. But I never tired. I never left you. Though you deserted me, I did not desert you.

Like the prodigal son who came to his senses, ridded himself of his false conscience for the true conscience his father taught him, and returned home, so must those in our country who live by the whims of a false conscience and sleep with the foolish

virgins. He should run to confession and receive instantaneous forgiveness, forgiveness on the spot, so he can hear along with the wise virgins in today's gospel, and the thief on His right, "Today, today, you will be with me in paradise."