

So close, yet so far – like being on a journey and finally being able to see your destination only to discover that across your path, between you and it, there is an enormous motorway making it well nigh impossible to reach that destination. Also a bit like Purgatory, being within sight of our heavenly homeland but having to go through the process of cleansing and purification before being finally admitted to heaven itself. So close and yet so far.

And so for the scribe in today's gospel. He knows that loving God and loving neighbour are the supreme commandments and that they are more important than anything else. He can see his destination but he still can't quite get there... *You are not far from the Kingdom of God.*

The opening prayer says: "Almighty and merciful God, by whose **gift** your faithful offer you service, grant, we pray, that we may **receive** the things you have promised". We can go on trying to love God and our neighbour until we are blue in the face but it will get us absolutely nowhere if we don't first of all receive **from** God that ability to love Him and neighbour. Loving God and loving neighbour is a gift from God that we need to receive at His hands in prayer and supplication. The moral life is impossible without the spiritual life.

'I love you, Lord, my strength' says the psalmist. We do love God but only because he first loved us. We are only in a position to praise him because he has become our Saviour. He is the one who has saved us from death and destruction. *'He is my shield, my rock, my fortress'*.

Up to the time of Christ all priesthood was an effort on the part of humanity to gain access to God. Christ abolishes this kind of priesthood and replaces it with his own, the priesthood that comes from God Himself. *His power to save is utterly certain, since he is living for ever to intercede for all who come to God through Him.* He has offered Himself once and for all and in that offering, and that offering alone, we find salvation.

Only in that offering which is of course the offering of the Mass do we have the ability to actually put into practice what the scribe aspired to, namely love of God and love of neighbour.

Heaven is within our sights. We will gain admittance and the faithful departed will gain admittance, not through our own hard work but through the work of Christ on the Cross. All we have to do is to allow Christ to do that work for us and take us across that bridge to heaven itself.

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