

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Therapists and marriage counselors all agree on the number one behavior of engaged couples who aren't going to make it: contempt. The rolled eyes, the crossed arms, the incredulous stare---these are all signs that at least one of the partners holds spoken (or maybe unspoken) contempt for the other. That's a huge red flag, and a warning that there are many serious issues that need to be brought to light before this couple attempts to marry.

Sure, we all know the Ten Commandments, especially "Thou shalt not kill," but dig deep into the reasons for this command, and we find unspoken anger, violent language, and quiet contempt for the other. It's usually considered bad form to bring this contempt into the light by actually saying out loud the ugliness we harbor in our hearts towards the people we secretly despise, but unless we truly repent of this contempt, it will eventually find its way out of our hearts and into malicious gossip, simmering rage, and, in the worst cases, physical violence.

This portion of the Sermon on the Mount thwarts our attempts to compromise our faith. *If your right hand is your trouble, gouge it out and throw it away.* Yikes. Who among us hasn't broken promises, harbored resentments, imagined the vengeance we would take if given the opportunity? I think this hyperbole that Jesus uses, to gouge out our eyes rather than be thrown into Gehenna, is a good example of the reasonable way to approach a challenging text like this. Everyone has temptations. Has anyone ever actually gouged out their eyes?

The greatest danger is to bask in our contempts. Pray that another isn't doing the same towards you.

How will you use the upcoming Lent to disarm your resentments?

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