

PASTOR'S CORNER



You have heard that it was said, “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.” But I say to you, offer no resistance to one who is evil.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth sometimes gets a bad rap – in the mind frame of our culture we often see it as promoting violence. But the saying is not about violence, it’s about vengeance. When we reflect on the experience of being wronged or hurt, our usual fallen desire is never really for a restitution and an equality. We don’t want the other to suffer as we have suffered, we want them to suffer more: and we have lots of ways other than ‘violence’ that can make that happen. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth is in opposition to those who would in vengeance seek more than what they had suffered in any way, shape, or form. It promotes justice against vengeance.

But it remains a mode of restriction, not freedom. It seeks to limit and restrict the vengeance we desire to take. Jesus Christ doesn’t want us to be restricted, he wants us to be truly free.

And so he says offer no resistance to one who is evil. Remember, now, that the Sermon on the Mount is addressed not so much to our external actions but to the interior state of the heart. When Christ is struck on the cheek by the guard before the Sanhedrin he does not turn the other cheek but instead rebukes the guard for his injustice. Christ does not simply want us to be passive to evil, he wants us to be able to do the good: to recognize what is the best response to the situation and to be able to do it.

But that’s only possible when we really can offer no resistance to one who is evil. When in my heart I am entirely capable of turning the other cheek, without needing restitution or vengeance, then I can ask, How can I best love the one who has struck me? What will be best for him and those around us? It becomes not a position of weakness but of tremendous strength. Perhaps offering no resistance will help the other to stop and return to reason; perhaps a stern rebuke will help them to realize the wrong they have done; and there will be times when a physical resistance is precisely what the situation calls for – but only the person who can in their heart offer no resistance to one who is evil can actually discern the particular situation’s good and choose to do that good in total freedom – without giving way to vengeance or having a sense of restricting their anger: freely being able to choose the good.

Jesus Christ speaks to our hearts but he very much means what he says – we must be able to offer no resistance to one who is evil – then we can freely choose the good. May we come to imitate him in this meekness – that we might have the true strength and freedom to always choose the good.

In Christ, through Mary,

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