

Today's readings tell us something very important: being a follower of Jesus is not just about staying out of trouble. It is about where we point our hearts. We often say, **"I am a good person; I don't hurt anyone"**. But today, Jesus challenges us to go deeper than just being **"not bad"**. He wants us to be **truly alive and holy**.

The first reading from the book of Sirach is very clear. It says that God put 'fire and water' before us. We can reach out and choose whichever we want. This is a beautiful reminder of our free will. In a world where we often feel like victims of **our circumstances, our biology, or our upbringing**, the Word of God reminds us of our terrifying and beautiful freedom.

God is a Father, not a dictator. He doesn't force us to love Him. He says: "If you wish, you can keep the commandments". God doesn't treat us like programmed software. He sets "fire and water" before us. In the Australian context, we know the power of both-the life-giving rain and the cleansing, yet destructive, flame. To follow the Law of the Lord isn't about **being "restricted"**; it is about choosing the water that sustains life rather than the fire that consumes it.

In Australia, we pride ourselves on the **"Fair Go"**. We like rules that are clear and equitable. But in the Gospel, Jesus takes the "Fair Go" and pushes it into uncomfortable territory. He says, **"Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven"**.

The Pharisees were experts at the **"minimum requirement"**. They didn't kill; they didn't commit physical adultery; they kept their oaths. They checked the boxes. But Jesus looks at the landscape of the human heart.

On Anger: It's not enough to keep your hands off someone's throat if your heart is a furnace of resentment. **On Lust:** It's not enough to be physically faithful if your mind treats others as objects for consumption. **On Truth:** It's not enough to avoid perjury; our **"yes"** should simply mean **"yes"**.

Jesus is calling us to an integrated life. In a culture where “no worries” can sometimes become a mask for apathy, Jesus asks us to worry deeply about the internal state of our souls. He is moving the goalposts from **legalism to love, from legalism to relationship**. He wants us to be good on the inside where only He can see. ***“Happy are they who follow the law of the Lord”.***

How do we do this? Sometimes it feels impossible to never be angry or to always stay pure. St Paul tells us in the second reading that we cannot do it by human logic alone. We need the **Holy Spirit**. When we come to Mass and receive the Eucharist, we aren’t just getting a “reward” for being good. We are getting the strength to be better. The Holy Spirit helps us see things the way God see them.

As we head back into our week- to our workplaces, our local footy clubs, and our dinner tables- let’s ask ourselves: Where am I just “checking the boxes”? Am I a “good person” simply because I haven’t broken the law, or am I actively seeking to love? When someone cuts us off in traffic, do we choose the “fire” of a rude word, or the “water” of a quick prayer for them? When we are tempted to gossip, do we keep our “yes” as “yes” and stay silent?

The “Happy” person of the Psalm isn’t the one who is perfect; it’s the one who walks in the law. It’s a journey. This week, let’s choose the water. Let’s choose the narrow track that leads to a life that is truly, deeply, and eternally **“right”**.