

**All Saints Episcopal Church**

**Steenrijk**

**Willemstad, Curacao**

**Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany (A)**

**February 12, 2023**

**A Sermon by the Rev. Joseph Parrish**

**DRAFT**

**“When push comes to shove”**

**The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus**

**Christ according to Matthew 5:21-37**

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall

be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court

with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand

causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell. It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, 'You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.' But I say to you,

Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No'; anything more than this comes from the evil one."

Dear Lord, let our Yes be Yes and our No be No, all in the glory of your name.  
Amen.

Possibly no one speeds too much in Curacao, but on our way to church we pass an automobile speed camera overhead that occasionally flashes when someone passes through it faster than 50 KMH. It may not be recording, but apparently at one time it probably did. It would make a considerable amount of money, as most drivers ignore it now. A fine in the mail would be distressing, no? There is technology for doing that, but it is likely not installed yet; of course it would be very unpopular.

But maybe you have seen situations where drivers are going a bit too fast to be safe.

In one town, the police were not happy with the speeders, but no one knew how to improve road safety. So one person took a hair dryer, covered it with some yellow tape, and put it on a pole near the speeding problem. What do you think happened?

Yes, for a while people were very cautious going past that dummy speed recorder.

Most of our lives we have the opportunity to stay within safe boundaries, but who has been one hundred percent compliant with all safety rules and regulations?

Several years ago my cousin's daughter was trying to meet us in California to go to a family wedding at the wedding chapel in Yosemite National Park, a very beautiful setting right near by the shear clift that many try to climb up there.

But we were waiting for her in northern California, with no

communication of what had detained her and her brother who was riding with her. Finally she called to say someone had careened into the back of her car, no one was injured, but her car had been pushed into a near vertical position by a somewhat gentle rear end collision; but she could not get her car down from that precarious position.

She called us, and her father and I set out to find out just where she and her brother were. We had her coordinates, but in the San Francisco area I learned that x and y coordinates are actually

insufficient. When we finally got to her coordinates, we were at the top of a three step interchange, with two other road levels crossing below us. We could only see one level below us, and she was not there either. So my cousin, who knew his way around, figured out how to get to the first, bottom, level. He took a very circuitous route, but finally we were close and the traffic was very heavy. We came to a very short tunnel, and there she was on the other side standing outside the car with her brother, and indeed the car was intact but at a near 75 degree angle up the

road embankment. A California Highway patrol car was on the opposite side and a somewhat bewildered young California Highway Patrolman was standing on the opposite side of the road by his car.

The California traffic was rather fierce, no one was slowing down, and a wrecker on her side was having trouble arranging itself for pulling the car down from its precarious perch.

As I was to do the wedding, I was wearing my black shirt and white collar, and I thought maybe I could try to help the California Highway Patrolman get the

speed down a little so the extraction of the upright car could proceed. The cars were coming fast around a bend in the road and then through that short tunnel.

So I walked back through the tunnel, and when I got to the other side I tried to wave the cars down a little bit.

Low and behold, rarely do drivers see a priest waving down the speed, and they almost began screeching to a halt. The traffic speed began to drop immediately. And looking back through the little tunnel, I could see the Highway Patrolman finally cross the road to

position himself behind the wrecker so the extracton could begin, and it was successful.

Apparently, even fast drivers are concerned to see a priest waving them to slow down. Was someone really dead? some may have questioned.

In our Gospel for today, we are given very serious directives by our Lord: pluck out the eye if it is offending. If we call someone a “Fool”, we are liable to the fires of hell. If we need to reconcile with another, pick up and leave our sacred

offering behind to find that person and settle the matter peaceably with them.

Looking at a woman lustfully is the same as adultery. Do not swear, only say yes, yes, or no, no.

These are all strict and stern warnings. They are life and death warnings. They are God's message to us this very day.

If heed them, our life will be safe. Otherwise, God only can help us with the consequences.

The world will look at us as representatives of Christ. What will be

our response? What will be our message to the world? We are in a life or death struggle. Let us not speed past God's warnings.

Amen.

Description: Yes, no--God gives us guidance, sometimes by God's law, sometimes by Christian ethics, but always so we can be examples of Christian love.

Tags: Jesus, safety, right, wrong, love, hope, serious

When push comes to shove

Matthew 5:21-37

Epiphany 6A