

Reflection

Twenty-Sixth Sunday Ordinary Time

September 29, 2024

Mark 9. 47-48

If your hand, eye, or leg leads you astray, remove it, says Jesus. In the above verses, we see Jesus warning his disciples to the danger of damaging their own souls. Avoiding anything that will divert us from our responsibilities or push us into sin requires extreme caution; even if something is important to us, we must let go of it. Jesus desires to keep us safe from sin, which is defined as any deed or idea that is at odds with God's nature. Sin leads to death. And since Jesus doesn't want anyone to go to hell, He issues warnings about it!

Jesus basically reiterates what Mark wrote in 8:34–35, which emphasizes that to follow Jesus is to take up our cross and follow Him. If we strive to save our lives, we shall end up losing them. A bacterial soul will require more severe treatment down the road if it is not cleaned up today. Although Jesus spoke of the greatest sacrifices in the strongest way imaginable, this was not a call for physical self-mutilation. Jesus spoke these things because his followers saw the kingdom primarily as a means of reward rather than as a means of offering sacrifice. And thus, if we wish to follow Him, we need to be ready to give up everything. God considers sin to be severe and hence to eliminate it, he offered His only Son as a sacrifice. We also need to be serious about sin because the crime of not repenting is one that carries an eternal death sentence.

The foot could lead you astray. Both the hand and the eye could reach where they shouldn't and to look with malice. Thus, amputation of a leg may be essential in an emergency to preserve the entire body whereas extreme surgery is required if one wishes to "enter [eternal] life" (9:43, 45; 10:17) or "the kingdom of God" (9:47). While we naturally want to indulge ourselves and justify our immorality, God requires righteousness (1 Peter 1.15). While giving up sin may make us uneasy at first, doing so is necessary for our own welfare (for survival); and if sin continues to govern us, it will ultimately destroy us. So let's endeavor to correct our failings or spiritual weaknesses.