

Lesson 17. . . Fulfilling the Law and the Prophets
Gospel of Matthew



Notes From the Podium
By Fr. Matthew Kauth

***These notes are intended to augment your own reading and study of the lesson.
Please use as an aid to help document the main message of the lecture.***

Matthew 17:1-27

I. The Transfiguration

- A. Our Lord takes Peter, James and John with Him up the mountain.
- B. Compare this instance with Matt. 26
 - 1. In the garden of Gethsemane Peter, James and John are drawn away with Christ again.
 - a. These three will again see our Lord's appearance change - He will sweat blood.
 - b. He pulls them aside and asks them to watch, and each time He returns they're asleep.
 - 2. How different it is that when he is drinking from the cup of sufferings of humanity, and is not beautiful, their response is to sleep.
 - 3. But here at the transfiguration and they witness this "metamorphosis", they are in awe as they behold the glory of God.
- C. As God revealed himself to Moses up on a mountain, so this day, the last day of tabernacles, our Lord takes these three, who he will ask to bear with him a little more of the weight of the suffering that he is to drink, and He pulls back the veil revealing to them who He really is.
- D. Peter has just confessed by virtue of the grace given to him by the Father, that Christ is the Son of the living God
 - 1. Now Peter is going to see the veil of Christ's humanity pulled aside.
 - 2. But Christ's humanity does not leave.
 - a. Look closely and see that everything, even His clothing is taken up into glory.
 - b. The person of the Son wields both natures, divine and human, and never leaves his humanity while in this glorified state.
 - i. This is the same glorified state He will have at the Resurrection.
 - ii. In this state He raises up His humanity, meaning body and soul, and sits at the right hand of the Father.
- E. "And to them is revealed also Moses and Elijah."
 - 1. They represent the fullness of the law(Moses) and the prophets(Elijah).
 - a. Christ is shown as superior as He stands between them.
 - b. Christ is the fulfillment of the law and prophets.
 - 2. Moses and Elijah don't need to appear to Christ; it says they appear to Peter, James and John.
 - a. And Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, *it is good* that we are here."
 - b. "Kalos" - "It is beautiful".



Notes From the Podium (cont)

3. Peter is in a state of rapture and does not want this to end.
 - a. Peter says to our Lord, “if you will let me build three booths,” (This is the end of the feast of the tabernacles/booths)
 - b. Peter wants to build 3 booths, 1 each for Jesus, Moses and Elijah that they might stay.
 - c. Peter, James and John don’t need a booth for themselves and just want to gaze upon this.
 - d. Where is Peter’s concern for the disciples who are at the bottom of the mountain?
 - i. How rightly forgetful he is of everything else.
 - ii. So shall it be when *we* see our Lord as He really is.
4. St. Thomas Aquinas once said that one drop of grace is worth more than all of the created order.
 - a. If we knew what we were receiving in the most Blessed Sacrament we would proclaim, “It is good that we are here!”
 - b. In prayer, often in particular experiences we don’t ever want to go back to the world and we say to him, “It is good that I am here, let me stay here with you and forget about everything else in life”, because as Christ is sufficient for the Father, He is more than sufficient for us.
 - c. The glory of Christ is the true light and when that fades you feel as if you’ve just stepped out of Oz and everything goes back to black and white.
- F. What does our Lord say in response to Peter? -Our Lord doesn’t answer Pete because Peter isn’t the only one who is in love with what he sees.
- G. “...a bright cloud overshadowed them...”
 1. “Cloud”, “Shekinah”, “Kabod” – The Glory of God is always hidden.
 - a. The overshadowing the temple,
 - b. The overshadowing of our Lady
 2. You cannot see the fullness of God and live.
 - a. Peter is just catching a mere glimpse; the Father himself is still veiled.
 - b. Moses wore a veil after speaking with God because his face would glow so much it would hurt the people’s eyes and he was allowed only to see the back of God as God passed by.
 - c. Even the angels have to hide their eyes, covering them with their wings.
- H. Our Lord had already built himself a tent.
 1. John 1:14, “...and made His dwelling among us” – literally means “and pitched His tent among us”.
 2. The tent that he pitched himself, that he made, is his own humanity.
 3. St. Paul will pick up on this when he says when the tent of our earthly dwelling is struck down, is destroyed, we have a dwelling place not made by human hands. -1 Cor 5:1
 - a. Paul was a tentmaker by trade.
 - b. Paul, like all the apostles was also another kind of tent-maker. They make “tents” (also translates “tabernacle”) of humanity, making persons the dwelling place for God.



Notes From the Podium (cont)

- I. The difficulty with Peter's offer is that Peter can't stay there yet.
 1. At the mere glimpse of Christ transfigured in glory, the apostles want to stay, captured by that beauty.
 2. Once they hear the voice of the Father it is as St. Paul says "the weight of glory".
 - a. "This is my beloved Son in whom I delight, listen to him."
 - b. "When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces, and were filled with awe."
 3. They cannot bear the weight of divine love that he has for the Son because they are not sons.
 - a. Only the Son can hear His Father's voice and receive it.
 - b. Sonship must come from the cross so they cannot stay yet.
 - c. Before they can build a "booth/tent" for the Father and His Son to dwell in they first have to go by way of the cross.
 - i. Sacrificing your life
 - ii. Denying yourself
 - iii. Living the life of Christ, infused in us by Baptism
 - d. In this process of going to the Father, we become sons and daughters in the Son.
 - e. Then the Father will delight in us as He delights in His only Son.
 4. "Listen to Him." This can be taken in two ways:
 - a. Be obedient to Him.
 - b. Listen as the Father listens and just delight in the sound of His voice!
- II. "Rise, and have no fear." That is what he will do after we die as sons.
 - A. Rise
 - B. Have no fear now to come to the Father.
- III. "Why do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?"
 - A. "...I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not know him, but did to him whatever they pleased."
 1. They put his head on a platter.
 2. John the Baptist
 - B. "So also the Son of man will suffer at their hands."
- IV. Peter, James and John, would realize much later, that what they say wasn't for the purpose of that moment.
 - A. This was for later when they would be in that garden.
 - B. After he was raised from the dead, they remembered it.
 1. Peter remarks about it in his letter, speaking of the one that they saw transfigured. -2 Peter 1:16-18
- V. "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he is an epileptic..."
 - A. "Lunatic" may be used in place of "Epileptic"



Notes From the Podium (cont)

1. The word epileptic comes from a Greek word that means lunar meaning moon.
2. A lunatic is one who is affected by the moon. Also the origin of sayings like “moon-struck” or “there must be a full moon”.
- B. This man is thought to be an epileptic.
 1. “O faithless and perverse (twisted) generation, how long am I to be with you? ...Bring him here to me.”
 - a. The apostles had tried on their own to heal the man, but were unsuccessful.
 - b. Jesus reminds them that they have no power on their own and they must rely on Him.
 - c. They were not using the power of Christ, and were trying to strike out on their own.
 - d. They never even realized that it was a demon that troubled the man.
 2. “And Jesus rebuked him, and the demon came out of him, and the boy was cured instantly.”
 3. “...the disciples...said, “Why could we not cast it out?”
 - a. “Because of your little faith.
 - b. “If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed...”
 - c. The disciple’s faith in Christ was too small; they were relying on their own power.
 4. Remember that miracles only happen for the purpose of salvation.
 - a. Our Lord only contravenes His natural laws for the purpose of saving a soul.
 - b. Don’t ask for a miracle just to see if your faith is strong enough. That’s not the point of a miracle.
 - c. Our Lord never used His divine power for himself, or for the purpose of making a show.
 5. And then our Lord repeats to them the discussion of his death and resurrection. It is never absent from here on out.

VI. “Does not your teacher pay the tax?”

- A. The half-shekel tax is not a Roman tax, it’s a tax for the temple that all of the sons had to pay for the upkeep of the temple.
- B. They were proud to do it because it said that they were sons of the covenant, sons of Israel, sons of the Father.
 1. We just learned in the transfiguration what it means to be a genuine son...
 2. And these men come to Peter with this question...
- C. Our Lord evidently hadn’t paid the half-shekel tax yet.
- D. Peter doesn’t really know if Jesus pays the tax or not.
 1. Jesus asks, “What do you think, *Simon*?”
 2. “From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from others?”
 - a. Jesus is teaching Peter here how to be a son.
 - b. He is identifying Peter with Himself.



Notes From the Podium (cont)

- c. The temple tax is something to upkeep the temple; Christ is the temple.
 - d. For all who wish to become sons, Christ is THE son.
 - e. The tax is something to ransom the first born son; Christ is the Son and the ransom.
 - f. And Peter is going to be a son with Christ.
- E. Jesus lightens the spirits of the apostles.
1. After talking about his death and resurrection that he does something really rather strange. -It is the oddest miracle in the Scriptures.
 2. He takes this fisherman, Peter and shows him how to receive the tribute, the payment.
 - a. Peter will be catching souls for Christ and give them to Him in the temple as payment.
 - b. Our Lord tells Peter he will find the half-shekel in the bottom of the sea.
 - c. Using not a net but a line and just one hook.
 - d. Peter is to take the first fist that comes up, and the shekel will be in its mouth.
 - i. Now a shekel is worth two “didrachms”, a stater; it pays for them both at the same time.
 - ii. Peter is being identified with Christ. He’s being united to Christ,
 - iii. Even as the Son of God pays for himself, He pays for Peter as well, to pay for one is to pay for the other, they’re becoming united in their persons.

VII. The John Dory Fish,

- A. Actually bears its eggs in its mouth.
1. When the eggs are gone, it begins to pick things up off the bottom of the ground, gravel, trash, perhaps even a shekel.
 2. What’s amazing about that is if this was the fish that was caught, and it happened to have a shekel in his mouth, our Lord knew he was there.
 - a. It does not matter whether our Lord put it there by divine fiat or whether he just happened to know all the fish in the sea and that one of them had a shekel and knew it would bite the hook.
 - b. What is important is that there is not one of you that is not known with that same accuracy in whatever depths you are swimming.
 - c. He knows what is in your mouth; he knows what is in your heart.
- B. The Obedience of Faith
1. Simon could have said, “I can’t just catch a fish with a hook”.
 2. He never questions our Lord.
 3. He doesn’t question because he is so identified with Christ now that he moves with Christ, he speaks with Christ, he acts in obedience to Christ, he just goes out a throws a line and there the sons are paid for together.