

Sibyls' Service

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Welcome

Stay Here

http://www.gkc.org.uk/Laudate_Music_of_Taize

Welcome

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you

All and also with you.

Confession

Christ the light of the world has come to dispel the darkness from our hearts.

In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our faults.

With a true heart, in full assurance of Faith;

God of Mercy,

We acknowledge that we have sinned.

**We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done,
and are mindful of all that we have failed to do.**

For the sake of Jesus, who died for us,

forgive us all that is past,

and help us to live each day

In the light of Christ our Lord. Amen

Absolution

May the God love
bring us back to himself
forgive us our sins,
and assure us of his eternal love
in Jesus Christ our Lord
Amen

Prayers of Intercession

Exaudi Nos: Lord, hear our prayer.

http://www.gkc.org.uk/Laudate_Music_of_Taize

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.

Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.

Amen.

Reading 1 John 4:7–19

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is perfected in us.

Reading 1 John 4:7–19

By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Saviour of the world. God abides in those who confess that Jesus is the Son of God, and they abide in God. So we have known and believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in them. Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness on the day of judgement, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear; for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not reached perfection in love. We love because he first loved us.

The Big Picture

What does it mean to be a good person?

Two theories of ethics:

- Divine Command Theory
- Christian Virtue Ethics

Divine command theory

- Moral obligation consist in obedience to God's commands
- Morality is ultimately based on the commands or character of God
- The morally right action is the one that God commands or requires
- Ethics reduces to actions

Divine command theory

When someone says “God has revealed His will, and that’s the end of it”, then they are appealing to a Divine Command theory.

When someone says “God said it. I believe it. That settles it”, then again, they are appealing to a Divine Command theory. They need no other justification for enforcing a law than “God has commanded it”.

Euthyphro Dilemma

In Plato's dialogue Euthyphro raises the question of whether:

1. an act is right or wrong simply because God decrees it, or
2. God decrees an action because it is morally right or wrong.

In the first case, God's commands are arbitrary (He could command cruelty, for instance).

In the second case, right and wrong are above God, who is supposed to be sovereign and omnipotent (i.e., nothing above Him).

Christian Virtue Ethics

An alternative to Divine Command theory is Christian Virtue Ethics.

Here, the aim is to focus on building a virtuous character. One should strive to live a flourishing human life where every action contributes to living a life that glorifies God.

It is about making people better (more virtuous) than they are, not just doing good things

Christian Virtue Ethics

- Right actions
- Proper motivations
- Virtuous character

Christian Virtue Ethics

Elizabeth Anscombe wrote *It would be great improvement if, instead of 'morally wrong,' one always named a genus such as 'untruthful', 'unchaste', 'unjust'. We should no longer ask whether doing something was 'wrong,' passing directly from some description of an action to this notion; we should ask whether, e.g., it was unjust; and the answer would sometimes be clear at once.* (“Modern Moral Philosophy”).

We should want to be what it is to be virtuous.

The Law of Love

According to Jesus, there are only two commandments:

“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the greatest and first commandment. And a second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (Mt 22:37-40)

Paul agrees that there is a single commandment that should determine all our interactions with each other:

For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, ‘You shall love your neighbour as yourself.’ (Gal 5:14)

The Law of Love

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet'; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law. (Rom 13:8-10)

The Law of Love

But aren't we back to Divine Command Theory, but with fewer commands?

The command is to *love*: but you cannot *command* someone to *love*: either they do, or they don't. It isn't something you can turn on and off.

So some people interpret the command as “behave in a loving way towards”, or in other words, “act as if you loved”

But for Jesus, motivation is just as important as action: “But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgement...everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart”

The Law of Love

We *cannot* keep these laws. We need the Holy Spirit to transform us:

“be transformed by the renewing of your minds” (Rom 12:2)

“And all of us, with unveiled faces, seeing the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit.” (2 Cor 3:18)

The Law of Love

Paul also says that *everything* we do should contribute to living a life that glorifies God:

“So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God.” 1 Cor 10:31

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” Col 3:17

The Law of Love

“Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.” Phil 4:8–9

The central aspect of living a Christian life is on what is virtuous, not on what is lawfully right or wrong.

The Law of Love

This task of working to understand what is good, rather than simply to blindly obey whatever God seems to command, is something that Jesus expects of his disciples. In Jn 15:15,17 Jesus says “I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. ... I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.” And in Jn 16:13 “When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth;”

The Law of Love

The way we learn how to be virtuous is by following, or learning from, more experienced virtuous people.

The first question Andrew and his friend asked Jesus in John 1:38 wasn't, 'What are you teaching?' It was, 'Where are you staying?' Jesus' response was 'Come and see.' (John 1:39). He made them welcome where he was. The call of discipleship is the call to share life with Jesus.

Imitating Jesus is essential (1 Cor 11:1)

The Law of Love

In Mt 23:23 Jesus says that the “weightier matters of the law” are justice and mercy and faith. If the divine command theory were correct, then our responsibility is simply to discern God’s commands and obey them: regardless of whether (in our own eyes) these commands are unjust or unmerciful. But with Christian Virtue Ethics, all our interpretations of the law must be consistent with these “weightier matters” of justice and mercy and faith, as Jesus requires.

The Law of Love

Jesus criticised the Pharisees for performing righteousness on the outside but being full of hypocrisy and lawlessness on the inside.

So for Jesus, righteousness is more than merely performing right actions in obedience to divine commands.

Christian Virtue Ethics

The Christian desires to be good because they have been regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit

We love because he first loved us (1 John 4:19)

Christian Virtue Ethics

The Pharisees thought that the way to be righteous was to keep to hundreds of rules and regulations, and put a hedge around the law, and a hedge around the hedge. The common people who did not have the skill to memorise all these rules, or the leisure or wherewithal to keep them all, were therefore considered to be under God's curse (Jn 7:49).

On the other hand, the psalmist says "Taste and see that the Lord is good", (Ps 34:8, cf 1 Peter 2:3) Ps 119 is a meditation on how beautiful, perfect and wonderful is God's law

Christian Virtue Ethics

In the 19th Century the Abolitionists could not find in the Bible any explicit command of God which forbade slavery: in fact the anti-abolitionists could make a strong case in their favour based on the Divine Command theory. Instead, the Abolitionists appealed to the Law of Love and said that the practice of slavery was totally incompatible with the command to love your neighbour as yourself.

Christian Virtue Ethics

With “God’s revealed Law”, as expounded by many Evangelicals, what is called the “goodness” of God seems to be very different from what we judge to be good. The Evangelicals may insist that “God’s ways are not our ways” but I was recently reminded of a quote from C.S. Lewis’s essay “The Poison of Subjectivism”:

“If once we admit that what God means by ‘goodness’ is sheerly different from what we judge to be good, there is no difference left between pure religion and devil worship.”

Conclusion

In *Mere Christianity*, C.S. Lewis provides a concise statement of the difference between these two positions:

“We might think that God wanted simply obedience to a set of rules: whereas He really wants people of a particular sort.” (*Mere Christianity*, Chapter 12 “The ‘Cardinal Virtues’”).

In Bread We Bring You

In bread we bring you Lord, our bodies' labour
In wine we offer you our spirits' grief
We do not ask you, Lord, who is my neighbour?
But stand united now, one in belief
O we have gladly heard your word, your holy word
And now in answer, Lord, our gifts we bring
Our selfish hearts make true, our failing faith renew
Our life belongs to you, our Lord and King

In Bread We Bring You

The bread we offer you is blessed and broken
And it becomes for us our spirits food
Over the cup we bring, your word is spoken
Make it your gift to us, your healing blood
Take all that daily toil, plants in our hearts poor soil
Take all we start and spoil, each hopeful dream
The chances we have missed, the graces we resist
Lord, in thy Eucharist, take and redeem

(http://www.gkc.org.uk/Karen_Bishop)

Communion

For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, ‘This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.’

For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. (1 Cor 11:23–26)

Communion

The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.
(1 Cor 10:16–17)

Reckless Love

Before I spoke a word, You were singing over me

You have been so, so good to me

Before I took a breath, You breathed Your life in me

You have been so, so kind to me

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God

Oh, it chases me down, fights 'til I'm found, leaves the ninety-nine

I couldn't earn it, and I don't deserve it, still, You give Yourself away

Oh, the overwhelming, never-ending, reckless love of God, yeah

When I was Your foe, still Your love fought for me

You have been so, so good to me

When I felt no worth, You paid it all for me

You have been so, so kind to me

Reckless Love

There's no shadow You won't light up

Mountain You won't climb up

Coming after me

There's no wall You won't kick down

Lie You won't tear down

Coming after me

Reckless Love

Your Love is relentless

It never stops coming after us

Your Love is relentless

It will never stop, it will never stop

Your Love is relentless