

Chapter Five

This new chapter begins quite abruptly or after Jesus had done a whirlwind tour throughout Galilee as recounted in 4.23. While the last verse of that chapter ends with “great crowds,” here we have Jesus again present among them, *ochlos* +. It’s quite difficult to imagine how he managed to maintain his own space in such a circumstance. That’s where help from Simon and Andrew along with James and John would come in handy. Since healing was the priority of most people following Jesus, we can assume that the crowds (*ochlos* in the plural as it is in vs. 25) consisted of such people. Obviously word spread like wildfire, but there’s only so much one man could do.

After having engaged in non-stop healing with some preaching and teaching thrown in almost as a kind of supplement, Jesus decides to assess the situation. That’s part of the reason why this chapter begins with him seeing the crowds, *horaō*. Obviously much more than seeing is involved, for this verb suggests that he’s about to take a different plan of action. Jesus knew that above all else the people needed healing and rightly so. However important that is, he couldn’t continue doing it 7/24 but needed to shift his ministry, give it more drama, if we could put it that way.

Since Jesus is in the mold of Israel’s prophets, why not start off with some flair? A mountain has special association with Moses, so he’d be the best figure to copy. With this in mind Jesus looks around for the nearest high point and decides to go ahead with this plan. While ascending the mountain, the disciples must have asked Jesus where he got his healing powers, thinking that a mountaintop was the last place to continue his ministry. It’s a really good question, for once there, there’s nowhere to go. It was the most unsuitable place, so they figured he had lost it or had something else in mind. Perhaps even at this early stage some of the brothers may have started to entertain second doubts about having followed such a man.

Jesus didn’t take long to shift his focus. After having ascended the mountain, he sit down. This can be taken as a way of showing that he’s in charge despite the chaos all around him. As for the crowds mostly comprised of the ill and distraught that followed, Jesus didn’t seem to have much sympathy for their condition. Only those determined enough would make the ascent. Surely that was no mean task. As to what happened next, we have no record. Perhaps Jesus was asking at random advice from locals as to how handle the crowds which despite their ailments, continued to stream up the mountain. Many already were in tough condition. As for the disciples drawing near, the preposition *pros-* of the verb *proserchomai* + is indicative of

direction towards which. Apparently by now Jesus had increased his closest disciples though the number twelve and their names is missing and not presented until 10.1. At least a quick mention of their presence is a relief to know that he had support in this stressful situation.

Now that Jesus had a kind of protective ring about him in the form of his disciples, the next move is to address the crowds. Despite the pressing need people had for healing, Jesus knows this is a temporary fix. He's thinking of the long haul, that they need to be taught, but making the shift won't be easy. Such were his thoughts when here on the mountaintop he first opens his mouth and then teaches, *didasko* +. Jesus is fully aware that opening his mouth is a sign of authority having scriptural precedents. Nevertheless, he's taking somewhat of a chance while at the same time admittedly delighting in a bit of fanfare. Jesus' focus is on the long run. By this gesture he hopes to produce a modicum of silence and order so he can be heard above the din.

Actually having arrived on the mountaintop signals a very important moment. We have here the first real chance Jesus had to do some serious teaching. As for him teaching throughout Galilee we have no information as to the content but can infer its general theme from his initial words in 4.17, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And so the preaching that follows—the well known beatitudes—signifies a shift away from this crucial though initial stance. Again, it's a gamble since those who had ascended the mountain came with the expectation of being healed.

Vs. 3 begins under the somewhat commonly used but bland title "beatitudes" and runs for nine consecutive verses. One way of viewing them is that they're a summary...an outline...of what Jesus said in greater detail. They are easy to remember and reflect upon later. After all, Jesus didn't stop here. He continued for a while, to the end of Chapter Seven. Throughout it all he was fully aware of the crowds' (again, in the plural) expectations and knew they were there for healing. In truth, Jesus was taking a chance, for to continue preaching without healing was a gamble. However, it seemed to be working out okay...more than okay...concluding with the crowds being astonished at his teaching.

As for the word "beatitude," the text has the familiar adjective *makarios*, also as fortunate or happy. The Syriac is *tuv* and is rather bland or generic like the Hebrew *tov* or good. On the other hand, the Hebrew adjective *'esher* fits the occasion better since it's more dynamic, being derived from the verbal root *'ashar*, to go straight on, to advance. Similarly the relative pronoun comes from that root. So if we slam all

three together we get an insight into something that's more than happiness as commonly understood. It intimates transition as by the relative pronoun in the opening words of the first psalm: "Happy ('ashrey) the man (haysh) who ('asher) does not walk in the way of the wicked." In other words, we have here a man or 'ysh¹ (by reason of the sound of the word) who is happy.

We could stop with this verse right here, incomplete, of course, because it's certainly loaded. Keeping in line with the Hebrew word, we can say that happiness is found in that which is transitional (as opposed to being transitory or passing) as it passes through a person or 'ysh who ('asher)...Again, an intentional incompleteness, the blanks being left as such but suggestive. Admittedly this is reading into *makarios*, but it would come as no surprise it concurred with what Jesus meant and who explained to it his disciples on a later occasion. Being Jesus and familiar with Hebrew, they could grasp the connection. One way to see if it resonates is to substitute 'ashrey for *makarios* when reading each of the nine verses in which it's found. Most likely Jesus had in mind scriptural references with regard to each of the nine beatitudes he's about to lay out. With this in mind, one such notable example is included.

Vs. 3 opens with the first 'ashrey² with regard to those who are poor in spirit, *ptochos* and *pneuma* +, the Syriac *meshken* connoting poverty as the adjective at hand. Certainly *ptochos* fits everyone in the crowds (again, plural) without exception, including the disciples. As for being this way in spirit, most likely it didn't register among most of those who were present. It simply went over their heads. Why bother, some may have asked, being poor in spirit because already we're poor resource-wise? As for this verse, Jesus uses the present tense in order to drill it home.

Jesus adds to *makarios* the kingdom of heaven, *basileia* and *ouranos* (both +). The association of being *ptochos* and a *basileia* is a real paradox, especially one not of this earth, the latter of far greater worth than riches, the very source of such riches. *Basileia* automatically brings up political associations and must remind some listeners of Rome. Perhaps that's why Jesus added *pneuma* or spirit. Without it he couldn't make the association between *ptochos* and *basileia*.

One biblical reference relative to the *ptochos* at hand is Zeph 2.3: "Seek the Lord, all you humble of the land who do his commands." *Hanav* (cf. vs. 5) is the

¹Not from the same verbal root, of course.

²All nine such verses do the same. For the fun of it, let's substitute the notion of 'ashrey for *makarios* as noted in the previous paragraph. That would put the beatitudes in a different perspective, actually one that's more attractive.

corresponding adjective which suggests affliction, even persecution. This can come either from one's own circumstances or imposed from without. Regardless, it frees one up for *baqash* or to search for the Lord, this verb connoting the sense of touch, almost of groping. While engaged in this *baqash*, the humble of the land or 'erets—it involves more than physical territory, that is, a nation—are doing what the Lord commands, *mishpat* also as judgment. The verb *pahal* here also means to make in the sense of fabricate and is more poetic than the common *hasah* (to do, to make).

Vs. 4 has *makarios*/'*ashrey* with those who mourn or *pentheo* which also means to be sad, the Syriac '*aval* also to bewail. Because so many who have followed Jesus this early in the game are in search of healing for a variety of ailments, this statement hits home directly. In fact, there may have been quite a few already mourning on the mountaintop for those who had succumbed or feel just plain hopeless. So when Jesus uttered this sentence, the mourning stopped at once. Total silence except the sound of the wind. What really brings it home is the promise of being comforted. Who, what and when are left up the air. It was enough just to hear these words from someone who's endowed with healing powers but otherwise a mysterious person who also speaks with authority.

A biblical except relative to *pentheo* is Is 61.2 which is part of an extended sentence beginning in vs. 1: "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn." This is the second time *qara'* + or to proclaim is used, the first being in vs. 1 with respect to liberty. The sense of *qara'* is more to cry aloud. Note the piel form of *nacham* or to comfort; it also means to lament, to take vengeance. Here it applies to those mourning, '*aval* corresponding to *pentheo*, suggestive of walking with one's head cast down.

Parakaleo is the verb which as in 2.18 is comprised of the root *kaleo* (to call, summon) prefaced with the preposition *para-*, beside...to call-beside in the sense of getting close or intimate. Unlike the previous verse related to being *ptochos*, this one is in the future³. Those mourning right now aren't comforted but will be comforted. As to when, Jesus doesn't specify. Nevertheless, he has created a space in which this will emerge on its own.

Vs. 5 has '*ashrey* concerning those who are meek or *praus*, that is, not preoccupied with a sense of self-importance. The Syriac is more direct, *makek* being derived from *mak*, to lay down, to be prostrate on the ground. Even though virtually everyone on the mountaintop is poor and afflicted with a battery of physical ailments, chances are

³Vss. 3, 9, 10 and 11 are in the present tense. All others are in the future.

not many are meek as just described. In other words, being poor doesn't mean you're automatically equated with it. And so when everyone heard Jesus speaking, it made them pause to consider their situation. Perhaps cultivating meekness would help put their state of affairs into perspective, especially with the prospect of inheriting the earth, *kleronomeo* also as to come into possession. Compare this with the first beatitude, the kingdom of heaven for those poor in spirit. So if you combine both, you have pretty much everything you could imagine.

One scriptural reference to *praus* is Ps 37.11: "But the meek shall possess the land and delight themselves in abundant prosperity." The adjective is *hanav*, the same as used with respect to *ptochos* or poor in vs. 3. Actually the two verses have a lot in common. Here the meek will inherit the land or 'erets + as well as take delight in (*hal*, literally 'upon') much prosperity which is the noun *shalom* +or peace as well as wholeness. The verb is *hanag* which connotes a certain softness and delicacy.

Vs. 6 has 'ashrey as being hungry and thirsty for righteousness, *dikaiousune* + (S ke'nu) also as judicial responsibility and fairness. Keeping in mind the quote below, such persons will find satisfaction, *choregeo* also as to supply in abundance. Both the **RSV** and **NIV** have Is 55.1-2 as a reference with regard to this verse: "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and he who has no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Why do you spend your money for that which is not bread and your labor for that which does not satisfy? Listen diligently to me and eat what is good and delight yourselves in rich food." The waters aren't specified here but are associated with wine and milk. Of note is the double use of *shamah* +or to hear rendered as "listen diligently."

Vs. 7 has 'ashrey as describing those who are merciful or *eleeo* and by reason of this, will receive *eleeo* in return. The Syriac is *rechmatha'* also as love, friendship and desire. Of all the nine beatitudes, this one, along with vss. 9 and 10 (peacemakers and those suffering persecution), lack biblical references most likely because they are obvious and straight forward.

In vs. 8 has 'ashrey pertains to those who are not just pure or *katharos* (also as clean; S *daka'*) but pure with respect to the heart or *kardia*, the seat of physical, spiritual and mental life...in essence, one's very being. Such purity enables one to see God, *horaio* + being the common verb also as to catch sight of, to notice. This gives a certain suddenness to the act. The image here is not unlike a mirror reflecting God.

Ps 24.3-4 is a reference to this seeing God: “Who shall ascent the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully.” Probable reference is to ascending Mt. Zion and the Jerusalem temple. The first ascent (*halah*) reads “in (b-) the hill.” Similarly, with regard to the second act of standing (*qum*), it is “in his holy place.” Note use of *qum* whose basic meaning is to rise as though there were a second ascent within the holy place or *meqom*. The two rhetorical questions can refer to any person who has emerged from the chaos symbolized by the seas and rivers of vs. 2.

The verbal root for clean (*naqah*) in vs. 4 of Psalm Twenty-Four implies being free or to pardon. Perhaps this word as applied to hands suggests that a person had been manacled and are now free. As for hands, they represent external activity whereas heart is the inner person which is pure, *bar*; alternate meanings are son, beloved, field. The harmony between outer and inner cleanliness is carried over to the second half of vs. 4, the lifting of one’s soul or *nephesh* or *nasa’* (which is a silent gesture) and refraining from a false oath. False or *shawe’* fundamentally means to lay waste whereas vanity is a noun. The verbal gesture of not swearing deceitfully (*mirmah*) is the external gesture.

Vs. 9 has ‘*ashrey* describing the beatitude of those who are peacemakers (*eirenopoios*) and will be called sons of God. Given the composition of the crowd, this has practical application when it comes to domestic squabbles and local misunderstandings. Perhaps when hearing this some had in mind the larger, more explosive issue of Israel’s relationship with Rome which could turn sour at any moment.

Vs. 10 has ‘*ashrey* relative to those experiencing persecution, that is, in the present as opposed to the future. *Dioko* (S *radaph*, also to follow after) is the verb which also means to set in quick motion as well as to chase, an apt way to describe the nature of persecution. As for what’s involved, most likely Jesus hadn’t in mind religious persecution but the political variety which, of course, ties in with Rome. For the most part it didn’t affect the local population directly though people certainly were aware of the larger picture as it affected them, for example, the burden of paying taxes. This beatitude lacks a biblical reference as noted with regard to vs. 7.

Vs. 11 has a different twist on ‘*ashrey* insofar as it pertains to one’s relationship with Jesus himself (*heneken emou*, ‘on my account’). It’s aimed directly at those listening (i.e., ‘you’) to him instead of a more general approach. Because this comes as a surprise as well as a challenge, we can be pretty certain not many responded from the

crowds strewn over the mountaintop. In other words, they hear Jesus but aren't listening to him. While those who had been healed certainly were filled with gratitude, chances are they were intent on getting home and resuming their own lives. To them this talk about people slandering Jesus didn't make much sense. He was too new on the scene, essentially coming from nowhere. Some may have thought that Jesus had been speaking of an earlier experience but was reluctant to spell it out publicly.

As for the 'ashrey at hand, it applies to three types of abuse which people would undergo because of Jesus: *oneidizo*, *dioko* + and *poneros*. The first involves mocking or heaping up of insults, the second is with regard to persecution which is expanded from righteousness of vs. 10 to Jesus and putting up with evil, this adjective also inferring degeneracy. The Syriac verbs are *chasad*, *radaph* + and *byesh*. The first connotes defying, the second to follow after and the third, the general adjective for evil or wicked. Surely this beatitude didn't impress most of Jesus' listeners.

One biblical reference to this is Is 51.7: "Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of men and be not dismayed at their revilings." The Lord commands his people to listen to him (*shamah* +) because they know righteousness, *yadah* + and *tsedeq*. This can be compared with *dikaiousune* of vs. 6, those who hunger and thirst after it. Such intimate knowledge is possible because the people have the Lord's law or *Torah* in their hearts (*lev*). It will enable them to do the following two things: not to fear reproach and be dismayed at their revilings, the verbs being *yare'* + and *chatat* which fundamentally means to break.

Vs. 12 is a continuation of the 'ashrey of the previous verse where Jesus adds some encouragement...enticement?...to inspire people to consider what he had just said and perhaps be part of his following. However, apart from the disciples we don't hear of him doing any active recruitment. At this point it consisted just of the two sets of brothers and possibly several others, hangers-on, if you will, at least for the moment. Now he exhorts his listeners on the mountaintop to rejoice and be glad. *Chairo* is the verb for the former and suggests more or less constant state whereas the latter (*agalliao*) connotes intense joy. Combine the two and you have something that's over the top even though both tie in with suffering for Jesus' sake.

The reason for *chairo* and *agalliao*? Jesus says it's because a reward is laid up to be great not on earth but in heaven, *misthos* also as remuneration for work that has been done. That consists of being reviled, persecuted and evil spoken against oneself.

Wisely Jesus concludes with a historical perspective. Israel's prophets suffered from this threefold abuse and had received their rewards. This can't help but bring to mind 2Chron 36.15-16: "The Lord, the God of their fathers, sent persistently to them by his messengers because he had compassion on his people and on his dwelling place; but they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words and scoffing at his prophets till the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, till there was no remedy." The last words are scary. The Lord had tried his best to extend his mercy to the people, but even he has a limit. To say there's no remedy or *marpe'* is by any standards extreme. The verbal root *rapha'* fundamentally means to sew together and more commonly to heal. In other words, there's no more binding up left.

Jesus continues with what may be taken as a summation...abbreviation...of his teaching on the mountaintop, the beatitudes having had some success in consoling the crowds. At least momentarily it took their minds off their one track desire for healing. Surely any one person—and again we're talking about basically peasants whose lives centered around the Lake of Galilee—didn't embody one, let alone all the beatitudes. In fact the same holds true across the board for everyone. While Jesus addressed these people he knew that his disciples were recording his words for the ages. They weren't taking physical notes but stuffing his words away in their memory which compared with today, was far keener in the ability to retain information. Perhaps as Jesus continued with his teaching they could see a real parallel between him and Moses who had received the Torah on the holy mountain and delivered it to the people.

Vs. 13 continues with Jesus on the mountaintop. Perhaps by now some of the people had drifted away, knowing he wasn't going to do any healing but instead, teach. As for Jesus' teaching, at this stage it's pretty much straight-forward and admittedly bland. Knowing this to be true but essential, Jesus decides to shift gears having two images of a positive nature meant for encouragement. That is, he speaks directly to the crowds as demonstrated by the second person plural, "you." The first such of images coming in rapid-fire succession is salt which was considered valuable because it was a preservative. If salt is present in the earth it acts as a kind of fertilizer. However, the primary image that comes to mind are fields liberally sown with salt as a way of rendering them useless. Such was a common practice done to fertile land of a recently defeated enemy. Jesus, of course, has the positive image in mind. Should salt become insipid or *moraino*, he asks rhetorically how can it be restored.

Moraino also means to be foolish or to show oneself to be such and *halizo* as to salt or make salty once more. If the earth can't be re-salted, the salt which had been in it is

useless. Jesus makes this clear by using the vivid example of trampling it under foot. So for the earth to be salted—an image of oneself using the sense of taste—Jesus is pointing to the way a person comports himself through life. This isn't to be done in bits and pieces but in an overall or comprehensive manner. As for the trampling, the preposition *kata-* as down prefaced to *katapateo* and is along the lines of a stomping which is more graphic.

The second image of a positive note is not just light or *phos* + in and by itself but of the world. Jesus' listeners could identify with salt, but light on a worldwide scope was well beyond their reach. At the same time being present now as on a mountaintop is ideal for this image for a light which can be projected at great distances. That's why Jesus shifts from this light to a city on a hill unable to be hidden. In fact, if you were at some distance from this mountaintop, you'd see it swarming with people not unlike a vast array of ants on a mound. That assembly in a sense formed a collective light.

Returning to the image of light, Jesus gives the almost absurd but graphic example of lighting a lamp and putting it under a bushel. Instead, it's placed on a stand to shed light throughout the entire house. He's speaking of a single lamp...essentially a candle...which to give off maximum light needs to be situated as close to the center of a room or house as possible. So with this in mind he says in vs. 16 that one's light must shine before others but to do so gathered around this stand with a single lamp on it. In this way it will be the center of their lives and around which they will order everything. As for the light which others see, Jesus identifies it with good works or *ergon* (also as deed) which are *kalos* + or beautiful. As for *kalos*, it doesn't refer to something done which is simply good and acceptable but is more comprehensive. The idea of adornment is suggested which makes the image quite attractive. And so *kalos* has a way of making the person who sees it become equally *kalos*.

Such *kalos*-as-elegance just presented is, of course, meant to be seen but is much more. Jesus says that it's intended to make people glorify the Father of those so radiant, he being present in heaven. Seeing (*eidon*, also as to perceive) good works leads automatically to *doxazo* or to attribute glory and praise to God. Thus it moves to what is right before one's face to what is completely invisible. As for God being in heaven, there's a shift which takes place in the blink of an eye. That is to say, it's from *eidon* (in a person) to *doxazo* (God), the two being distinct but in a manner which is interchangeable. Another way of understanding this is that the *phos* of which Jesus speaks is a reflection of the *doxa* of *doxazo*.

After having presented two images that involve his listeners on the mountaintop along with God as Father, in vs. 17 Jesus takes what many would consider an unexpected stance. He speaks of himself with respect to the law and the prophets. We have to keep in mind that the people present with him essentially were peasants. Nevertheless, they had a rudimentary grasp of their religious tradition but clung to it with dear life. While everyone present on the mountaintop concurred that the beatitudes sounded beautiful, this sudden introduction of Jesus' relationship with two important tenets of faith came across as not quite in line with how they had been raised.

First of all, in a way Jesus reads the minds of those whom he's addressing by using the verb *nomizo* or to think, suppose. More fundamentally it means to form an idea about something or to hold as tentative until further evidence comes in. Also *nomizo* is related to the noun *nomos* which means custom or usage...in essence, something which is familiar and a guiding principle. Having that straight in his mind, Jesus now can come out with the controversial two verbs *kataluo* and *pleroo* to both *Torah* and the prophet. Jesus mentions the fact of loosening to *Torah* but doesn't, of course, carry through with it. That'd mean a loosening or *luo* which, if you will, is *kata-*inferring that which is down...a thorough loosening of that which is most central to Israel's religion.

Essentially the same applies to the prophets, those men who were prominent in Israel's history but can include all holy men and women who helped shape that nation's religion. Applying the verb *kataluo* to them would be bordering upon the idolatrous or to undo their collective witness which in turn was based upon *Torah*.

Jesus is quick to point out that instead of being identified with a loosening of both the *Torah* and prophets, he has come to fulfill them, *pleroo* +. This could be interpreted wrongly in terms of political action. However, if one has in mind what's implied by both *Torah* and prophets, it suggests that being present among the people is what counts. However, those in power both in the political and religious arenas won't sit by idly nor listen to Jesus as the crowds are doing right now. They will be instrumental in taking this *pleroo* to a place that will involve considerable suffering and pain. In other words, Jesus won't have to do a thing; all he has to do is await what will come to him.

In vs. 18 Jesus speaks somewhat cryptically, even vaguely. He's using passive language, "all is accomplished" or literally as "all may be occurring," the verb being *ginomai*, to come into being, to take place. What, then, is this "all?" Obviously it's

connected with the *Torah* as something not so much written but with the fuller sense of being inscribed conveyed by the Hebrew verb *saphar*. That, in turn, implies a close association with *Torah* where Jesus mentions the smallest letter in it, an *iota* or the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew *yod*. It seems that *Torah* will abide as long as heaven (*ouranos* + or the sky above) and earth, that they won't pass away or *parerchomai* or go by the side, *para-*. In other words the two will run concomitantly until *ginomai* or "all may be occurring." So Jesus is pointing to *Torah* as equivalent if not greater than the physical realm which is true from the mythic point of view. Reading it (and this implies doing it as *lectio divina*) is the equivalent of accessing God's presence, the one who created heaven and earth.

In vs. 19 Jesus comes off with a kind of veiled threat or warning not to meddle with the *Torah*. He brings this home by mentioning the smallest letter in it (i.e., *yod*) which no one has the authority to change. As for the *luo* or loosening in vs. 17 (i.e., *kataluo*: a loosening down or *kata-*), Jesus uses it in vs. 19 with respect to anyone who applies it to one of the least commandments or *entole* (also a mandate) within *Torah*. If that weren't bad enough, even worse would be teaching (*didasko* +) others to follow suite. However, there is hope because such loosening, while not advisable, has to do with observance and observance can never be complete but lacking in one way or another. The person so engaged will be considered least compared with one who observes these small commandments, that is, one considered as great. Thus within the universe of *Torah* is a reality broader than one can imagine which Jesus certainly acknowledges and tries to impart to his listeners on the mountaintop.

In vs. 19 Jesus turns attention to the scribes and Pharisees or religious authorities who are educated and belong to a class wholly other than those gathered on the mountain. Without bringing it out in the open, Jesus presents a critical view of the two groups while at the same time respecting them. Actually his listeners love this, their ears suddenly being perked more than when he had been in a preaching and teaching mode. Some would have wanted Jesus to go further in his criticism, but that isn't what he's about. If there were anything between the first words out of his mouth and through Chapter Seven that stuck in the minds of his listeners, we have them right here.

As for the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus speaks of righteousness or *dikaiousune* +, perhaps wishing to tie them in with his earlier words in vs. 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." Here he renders *dikaiousune* in more concrete terms or as applicable to daily life. That means we can

render *dikaiosune* as fairness or a desire to act uprightly. Chances are Jesus' listeners practiced that fairly well in their humble day-to-day interactions. Certainly it didn't reach the more subtle and more sophisticated realm in which the scribes and Pharisees operated who most likely would look down on their humbler counterparts. Thus the practice of *dikaiosune* as properly understood is the most important criterion for entering the kingdom of heaven. The verb is *eiserchomai* (literally, to enter into) with the preposition *eis*. I.e., we have a double *eis* or into. As for mentioning the kingdom of heaven, Jesus is being faithful to the very first words he uttered publicly, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

In vs. 21 Jesus gets down to practical, nitty-gritty details about relationships. He refreshes the memory of his listeners, that is, by appealing both to the *Torah* ('it is was said'⁴) and those to whom it had been addressed. Jesus shows reverence by calling them *archaios*, an adjective referring to what was from the beginning or a long time ago (*S qadeym*: first, former). Also by this term Jesus wants to make what was uttered then is just as valid now. The reference? One of the Ten Commandments, "You shall not kill" or *phoneuo* which is more along the lines of murder and therefore an intentional act.

The full sentence from Ex 20.13 is very short and the same as in the text at hand. As for the Hebrew *ratsach* (*S qatal*: also as to murder), it's pretty much equivalent to the Greek *phoneuo*. Virtually everyone present on the mountaintop was familiar with what Jesus is speaking about, namely, references from the Ten Commandments, the heart of Jewish religious life. In both instances—then and the present—murder makes one liable for judgment, the adjective *enochos* (*S chov*: to be guilty, to be unequally matched, powerless) with respect to *krisis*, judgment. Chances are that it will result in capital punishment. What made this statement even more frightful was that in some instances the Roman overloads might get involved and mete out punishment in the form of crucifixion, a horror to everyone.

After grounding his initial remarks in a key element from the Jewish code of moral behavior, Jesus adds his own interpretation, thereby elevating the original sense of the commandment at hand. That's where the participle *de* comes in—barely noticed but important—which the **RSV** translates as "but." Note that Jesus prefaces his words with "But I say to you," the active *lego* compared with the passive "it was said" relative to the *Torah*. This he does with the remaining scriptural citations. So in the verse at hand *lego* represents a distinction between two types of murder: the physical one and the mental one, the latter which Jesus puts as being angry, *orgizo* (*S*

⁴This is the first of six references to the phrase.

ragaz: prone to anger or to have enmity). Not only that, he increases the severity with the term *adelphos* or brother meaning that all people are equal and related with each other.

The person committing murder, so to speak, by expressing anger deserves hearing the condemnatory Aramaic word *rhaka* (S *raqa'*: contemptible), a term of abuse or contempt related to a lack of intelligence. Furthermore, such a person is liable (*enochos* +) or held accountable before the council, *sunedrion* being the highest court of the Jews. That, of course, is something anyone would want to avoid, again in light of the Roman overlords who could intervene at any moment. However, usually they let things be while at the same time keeping a close eye on what's going on.

Even worse than the example Jesus just presented is when someone uses the adjective *moros* (S *leal*: brutish) which means foolish or stupid. It makes him automatically liable (*enochos* +) for the fires of hell, *Gehenna* being the word which is the city dump for Jerusalem. The preposition *eis* or "into Gehenna" gives a sense that one will be there for good. As for the fires associated with it, they are slow-burning and therefore more persistent, not the kind that flare up and die down.

In vs. 23 Jesus gives an example related to what he had just expounded, not as intense, but still comes across as a stiff warning. Of concern is the offering a gift at the altar which presumably is a rare occurrence for those whom Jesus is addressing. Most likely he's referring to Jerusalem, and people of the Galilee area didn't get there terribly often. Passover might be the prime example which combines making a sacrifice with going on a pilgrimage. Good as all this may be, more important is to be reconciled where again Jesus uses the noun *adelphos* + to make it more personal.

Diallassomai is the verb to reconcile which implies the restoration of normal relations as well as to make an exchange, the *dia-* or through indicative of thoroughness. The Syriac *raha'* is pastoral and pertains to sheep; also it means to keep. Jesus employs this association of offering and reconciliation to show how religious practices which have become so ingrained in a culture can be taken as an excuse for less than exemplary behavior. It's far easier to focus on such observances than to engage in real life situations which have an effect over the long haul. While people would tend to agree, still it's hard to put into practice.

Because this example of reconciliation is difficult to carry out both then as well as now, Jesus saw the value of befriending the person who's making accusations, the *anti-* or against-ness of *antidkos* making it necessary. Note two indications of the

urgency involved, Jesus being fully aware that to continue in an adversarial relationship is damaging all around. That is, *tachu* and *en te odo*, immediately and “in the way” or at the same time one is off to court with him who is *anti-*. Also the suddenness with which Jesus recommends doing this can resolve the situation more quickly by not allowing it to fester indefinitely. After all, who wants to appear before a judge and end up in prison? Jesus means business, for the person who doesn’t allow reconciliation will remain in prison until he pays the very last penny. *Kodrantes* is the smallest Roman coin and once again intimates the ever present Roman rule hovering quietly yet persistently in the background.

In two paragraphs above we have the verb *diallassomai* or to reconcile. Jesus brings this a step further with the verb *eunoëo*, to make friends. More accurately, it means to think well, *noëo* (to perceive, to observe) prefaced with the adverbial form of *agathos* or good, *eu-* +. A more sober approach is implied, of having good thoughts with regard to someone who had been or still might be a threat.

Vs. 27 has the second instance of “it was said” where Jesus appeals to the *Torah*’s authority to back up his words. All such examples convey a clear impression that his authority is the one that counts, that of the *Torah* being derived from it. Now Jesus quotes a second time from the Ten Commandments, “You shall not commit adultery” [Ex 20.14], *moicheuo* for the Hebrew *na’aph*. Jesus ramps this up considerably by saying that just looking at a woman with lustful intent is adultery. The two verbs here are *blepo* and *epithumeo* (*S chaza’* + & *rega’*: desire, longing, appetite), the former being the common verb to see or to look at and the latter, to have intense desire (*thumos* +) upon or *epi-*. This looking → desire-upon is intensified by the preposition *pros*, indicative of direction towards-which. The suddenness and intensity effects adultery not in the physical sense but in one’s heart or *kardia* +.

In vs. 29 Jesus follows through on this *blepo/epithumeo* which deals with visual lust, if you will, by removing the source which is not so much the physical eye but the inner one. This vision is the one responsible for committing sin, *skandalizo* or to cause a downfall from which is derived the noun *skandalon*, a device for catching something such as a trap or snare. The verbs *exaireo* and *ballo* along with *apo* (‘from you’) are intended to show the immediate and drastic need to take such action as it pertains to keeping one’s heart or *kardia* pure. Jesus says this is more profitable or *sumphero*—to bear or to carry with—oneself than to have one’s entire body cast into Gehenna. That is the same place mentioned in vs. 22 with regard to being angry with one’s brother. Jesus counsels the same in vs. 30 concerning the cutting off one’s right hand when it

comes to sin, the hand applicable to doing sin compared with seeing it. And so he covers both the inner and outer person, eye and hand.

In vs. 31 we have “it was also said” instead of “You have heard” though it’s of the same order, if you will, and counts as the third instance of this expression. This time Jesus is referring to divorce or *apoluo* + which means literally a loosening from. It borrows from Dt 21.1 which is part of an extended sentence running through vs. 4. “When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house.” The text revolves around indecency which reads literally as “word (as expression) of nakedness” comprising of *davar* + and *hervah*. Implies is being uncovered in the sense of being discovered as well as laying naked in bed with a man other than one’s husband.

While Jesus subscribes to the Deuteronomy verse just cited, he amplifies it as indicated by the participle *de* + which the **RSV** renders as “but.” Furthermore, the words “I say to you” have a definite air of speaking authoritatively. Here *apoluo* + or loosening-from is with regard unlawful sexual activity by one’s wife. Should the husband do this, he’s making her an adulteress, and should a woman marry this man, he’s committing adultery, *moicheuo* +. Such talk is quite strong for those on the mountaintop, making them look within themselves as well as their more immediate family members and neighbors. Throughout it all we have no person asking Jesus for any clarification or the like, his words hitting too hard to evoke a response.

Vs. 33 has the fourth installment, if you will, of “you have heard” but this time prefaced with *palin* or again. Such is one way Jesus continues his use of scripture to enhance his own teaching. He presumes with pretty good certainty that his audience, humble though it may be, has a fundamental understanding of its religious heritage. Here he brings in “men of old” or *archaios* + which gives his interpretation on swearing an oath greater credence. In this instance Jesus’ words are given preceded by the original verse, Lev 19.12: “And you shall not swear by my name falsely and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord.” This verse stands out by reason of three similar sounding words or more accurately, beginning with the same letter, *shin*: *shavah* +, *shem* and *sheqer* or to swear, name and lie or fraud. Making a false oath profanes not just God but “your God,” that is, making it personal, the verb being *chalal* fundamentally as to lay open, to dissolve. To top it off, he says simply but majestically that he’s the Lord.

“You shall not swear falsely but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.” *Epiorkeo* (S *dagal*: to lie, cheat) is the verb where the preposition *epi-* or upon is indicative of an underhanded frame of mind. The Lord’s name isn’t mentioned but inferred by reason of Jesus making an association with the Leviticus verse above. In place of this swearing-upon a person is to perform what he or she already has sworn. That is to say, *apodidomai* (S *shalam*: to complete, make whole) literally as to give away but more as to fulfill relative to one’s *horkos* or oath, that is, minus the deceptive-ness inferred by the preposition *epi* of *epiorkeo*.

In vs. 34 Jesus shifts the tone of the Leviticus verse by again using *de* + or “but” and the authoritative “I say to you.” Such words wouldn’t be used if Jesus were simply engaged in a conversation. Instead, he’s imparting a teaching in a formal way which hopefully his listeners will apply to themselves. Instead of swearing an oath (*omnumi* is the verb) he counsels that it not be done in accord with heaven, earth, Jerusalem or one’s head. The details of these are spread out over the next two verses, that is, 34-35.

As for heaven, it’s where God has his throne (cf. Jas 5.12 for similar words). Jesus is using part of Is 66.1 which runs in full as “Thus says the Lord: ‘Heaven is my throne and the earth is my footstool; what is the house which you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest?’” If heaven is the Lord’s throne and earth his footstool, that means he spans the full distance in between which, of course, is all creation. And so he asks rhetorically about the house and place of rest the people are building for him. As for the latter, *menuchah* can be taken as the temple of Jerusalem situated midway between the divine throne in heaven and the divine footstool on earth. In other words, it stand in between both. This doesn’t contradict the Lord telling David to build a house which was followed through by his son Solomon. Rather, it infers an insight reaching beyond a particular spot (the Jerusalem temple) vis-à-vis the entirety of creation.

As for the forth element which Jesus counsels against, it’s swearing an oath by one’s own head or very person. Note the adverb *holos* or “at all,” also as “wholly” for emphasis. Jesus adds somewhat humorously that we’re unable to change a single hair of our head white or black by any attempt at swearing as he describes it. In vs. 37 he spells out the gist of this as to when we have to swear an oath, that is, our word or *logos* + (S *melata’* or *melal*) is to be done simply and directly. Any more comes from the evil one, *poneros* +, the devil or the same one who had tempted Jesus in the wilderness. Such *poneros* (S *beysh*) ties in with swearing an oath in a false manner, *epiorkeo* of vs. 33.

Vs. 38 has the fifth example of “you have heard that it was said” in reference to Ex 21.23-24: “If any harm follows, then you shall give life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.” The context is the judge deciding the proper punishment for any harm (*‘ason* also as mischief and seems to infer premeditated action) done to a pregnant woman. Again, in vs. 39 Jesus brings this verse to a whole new level as indicated by the conjunctive *de* + translated as “but.” What he proposes sounds downright ridiculous, obviously extreme. Our first instinct is to be defensive should someone evil try to do something to us. Instead, Jesus advises not resisting it, *antistemi* (S *qam*: to take a stand) literally to stand against a person who is evil or *poneros* +. In sense, this is a bit ambiguous because it could refer to a person or the one who is *poneros* mentioned in vs. 37. Chances are it’s a person influenced by the one who by nature is *poneros*.

Not engaging in *antistemi* takes on five forms which are extreme by any measure. What’s striking is the way Jesus speaks of them as though they were perfectly normal to do. They are as follows:

- The famous exhortation of turning of one’s cheek.
- Freely give one’s cloak to a person who’d sue you.
- Go two miles with one who forces you to go one mile.
- Give to one who begs.
- Do not refuse a person who borrows.

Most likely 99.99% percent of those hearing this on the mountain would not agree, something Jesus had anticipated. Although their implementation is clearly out of reach, in reality Jesus expects going at it little by little, taking baby steps and perhaps focusing upon one of the five, not swallowing them all at once. After a while, one may advance. The big problem, of course, is holding on to the memory of personal offense and not being able to let go.

So with this in mind Jesus moves on (one would ask how can you move on after this?) to flesh them out. He starts in vs. 43 with the sixth example based upon Lev 19.18: “You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.” This verse is couched within the context of one’s own people, i.e., Israel. By any standard not taking vengeance nor bearing a grudge with closer members makes this more difficult to practice. The two verbs are *natar* and *naqam*; the former means to watch or to retain while the latter connotes satisfaction by taking vengeance. And so loving one’s neighbor is the divine command, *‘ahav* suggestive of breathing after. There’s

simply no way out of this. The verse concludes with the Lord saying that he is as he is. A person can rely upon such a statement as being constant and thus helpful to avoid despair or fear. To no surprise, the verb *agapao* (S *chuv*: also to show affection) is used in the verse at hand, the verbal root for *agape*.

Vs. 44 has another distinction between the scriptural passage Jesus quotes from and his own take on the matter, that is, through the conjunctive *de* + translated as “but.” As we’d expect, Jesus does use the verb *agapao* + (root of *agape*) but not in and by itself. Along with it he throws in praying for one’s enemies, *proseuchomai* (S *barek*: to bow down) more as to make petition. Note the preposition *pros-* prefaced to the verb signifying direction towards-which. Such *pros-*ness is on behalf of those responsible for the persecution, *dioko* +. Jesus doesn’t intend this next-to-impossible command of having *agape* towards these persons to be done in isolation. Rather, in vs. 45 he continues to say that by doing this one becomes a son of your Father who is in heaven.

By reason of this position (i.e., above, if you will), he both observes and participates in making not just the sun but his sun rise on both those who are evil and good alike as well as sending rain on the just and unjust. The two pairs are *poneros* and *agathos* (both +) *dikaios* + and *adikos*. And so both sun and rain are not representative of a remote indifference but of not bothering to make distinctions. To do so at this level is virtually impossible to carry out. That’s why Jesus couches it in terms of one’s Father who is in heaven, not present on the earth. To the former it is possible whereas as to the latter it is not possible. Thus the introduction of space physically speaking helps to understand what’s going on here.

Towards the end of this chapter Jesus comes off with four rapid three rhetorical questions followed by a concluding verse which gives an exhortation in light of them. They are enumerated as follows:

-No reward or *misthos* + for showing *agapao* in return for *agapao* +. A secondary type of rhetorical question is attached here, though not included among the four, where Jesus exclaims that tax collectors engage in the same *agapao*.

-Saluting your brothers is essentially no big deal, *aspazomai* meaning to recognize someone. Again Jesus throws in a secondary rhetorical question, that the Gentiles do the same.

Vs. 48 brings Chapter Five to a close with what seems like an ultimatum as far as religious and moral behavior is concerned, well beyond the reach of all who are on

the mountaintop listening to Jesus. He tells...commands...them to be perfect in the same way their heavenly Father is perfect. *Teleios* is the adjective applicable to God the Father as well as people. It doesn't involve an unattainable goal but to live in a way where one is geared toward the end of things, the *telos* or end of life in the sense of completion. *Gamer* is the Syriac adjective derived from the verbal root which is similar and connotes completion as well as maturity. One can only speculate how this went over with the crowds who, it should be kept in mind, are designated as *ochlos*, essentially a mob or not far from it. By now people must have been drifting away down the mountain saying they've had enough. After all, what happened to the healing? They had forgotten the real healing Jesus had in mind as embodied by his words, the healing of mind and spirit.

Chapter Six

This new chapter passes seamlessly from the previous one, Jesus, of course, still on the mountain with the *ochlos* or crowd. Note the directness with which the verb *prosecho* (S *chor*: to look, behold) leads off, literally to have-toward or in the direction toward-which, *pros-*. Jesus is cautioning not to manifest one's piety, *dikaiosune* + more properly as righteousness. That is, it's best to avoid being seen, *theaomai* more as to behold in the sense of taking it all in. Failure to heed the directness of *prosecho* will preclude receiving a reward offered by one's Father in heaven. Note the verb *echo*, the same root as in *prosecho* and is accompanied with the preposition *para*. It's with regard to the reward or *misthos* + which comes from beside the Father, if you will. This intimates both directness and a certain remoteness, the two acting simultaneously.

This example implies that the temptation to be seen or *theaomai* is an unfortunate illusion. Despite the many times one may engage in making a show of piety—righteousness as noted above or perhaps better, self-righteousness—it doesn't register where it should. The person doing it is aware that something is missing, that he won't get a divine recompense. That feeling, of course, can have a beneficial outcome provided it makes him aware of how foolish his actions truly are. Even those who are recipients of his piety as through almsgiving and various good deeds can pick up that something isn't quite right.

Vs. 2 begins with *otan oun*, "thus when" and represents a shift where Jesus moves to speak of true almsgiving, *eleemosune* as meeting a basic need. It is to be done in complete silence, that is, without broadcasting the fact and without a desire to be

seen, *theaomai* as in the previous verse. In other words, hypocrites favor *theaomai*, the noun *hupokrites* meaning one who pretends or dissembles. Adopting such a stance is a sign that one craves an audience, again *theaomai* coming into play.

Jesus picks out two of the most obvious places to show oneself off, the streets and synagogues. The former applies to everyone and the latter to observant Jews. Jesus acknowledges that there's some shred of redemption in all this, that they do have their reward. After all, they're not doing anything manifestly evil which implies they will receive a reward. Those on the receiving end are getting much needed help, and this is what concerns Jesus. However, given the circumstances, it'd be better not to inquire further into what that may be. That's intimated by a certain finality when Jesus says "amen," a dead give-away as it is in vs. 5. Indeed, those listening to him knew exactly what he meant by that.

Jesus takes this hiddenness a step further in vs. 3. One's left hand isn't to know what one's right hand is doing. Physically speaking this is impossible since by nature the two hands are coordinated and must work together. Jesus recognizes the fact that we're disinclined to do charitable deeds quietly and out of the limelight which is why he takes the need for concealment to the extreme. An extreme tendency require an extreme antidote.

Vs. 4 is part of an extended sentence beginning with vs. 3, the first word being *hopos* or "so that." The purpose? To engage in almsgiving or *eleemosune* +. It's to be done without fanfare, *kruptos* connoting that which is unknown and just the opposite of what a hypocrite is fond of doing. So the whole gist of Jesus' words is to dispose oneself to the Father who sees in secret, *blepo* + (compare with *theaomai*). As for doing such alms in secret or *kruptos*, it will draw the Father who sees in *kruptos* to mete out a reward, this too not being specified but left deliberately as somewhat vague. Actually the person intent on doing the right thing is not concerned about a reward. For him it doesn't enter at all into the picture.

So if a person doesn't succumb to the innate though difficult to admit desire to show off publicly, something far better will happen to him. He will receive a reward from the Father who sees in a hidden manner. It's the way he operates, simple as that. Should he do it in dramatic fashion as he did coming down on Mount Sinai, people would be in awe initially, but it would wear off rather quickly. This preference for doing things in secret reveals a profound knowledge of human nature. Also it extends to his giving or *apodidomai*, the common verb *didomai* prefaced with the preposition *apo-* or from. However, the person receiving it does know what's going

on and may require some sensitivity in getting accustomed to the way the Lord likes to keep things under wraps. Again, Jesus doesn't reveal what the Father metes out. All this talk about a reward, human or divine, shows that a person engages in charitable activity in order to gain a reward. It may not be out there for all to see as the hypocrites would have it; nevertheless, this desire is the primary motivating factor.

A quick note with regard to the Syriac translation of the two instances of *kruptos*. For both it's *kasa'*, also to veil. As for the Father giving a reward, it's with the added word *gelya'* or in open fashion which can mean that others will see it as well.

Vs. 5 begins with the conjunctive *kai* or "and" to show the connection between adopting a tacit or hidden approach to almsgiving and prayer, the two being affiliated intimately. So the transition from one to the other is not radical but actually seamless. The verb for prayer is *proseuchomai* + with emphasis yet again upon the *pros*-ness of such prayer. This form of prayer as petition is not to be like that of the hypocrites as noted in vs. 2. The difference is that they love to make a display of their activities, street corners and synagogues, places with a high concentration of people. The verb is *phileo* which is akin to *agapao* but with a more focused or specialized interest, if you will.

As for these hypocrites, Jesus says that they too have their reward as the others mentioned in vs. 2. It seems these words concerning true almsgiving are intended to prime the listeners to what Jesus is about to say concerning prayer, *de* + or "but" being a clear indicator of this. *Proseuchomai* + is the verb which as has been pointed out, has to do with making petitions. In sum, this is the most basic form of prayer and obviously would appeal to Jesus' audience on the mountaintop in their desire for healing. Often *proseuchomai* is understood as having a public character, even a liturgical one. However, here Jesus associates it with going into one's room or *tameion* or better, a storeroom, not an especially comfortable place to be. Perhaps he has in mind a place for common use, the last spot one would consider because it's out of the way. Given the time and culture, this *tameion* could be either a detached building or down in the cellar.

Jesus is serious about praying. He says that we should shut the door after which we are to pray to our Father in secret, *kruptos* +. This, of course, is the same word with regard to giving alms in vs. 3. In a sense, *kruptos* is ironic in that you'd normally associate being in the *tameion* as sufficient. Because it's a storeroom and despite being

out of the way, there's the potential of someone barging in unexpectedly. So we can take the shutting of the door as actually locking it.

Jesus drives home this secrecy by a second mention of it. First the Father is in secret, pure and simple. In addition, he sees (*blepo* +) in secret, this mentioned in vs. 4 with regard to one giving alms in secret. There he will reward bestow a reward, *apodidomai* +. Part of the deal to accept this reward is that one must be aware of being watched, *blepo*. Without it there is no reward, this as in earlier instances is not elaborated upon but left to us guessing. As the content of the reward, nothing is said. One has to actually be in secret to discover it.

In vs. 7 Jesus comes off with some preliminary remarks about *proseuchomai* before presenting the well-know Our Father. He cautions against copying the Gentiles which include the Romans and longer established Greeks and the influence they've had. Apparently they and perhaps other non-Israelites are by nature fond of heaping up not so much words but stock phrases which are empty, *polulogia* being a perfect way to describe this which may mean corresponds to out various titles, etc., to the gods. *Battalogo* is the verb at hand which means to imitate someone who's stammering or repeating the same words repeatedly. Such imitation won't be heard by the Lord, *eisakoueo*, the preposition *eis* as into, to hear-into. The biblical image that comes to mind are the prophets of Baal and Elijah: "And they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon" [1Kg 18.26].

In vs. 8 Jesus counsels not to be like the Gentiles just mentioned, they being well known to the local population as arrogant and often using their position to exploit those less fortunate. In truth, Jesus doesn't have to tell them not to be like them; they're universally disliked if not hated. The best part in this situation is that their Father—and by now the people listening to Jesus are getting used to this familial name as applied to the Lord—knows their needs even before they're on their hearts and mouths. The verb is *eidon* + with respect to *chreia* (S the verb *baha'*, to seek, desire) or need. Although *kruptos* or a word indicative of such hiddenness isn't used, we can assume that God the Father is watching in this fashion, well aware of all the details.

Now at last in vss. 9-13 we have what has become known as the Our Father which Jesus introduces simply as "Pray then like this," *houtos oun* +. Although this is so familiar, at the time it was revolutionary to address the God of Israel in such a

familiar way. Surely that alone was enough to grab the attention of the *ochlos* on the mountaintop. Any commotion or restlessness ceased immediately.

Although Jesus posits the Father in terms as belonging to us, that is, the Father who is ours, nevertheless he remains in heaven, literally “in the heavens” or *ouranos* +, his proper dwelling. Despite the presence of *houtos oun* or “then like this” which means he’s giving a kind of demonstration, he’s addressing “our” Father directly. His name—and this comes immediately after the one of Father—is to be hallowed. The verb *hagiazō* (S *qadash*) means to set aside or set apart which is the Hebrew concept of holy. So despite the first person plural associated with Father, this very name is designated as being wholly other.

Although the Father is “our” as well as being in heaven, the gap between both can be bridged by wanting the following two which work as one. “Wanting” or similar words are awkward to apply in this situation since something far more mysterious is at work. That is, the kingdom or *basileia* + of the Father and his will to be done on earth as in heaven. Note that it’s the *basileia* plain and simple, not the one of heaven though the association is obvious. *Thelema* is the noun for will which is the way this *basileia* is managed; not in an authoritarian fashion but one where that which is currently in effect in heaven exerts its influences upon earth. The connection is bridged by the two words *hos* and *epi*, “as” and “upon.” The first applies to heaven and suggests an active exercise of *basileia* whereas it’s still somewhat problematic for the latter. For *basileia* to take effect there will require more time, something that doesn’t exist with regard to the former. Thus we could say that *hos* represents transcendence whereas *epi* existence or presence in space and time.

Vs. 11 gets concrete, asking for bread which is modified by *epiousios* (S *sunqam*: the thing needed) rendered as “daily” which seems a strange way of putting it in light of “this day.” You’d think it would run as “Give us this day our bread” which would be suitable enough. One way of rendering it (the most likely one, it seems) is along the lines of “for the current day.” Literally it’s based on the *ousia* (being) prefaced with the preposition *epi*-, “upon the being.” Chances are it refers to bread as one of the most basic foods around and necessary for survival, especially among a large amount of people as we have here assembled on the mountaintop.

Vs. 12 begins with the conjunctive *kai* (and) to show that the words he’s telling us to address to the Father have a close relationship with forgiveness. And so hopefully the Father will forgive us our trespasses, *aphiemi* (S *shavaq*: to depart, leave) also as to dismiss or release. The noun *opheilema* (S *saklu*: transgression, folly) has a financial

implication such as a debt in need of being paid off. Nice as this request happens to be, there's a catch to it. We are to exercise the exact same *aphiemi* as the Father. Jesus is well aware this is impossible and we can be fairly certain the Father is of the same mind. Still, such exaggerated words are to be taken in stride as showing what we can tend toward, that being the whole idea behind such strong words.

Just as vs. 12 begins with a conjunctive, so does vs. 13 mean that the forgiveness of sins is tied in with a request not to be led into temptation. Note the two occurrences of the preposition *eis* or into: *eisphero* and *eis* with regard to *peirasmos*. The first is literally a bearing-into whereas the second is into with regard to being tempted, that not specified but put in a general way which gives it a certain flexibility. One approach is to request avoiding this double *eis*. It's followed immediately by a preposition opposite to it, *apo* or from with regard to *poneros* + or that which is evil. The connecting verb is *rhuomai*, to save or rescue. In sum, we're to ask the Father to avoid situations (signified by *eis*), but should we do not for various reasons, we are to ask for an *apo*. It appears that *peirasmos* and *poneros* are two different realities which can stay separated, for if joined, we have a problem on our hands. It's precisely this joining the Father can work to prevent from happening.

Vss. 14-15 form one extended sentence where Jesus expounds on the forgiveness he just set forth with it's seemingly impossible goal. Actually it's a kind rehash of vs. 12 where we have the noun *opheilema* as trespass now surpassed by *paraptoma*, literally a stepping beside (*para-*). When you take both into consideration along with the demand by God to forgive or *aphiemi* both, the initial difficult can be overcome but not by human effort. Perhaps that's why in vs. 15 which brings to a close Jesus' discourse on the subject we find him saying that his Father (i.e., 'my Father') won't forgive your trespasses if you don't first do it. While this is a negative way of putting it, actually it's encouraging. Jesus is saying that once you forgive someone, the Father rushes in and takes over from there. Obviously the words *opheilema* and *paraptoma* cover a whole range of misdoings, some of which are quite horrendous. Still, the idea is to allow the Father to step in regardless.

In vs. 16 Jesus shifts gears to fasting which was held in high regard for religious reasons even among people who basically lived at the poverty level or just above it, the verb being *nesteuo* +. Actually his take on it is quite positive, even revolutionary, by first contrasting it with the hypocrites who are the most noticeable ones engaged in this religious practice. They take pleasure in dirtying (S *kamar*, to be gloomy) their faces, *aphanizo* (S *chaval*: to be corrupt, depraved) so as to become unrecognizable by a change of appearance. The verb also means to cause something to disappear. One

can't but have in mind the image of a woman adorning herself with cosmetics designed to conceal her true appearance. Still, the desire to stand out is central, the verb *phaino* (*chaza'* +) as to cause to appear, bring to light. Compare with *aphanizo*, the alpha privative. As with the above mentioned hypocrites, Jesus doesn't condemn such persons outrightly but simply says that they have their reward (S '*agar*: to hire). Again, one can't help but wonder what that reward might be. We know that it's better not to inquire but to leave it be.

Vs. 17 contains similar advice but when you come down to it, anointing one's head and washing require considerable effort. Such care is designed to make one pass as unnoticed when fasting; essentially one's exterior look is to be identical as when you're not fasting. This can be seen in light of the Father (i.e., your Father) who is presented as being in secret, the adjective *kruphaios* (S *kasa'*: to conceal, veil). Where precisely this secret-ness happens to be is not given, rather, it's simply inferred. Nevertheless, the Father sees (*blepo* +) from that place, if you will, and will bestow his reward, *apodidomai* + (S *parah*: to spring up, to repay). The Father also is in secret and sees the hypocrites as well. If he didn't he wouldn't be able to reward them as it says in vs. 16.

In vs. 19 Jesus counsels not laying up treasures on earth, *thesaurizo* (S *sayam*: to lay down, to set) being the verb which to those on the mountaintop wasn't a real problem due to their inherent poverty. Nevertheless, coveting even limited resources can be an issue, for thieves can steal those as well. And so covetousness isn't exclusive to persons who are well off. Regardless of their material resources, those listening to Jesus would concur more readily when he told them to lay up this *thesaurizo* in heaven, the noun being *thesauros* or treasure.

Figuring out how to do that is up to each person though obviously there are some general characteristics. First you have to have a clearer idea of what heaven is about. It is there that the Father lives as Jesus had stated. So if that's where he is located, your treasure will be in good hands, not on earth but away from it. Then you have to figure out what to actually store up in that place on high. It has nothing to do with physical goods, so essentially it's invisible or if we take a cue from all the talk about being and doing in secret, is done discreetly. Again, the Father is key to all this which means the *thesaurizo* actually turns out to be him. Clearly this is no place where a thief can break in nor does he have interest in doing so. Also it's immune to decay and rust. So once you realize this, you have something incomparable which is why Jesus says that the location of your treasure is in the same place as your heart, *thesauros* and *kardia* + being equivalent.

In vs. 22 Jesus equates the eye not just with a lamp but its relationship with the body, *luchnos* connoting a lamp that can be either stationary or portable. This eye-as-lamp has to be in good condition or *aplous* (S *pasahat*, to stretch forward, make straight), an adjective which connotes simplicity as well as single-mindedness. If the eye were the opposite, it would take in all sorts of images which is a genuine problem today as well as then. This simplicity enables the body to be flooded with light, the darkness being equivalent to a multitude of images. The adjective to describe this is *poneros* + (*beysha'*: evil) or downright worthless and *skoteinos*, fundamentally as full of gloom. Jesus ends his remarks with an exclamation, namely, that if the light in you is *skoteinos*—and this implies its complete absence—the darkness or *skotos* is overwhelmingly huge.

About now those on the mountaintop must have had trouble absorbing all that Jesus was communicating to them. Some of it was good and some of it was...well...not so good if not impossible to adopt. Jesus was aware of this yet continued. He wanted to get out as much teaching as possible, knowing full well that his words would be set down for future generations which would have the same basic experience. It doesn't matter if they are poor like those at hand or relatively well off. Human nature is the same across time and space as well as various cultures.

In vs. 24 Jesus hits upon one subject and one alone, that a person cannot serve two masters, *douleo* (S *palach*: to labor, work, plow) often as being a slave or acting like one with regard to a person who has power or authority, *kurios*. This boils down to a choice represented by the following two pairs of verbs:

-*Miseo* and *apapao* + (S *sana'*: to be detestable and *racham*: to delight in, desire), to hate also in the sense of to neglect and to love or to have *agape*.

-*Antecho* and *kataphroneo* (S: *yeqar*: also as to be heavy and *shot*: to have contempt, neglect) or to have strong attachment and to look down upon (*kata-*), the verbal root being *phroneo*, to think, to have understanding. Note the two prepositions *anti-* and *kata-*, literally as to have against and to think down upon. Both are applicable to serving or *douleo* (S *palach*, both +) either God or *mammon*, the latter as wealth or property. In a sense, most of the people listening to Jesus didn't have to worry about *mammon*. They simply lacked it but could manifest greed in other ways.

In vs. 25 Jesus gets concrete, that is, he speaks directly to a matter that affects his listeners. *Dia touto* translated as “therefore” serves to both shift attention as well as signaling a request to pay close attention, *lego* + or to say in the sense of declaring.

This makes what follows all the more attractive since it deals with the nitty-gritty details of daily life. At issue is anxiety about such basics as eating and drinking or essentially, what's necessary for daily sustenance. The verb is *merimnao* (S 'azaph: also to take care of), to be apprehensive or unduly concerned and even pertains to one's body and life itself, the latter being *psuche* (S *naphesh*) often as soul. This is as basic as it gets by any standards. In fact, Jesus puts such concern in terms of a rhetorical question in order to relativize what we consider as absolutes. It's the first in a series of such questions Jesus usually employs to make his listeners uncomfortable which is not the case here and right through the end of this chapter.

Next Jesus gives the famous example not just of birds but "birds of the air," *ouranos* + also as heaven but of the sky. The verb at hand is *emblepo* (S *chor* +) meaning to look intently or with direction, *em-* or *en-* as "in." When seeing them flying about from place to place, we're struck by the freedom they represent to us earth-bound creatures who are compelled to toil away. In truth, birds are concerned about survival just as much if not more than humans. Nevertheless, your Father (again, as belonging to the listeners) who is heavenly takes care of them. Note that he's described *ouranios* or belonging to the *ouranos*, the same realm as the birds though much higher above them. Thus the birds have a certain kinship with the Father by reason of flying about in *ouranos*. After stating this, Jesus comes off with another rhetorical question which centers around his listeners being of greater value, *diaphero* (S *yetar*: to have over and above) literally as to carry through or to differ to see the advantage of this difference.

In vs. 28 Jesus asks why his listeners are anxious about clothing, *merimnao* + followed by an answer, if you will. This turns out to be an invitation to consider the lilies of the field, *katamanthano* (S *baqa'*: to inquire into) consisting of the verbal root *manthano*, to learn to know, prefaced with the preposition *kata-* which here means in accord with. In essence, it means to pay close attention not so much to the lilies but how they grow, that is, the means by which they grow, the process involved. By comparison, humans have to toil or spin clothes, *kopiao* (S: 'eley: to take pains, to labor) being the verb for the former also as to become weary. And so focus upon the "how" precludes such work.

Jesus brings home the tendency to be anxious in vs. 29 by the legendary example of King Solomon's glory (*doxa* + S *shuvcha'*: also pride, pomp) which was inferior to just one lily. He doesn't mention beauty, but certainly it's inferred. As for the lilies, they enhance the grass of the field. Although the grass may be alive right now and adorned with the beauty of the lilies, on the next day it will be burned in an oven. This gives occasion for the rhetorical question where God...not the Father...will cloth

his listeners who have little faith. So while they too are destined to be burned, their faith, even if little, can save them from such a fate.

In light of the transitory nature of life and what people value, in vs. 31 Jesus counsels not to bother worrying about nourishment, something that unduly occupies the minds of the Gentiles. Compared with them, the poor folk indeed worry about scrounging to get enough food for the day. Indeed, those on the mountaintop are familiar with the Gentiles which makes the contrast between them and those over them all the greater. Despite their inherent poverty, the Father again as “your” knows that they need all such means of sustenance, *chrezo*.

Vs. 33 brings to a head all that Jesus said with regard to our tendency to be anxious about our lives. It begins with *de* + translated as “but” and is designed to put such concern into proper perspective. Jesus counsels...practically demands...his listeners to seek (*zeteo*; S *baha'*: to beseech, to desire) his kingdom, his being in reference to the kingdom or *basileia* + of his heavenly Father in the previous verse. This is accompanied with his righteousness or *dikaiosune* + or the means by which this kingdom is established. As a consequence, all things will be added, *prostithemi* (S *yasaph*: to give in addition) where the *pros-* or direction towards-which are added as a kind of supplement. While such things are valuable in their own right, they pale in comparison to the divine *dikaiosune* (S *zedqa'*: due, portion).

In the concluding verse of Chapter Six for the third time Jesus tells his listeners not to be anxious about the morrow, *merimnao* +. Also he personifies tomorrow by saying it will have this same *merimnao* in and by itself, so let it be. In contrast to the future, Jesus says that any given day has sufficient trouble or *kakia* in and by itself, this noun fundamentally as evil. Indeed, anyone can identify with that.

Chapter Seven

This new chapter continues seamlessly from what went before or from the beginning of Chapter Five, that is, Jesus teaching on the mountaintop and the *ochlos* or crowd listening in. Because this took place over an extended period of time people, we can assume that people were coming and going. Given the fact that Jesus wasn't engaged in healing, the crowds must have dwindled considerably, for that is why they had come in droves. Also it was quite crowded on the mountaintop with so little room to maneuver. Throughout we haven't heard a peep from the apostles. However, someone...either them or a more learned person from the *ochlos*..thankfully was

taking notes mentally which is why we have the text at hand. Also there's a certain parallel between Jesus and Moses. The major physical difference, if you will, is that the *ochlos* was on the mountaintop with Jesus whereas in the case of Moses the people were at the mountain's base. That in and by itself is a significant shift while the two essentially remain as one.

In the first verse Jesus speaks somewhat forcefully, and we can assume he paused a bit so as to allow these words to sink in to the ears of those present. The issue at hand is a common fault to which we're all prone, judging. *Krino* (S *don*) is a verb which indicates the desire to influence the lives of other people, usually in the negative sense, and with the intent to enhance our own position. Should we decide to engage in this *krino*—and Jesus is speaking of doing it both inwardly and outwardly—the same *krino* would come back as a haunting presence from which we couldn't escape.

Vs. 2 continues this theme, putting *krino* in the context of measuring. The verb *metreo* (S *kol*) connotes a sizing up and thus a guiding principle to direct the energy represented by *krino*. The combination of *krino* and *metreo* applies to both extreme as well as to minor cases. The force of the latter verb depends upon that of the former, of how strong and prejudiced a person happens to be. The silver lining in all this is that Jesus recognizes the fact that we can't eliminate *krino* and *metreo* completely. However, he infers that the best strategy is to minimize both as much as possible. He does this indirectly, of giving us the opportunity to insert a pause between awareness of our tendency to *krino* and to experience it first hand. In most cases that suffices to minimize the damage or avoid getting damaged in the first place.

In vs. 3 Jesus speaks of a way to effect lessening the impact of *krino* and *metreo*; not only that, to eliminate it completely. He comes off with a rhetorical question concerning something we do all the time but obviously are fearful to admit. Why do we pay attention to a speck in our brother's eye while failing to notice the log in our own? The two verbs are *blepo* + and *katanoeo* while the Syriac has *chaza'* + and *bachar*, the latter as to prove, ascertain. The former is the common verb to see as we'd do in any circumstance whereas the latter implies closer attention, the preposition *kata-* as in accord with and prefaced to *noeo* +, to perceive or to observe. The objects in question are two complete opposites, *karphos* and *dokos*, a small particle that causes irritation and a beam that bears weight as in a floor.

Immediately following this Jesus presents another rhetorical question which impinges directly upon our innate tendency to judge. He's speaking directly, using

the second person singular with regard to being ready and eager to remove the speck from the eye of someone else while leaving or ignoring the log in your own eye. Then he utters some rather harsh words, using the word hypocrite (*hupokrites* +) in the plural which is more aimed toward scribes and Pharisees who, although not mentioned as being present, most likely are listening in. Both their attitude and posture was self-evident as they remained in the background which means in effect that they couldn't help but stand out. All along Jesus was noticing them which made them feel quite uncomfortable.

Jesus tears into these hypocrites by telling them to remove the speck from their own eyes in order to see clearly. Note the prepositions prefaced to the two verbs at hand: first comes the *ek-* or from prefaced to *exballo* followed by the *dia-* or through prefaced to *diablepo* (*S bachar* +). As for the latter, this seeing-through will enable the hypocrites to have a change of heart which is inferred by a willingness to remove the speck. In other words, Jesus is holding out hope for such persons without putting them on the spot directly. As for the symbolism of a speck and beam, that's left up to how each person interprets them in their own lives. Such is one example where Jesus lays it out with a clarity that left no doubt in anyone's mind.

In vs. 6 Jesus speaks of not giving dogs what is holy and not casting pearls before swine. In other words, we have two contrasts which couldn't be sharper. First are dogs and that which is *hagios* (*S qodash*) or set apart, possibly food as from offerings made to the Lord. Next come pearls and swine. On the natural level, swine wouldn't be attracted to pearls because they're not edible. However, the brightness of pearls may catch their attention. As soon as they discover it isn't food, they'll turn at once in anger and trample the person who had cast them. Note the two verbs, *katpateo* and *rhegnnumi* (*S dosh* and *bazah*) also as to transgress and to pierce, to cleave: the *kata-* here is to be taken as as down or underfoot and the latter as literally to tear into pieces.

In vs. 7 Jesus comes out with three things we should do unhesitatingly but doesn't give a reference as to what they are. Some may view this lack of elaboration on how to comport oneself as frustrating, but it's his way of prodding us on to find out for ourselves. We, along with Jesus' listeners, are simply to go ahead and do them to see if there's any response. All three involve action in the present with the result in the future. The first is to ask or *aiteo* (*S sha'el*: also as to make a request, inquire) which is more along the lines of making a demand. What this consists of isn't fleshed out but as often is the case, left up to each individual to discover. Jesus is confident that the person will make the right *aiteo*. As for the response, it's the future passive of *didomai*

(will be given), not now nor at any specific time but in the future. It all depends upon the courage of the person. The request isn't given straight out but indirectly; it will appear on its own and in due time. So there's an interval—how long or how short Jesus doesn't say—but that will pass.

The second demand, if you will, is to seek or *zeteo* (S *baha'*, to inquire, endeavor) which will result in finding, *heurisko* (S *shaqach*, to meet with, to happen). Of the three, this one is not passive even though it's in the future. Given the relatively primitive conditions of the time, we can assume that this seeking, along with asking and knocking, will be for the basics in life. Obviously healing is chief among them, the reason why so many followed Jesus up the mountain.

The third demand is to knock or *krouo* (S *naqash*, also to fix, to pitch), also as to deliver a blow and is the strongest and most vivid of the three when it comes to going after something. As with the verb *didomai*, *anoigo* is future passive, that it will open all on its own and reveal what lays behind it.

Vs. 9 begins with the one letter word *e* translated as “or” to show that an alternative exists with regard to *krouo*, *zeteo* and *anoigo*. On a number of occasions Jesus has spoken of the Father which, of course, implies the existence of a son. This son, if you will, is mentioned now in the context of a rhetorical question. For example, the son wants both bread and fish. The father—and let's presume it's the heavenly Father—complies instead of handing over a stone or a serpent. Vs. 10 has the second instance of the one letter word *e* translated as “or” regarding another rhetorical question which can be viewed as an extension of the previous verse, the two running into each other as one.

Now in vs. 11 Jesus calls his listeners evil or *poneros* + which sounds quite harsh. Taken at face value it implies that everyone on the mountaintop is degenerate and downright despicable. Instead of taking this as a blanket statement or an across the board judgment, Jesus is speaking in a general sort of way to make his listeners reflect on their own behavior. Although it's the second person plural, the way Jesus phrases it seems to be that some...not all...among the listeners are *poneros*. It's up to each person to figure if he or she is as such. For some readers this can be disconcerting. It's an instance where Jesus doesn't elaborate on why he spoke as such.

Even those whom Jesus deems evil have a redeeming quality. That is to say, he sets up a contrast between those who are *poneros* yet know how to give good gifts to their children. Next he contrasts this with your Father in heaven...second person

plural...who gives good things to those asking him. The human measure is familial whereas the divine is all-inclusive.

In vs. 12 Jesus wishes to resolve this sticky situation. He does so by taking direct action, doing (*poieo* +) to others what you'd like them to do. In other words, he levels the playing field by appealing to our self-centeredness. Although that's essentially unattractive, it has the potential of being transformed. Again, Jesus leaves the measure with which this is done as unspecified which can leave some of his listeners on edge. The consolation? Jesus takes the burden off himself by referring to the law or *Torah* and the prophets. Both sources cover a lot of territory but are rooted in the well-known quote from Deuteronomy: "Here, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might" [6.4-5]. Except for one's children in vs. 6, technically speaking these verses don't apply to human relationships but certainly are the springboard for them.

In vs. 13 Jesus speaks of two types of gates or *pule* which he doesn't define but whose very mention conjures up images of a sizable city to his listeners. Most of them lived in small rural communities which couldn't afford such protection. If and when they entered a city with a *pule* it was a sure sign of its importance and worth protecting. Of course there comes to mind the capitol, Jerusalem. Jesus exhorts people to enter through (*eiserchomai* +) the gate which is narrow or *stenos*, the Syriac verb being *hal*, also to advance, come; the adjective is 'elaz, to be pressing. The verb is prefaced with the preposition *eis* or into along with *dia* or through, "enter into through" as it reads literally.

As for the gate, it's designed to be narrow so as to exercise control over those who are entering the city. The chief advantage is to allow close scrutiny of each person as well as to keep an account of how many are entering and leaving. However, it's especially difficult if you're bringing in goods to sell, let alone purchase in the city as you make your way out. Although inconvenient, this bottleneck makes it have the added advantage to detect any infiltrators as well as preventing an enemy from making a sneak assault. Jesus leaves the reason why his listeners should opt for this up to them after he mentions a second type of gate.

As for the second gate, it's wide and easy or *platus* and *eurochoros*, the first adjective connoting breadth and the second ease of access, *eu-* being the adverbial form of *agathos* or good. When speaking of both, Jesus must have had in mind several concrete examples. He'd hear of locals complain of towns with such narrow gates

with people waiting in line to squeeze through compared with those having broader, less fortified entrances. Obviously the second gate was the city's weakest point of access, the one an enemy would seek to exploit. It was easy to pick out because people came and went as they pleased with little or no inspection.

Jesus favors entering the first gate which is *stenos*. The Syriac is *qatn*, narrow in the sense of contracted; compare with 'elaz of vs. 13 which connotes pressing. In addition to the gate being so confining, Jesus speaks of the way or *hodos* leading to life. At first you'd think that since life is involved, the gate and way to it would be wide and welcoming, not narrow and hard. However, the ease of access is deceptive. It leads to destruction, *apoleia* more as total annihilation and the exact opposite of life. As for life, Jesus has in mind something more than *zoe* in the physical sense.

Presumably the *hodos* at hand is the one that actually approaches and passes through the narrow gate. The verb is *apago* (S 'arach, to depart, withdraw), literally as leading from (*apo-*) somewhere and going into somewhere else. Compare with *eiserchomai* of vs. 13 where Jesus speaks in general fashion with regard to entering (*eis-*, into) the narrow gate. Concerning the former, emphasis is as noted more with regard to coming from and going to whereas the latter is just going into. As for the nature of this *hodos*, Jesus says it's hard or *thlibo* meaning to press and suggests the stone walls closing in on those passing through the gate.

In vs. 15 Jesus puts his listeners on guard as he warns against prophets who are false, *pseudes* (S *dagal*: also as vain, deceitful) prefaced to *prophetes* which also means lying. *Prosecho* + is the verb, that one is to be especially attentive, *pros-* or direction-towards signifying this. As for *pros*, it's used with this verb as "to (towards) you" or the false prophets trying to pull one over. Such shady characters must have been familiar to the locals, especially those propounding political freedom in the context of religion. Obviously it was super-dangerous when it came to fomenting revolt against the Roman authorities. The *pseudes* is reflected in the clothing of sheep, *enduma* referring to any type of clothing which has a gentle and soft exterior. Nevertheless, the intent is to create havoc after the fashion of wolves which are ravenous, *haparx* (S *chataph*: to take by force) also rapacious or like a robber. Use of the adverb *esothēn* (S *gao*: the inside) describes the inner attitude of *haparx* and mirrors the outer one of *pseudes*.

The distinction between sheep and wolves, two classical extremes familiar to Jesus' listeners, some of whom must have been shepherds, becomes evident by their fruits, the verb being *epiginosko* (S *yedah* +), literally a knowing upon or *epi-*. Implied is a

view-from-above enabling one to look down upon the *karpos* or fruit which ravenous wolves produce, that being, of course, mayhem.

On the heels of this Jesus posits a rhetorical question with regard to grapes from thorns, figs from thistles. In other words, a tree which is good or *agathos* + (S *tavah*) yields fruit which is literally beautiful or *kalos* + (S *shapher*: fair, lovely, excellent). The same applies but inversely to a bad tree, *poneros* + (S *beyshe'*) yielding fruit which is *sapros* meaning of poor quality. It's to be cut down and cast in the fire, the verb *ballo* + (S *naphal*: also to fall) added for emphasis. And so Jesus concludes his words about this matter by *ara* or "thus." In sum, a person will have this knowledge-upon, *epiginosko* + as it pertains to their fruits, the fruit of each tree.

The **RSV** by Ignatius Press has a good heading worth mentioning to describe the next three verses because it captures the spirit expressed here, *Concerning Self-Deception*. For the first time in these verses Jesus uses some pretty strong language concerning his identity. He figured, might as well get it out now after the people have heard the bulk of his teaching. At this point they may or may not be ready to accept his words.

For the first time (vs. 24) Jesus puts himself in a position of authority and speaks as though he were divine or bordering upon it. This really must have astounded those listening to words clear and as plain as they could be. As talk about any divinity, Jesus calls himself *Kurios* or Lord which doesn't necessarily mean he's attributing it to himself. Rather, he claims to have special authority from the Lord with regard to anyone who wishes to enter the kingdom of heaven. *Eiserchomai* + is the verb along with the preposition *eis-* as 'into;' the Syriac is *hal:* to go up, ascend. The last time this phrase was used is 5.20 with regards to one's righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees.

And so towards the end of this lengthy teaching which takes place on a mountaintop Jesus comes across as a kind of gatekeeper. He figures that he might as well come out with it now for it represents a dramatic shift with his relationship with the *ochlos* or crowd. Only the person who does the will or *thelema* + (S *zevyan*: also as desire, delight) of his Father who is in heaven can enter the kingdom of heaven. If the Father is in heaven and a person can enter the kingdom of heaven, the two will share the same living space. This indeed is an extraordinary claim by any standards. Note that Jesus uses such words for the very first time compared with those instances where he says "your Father." Are there two Fathers? It's a question that ran through the minds of many and set them to wonder. Also, how does one know he or she is

doing the will of this Father who lives in heaven? Like so much of what Jesus says, that boils down to a question which remains unanswerable. All in all some if not most people find this downright disconcerting.

Vs. 22 has Jesus shifting from the present to “that day” which lays in the unspecified future. Actually it has the preposition *en*, literally as “in that day.” So it seems that those calling out “Lord, Lord” to Jesus in order to obtain his favor will obtain a response but are in for a rude awakening. Indeed, they had prophesied, cast out demons and did a lot of mighty works. They took care to carry them out in Jesus’ name, *onoma* suggesting a relation of domination and possession with regard to the person bearing it. And so these people were carrying around the *onoma* Jesus, if you will, supposedly using it for a multitude of good purposes. In actuality such persons were acting in their own name, using that of Jesus for personal gain.

However—and that’s a good way to render the conjunctive *kai* of vs. 23—Jesus hits back unexpectedly hard to this manifestation of supposed good will. In the case at hand Jesus uses the verb *homologeō* + (S *yada’*: to confess, believe) which literally means to speak together, to show a common mind and thus has solemn air of pronouncement about it. This will take place in the future or as noted above literally “In that day.” Despite the objectively good deeds done by those who cried out “Lord, Lord,” Jesus says coldly yet in a magisterial fashion that he doesn’t just not know (*ginosko*, S *yedah* +) them but never—at no time whatsoever—knew them, *oudepote*. I.e., despite their threefold use of Jesus’ name, this had absolutely no effect.

He calls such people evildoers which consists of the verb *ergazomai* meaning to work or to labor at something, not just to do it, the object being *anomia*. This noun is suggestive not just of plain evil but a state or condition where wickedness is firmly established. Jesus tells these people simply to depart from him, *apochoreō* (S *rachaq*: also as to avoid, abstain), the verbal root *choreō* meaning a real separation made all the more dramatic by the preposition *apo-*, from. Those to whom and for whom such good works must have been shocked when hearing that the ones who did them on their behalf were so roundly condemned. It would make them wary as to any future manifestation of charitable deeds. That’s what Jesus is really concerned about.

The previous few sentences leave everyone’s mouths hanging. That means in vs. 24 Jesus finds himself in an awkward position to do some quick explaining. From here almost to the end of this chapter he uses the example of a house built upon rock. Note the contrast: the apparently fleeting nature of words (*logos* +, S *melata’* or *melal*) and the permanence of rock, *petra*. What effects a transition between the two is the

person hearing not so much Jesus but as he puts it, “these *logoi* of mine.” In a way, such words have a certain independence from him which in the end is a way of saying they have authority. As for this linkage, Jesus considers the person making it as wise, *phronimos* (S *chakeym*) which connotes uniting wisdom with understanding. This is reflected in his ability to take into account foul weather which will beat upon the house yet leave it undisturbed by reason of it being founded upon rock, *themelioo*.

In vs. 26 Jesus contrasts the person who is *phronimos* when it comes to constructing a house to another person also hearing “these words (*logos* + S *melata’* or *melal*) of mine.” In both instances we have the verb *poieo* + (S *havad*) or to do the *logoi*, to follow them through. Use of this verb suggests concrete action, something Jesus not only expects but demands. Unfortunately the person at hand is *moros* +, foolish or in a nutshell, downright stupid. He builds his house on sand which is loose and easily subjected to collapse when the weather turns bad. Not only that, chances are the house had slipped considerably on its foundation, priming it for a dramatic fall. Jesus favors the verb *proskopto* (S *tara’*, also as to drive away), the verbal root meaning to strike emphasized by the preposition *pros-*, indicative of direct, forceful action.

The last verse of this chapter begins with the conjunctive *kai* which gathers up everything Jesus had said going back to his ascent of the mountain beginning with Chapter Five. Actually he communicates quite a lot—perhaps too much for the type of audience—but was keenly aware that it was being recorded for future reference. Most likely that came about in the minds of one or more of the disciples with him who consulted some of the people present with them. With regard to this rapid fire manner of teaching we have the verb *teleo* (S *shelam*: to conclude, fulfill) meaning to complete in the sense of bringing to conclusion.

Obviously the crowds (again, plural of *ochlos* +) couldn’t help but be astonished, *ekplesso* (S *tahar*: also as to marvel, delight). The preposition *ek-* or from prefaced to the root *plesso* (to strike) brings this home in a forceful manner. Not only that, we have the preposition *epi* or upon with regard to the object of this striking-from, that is to say, Jesus’ teaching in the sense of giving instruction, *didache* (S *yolphana’*: also doctrine, dogma). People flocked to Jesus and followed him up the mountain in a desire to be healed of various ills and instead got instructed. That transition alone suffices to make his teaching stand out with authority. The verb is *didasko* + from which is derived the noun *didache* (S *yelaph*: to learn, inform) and is done with authority or *exousia* (S *shalat*: verbal root as to rule, govern).

In conclusion we can say that the people were certainly used to local religious authorities doing their thing in the synagogues and elsewhere. They are enthralled by a man who comes out of the clear blue and not only interprets the basic teachings of the *Torah* as they should be interpreted but goes a step further by concluding his teaching in reference to himself. If Jesus had begun that way, to be sure he'd be stoned. Now with some basic teaching having been offered, words with regard to himself all came together in a harmonious fashion. That's why Chapter Seven concludes with a dig at the scribes, that Jesus didn't teach like them. Surely among the crowds some didn't agree and reported this to the local religious authorities. And so without formal mention of the scribes or Pharisees we have here the very beginning when the seeds for Jesus' demise are sown.

Chapter Eight

Compare the following two verses: "Seeing the crowd, he went up on the mountain." "When he came down from the mountain, great crowds followed him." The first is from the beginning of Chapter Five and the second begins the chapter at hand. They are cited because in this space Jesus had put forth a wide variety of teachings in a marathon-like fashion. As for the crowds or plural of *ochlos* + noted so often, it comes as no surprise that they followed Jesus, *akoloutheo* + down the mountain. Apparently his words has stirred them deeply, and they wanted to hear more. Also, the desire for healing never was far from their minds.

As noted earlier, the top of this mountain could support not that many people. So when Jesus spoke, he directed his voice downward and as well as 360 degrees or in a circular fashion. This was an easy yet brilliant way to handle the situation. All he had to do was to remain in one position and from time to time rotate himself. Most likely the disciples who were about him took up positions down the mountain. In this way they helped spread his words to those who were out of hearing range. As for Jesus' descent, compare him and the people with Moses coming down from Mount Horeb alone and to the people below. There at the base he instructed the people compared to Jesus doing the same on the top. And so the three chapters devoted to Jesus teaching come to an apparently successful conclusion. The crowds ascended with the hope of obtaining cures for their affliction. Instead, they had received an abundance of teachings both old and new which, though initially disappointing, would have a more lasting effect.

As for the healing which had prompted people to seek from Jesus, he begins or recommences this as soon as he reached the bottom of the mountain. A single leper approached him, the *pros-* of *proserchomai* + indicative of directness. Actually this solitary leper stands out sharply compared with the “great crowds” still accompanying Jesus. According to custom, everyone stayed a healthy distance away, but the leper wasn’t deterred in his *proserchomai*. We can just see the people automatically giving way as this man advanced. Perhaps that’s why *idou* + or “behold” is inserted, a way of conveying astonishment.

What stands out with this man—and lest we forget, leprosy was a dreadful disease, a living death—is that he exhibited a certain indifference as to his plight. This is manifest in his words *ean theles*, “if you will” meaning that it’s okay if Jesus does not wish to make him clean, *katharizo* (S *daka’*) implying to heal. The two meanings are right to the point with such a disease. The leper was also dirty in the sense of not being allowed to contact other people but forced to live pretty much alone or in isolation. He made his petition kneeling which in itself must have been quite painful.

Without responding, immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and touched (*apto* also as to take hold of; S *qerav*: to draw near) the leper, an absolute no-no. Just before he made him clean he said “I will.” This is the most direct response Jesus could give when struck by the incredible indifference of a man so afflicted. It’s as though he couldn’t heal him quickly enough. That’s why the adverb *eutheos* is inserted, “immediately.”

You have to read vs. 4 tongue-in-cheek when Jesus tells the cured leper not to speak about what had just happened. Who couldn’t stop blabbing about such an incredible cure? Besides, it was done in the presence of the great crowds noted in vs. 1. Should the man who had been cured obeyed Jesus’ wish, people from the crowd would be more than willing to publish the cure for him. So if ever there’s a sure-fire way to make oneself known, it’s to do precisely what Jesus had just done. As for the man who had just been cured, we have no reaction which you’d think would have been the case. In a sense, this absence concurred with Jesus’ wish. Also we have no reaction from the people who had witnessed this.

The exception Jesus makes is that the man show himself to the priest, *deiknumi* + (S *chua’*: also to manifest) also as to point out, to make known. Then he will offer a gift in accord to what Moses had commanded. Note the following two verbs with the preposition *pros-* prefaced to them. They are indicative of direction towards-which as well as urgency: *prosphero* with *doron* or gift (*qarev* + and *qorvana’*) and *prostasso*, to

offer and to command or literally to carry-towards and to command-towards. The Syriac is *qarev* + with *qorvana'* and *paqad*, the second word being derived from the first and the third verb as to visit.

As for the double *pros-*, if you will, it is to be “into a witness to them,” *eis* along with *marturion* + (S *sahdu*: also as clear evidence). As for the cleansing of lepers, refer to the rather extended ritual beginning with Chapter Fourteen of Leviticus. Perhaps its long and drawn out by reason of the uniqueness of being freed from such a disease. Chances are that it was rarely implemented. We can assume that the man hadn't a clue about this, certainly the process involved which would restore him to a functioning member of the community.

In vs. 5 Jesus heads for Capernaum last mentioned in 4.13 in reference to the quote from Is 9.1-2 about the people who have walked in darkness but now have seen a great light. Surely he had these verses in mind once again, for we have no other reason other than this for going there. Regardless, the Isaiah quote fits in perfectly with his overall mission. No mention is made of the great crowds following him but in light of his recent cure of the leper, we can assume that even more people tagged along hoping for a cure of whatever ailments that were bothering them.

As short as was the trek to Capernaum, the sight of such a throng must have been caused a commotion, so much that the local centurion came out to meet Jesus. Apparently he got word of his healing power as well as marveling at the stream of people going up and down the mountain which he saw in the distance. He had sent word there to find out what was happening, always having in mind the possibility that it might be the beginning of a revolt against Roman authority of which he was a local representative. However, he found out it was harmless, politically speaking, and decided to go out and meet Jesus, another example of *pros-* as in *proserchomai*.

This man...a foreigner...was in a way the local ruler which made him begging Jesus to heal his servant quite unusual, the verb being *parakaleo* + (S *baha'* + here with *meneh* or 'from him'), literally to summon beside. The request must have taken Jesus off guard as well as his disciples and others who certainly were familiar with him. His disciples felt comfortable in the presence of this centurion because they knew from personal experience that he was sympathetic toward the local population. They assured Jesus that he was a God-faring man whose face showed that he was clearly troubled. What's remarkable is that the person paralyzed was a servant, not a family member. *Paralutikos* can also mean lame, and *pais* (S *telaya'*: an unmarried youth) is the common noun for a child with the verb *ballo* +. This verb means to cast inferring

that the man was cast or thrown onto a bed. We get a clear sense that the slave has a certain intimacy with his master, hence the reason for the manifestation of great distress, *deinos* being an adverb meaning terribly with the verb *basanizo* or to torment. The Syriac has *beysha'yth* or badly with *shanaq*, to inflict severe pain.

The familiarity between master and slave suggests that the latter had held an important position in the centurion's household such as raising his children, managing domestic affairs or both. Also the centurion was away quite frequently, even on occasion to Rome itself. We can assume that the servant was not from nearby but either a Roman or from some other place in the empire. Obviously the relationship between the two made a deep impression on the local population. In light of all this Jesus promptly said that he'd come and heal the servant, the verb *therapeuo* (S 'asa' +) also involving restoration.

Vs. 8 begins with the conjunctive *kai* translated as "but" and shows hesitation on the centurion's part even though Jesus readily agrees to heal his servant. While there's no doubt that he wishes this to happen, he claims to be unworthy or lacking *hikanos* + (S *shao'*: also to be equal, sufficient) also meaning sufficient, adequate but used here with the negative. At the same time the centurion unhesitatingly addresses Jesus with the title *Kurios* + or Lord. As for not being worthy, the centurion continues by saying that Jesus shouldn't enter his house or as the text puts it, enter under the roof of his house which infers a sense of greater hospitality. Those standing nearby and being witness to this dialogue must have been impressed to no end. Indeed, they showed tremendous deference to both the centurion and his servant long after this incident.

In vs. 9 the centurion gives an explanation for his position, namely, that he is a man under authority (*exousia* +) who can boss around soldiers at will. "Under authority" also suggests his boss is Pontius Pilate. He plays this out, if you will, by giving a few simple examples of his authority not to make an impression but essentially laying bare the fact that his *exousia* is inferior to the one belonging to Jesus. He does this in a direct, unpretentious fashion which affected Jesus so much that he marveled at him, *thaumazo* also as to impress.

Before actually healing the servant, Jesus makes some disconcerting remarks which reveal a lot about his mission. That is to say, he praises not just a foreigner over an Israelite but someone who's a powerful representative of the oppressive power of Rome. In essence, Jesus is saying that this man has impressed him the most by reason of his simplicity and trust. Apart from the distinction of alien/Israelite which

includes a lot of people, we have the countless number on the mountain as well as his disciples. And so Jesus uses the centurion as an example to those following him, presumably the great crowds of vs. 1. He utters the expression “amen” found last in 6.16 in instances where something has struck him as outstanding. Obviously some if not quite a few who had followed Jesus up the mountain had great faith along with great need and could qualify as receiving this “amen.”

As for the centurion, he was in need but not like those who were afflicted with various illnesses. What makes him stand apart is his detachment or indifference as to whether or not his servant is healed. It can be argued that yes, the servant is not a family member. The centurion wouldn't be as detached if it were his son, wife or the like. While that may hold some weight, it doesn't appear to be as such. The centurion is a battle-hardened soldier stationed at the extreme end of the empire and in essence, has seen it all. Throughout it all he has retained his composure and above all, recognized Jesus' authority and better, the ability to have a discreet distance between him willing or not willing to exert it as through healing his slave.

Vs. 11 begins with Jesus saying “I tell you” which is akin to “behold,” “amen” or “truly” and is indicative that he's speaking with a certain authority demanding close attention. He says that the centurion's faith has surpassed anything he has seen in Israel. Furthermore, many will come from the east and the west and sit at table with the three patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, *anaklino* (S *samak*: to rest, to support) as to lay down or recline when at a meal. A footnote in the Greek critical edition refers to Ps 107.1-2 which is appropriate here: “Let the redeemed of the Lord say so whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.” The directions north and south are mentioned compared with the text at hand which does not include them.

Thus the cardinal directions of the earth fade away in comparison with being in the kingdom of heaven. At the same time another “place” exists which doesn't belong to the cardinal directions as well as to the kingdom of heaven. That realm is the outer darkness, *skotos* also as gloom modified by *exoteros* which pertains to an area outside a particular boundary. It suggests a place of total darkness not unlike the *tohu* and *bohu* of Gn 1.2. Both represent the lack of form and presence of a void, that is always present surrounding and threatening to envelope all creation. Also it brings to mind the flood associated with Noah. As for the kingdom of heaven, it's totally immune to any threats from *tohu* and *bohu*. The Syriac verb is *naphaq* or to go out along with *cheshok* as darkness and *bar*, the latter as belonging to open country.

Nevertheless, into that foreboding yet mysterious darkness, the sons of the kingdom will be cast, *ekballo* with the preposition *ek-* or from prefaced to the verbal root. The same noun *basileia* + *is* is used for two types of kingdoms Jesus speaks of in one breath. That is, of heaven and of the outer darkness. In the latter those members of the kingdom established by Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will create a constant din all the more troubling by reason of it coming from the *skotos* which is *exoteros*. So we have a complete reversal here.

As for the centurion, we don't hear any more from him though given his position, he must have been privy to information about Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. This could have come from Pontius Pilate himself who may have had some suspicions as to all three. After all, these powerful men taken together could threaten his authority. Also we can be almost certain that he and the other centurion named Cornelius were in contact with each other, especially after the latter's conversion recounted in Chapter Ten of Acts. The same could apply to the centurion who pierced Jesus side. Thus all three were sympathetic to Israel in one way or another which perhaps is why they ended up being posted there.

After this short discourse, in vs. 13 Jesus addresses the centurion telling him to return home, the request for healing his servant having been granted. It was done in accord with his belief, the verb *pisteuo* (S 'aymen) also as to consider something as being true. As for the healing, it took place literally "at that hour" or *hora* also as an undefined or general time of the day. Thus both the centurion, a representative of Roman rule, and his servant who most likely was foreign-born, were shown special favor. This must have outraged some locals, especially Jesus' words about how non-Israelites are not just excluded but subject to being cast into the outer darkness. We don't hear any report of this, for Matthew considered it would be inappropriate to insert in his account.

The conjunctive *kai* which begins vs. 14 as "and" shows virtually no time of transition from Jesus and the centurion to entering Peter's house. Up to this point we haven't heard from this disciple who'd become leader of the apostles except for the fact that Jesus had chosen him. Because a mother-in-law is involved, Jesus must have entered the house with some hesitation. We can assume that not long ago he had a less than pleasant contact with Peter's wife who similarly remains as anonymous. She isn't mentioned as being present perhaps in disgust at having been abandoned. Both she and her mother had some justification for being angry with Jesus whom Peter followed willingly and at once (cf. 4.19). Apparently this stranger who came on the scene was responsible for leaving her to own resources. The same held true with

wives of the other disciples. Chances are these woman formed a bond and were delighted at Jesus' apparent ultimate demise. Now that he was dead, their husbands will fly back home.

Fortunately Peter's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever which meant she was too ill to rebuke Jesus. As for Peter, there's no mention of him being present. Given what we know as to how later he'd betray his master, even at this early stage he was too chicken to accompany Jesus. Parallel his standing outside with doing the same thing with regard to the high priest's residence (cf. Jn 18.16). Jesus did heal this woman who got up and served him, *diakoneo* (S *shamash*: also to administer to) which also means to function as an intermediary. Obviously she was grateful and if she treated Jesus well, she just might win back her husband. That's not the end of this story, for we can assume that she informed Peter's wife. However, things didn't work out for them both. Peter continued to remain with Jesus which meant the two woman had to fend for themselves, a difficult thing to do in those days. And so their resentment continued for the rest of their lives.

Jesus remained with Peter's mother-in-law until evening, trying to explain why Peter left her in the lurch. We weren't privy to that presumed conversation but can assume some hard feelings remained between the two. Perhaps Jesus used his contact with the centurion whose servant he had healed. Being in a position of authority, the centurion could offer some financial support to both the mother-in-law and Peter's wife. After all his sudden desertion amounted to something akin to a divorce...more than a divorce but an outright abandonment that could be subject to prosecution. Again, the centurion could step in and smooth things over.

Jesus intended to go off somewhere and rest after this tense confrontation after having conveyed to Peter that he had cured mother-in-law. It'd come as no surprise that Peter secretly wished that Jesus hadn't done this, that she had died, for that would be one less thing to worry about. Now he's faced with both her and his own wife, both of whom he had basically deserted. Peter's mother-in-law detained Jesus for longer than he had expected, so by the time they finished their conversation it was evening. While grateful for the cure, she'd find it awkward to invite him to spend the night.

As the light began to fade, people who had followed Jesus from the mountaintop to the centurion's house and now to the house of Peter began to grow impatient. They had brought quite a few relatives and friends who were possessed with demons which must have been quite a scene in the dim twilight. The ones possessed made all

sorts of dreadful noises, causing those in their power to flail this way and that. If it were broad daylight, it'd be a different story. This semi-light, if you will, where people could see in part made for a situation that was more scary. When word reached them that Jesus had cured Peter's mother-in-law, they just about stormed the house. To prevent what could quickly become an all-out riot, Jesus decides to step outside and assist them before it became dark. Once darkness fell, the demons would be in their native environment, free to do whatever they wanted. That indeed was a chilling prospect, and the people knew it, including Jesus.

As for those who were possessed, the verb is *daimonizomai* (S *dayun*) and applies to a hostile spirit which here goes unspecified. Such a being is also known as a *pneuma* + which Jesus cast out (*ekballo* +) by means of a *logos* + (S *melata'* or *melal*). What that *logos* is we have no record of but can surmise it took the form of a sharp, direct command. The whole goal was to get these malignant beings out of the possessed so they could head directly for the gathering darkness and hopefully remain there. Although they are essentially invisible, nevertheless they left a residual wake of sorts in the atmosphere that was palpable. Peter's mother-in-law was viewing this from insider her house. Perhaps in light of this dramatic incident she was beginning to have second thoughts about her husband having left her. If Peter associated with Jesus and learned to do the same, he could return home and make a killing by employing this new-found skill.

Vs. 17 puts this drama in perspective because it fulfilled (*pleroo* +) what was spoken by Isaiah (53.4). We have two quotes, the first from the text at hand and the one from the Book of Isaiah itself:

“He took our infirmities and bore our diseases.” As soon as we hear this there comes to mind Jesus' recent healing of the leper, Peter's mother-in-law, the centurion's servant and the casting out of demons. Two types of affliction are noted in the Isaiah verse, *asthenia* or a debilitating kind of illness and *nosos* or a physical malady. As for the two verbs, they are *lambano* and *bastazo*, to take and to bear in the sense of to sustain a burden. Technically speaking, Jesus did not do this in the sense of willingly assume suffering. Rather, Isaiah's taking and bearing can be seen in light of Jesus going about to cure people both physically and spiritually.

“Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, struck down by God and afflicted.” The original is more descriptive of the mysterious suffering servant. Yes, it can apply to him later on but not now. ‘*Akan* or surely is a strong affirmative with regard to what the servant is doing, *nasa'* and

saval; the former means to lift up and the latter often applies to heavy burdens. Because of this, we—a direct and personal way to speak of the people—considered him as *nagah*, *makah* and *hanah* by God. The verb *chashav* translated as “esteemed” connotes having such and such an opinion which here may not concur with what God is doing to the suffering servant. That puts the objectively real afflictions he’s bearing into perspective. To the people it is dreadful but is something else beyond their comprehension from God’s point of view.

The **RSV** of vs. 18 begins with “now” which is the translation of the conjunctive *de +*. It shows both a continuation and differentiation from what had come before, namely, Jesus casting out demons near the house of Peter. It seems that from now on or for the rest of his life these “great crowds” (*ochlos +*) are destined to accompany him, giving him virtually no privacy. Naturally Jesus is conflicted. On one hand, he has come to be of service to people but may not have anticipated it would wear him down so quickly and thoroughly. With this in mind, Jesus orders his disciples to make ready a boat in order to cross the lake. Those following him watched every move he made but don’t seem to have set out as well. They lived by the lake all their lives and knew its moods inside out. In other words, they could feel a storm brewing. The same applied to the disciples, but to their credit, they trusted in Jesus even though he had no knowledge of the lake’s varying moods.

As Jesus was about to embark, a scribe approached (*proserchomai +*) Jesus addressing him as Teacher or *Didaskalos*. That must have taken Jesus by surprise, for a scribe is representative of the Jewish religious authorities and normally wouldn’t address an upstart teacher as such. Probably this man was struck by Jesus claiming that the centurion had more faith than anyone in Israel and wouldn’t rest until Jesus fleshed it out for him. The scribe said that he’d follow Jesus wherever he went, *aperchomai* being the verb. It’s prefaced with the preposition *apo-* (from) prefaced to the verbal root *erchomai* and singles moving from a given point.

Jesus gives a somewhat terse, even blunt response, showing a certain indifference which must have surprised the scribe. By saying that foxes and birds (*kataskenoo*: literally, to pitch a tent in accord with, *kata-*) have their own places to live, that is, out in the wild, the Son of man lacks this most basic need for shelter. Actually this is the first time Jesus applies this title to himself and adds a sense of mystery as to his person. That is, as Son he identifies himself with all humanity. On the other hand, Son of man is not especially a king-like title. Jesus was fully aware that some of the crowd might want to establish him as their ruler and therefore stand up against the

all-powerful Roman rule. In their view his miraculous touch qualified him for this position.

Most likely when speaking of himself as Son of man Jesus had in mind two scriptural references with different connotations. The first is Dn 7.13: "I saw in the night visions and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him." The second is the same title the Lord uses when addressing the prophet Ezekiel, this totaling a little over ninety times. The first is in Ezk 2.1: "And he said to me, 'Son of man, stand upon your feet, and I will speak with you.'"

The verse from Daniel refers to a more divine-like figure and his relationship with the Ancient of Days whereas the second to Ezekiel's humanity with respect to the transcendent Lord in his dealings with him. Being an educated man, surely the scribe was able to make an association of the title with these two verses. Unfortunately nothing seemed to have come of the encounter which ended abruptly then and there. The scribe didn't join Jesus in the boat but went his own way. Who knows...perhaps later becoming a member of the early church. When Jesus had these encounters we tend to think that they had no lasting impact on him. On the contrary, they must have registered in his mind as to what eventually happened to them. It'd come as no surprise if he had his disciples follow through on them as much as humanly possible.

In both vs. 19 and vs. 21 we have two quick encounters which shows a certain harshness to Jesus' teaching. The first is a scribe, one who is quite learned compared with the crowd following Jesus around. He blurted out a declaration of loyalty, if you will, of willing to follow Jesus wherever he goes, the two verbs being *akoloutheo* + and *aperchomai*, the latter as to go from (*apo-*) one place to another. Jesus sees right through him, that is, he's sincere but lacks the willingness to follow through on his declaration. That's why Jesus compares himself to a fox or bird which have their own dwelling place whereas he doesn't even have a place to lay his head. There's some truth to that though given that Jesus had done so much for so many people, they were willing...actually clamoring...to have him stay with them. Thus Jesus is telling the scribe that he'd have to adopt to a life style marked by continuous wandering. That would be exactly opposite to his sedentary life now as a scribe, one who needs to have access to scrolls and legal documents pertaining to religious practices, etc. And so we're left hanging as to the scribe but are pretty much certain he opted out.

Immediately after this we have in vs. 21 “another of the disciples,” *mathetes* as one who engages in learning from instruction. He goes unnamed and must have enjoyed a close association with Jesus and his more immediate disciples. That means he was with them for some time. Apparently this disciple didn’t hear what Jesus told the scribe, of not having a place of his own. However, the disciple could tell by the look on the man’s face that he was disappointed as he walked away. That should have been a warning, but the disciple decided to go ahead and make what seems to be a legitimate request. That consists of burying his father. It seems that the father had died while the disciple was in the service of Jesus. So he decided it’s be no problem to interrupt following Jesus for what seems a perfectly sounds reasonable request. However, he gets a real shock. Jesus tells him that the dead should bury their own dead. We have no response but are pretty much certain this disciple said to himself enough is enough. The group of closer associates belonging to Jesus is now one member less. We can imagine that once he left to bury his father, his family and friends were quite angry with Jesus. Later they weren’t surprised to find out that he ended up as he did, condemned and crucified.

The disciples certainly witnessed all this which had happened right before their eyes. Each man must have questioned himself, whether he was doing the right thing or not. Was following this man a wild goose chase? Judging by the way he treats people willing to follow him or those already in his service, this observation holds some truth. All in all being a disciple of Jesus boils down to the interplay of two verbs in vs. 23 or when the disciples pile into a boat with Jesus, *akoloutheo* + and *aphiemi*, to follow and to let go. The former means active involvement and the latter a precondition for this involvement. Each of the disciples couldn’t help but be caught in between them both. Actually the ambiguity is deliberate, one almost gnawing at the other, so that quickly they will realize what they’ve gotten themselves into.

Notice that vs. 23 begins with the conjunctive *kai* or “and” which shows the close connection between the previous two incidents and Jesus wanting to move on. We can be fairly certain the scribe and former disciple didn’t hang around to see Jesus off. Now he gets into a boat, *embaino* connoting an embarking followed by his disciples. While this was going on, everyone on the shore had their eyes glued on which direction they would go. Surely Jesus and those in the boat with him saw a certain despondency on the faces of everyone. Obviously he didn’t inform them where he was going. The same could apply to the disciples. That would come once they had gotten further off shore. While the crowd would love to jump in boats and come after him, this time they did not. A storm was brewing, and they knew it’d be better to stay on shore and hopefully catch up with Jesus later.

As for the storm inferred in the paragraph above, indeed it did come and hit hard. *Seismos* is the noun which more precisely means a shaking or commotion, almost like an earthquake. The Syriac *zoaha'* is similar, a shaking. The disciples were familiar with such conditions since they made their livelihood by fishing on this same lake. They knew it was coming, just like those on shore did, but decided to follow Jesus' instructions. This showed faith in him even though essentially he's a land-lubber. Hopefully they would make for a nearby bay and find shelter from both the approaching storm and from being pressed in so relentlessly by the crowds.

During this *seismos* Jesus was asleep. Perhaps he was faking it, for let's face it. Who could sleep during such a violent shaking in addition to being drenched with wave after wave of water? Indeed, we can assume that Jesus was using this as a ruse to listen in on the disciples as they were getting more and more panicked. Also he wanted to see how long they'd wait for him to calm the water but wanted to allow the crisis to play out as long as possible. The verb *apollumi* + aptly describes how the disciples were feeling, this basically meaning to wipe off the face of the earth as a result of the storm.

When Jesus was roused from his sleep, real or not, he wasted no time to rebuke his disciples calling them *oligopistos* or having little faith. The Syriac is *haymanutha'* modified by the adjective *zahor*. Actually his rebuke was in the form of a rhetorical question. As soon as they heard it—and this was over the almost deafening *seisomos* threatening to engulf them—the disciple came close to throwing Jesus overboard in their anger. No sensible person would treat these seasoned fishermen in such an off-handed manner. Perhaps one or more of them thought of the sailors who did cast the Jonah overboard but didn't want to go down that road even though it was tempting. After all, the sea did quiet down once Jonah was thrown out.

Then Jesus did what he planned all along. He rose and rebuked the winds which were causing the *seismos*. The verb is *epitimaō* (S *ca'a'*), also as to censure, the root *timaō* or to honor, to estimate with the preposition *epi-* (on) prefaced to it. The result? Suddenly there came upon the lake a great calm, *galene* (S *shelya'*: also as stillness, stupor) also as serenity. This too could apply to how the disciples felt. Just a moment ago they were at the point of despair and ready to do in Jesus. As for the crowds on the shore, they watched with horror as the boat disappeared into the storm clouds fearing it wouldn't emerge. In a way Jesus was delighted, for it gave him time to be alone with his disciples. As the modern expression goes, they could spend some quality time together before coming to the opposite shore. Soon they realized word

would get out that all was well, and people would start streaming toward him more than ever.

The conjunctive *kai* beginning vs. 28 shows a connection between the drama just delineated and Jesus arriving on the other side of the lake with his disciples. Indeed, as fishermen familiar with the weather they had learned their lesson the hard way and were glad to be on land. Now they disembarked in the country of the Gadarenes, the very name itself conveying an alien presence compared with the other side of the lake. It's made even more ominous by reason of two demoniacs (*daimonizomai* as in vs. 16) having come out to meet Jesus. They must have seen the ship coming and thought for them it was a golden opportunity. Soon they would have in their grip several innocent men who had been blown off course. As for the disciples, as men who made their living on the lake, certainly were aware of these demoniacs and stayed a healthy distance away from getting too close to that side of the lake.

What makes these two demoniacs so frightful or *chalepos* (also as hard to bear or grievous) is that they lived in tombs meaning they were outcasts from society and associated with the dead. The Syriac is *beyshe' dtav*, literally "evil of good," the latter in this case indicative of abundance. Interestingly they recognized Jesus, calling him Son of God just as the devil had done in 4.3. The reason for this recognition? Perhaps the two men had become hosts of those demons Jesus had cast out recently as recounted in vs. 9. They needed a place to live so they decided to cross the lake and take up residence with these two. They wanted to protect their newly won territory which is why vs. 28 says that no one could pass that way, the verb *ischuo* meaning to have the strength to go ahead and take the chance. If anyone did, that person would end up being in their grip. *Chalepos* and *daimonizomai* basically are the same. However, automatically the spirits within the two men realized they were defeated and acknowledged it was time to move on again. This movement from place to place may work for the short term but is destined to fail over the long haul. They can move on only so much before events catch up with them.

To be sure, the spirits possessing the two men aren't dumb. They have a limited time and know it while making the most of the situation. That's why they mention time or *kairos*, a special or proper occasion when Christ—and they use the second person singular—will torment them, *basanizo* +. These spirits are identified as demons or *daimon* which are identified as evil compared with the customary Greek notion of beings who exist midway between God and humans. The next stop for them? It so happened that a herd of swine was not far away and asked Jesus to send them there.

He simply said “go” or *hupago* +, the preposition *hupo-* or from under suggestive of pulling out from under which of course means the two men.

As soon as this *hupago* took place, the entire herd of swine ran headlong over the cliff into the water below, *thalassa* commonly referring to the sea or ocean. End of story for the pigs but not for the *daimones* who enjoy a certain invulnerability. Where they went is unknown. Perhaps we’ll encounter them later in this Gospel narrative because the *kairos* of their *basanizo* torment is still off in the future which is known to Jesus alone.

Jesus, his disciples, the two men and two *daimones* weren’t alone. Nearby were the herdsmen of the swine who upon seeing what had happened, were dismayed. That’s putting it mildly. Right before their eyes they saw this stranger from the other side of the lake ruining their livelihood in one fell swoop. Such a job belonged to Gentiles, not Jews, so they inferred (rightly) that man who had done this was Jewish. Without wasting a second, they rushed off to tell what they had witnessed, bringing the city’s entire population out who begged Jesus to leave, *parakaleo* + or literally to summon beside being the verb.

In sum, Jesus’ visit was a mixed bag. On one hand Jesus rid the area of demons while on the other, caused long term havoc economically speaking. He did oblige to leave. If it weren’t for casting out the *daimones*, the locals would have stoned him on the spot. To make certain he and his disciples meant it, they watched and weren’t satisfied until he and his disciples got into the boat. Without realizing it, they were on the same cliff over which the swine rushed. A moment later they caught themselves and moved away. With some justification they were fearful that he might cause them—the entire population of the local city—to fall headlong into the sea. Despite this, everyone’s attention remained riveted upon the boat until it disappeared from sight. As for the two men who had been possessed, they stood their ground, overcome as they were with gratitude for having been set free. In light of the lost swine, one wonders how the locals felt towards them. After all, it was they who were responsible for what was an economic disaster.