

Love like Jesus loves to truly live beatitudes

written by Bishop Anthony B. Taylor |

When preparing for my first confession, I was taught that we should live according to the Ten Commandments and the Eight Beatitudes, but then I discovered a problem: you can't obey a beatitude because the Beatitudes do not tell us what to do. They tell us how we should be: poor in spirit, humble, merciful, pure, peaceful, courageous.

Naturally these attitudes produce actions and lead to results: holiness in this life and a big reward in heaven, which is good, but once again, the problem: how do we become that kind of person? We can change our external behavior in order to obey a commandment but how do we change our inner attitudes to become a different person on the inside?

Jesus gives two answers to this question: the Old Testament answer and then later his new answer. In today's Gospel, he gives us the Old Testament answer, which is that there are two great commandments that contain the other 10: If we love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, we will keep holy the Lord's day and not have any false gods or take God's name in vain. And if we love our neighbor as ourselves, we will not kill, steal, lie, covet, etc.

Since love is an inner attitude, love of God and neighbor will produce good deeds that go way beyond those listed in the 10 Commandments, as Jesus illustrates today in his parable of the Good Samaritan.

Just before his death, Jesus will replace this Old Testament answer, the two Great Commandments of the Old Testament, with his new and far greater Great Commandment of the New Testament: that now we love one another as he has loved us.

Not just loving our neighbor as much as we love ourselves, which in some cases may not be very much. Now, we are to love others as Jesus loves them, meaning that we are to give our lives for them just as Jesus has given his life for us.

It's only when we begin to love like Jesus loves that we truly start to live the Beatitudes because the inner content of the Beatitudes is sacrificial love — death to self for the benefit of others.

Indeed, it's also only then that we begin truly to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength, and our neighbor as ourselves.

Who was a true neighbor to the man who was mugged on the road from Jericho to Jerusalem? The Samaritan, the one who treated him with mercy. And then Jesus says, Go and do likewise. Help others, and your inner attitudes will begin to change. Make sacrifices for those in need, and you'll become a different person on the inside.

Bishop Anthony B. Taylor delivered this homily at the memorial Mass Oct. 19 in Little Rock for the Southwestern USA Lieutenancy of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.