

Scripture Reading

A Reading of the Gospel According to Matthew (*Matthew 13:15*)

For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them. The Gospel of the Lord. R. Praise to You Lord Jesus Christ.

Reflection ~ Lord, open my eyes to see the Enemy and close my heart to deceit

Sins harden our heart and make us forget God's love for us. Unacknowledged and unrepented sins especially unforgiveness and hatred shut off the action of God's grace on our heart. In such a situation it is difficult to hear and respond to the gentle inspirations of the Holy Spirit who is always working within us on the sanctification of our souls. Instead, such a soul responds without prudent restraint to the calling of his lower self, his pride and the falsities of the world. *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will* (*Romans 12:2*). Without the anchor of a sincere prayer life, a lukewarm heart becomes oblivious to its sins, fails to seek daily forgiveness from God and the inner healing that God alone can and will provide.

Our real enemies are not of flesh and blood but Satan and the evil spirits (cf. Ephesians 6:12). Satan, the Prince of the World, and the Master Deceiver, works in many ways to distance us from God with the ultimate aim of depriving us of the glorious, eternal inheritance God has planned for each of us. Through the spiritual weakness of souls engendered by pride and disorderly self love, Satan works through these people to tempt others. No level or sector of society is free from the evil influence of Satan. He attempts to use every spiritually weak person as his instrument to further His dark kingdom on earth. His diabolical mark is every where: greed, violence, moral degeneration, culture of death, denial of and indifference to God, materialism, rebellion, obsession with money/wealth and self, confusion, war, restlessness, emptiness of hearts, lives lacking meaning and direction, poverty, hopelessness, helplessness, addiction of all kinds, fears, anxieties – the list goes on. Where God is not welcome, the evil spirits rush in uninvited and stake their claim. They are persistent because their aim is the eternal damnation of souls.

Our minds, hearts and bodies – the targets of Satan. Satan tries to introduce evil into our minds by planting devious thoughts which we may mistakenly perceive as our own. These thoughts could introduce prejudice, suspicion or dislike of certain persons, lead the soul to judge, accuse, dislike or hate another person. Devious thoughts could cause the soul to focus negatively on his situation, introduce worries, anxieties and unholy fears, thus undermining faith and trust in God. Satan could, through the greed of the person, introduce devious plan to amass money or wealth through dishonest means. Many hearts remain under the bondage to Satan when sins especially unforgiveness and hatred are not acknowledged and repented of. In young persons, Satan is especially active through addiction of the body to worldly fashions/beauty, sensual pleasures/entertainment, drugs/rock music, pornography/sexual promiscuity. Satan tries to change our mindset especially in our relationship to God. Leveraging on our pride and ego, Satan promotes rationality in our relationship with God which should have the hallmarks of faith, love and humility. Thus, we tend to understand our faith with our minds and not with the heart, rendering it as shallow as our mind/intellect allows it to be.

Sin of indifference and omission can lead us to hell. In Scripture Jesus recounts to us a parable of a rich man and a poor man named Lazarus (cf. Luke 16:19-31). In this parable, the rich man did nothing about Lazarus' situation. He did not drive Lazarus away from his gate but did not do anything to help him. After dying the rich man entered hell. Thus Jesus says: *Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me.* (*Matthew 25:40*).

Conversation with Jesus

Precious Lord, when I came into this world, I was made a child of God through You. It was an honour and dignity I will never be able to grasp fully. Through Your precepts and commandments, You show me clearly to walk in the path of truth. You are love, and my mission is to love. To love as You have loved. Many times I have fallen: in my actions, in my words, in my thoughts and in what I failed to do. Many times I am blinded by my pride, and sin speaks to my heart without me realizing it. Many times I am blind to my own sins and failed to seek Your forgiveness and healing. Please forgive me. I surrender to You my mind and my heart. Purify my mind of all falsities and anything which opposes holy truth, and flood it with Your light and truth. Purify my heart of pride and disorderly self love, and flood it with holy and divine love. Bestow upon me the gift of discernment so that I may see the truth with clarity, close my heart to deceit and avoid evil. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk