



The Gospel is Shocking!

Much of what Jesus says as it is recorded in the Gospel would be very difficult to do. Moreover, it can be very confusing and difficult if we understand Jesus' commands in a literal way and try to carry them out accordingly. For example, "If someone is being attacked, would it be wrong to use force on the attacker?" someone asks, raising a question that has troubled Christian consciences for centuries.

During a time when many believed the end of the world was at hand, it is easy to see why Jesus would be represented as telling His followers to strip themselves of all possessions, to rely upon God instead of providing for themselves and to leave their families and their worldly responsibilities behind.

Even then, however, it seems that a place was made for a less radical form of Christian life that was appropriate to the man or woman who stayed at home: "If anyone gives so much as a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is a disciple, then I tell you solemnly, he will most certainly not lose his reward." (Matthew 10:42)

Yet, it would be a mistake to fall back on this interpretation as a way of avoiding the challenge that the Gospel presents to us. Otherwise, we will never be shocked by the Gospel and we will never be disturbed by the distance between what we are and what God would have us be. There can be no grace and no progress until the Gospel has in some way "shocked" us.

Finally, all we can do then is pledge ourselves through the grace of God to do the best we can, as individuals and communities, to live out Jesus' teachings in our own time and place.

Father David