I. A theme we can draw from the readings this weekend is: Grace perfecting nature (cf. St. Thomas Aquinas).
   A. This can be contrasted with the Lutheran view:
      1. Luther understood that man was not capable of acting freely, unless he was turning from God through sin.
      2. For Luther, when humans do good, it is because the Holy Spirit is supplanting their human nature and will and acting through them. But, humans are totally deprived of grace, incapable of doing good on their own. Thus, grace destroys human nature.
   B. But, the readings demonstrate the opposite today, first by giving the example of David.
      1. David has much to gain by killing Saul — a kingdom, freedom from distress, safety for his friend Jonathan.
      2. Yet, David chooses to keep Saul alive: “The Lord will reward each man for his justice and his faithfulness...I would not harm the Lord's anointed.”
      3. David is not acting, initially, from a spiritual impulse. He first desired to kill Saul, but he relented by the action of grace which enabled David to make the right choice.
         a) In the words of the Second Reading: “the spiritual was not first; rather the natural and then the spiritual.”

II. The Christian life is not one of platitudes but of DOING.
   A. The commands of Christ in the Gospel are meant to be understood literally:
      1. Christ literally desires us to give without expecting return, to forgive our enemies, to pray for those who persecute us. These are commands, not recommendations or nice ideas.
      2. Christ doesn’t say, “Because you are human, you can’t forgive those who hurt you, but I will forgive them for you.” He says, “forgive your enemies.” Christ expects his Christians to DO something — to live the Christian life actively.
      3. And, this is what Catholics mean by our understanding of good works. If a Christian doesn’t forgive their enemies, or doesn’t give to those in need, (etc.) it is disobedience to Christ. A Christian who has no interest in obeying the commands of Christ can’t really have faith.
         a) It’s not that our works buy our salvation, but that Christianity isn’t about memorizing nice phrases.
         b) You can spend countless hours memorizing scripture or going to church, but if it never changes the way you live and the way you treat one another, then do you really love the God who commands you to live this way? What good is knowing about God, if you have no concern for the commands he give you?
      4. “Going to church no more makes you a Christian than standing in a garage makes you a car.” - Billy Sunday

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