

Making the Tree Good: Interpreting Mt 12:33 in the Context of the Eucharistic Meal

By

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The Problem

When the Pharisees accuse Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebul (*Mt* 12:24), he rebukes them for their inconsistency, for in the case of their exorcist sons they have apparently attributed the same activity to the Spirit of God (12:27). As Jesus insists, “Either make the tree good and its fruit good or the tree bad and its fruit bad; for the tree is known by its fruit” (12:33). This interpretation of *Mt* 12:33, which relies on a figurative sense of the aorist imperative *ποιήσατε*, is succinctly presented by Willoughby Allen in his paraphrase of the verse: “Be consistent. Either allow My acts of casting out devils to be good in result, and attribute the power to do such good acts to the Holy Spirit; or condemn them as evil in result, and attribute them to Satanic agency.”¹

In terms of the tree-fruit imagery, it is clear that Allen interprets the exorcisms as fruit; less clear, but consistent with his interpretation, is the understanding of God or Satan as tree. Thus, the charge of inconsistency is prompted by the Pharisees’ failure to attribute to the good tree (God) the same fruit (exorcism performed by different agents). While it is implied that the Pharisees have spoken correctly in the case of their sons, they have not done so in the case of Jesus. Therefore, Jesus rightly demands of them consistency. Either they are to regard exorcism (the fruit) as good and attribute it to God (the good tree) regardless of the agent, or they are to consider exorcism (the fruit) bad and attribute it to Satan (the bad tree).

An alternative reading of *Mt* 12:33, which relies on a more literal sense of *ποιήσατε*, is to construe the words of Jesus as a command to transform the tree and its fruit, to make them both good (or bad), which command expresses a different type of consistency, namely, a consistency between appearance and reality.² According to this interpretation, the tree is considered to be a metaphor referring to the heart. Conceivably, then, the imperative to make the tree and its fruit good should be understood as a command to change the heart, to make it good. The question then becomes, How does one make the heart good? It is here that my proposal –to read the Gospel in the context of the eucharistic meal– makes its contribution.

The Tree and Its Fruit

The saying “a tree is known by its fruit” (12:33; cf. 7:17-20) is a metaphorical expression for the correspondence that exists in principle between a person’s outside or actions, which encompass both words and deeds, and a person’s inside or heart, the seat of understanding and intention. Indeed, so certain is this correspondence in principle that the

evangelist can say that the outside of a person reveals the inside, that words and deeds reveal a person's understanding and intention. This interpretation is supported by the parallel saying of the good/evil man who brings forth good/evil out of his good/evil treasure (12:35). Although Matthew does not associate treasure with heart in 12:35, as the evangelist Luke does in the synoptic parallel (*Lk* 6:45), the connection is clear from the preceding verse: "For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks" (*Mt* 12:34). Matthew's warning that everyone will be held accountable at the judgment for "every careless word" (12:36-37) confirms the principle that words reveal the heart. In like manner, the correspondence between a person's deeds and heart is confirmed by Jesus when he warns the crowds and his disciples, using the same tree-fruit metaphor, to beware of false prophets whose deeds will show them inwardly to be ravenous wolves (7:15-20). Indeed, so certain is this correspondence that the evangelist elsewhere is able to define a person's deeds as the adequate measure of a person's heart, as the sole criterion of judgment (25:31-46).³

While the correspondence between the outside of a person and the inside is certain *in principle*, in the fallen human condition words and deeds do not always reveal a person's heart. As Matthew warns his readers, not everyone who calls Jesus "Lord" will enter the kingdom of heaven (7:21-23). In this example, words alone, even correct words, are not sufficient for entering the kingdom. But if correct words are not sufficient, then one can no longer say that words always reveal the heart, that the tree is always known by its fruit. Indeed, words may actually conceal the heart, as implied by Jesus' rhetorical question to the Pharisees: "You brood of vipers! how can you speak good, when you are evil?" (12:34). The Pharisees, despite having evil hearts, are in fact capable of speaking correct words, a possibility openly acknowledged by Jesus elsewhere: even though the Pharisees are "full of hypocrisy and iniquity" within (23:28), they nevertheless sit on the chair of Moses (23:2).

The possibility that words can in fact conceal the heart suggests that it is possible for deeds to conceal the heart as well. The apparently good deeds of the false prophets, who testify before the judge of the mighty works performed in his name, are rejected as the works of evildoers (7:21-23). Therefore, as Dan Via concludes, it is impossible "to know whether acts in any particular situation really reveal or conceal the heart."⁴ Ultimately, it is God alone who is able to see the true intention of the heart. Consequently, "all deeds, even apparently righteous deeds, are subject to the eschatological judgment, at which time it will be revealed whether the deeds of righteousness proceeded from a good heart or an evil one, whether they were truly deeds of righteousness or only apparently so."⁵

A Good Heart

A careful reading of the tree-fruit metaphor of 7:15-20 in its context supports the contention that both correct words and righteous deeds are necessary for salvation, despite the impossibility of knowing whether any particular word or deed conceals or reveals the heart. While it is clear that the metaphor speaks directly of the necessity of good deeds, the good deeds of the righteous are set within the context of good words: those who do the Father's will are among those who have spoken correct words, who have called Jesus "Lord" (7:21).⁶ One interpretation of the tree-fruit metaphor of 7:15-20, therefore, "is that good words (7:21) are expected to

be matched by good deeds, which may (10:1, 8), or may not (7:22-23), include mighty works.”⁷ An analysis of authority in the Beelzebul controversy (12:22-32), on the other hand, which pericope serves as the context of the tree-fruit metaphor of 12:33-37, suggests an alternative interpretation, namely, that correct understanding, or a good heart, is the precondition for good words and good deeds.

Daniel Patte has argued that the Beelzebul controversy is best understood as a portrayal of conflicting views of authority.⁸ According to the Pharisaic conception of power and authority that is implicit in this pericope, “one has power only over those who recognize one’s authority.”⁹ Consequently, Jesus only has power over the demons, it is thought, because they recognize his authority, an authority that must come from Beelzebul himself. From the perspective of the Gospel’s dominant value system it is clear that the view of authority implicit in this accusation is to be rejected. It is surprising, however, especially in light of explicit statements elsewhere on the necessity of righteous deeds for salvation (6:14-15; 7:21-23; 16:27; 18:35; 25:31-46), that there is no mention of deeds in the Beelzebul pericope. The absence of any mention of deeds suggests to Patte that the emphasis in 12:33-37 has been placed on good words as the precondition for doing good deeds.¹⁰ Good words, in this instance, however, must not be understood merely as correct words, words that may in fact conceal the heart; rather, good words are “the proper acknowledgment of Jesus’ authority, the conviction that he casts out demons by the Spirit of God (12:28).”¹¹

To acknowledge the authority of Jesus in such manner – with conviction – is ultimately to characterize the heart itself as good, and thus to confirm *in fact* the correspondence between heart and word. This is because, according to Patte, it is the *view* or understanding of Jesus’ authority, not merely correct words, that “causes [the people] to bear good or bad fruit.”¹² Unless one is able, therefore, “to discern correctly the source of Jesus’ power, that is, unless the heart as the seat of understanding and intention is properly constituted, one cannot perform truly good deeds.”¹³ Because the Pharisees hold the wrong view of Jesus’ authority, their words and deeds, however good they might appear to be, can only be *apparently* good, as will be revealed at the final judgment.

While this interpretation may clarify the relationship between understanding and action, it does not yet answer the question posed by this paper, namely, How does one *make* the tree (or heart) good? One answer is provided by Dan Via, who explains that “The word of the kingdom and cross (4:17; 13:19; 16:21; 20:28-34) restores the heart to understanding (13:11a, 16-17) which in turn produces ethical fruit (13:23).”¹⁴ In other words, if one correctly understands the meaning of Jesus’ teaching, ministry, and death, then they become the pattern for one’s own life. By now it should be clear, however, that correct understanding is not to be viewed simply as a correlative of correct confession. Indeed, the possibility that words (and deeds) may *in fact* conceal the heart should warn us that the transformation of the heart is more likely an ongoing process; certainly, it is an outcome that cannot be confirmed until the final judgment. My task for the rest of this paper, therefore, is to explore how the eucharistic meal – arguably the original (and, for many communities of faith, ongoing) setting of Matthew’s Gospel – might contribute to the transformation of the believer’s heart.

The Eucharistic Meal

George Kilpatrick begins his study of Matthew's Gospel by reminding his readers that "While we may not say that the Gospel was created by a community, yet it was created in a community and called forth to meet the needs of a community."¹⁵ Therefore it follows that if one were able to reconstruct the circumstances of the community, the reconstruction would offer insight into the meaning of the Gospel for that community. Such a project raises two difficulties, only one of which is addressed by Kilpatrick – the problem of sources. Most of the evidence for Kilpatrick's reconstruction comes from Matthew's Gospel itself, as well as from other roughly contemporaneous Christian and Jewish literature.¹⁶ The second problem is related to the challenge of extracting contextual history from a narrative. For, as Norman Petersen has observed, the narrative creates its own world, a world that does not "directly represent history as it happened."¹⁷ Rather, it offers a secondary source for the reconstruction of an historical world. This warning applies to all sources for the project of reconstruction. A related problem is due to the nature of the Gospel itself: the narrative world of the Gospel serves explicitly as a secondary source for the referential world of the historical Jesus and implicitly as a secondary source for the contextual world of Matthew's community. A careful presentation would require a methodology for sorting the implicit from the explicit, a methodology that would account for the differing perspectives of the unknowing disciple of the narrative world and the knowing reader/believer of Matthew's community.¹⁸ For purposes of this paper, however, I shall assume an "implied believer," one who correctly appropriates the Gospel in the context of the Matthean community.

Kilpatrick's analysis of the Gospel leads him to conclude that documentary criticism has failed to explain the source of much in Matthew's Gospel.¹⁹ Among its failures he includes: 1) the nativity stories; 2) certain Petrine stories; 3) certain passion and resurrection stories; and 4) OT quotations. Therefore, he proposes that besides the written sources Mark, Q, and M, the evangelist "was acquainted with a number of traditions existing only orally, until they were incorporated in the Gospel."²⁰ The occasion for incorporating these oral traditions, Kilpatrick argues, was the community's liturgical practice. By combining the conclusions of documentary criticism with the supposed liturgical practice of the community, Kilpatrick proposes the following reconstruction:

Let us assume that the Church in which [Matthew] was composed had long read Mark, Q, and M in public worship.... At the end of this period Matthew was written as a kind of revised gospel book, conveniently incorporating into one volume the three documents Mark, Q, and M. It was natural that, in a revised gospel book produced for the worship of the Church, the needs and convenience of liturgical practice should be consulted. This was necessary since Mark, for example, for all its excellences, is not an ideal book for liturgical use.²¹

Criticism of Kilpatrick's hypothesis would appear to be directed primarily at his understanding of "liturgical use," rather than at other aspects of his reconstruction. For example, Krister Stendahl objects to Kilpatrick's hypothesis because 1) liturgical recitation of gospel material cannot be assumed from synagogue recitation of Scriptures; and 2) as a whole, Matthew's "gospel lacks the character of a liturgical text."²² Against Kilpatrick, Stendahl cites the work of Oscar Cullmann, who challenges the view that there was a word service apart from the eucharist.²³ Apparently, Stendahl believes that it would be necessary to prove such a service in

order for Kilpatrick to argue convincingly his case for gospel dependence on synagogue recitation. Stendahl's criticism, however, is not significant, at least for purposes of this paper, since it appears to be based on a rather limited understanding of "liturgical use," as I shall argue below.

Stendahl's second objection is even less convincing: apart from his above-quoted comment that the Gospel lacks a liturgical character, Stendahl notes only that "the structure of the five parts, with its systematic aims, points rather to a milieu other than the homiletic or liturgical one."²⁴ Instead of examining Kilpatrick's argument in favor of a liturgical milieu, Stendahl only tests Kilpatrick's analysis of the didactic or catechetical alternative to his liturgical hypothesis. Although he accuses Kilpatrick of over-simplifying the alternative between the liturgical and the catechetical, Stendahl in the end concurs with Kilpatrick's assessment of the catechetical: "Even if freed from the limitations of the definitions 'pre-baptismal' and 'ethical instruction,' the term 'catechetical' falls short of a definition of the *Sitz im Leben* of the First Gospel."²⁵ Then having concluded that the Gospel is a type of handbook, Stendahl criticizes the liturgical hypothesis on similar grounds: "A handbook might hardly have been the ideal of those who intended to render the gospel more suitable for liturgical use."²⁶ The conclusion that the Gospel seems more like a handbook than a liturgical text leads Stendahl to propose "study and instruction" as the most convincing setting for the Gospel.

Although Stendahl's criticism does not really address the substance of Kilpatrick's liturgical hypothesis, it does raise the question, Has Kilpatrick sufficiently incorporated the catechetical into his understanding of a liturgical milieu? On the other hand, it seems that Stendahl's proposal – that the Gospel was a manual for teaching and church administration– fails to account for the liturgical features identified by Kilpatrick. I propose that the dichotomy between these alternative hypotheses can be overcome if one defines "liturgical use" more broadly than do either Kilpatrick or Stendahl, both of whom seem to take this to mean that the text was in some sense the liturgy itself. The broader definition that I propose places more emphasis on the setting in which the text would have been used rather than on the text itself. It is with regard to setting that Cullmann's work offers important insight.

Oscar Cullmann has argued that "the basis and goal of every [Christian] gathering" was the eucharistic meal.²⁷ For it is at the eucharistic meal that the risen Christ again meets the gathered community. According to Cullmann, *Luke* 24:30, 24:36, *John* 21:12-14, and *Acts* 1:4 preserve the tradition that "the first appearances of the risen Christ took place during meals."²⁸ This would appear to be contradicted by accounts of post-resurrection appearances that took place apart from meals, namely, *Mt* 28:9-10 (cf. *Mk* 16:9; *John* 20:11-18) and *Mt* 28:16-20.²⁹ Nevertheless, one can still argue that the explicit passages preserve at least a tradition that links the appearances of the risen Christ with the common meal. Consequently, as Cullmann concludes, it is at this meal that the risen Christ is "effectively present in the ... Spirit."³⁰

Although the eucharistic meal was the "basis and goal" of every Christian gathering, it was not the sole content of the gathering. Instruction, preaching, and prayer were also foundational elements of Christian worship (*Acts* 2:42-47; 20:7-11).³¹ While Cullmann cautions against insisting that all of these elements were present at each gathering, he rejects attempts "to distinguish sharply between gatherings for the proclamation

of the Word and gatherings for the Lord's Supper."³² The evidence for two separate services is adduced from silence³³ and the problematic letter of Pliny.³⁴ On the other hand, Cullmann sees in the account of the midnight meal preserved in *Acts* 20:7-11 evidence supporting his view that a non-eucharistic gathering was unthinkable.³⁵

Thus it follows that the expected context for every gathering of the Christian community was the eucharistic meal. This means that all of the various elements of Christian worship –instruction, preaching, prayer, etc. – were referred to the risen Christ who is made present at the eucharistic meal. The aim of these gatherings, however, was not simply to make present the risen Christ. As we know from *Mt* 25:31-46, there are consequences for those who do not respond to his presence as they should. Therefore, the aim of these gatherings, according to Cullmann, was “the ‘building up’ of the community as the Body of Christ, the spiritual body of the risen Lord.” In other words, the aim of these gatherings was for the community to show itself to be the body of Christ. Every element of these gatherings served this “building up” by seeking to rid the community of everything that was incompatible with the purified body of Christ. The Gospel of Matthew, therefore, was neither the worship service itself nor a teacher's handbook. Rather, I propose, it was instruction, preaching, exhortation in the context of the eucharistic meal.

Making the Tree Good

Dan Via reminds us that the parable of the last judgment (25:31-46) “reveals the inseparable unity of the commands to love God with one's whole being (or minister to the Son of Man) –the religious requirement– and to love the neighbor as one's self (22:34-40) (or minister to the brothers and sisters of the Son of Man) –the ethical requirement.”³⁷ Although the parable depicts the judgment as an eschatological event, when the intention of hearts will finally be revealed, it is important to recognize that certain elements of the parable are similar to characteristics of Matthew's liturgical setting. First, there is an emphasis on the presence of the risen Christ in both the parable and the eucharistic assembly. Second, the religious requirement of the parable arguably corresponds to the religious requirement of Matthew's community, which includes the right profession of faith (28:18-20). And third, the ethical requirement of the parable, which threatens eternal punishment for those who fail to minister to the needy, finds an analogous expression at the eucharistic assembly, where exclusion from the meal is the norm for those who have not been reconciled with other members of the community. This third point, which I shall develop below, is one of the important implications of Cullmann's assertion that the risen Christ is made present at the eucharistic meal.

The Apostle Paul's warning to the Corinthians not to partake of the eucharist in an unworthy manner (*1 Cor* 11:27) sets the ethical requirement in the context of the assembly. The occasion for this admonition is the failure of the Corinthians to express their love for one another during the eucharistic meal: “For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk” (*1 Cor* 11:21). Ironically, the Corinthians fail to “discern” the very body for which they assemble, which body, according to Paul, refers not only to the eucharistic bread but also to the members of Christ's body, the Church. For the Corinthians who neglect to fulfill the ethical requirement, the eucharist no longer represents a joyful opportunity to meet the risen Christ (cf. *1 Thess* 4:16-18) but becomes a

moment of judgment that anticipates the everlasting punishment of those who do not do the Father's will. Indeed, even the consequences of their ethical failure, which consequences are to be fully revealed only at the final judgment, are said to be foreshadowed in the experiences of the Corinthian community: "For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself. That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died" (*1 Cor* 11:29-30).

Although Matthew's Gospel does not establish a clear expectation for fulfilling the ethical requirement in the context of the eucharistic meal, it does require that believers fulfill their ethical responsibility *before* completing the religious requirement, *before* gathering at the eucharistic meal: "So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (*Mt* 5:23-24). Regarding this passage, E. P. Sanders has observed that it follows a long tradition recognizing the relationship between justice and sacrifice.³⁸ Particularly interesting is *Lev* 6:1-7, which specifies both the form of restitution and the type of sacrifice:

The LORD said to Moses, "If any one sins and commits a breach of faith against the LORD by deceiving his neighbor in a matter of deposit or security, or through robbery, or if he has oppressed his neighbor or has found what was lost and lied about it, swearing falsely – in any of all the things which men do and sin therein, when one has sinned and become guilty, he shall restore what he took by robbery, or what he got by oppression, or the deposit which was committed to him, or the lost thing which he found, or anything about which he has sworn falsely; he shall restore it in full, and shall add a fifth to it, and give it to him to whom it belongs, on the day of his guilt offering. And he shall bring to the priest his guilt offering to the LORD, a ram without blemish out of the flock, valued by you at the price for a guilt offering; and the priest shall make atonement for him before the LORD, and he shall be forgiven for any of the things which one may do and thereby become guilty."

In this case, it is also clear that the one who wrongs another person is the one who is to seek forgiveness.

In the case of *Mt* 5:23-24, however, it is not clear who is expected to make reconciliation, "whether it is the offender (as in 5:24-26) or the offended (cf. 6:14-15)."³⁹ Davies and Allison make two points in favor of the interpretation that it is the offender who must seek reconciliation. First, the authors cite the idiom "have (something) against" as it is used in *Rev* 2:4, where Christ "has against" the Ephesians that they abandoned the love they had at first, a failing of the Ephesians that casts them in the role of "offender." The second point is based on the synthetic parallelism of the two illustrations in *Mt* 5:27-30. It follows, according to Davies and Allison, that the illustrations in 5:21-26 would also be in synthetic parallelism. And since the second illustration in 5:21-26 is directed toward the offender, the first illustration must also be so directed.

On the other hand, a similar text from the *Didache* suggests that the alternative interpretation –that the offended is to make reconciliation– is also possible: "And let no one who has a quarrel (ἔχων τὴν ἀμφιβολίαν) with his friend join you until they are reconciled, lest your sacrifice be profaned" (*Did* 14:2). Although, as Davies and Allison note, this text does not show clear dependence on *Mt* 5:23-24, they nevertheless believe that the author of the *Didache* was familiar with Matthew.⁴⁰ If *Did* 14:2 can be interpreted to mean that even the one offended is to be excluded until there is a reconciliation, then it is possible that this may also have been the

Matthean community's interpretation of *Mt* 5:23-24. In support of this suggestion is the context of 5:23-24: arguably, Jesus' interpretation of the Law in 5:21-48 represents a radicalizing of the Law. And, as Davies and Allison have noted, the interpretation of 5:23-24 that requires the one offended to make reconciliation "would certainly surpass traditional Jewish teaching."⁴¹ The ambiguity of these verses leaves open the possibility, of course, that *both* the offender and the offended are to seek reconciliation. But it can also be argued that the interpretation that places the burden of reconciliation on the innocent party better reflects the pattern of Jesus' life and death, the life and death of the innocent one, which pattern believers are called to actualize in their own lives.

The evidence of *Did* 14:2 clearly establishes the ethical requirement as the precondition for participation in the eucharistic assembly, a precondition that is consonant with the command of *Mt* 5:23-24 to seek brotherly reconciliation, leaving one's gift at the altar if necessary. The implication of this requirement in the eucharistic setting is that the presence of the risen Christ challenges the believer to actualize the pattern of Jesus' life in the believer's own life, a pattern for which he or she will be held accountable at the last judgment (25:31-46). Indeed, the presence of the risen Christ at the eucharistic meal confronts the believer with the eschatological demand for the unified response of profession (implied by the believer's presence in the community of faith) and reconciliation, neither of which is possible without the correct understanding of who Jesus is and what he expects.

On the other hand, those who do not actualize the pattern of Jesus' life in their own lives are confronted each week by their failure when they are excluded from the presence of the risen Christ at the eucharistic meal, foreshadowing the everlasting exclusion in store for those who do not do the Father's will (7:21-23; 25:41-45). The only hope for such as these is that as they are confronted by the word of the Gospel, as the hidden intention of their hearts is revealed, their hearts would be transformed by this new understanding, enabling them at last to fulfill the ethical requirement, enabling them to produce the fruit that corresponds to the good tree.

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Περίληψη
«Ποιήσατε τὸ δένδρον καλόν».
Ἑρμηνεύοντας τὸ Μτ. 12,33 στή συνάφεια
τοῦ εὐχαριστιακοῦ δείπνου

Ὁ σκοπὸς αὐτῆς τῆς ἐργασίας εἶναι νὰ ἐρευνήσῃ τὴ σχέσηὴ ποὺ ὑπάρχει μεταξὺ ἐνὸς γλωσσικοῦ λειτουργικοῦ πλαισίου καὶ τῆς μεταφορᾶς τοῦ δένδρου καὶ τοῦ καρποῦ του στὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον Εὐαγγέλιο. Καθὼς ἓνα δένδρον ἀναγνωρίζεται ἀπὸ τὸν καρπὸ του, ἔτσι καὶ ἡ καρδιά ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου, ὅπου ἐδράζουν ἡ κατανόηση καὶ ἡ πρόθεση, γίνεται γνωστὴ κατὰ κύριο λόγο ἀπὸ τὰ λόγια καὶ τὰ ἔργα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου. Στὴν μεταπτωτικὴ ὁμως κατάστασιν τὰ λόγια καὶ τὰ ἔργα ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου δὲν ἀποκαλύπτουν πάντοτε τὴν καρδιά ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου. Ἀντίθετα, ἴσως καὶ νὰ τὴν ἀποκρύπτουν. Συνεπῶς, ὅλα τὰ λόγια καὶ τὰ ἔργα, καὶ αὐτὰ ποὺ εἶναι σαφῶς ἐνάρετα, ὑπόκεινται στὴν τελικὴ κρίση. Γιὰ τὸ λόγο αὐτό, μπορεῖ κανεὶς νὰ πεῖ ὅτι ἡ σωτηρία ἀντιπροσωπεύει ἓναν τύπο τῆς ὀλότητος, ὅπου τὸ ἐξωτερικὸ τοῦ ἀνθρώπου ἀνταποκρίνεται οὐσιαστικὰ στὸ ἐσωτερικὸ του, ὅπου τὰ ἀληθινὰ ἀγαθὰ λόγια καὶ οἱ πράξεις εἶναι ἐκεῖνα ποὺ ἐκπορεύονται ἀπὸ μία ἀγαθὴ καρδιά.

Ἡ ἐντολὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ νὰ ποιήσουμε καὶ τὸ δένδρον καὶ τὸν καρπὸ του ἀγαθὸ (Ματθ. 12,33) μπορεῖ ἔτσι νὰ ἐρμηνευθεῖ ὡς μία ἐντολὴ νὰ ἀνακατασκευάσουμε τὴν καρδιά ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου. Αὐτὴ ἡ μεταβολὴ συντελεῖται, σύμφωνα μὲ τὴν πρότασίν μου, στὸ εὐχαριστιακὸ δείπνο, ὅπου κατὰ τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον Εὐαγγέλιο ὁ ἀναστηθεὶς Χριστὸς κάνει γνωστὴ τὴν παρουσία Του. Ἡ παρουσία τοῦ ἀναστηθέντος Χριστοῦ προκαλεῖ τοὺς πιστοὺς νὰ πραγματοποιήσουν τὸ πρότυπο τῆς ζωῆς Του στὶς δικές τους ζωές, ἓνα πρότυπο γιὰ τὸ ὁποῖο θὰ ἀποδώσουν λόγο κατὰ τὴν τελικὴ κρίση. Ἀπὸ τὴν ἄλλη μεριά, ὅσοι δὲν πραγματώνουν στὴ ζωὴ τους τὸ πρότυπο ζωῆς ποὺ προτείνει ὁ Ἰησοῦς, ἔρχονται ἀντιμέτωποι κάθε ἐβδομάδα μὲ τὴν ἀποτυχία, καθὼς ἐξαιροῦν ἑαυτὸν ἀπὸ τὴν παρουσία τοῦ κατὰ τὴν Θεία Εὐχαριστία, προσιωπίζοντας τὴν αἰώνια ἐξαίρεση γιὰ ἐκεῖνους ποὺ δὲν ἀκολουθοῦν τὸ θέλημα τοῦ Πατρὸς.

1. Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Gospel According to St Matthew*, International Critical Commentary (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907), 137.
2. The alternative interpretation is proposed by Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 239, who argues that Jesus is enjoining his hearers "to avoid hypocrisy."
3. So Russell Pregeant, *Christology Beyond Dogma: Matthew's Christ in Process Hermeneutic*, Semeia Supplements 7 (Philadelphia and Missoula: Fortress Press and Scholars Press, 1978), 122-23.
4. Dan O. Via, Jr., *Self-Deception and Wholeness in Paul and Matthew* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 92.
5. John A. Barnet, *Not the Righteous but Sinners: M. M. Bakhtin's Theory of Aesthetics and the Problem of Reader-Character Interaction in Matthew's Gospel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 246 (London: T & T Clark International, 2003), 123.
6. Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 179.
7. Barnet, *Not the Righteous but Sinners*, 124-25.
8. Patte, *Matthew*, 176-78.
9. Patte, *Matthew*, 176.
10. Patte, *Matthew*, 179.
11. Barnet, *Not the Righteous but Sinners*, 125.
12. Patte, *Matthew*, 178.
13. Barnet, *Not the Righteous but Sinners*, 125.
14. Dan O. Via, Jr., "Ethical Responsibility and Human Wholeness in Matthew 25:31-46," *Harvard Theological Review* 80 (1987): 96.
15. George Dunbar Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel According to St Matthew* (London: Oxford University Press, 1946), 2.
16. Kilpatrick, *Origins*, 2.
17. Norman R. Petersen, *Rediscovering Paul* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985), 7.
18. See Via, "Ethical Responsibility," 97. My interest here is not in the *implied* reader, whom Via places "between the poles of knowing maturity and not-knowing, non-calculating innocence;" but in the knowing, mature reader, for whom the text is undoubtedly only one aspect of his or her religious experience. The problem of analyzing character/reader perspectives comprises the main task of Barnet, *Not the Righteous but Sinners*.
19. Kilpatrick, *Origins*, 37.
20. Kilpatrick, *Origins*, 57.
21. Kilpatrick, *Origins*, 70.
22. Krister Stendahl, *The School of Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 21.
23. I shall return to Cullmann's work below.
24. Stendahl, *School*, 22.
25. Stendahl, *School*, 29. Cf. Kilpatrick, *Origins*, 78-80.
26. Stendahl, *School*, 29.
27. Oscar Cullmann, *Early Christian Worship*, translated by A. S. Todd and J. B. Torrance (London: SCM Press, 1953), 29.
28. Cullmann, *Worship*, 15-16.
29. Other examples, such as *John* 20:26-29, may be interpreted as implying a gathering for a meal.
30. Cullmann, *Worship*, 16. Cf. *Mt* 18:20.
31. Cullmann, *Worship*, 12.
32. Cullmann, *Worship*, 27.
33. Even though *Acts* 5:42 mentions only teaching and *Acts* 2:46 mentions only the meal, this does not mean that there were two separate gatherings. It only means that in the former case there is no mention of a meal; in the latter case, no mention of teaching. Cf. *Acts* 2:42, where both are mentioned.
34. Cullmann, *Worship*, 28, interprets the two "gatherings" as "two parts of one unified act."
35. Cullmann, *Worship*, 29.
36. Cullmann, *Worship*, 33.
37. Via, "Ethical Responsibility," 94.
38. E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah* (London and Philadelphia: SCM Press and Trinity Press, 1990), 42-43.
39. W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1988-1997), 1:517.
40. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:516.
41. Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:517.