

18A SML 2020  
MT 14:13-21

- ✓ When you think about God, what are your thoughts? Do you think of Him a man with a white beard with an all knowing look on His face . . .
- ✓ Do you think of God as Someone you pray to to hold it up! To hold it up so the other shoe doesn't drop! That was my Mother's image of God . . .
- ✓ Do you think of God as a "He doesn't care," as a kind of benevolent grandfather who likes to see you go places and do things, and doesn't care if you have a good time doing good things or a good time doing bad things? . . .
- ✓ Do you think of God in time of crisis as The Ideal or as a morale builder? . . .

If you hold any of these views of God, it might be hard to understand why you or anyone else would or even should worship God, or how God can be good if He is all knowing and yet bad things happen to good people, or if he lets you do as you please . . .

Let's start with the first difficulty: Why worship God? The word "worship" is a contraction for "worth – ship." It is a way of acknowledging the worth we have for another person. Worship is a sign of value, the price we put on a performance or a person. When you applaud an athlete or an actor on stage or a

returning hero, you are “worshipping” him in the sense of putting a value on his worth. Therefore, to worship God means to acknowledge in some way His Power, His Goodness, and His Truth. And if someone doesn’t worship God, he will worship something, and nine times out of ten he will worship himself. Hence we should not be surprised there are so many atheists.

Yet we have not answered the question, “Why worship God?” We have a duty to worship God, not because God will in any way be “less than” if we don’t, but because if we do not worship God, we will be “less than,” we will be imperfect, we will be unhappy. Let me explain.

Fathers love the little gifts from their children. They value a chocolate cigar from their son more than a box of Corona Coronas from their financial advisor. Mothers are the same way. They value a bouquet of yellow dandelions from their daughter more than a centerpiece of roses from a dinner guest.

Do these little gifts make you richer? Do you need a piece of chocolate or a handful of weeds? Outside of who gave them to you, they have no value, no use. Yet you love them! Why? Because your child is worshipping you; they are

acknowledging your love, your goodness, and by doing so they are perfecting themselves, that is, developing along the lines of:

- ✓ love rather than hate,
- ✓ gratitude rather than ingratitude,
- ✓ loyalty rather than disloyalty.

They are becoming a more perfect and happier child.

Just as you do not need chocolate or dandelions, neither does God need worship. Your children's gifts are signs of your worth in their eyes, just as prayer and adoration are signs of God's worth in our eyes. And, as their worship is needed for them to become more perfect and happier, so our worship of God is needed for us to become more perfect and happier as well.

A lover does not give gifts to the beloved because she is poor. He gives gifts because she is every gift he ever wanted. And the more he loves her, the less his gifts measure up. The gifts are his perfection, not hers. Worship in like manner is our perfection, not God's. The man who is ignorant is like the man who is irreligious. Both are imperfect, one in relation to his intellect, the other in relation to his whole being and his happiness.

Too many assume God is good only when He gives us what we want. We are like children who think our parents do not love us because they make us eat vegetables and go to school. In order to understand goodness, we must make the distinction between getting what we want and getting what we need.

When the prodigal son left the Father's house, he said, "Give me." "Give me the share of your estate that is coming to me." But when he returned a much wiser man, he merely asked for what he needed. "Make me." "Make me one of your hired hands."

The thief on the left judged the goodness of Our Blessed Lord by His power to take him down from his cross; that is what he wanted. The thief on the right judged the goodness of Our Blessed Lord by His power to take him into Paradise; that is what he needed.

In today's gospel, the multitude in the desert were not given gold bricks or jewels or money by Our Blessed Lord, and if they had been given gold or jewelry or money, none would have said they had enough. But He gave them bread, and the scriptures added, "they were satisfied." That was what they needed.

The goodness of God means that God gives us what we need for our perfection, not what we want for our pleasure and sometimes our destruction. The prodigal son is a case in point.

I've stated that worshipping God is our perfection. When I was in my depression, years ago, I spoke about it with a seminary classmate, who is one holy man. He is a holy priest. He said to praise God in good times and in bad, to praise God in the middle of my depression. I thought he was crazy. But I followed his advice. It did not lift my depression. But I followed his advice anyway.

Years later, when my Mother was dying, I was at her bedside with my sister Joanne and my brother Tim. And when our mother died, Joanne said, "Dan, you once said to praise God in good times and in bad. Let's pray the Divine Praises." I was shocked she remembered what my priest friend said years earlier, and we sat next to Mom's deathbed and prayed the Divine Praises.

God could never let you suffer a pain or a loss, or experience sadness, if it could not in some way minister to your perfection. Somehow, some way, this pandemic, this nation's unrest, your "this", whatever your "this" is, will minister to your perfection. If God did not spare His own Son on the

Cross for the redemption of the world, then we may be sure He will sometimes not spare your wants, that you might be all you need to be: a happy and perfect child of God.