

Exodus 20:1-17

Then God spoke all these words: I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the Lord your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the Sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a Sabbath to the Lord your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and consecrated it. Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the Lord your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

John 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

"Detecting our Errors"

But who can detect their errors? Clear me from hidden faults.

Psalm 19:12

In his Lenten Devotional, 'In Praise of Guilt and Shame', Rev. Caldwell recalled: 'Samuel Sewall was one of the judges who condemned so-called witches to death in Salem. Eventually, he became convinced he'd made a terrible mistake, so he later wrote a public confession of guilt and chose to stand before his church in shame while the minister read it out. This moment was so important for Boston that it is immortalized in a State House mural entitled "The Dawn of Tolerance in Massachusetts." Sewall's heart was so softened and opened by this pain that he became a leading advocate for the oppressed: he later went on to argue publicly for women's rights and the full personhood of Native Americans, as well as to write the first anti-slavery tract on this soil.' Amazing what feeling appropriate guilt and shame can do, but wouldn't it have been better if the judge had a conscience that enabled him to feel that pain before he promoted hell on earth?

Conscience, what is it? Conscience, posited Joan Chittister, is the voice that reminds us that we have not lived up to our own best ideals. The psychologist Carl Jung wrote, "Deep down below the surface of the average conscience a still, small voice says to us, "Something is out of tune." The formation of conscience---the ability to recognize right and wrong, good and bad, truth and untruth, beauty and ugliness---is the major task of the human society (God's Tender Mercy, p. 40-41). In our faith tradition, it is the voice that reminds us that we have not lived up to the ideals of God and the voice of Jesus that says to us that something is out of tune.

So, how can we build a conscience that fosters a Godly spirited, Jesus led life? Greek orthodox Christians talk about internalizing the Divine in our conscience through a process known as theosis. Theosis means "God," and as a cloth soaks up water by

osmosis, we are saturated with God through theosis. This indwelling presence heals, restores, and completes us, preparing each of us to take up the role in God's kingdom that we alone can fill. Progress in theosis is a gift of God, not won by any effort. But anyone can make their soul available to such a blessing by practicing spiritual disciplines (Praying the Jesus Prayer, p. 26).

The good news is that we have many spiritual disciplines that help us practice the presence of God for the building of a conscience that can detect our errors. One of those practices is meditation on and practice of the Ten Commands. This can help us develop a healthy sense of guilt and shame. Chittister comments: The first sign of healthy guilt is that we never feel guilty for the wrong things. Healthy guilt always has something to do with failing to recognize my creature-hood or hurting someone else. Think of the Ten Commands, the first three have to do with recognizing that God is God and not making ourselves the center of the universe; the next seven have to do with doing no harm to others. As in, Love God, love the other.' Nothing else counts. Not really. The question that measures guilt is always, who was harmed? (p. 34-35).

Another saturating practice for building God conscience that helps us detect our errors, is meditation on the life of Jesus. When we follow the life of Jesus, the laws he broke and why, we begin to see what is really important both to others and to God . . . and to see that eternal life is for now. The gospel reading for today is the one in which Jesus enters the temple in Jerusalem and overturns the tables of the moneychangers. When he saw the sellers worshipping the dollar, he reminded them of God's command: 'Thou shall not make yourself any idols'. When the moneychangers said that the end justifies the means, Jesus reminded them of the commandment: 'Thou shall not steal'. When the seller of doves thought that ritual would cleanse his soul, Jesus reminded him that God said: 'I am the Lord your God who brought you out of Egypt; out of the land of slavery . . . you shall have no other gods before me'. When the buyers said, 'what's mine is mine and what's yours is mine', Jesus said to them: 'You shall not covet'. Later Jesus would teach: The first

commandment is: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. The second is like unto it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself". In 'Obedience, the Deepest Passion of Love', spiritual activist Marjorie Thompson noted:

Christ's love was a love which would not be deflected by suffering or injustice. He did not allow pain, humiliation, or malevolence to suffocate his spirit. It was as if his sole desire was to overcome the massive, tangled web of evil and pain in this world through love . . . For Jesus, obedience meant choosing his deepest passion for redemptive love over lesser passions (Cross Purposes, Weavings p. xxvii).

In a Jesus led life . . .

Christ comes to turn the world upside down.
To humble the powerful and to lift up the lowly.

Christ comes to turn the tables.
To topple vain idols and to stand with the poor.

Christ comes to proclaim God's kingdom:

To feed the hungry,
To liberate the oppressed,
To strengthen the weary,
To set the prisoners free.

Christ comes to turn the world upside down.
To overthrow the present order with a revolution of love
(Holy Ground, In An Unjust World, p. 95-95)

When we look closely at the way in which Jesus exposed, engaged, and disarmed the sinful powers of economic injustice in the temple, we become saturated with His Presence, enabling our God conscience to detect our errors and feel healthy guilt and shame when we don't lead a Jesus-led life.

Prayer: Dear God, when we fall short of your glory and are less than all we can be, saturate our consciences with God determined guilt and shame. Amen.