

**Moral Scrupulosity**    Twenty-first Week in Ordinary Time    Tuesday, August 28, 2018    2  
Thes 2:1-3a, 14-17;    **Mt 23:23-26**    St. Augustine, bishop and Doctor of the Church  
(Look at what's really important: judgment, mercy, and fidelity.)

**“Blind guides, who strain out the gnat and swallow the camel!”**

This is a continuation of yesterday's discourse on what we could call **moral or legal scrupulosity**. This particular phrase summarizes the whole thing: straining the gnat, swallowing the camel.

Now this happens all the time in religion. It isn't actually the result of bad will—it is **not the result of bad will. It's the result of bad judgment**—that's different. **It's a failure to see what is important.** It's actually in an unconscious way **an attempt to avoid what is important, and who of us could say we have never tried to avoid something unpleasant or difficult or challenging?** It is perfectly natural. We prefer what is pleasant, what is sociable, what is acceptable to others, and so on. But **in avoiding what is unpleasant, we sometimes swallow the camel.**

**This straining the gnat is a sort of defense mechanism.** Modern psychology has also studied this. **We start to take care of little things**, focus on little things, things “we can handle.” What Jesus wants us to do is realize that it's true **we can't handle life, that's true, but God can.**

And if you look at what's really important: judgment, mercy, and fidelity. **Judgment: what really is true?** What really is good? **Mercy: that's all about divine love that is all-encompassing**, and in encompassing even the wicked **it creates conversion, repentance, new life**, change, deep radical change in people's very constitution. The cynic doesn't believe this, but God does and Jesus does. Mercy and fidelity, **fidelity to the God who has come to us to mix with us**, he taking on our human nature so that we can take on his divine nature. That is what God is offering. That's what the gospel of Jesus Christ is all about. **Fidelity is about being loyal to that and to him.**