

A Sermon on the Vicious Mind

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for September 13th, 2020 (and beyond)

The vicious mind seeks satisfaction at the expense of others without recognizing or acknowledging the cost to all involved. The following is the inner and outer dialogue between the virtuous and vicious with thoughts provided in brackets and open dialogue not bracketed. The dialogue is fictional and intended as a mystery/morality play. Characters are fictional and not based on any individual persons or parties.

Vicious Minded Party: [How can I put this and still get what I want without any question or conflict? I gambled with money given to me meant for another purpose and need more money.] I had some unexpected expenses and don't have any left for necessities. I hate to ask, but, can I borrow more? I'll pay you back and just add it to what I owe you.

Virtuous Minded Party: [I need money to pay bills and cover my expenses. I understand the limitations on my existing resources and stick within my budget. I have some in savings, but, wish to add to that for my own financial wellness and security. But, a friend in need is a friend indeed.] That's terrible news. How much do you need? When will you pay it back?

Vicious Minded Party: [I need \$500 so I can gamble in hopes to get back what I already lost and that will cover all my expenses and more with plenty to pay back Virtuous Minded Party.] \$500 would be great and I'm sure I can pay it back within the week. I've got a good feeling that things will turn around.

Virtuous Minded Party: [\$500 is a lot. But, inflation and maybe. So, if I'm paid back within the week then that should be fine.] Sure, if you will pay it back within the week, I'll loan it to you.

Vicious Minded Party: [I lost the money again. And, I really thought I'd win this time and had such a good feeling about it. Maybe Virtuous Minded Party will forget about or forgive the debt. I won't mention it.]

Virtuous Minded Party: You seem upset and worried. Did something happen?

Vicious Minded Party: I'm upset because I don't have the money to pay you back and now I feel awkward or anxious. Please forgive me. I will pay it back, I promise.

Virtuous Minded Party: What happened? I thought you said you were sure you could pay it back within the week.

Vicious Minded Party: I'm not comfortable with all your questions. I'd rather not talk about it. Can we just drop this?

Virtuous Minded Party: I'm willing to drop it if you promise to NEVER ask me if you can borrow money again and welcome gifts without expecting any.

Vicious Minded Party: Thank you so much. That's such a relief. I'm so glad we've moved past that. Should I expect a gift anytime soon? I'm still not satisfied.

Virtuous Minded Party: I believe you misunderstood, I said you shouldn't expect any gifts, but, should welcome gifts you receive.

Vicious Minded Party: What the fuck does that mean?

Virtuous Minded Party: Have you heard about Santa Claus or St. Nicholas? He's a myth based on a man or Santa Claus is the artistic interpretation of the best aspects of St. Nicholas which first and foremost is charitable to children in need. So, the mythological version, that reinforces Jesus Christ's charity which many refer to as Christian Charity, keeps a "naughty" and "nice" list. And, those on the "naughty" list get coal in their stockings (which is actually a nice gift that helps heat the family home in the time that myth originated and for some still today) and nothing more. The nice list gets something for their personal use only to feel recognized but the naughty only get what is really just stock on hand as a symbolic gesture where the gift is actually for the home and not the recipient individually. So, mutual respect and consideration are virtuous qualities and/or "nice" and from my perspective, you've been given more here than reason suggests was warranted in hindsight. Jesus is the reason for the season.

Vicious Minded Party: Fine. Then, Christmas is off-limits. See if I get you anything!?! Even if it is coal you'll probably appreciate it. You are an idiot.

Virtuous Minded Party: You got out of it what you put into it. Sometimes that saying is more than cliché even though I personally find it annoying and stupid.

Vicious Minded Party: So, you know how I feel then. Feelings are powerful.

Virtuous Minded Party: But, cooler heads prevail.

Vicious Minded Party: What the fuck does that mean?

Virtuous Minded Party: It means virtue is actually its own reward and when you don't find virtue rewarding you often go without in more ways than one.

Vicious Minded Party: That's not fair. Everyone should be treated as equals. Why should you have more than I do? We're both human.

Virtuous Minded Party: I've treated you in a manner where I arguably subjugated myself and my rights to serve your self-interest. That was not my intention as I am not a co-dependent and actually recognize our equality. Completely objectively, I could sue you in small claims for a return of all the money I loaned you right now. I keep my word and I said I was willing to "drop" or "forgive" it with the understanding that I would never loan you any money again and that you shouldn't expect any gifts, but, be open to

receiving them just the same. But, if you contact rev@cope.church she'll send you a free Prometheus-themed mystery bonus blessing as long as there remains supply on hand. So, at least a tip on where to get a handout when in need. But, while virtuous she has learned your language so be prepared and know when she says she'll post your feedback, she means it.

Vicious Minded Party: I didn't realize you were one of those "church people". I don't need a handout from church. I'm starting to regret asking you for help in the first place. I'll pay you back as soon as I can. I don't need your charity.

Virtuous Minded Party: I won't hold my breath and will be pleasantly surprised if you act on it. I still forgive it and consider the matter dropped.

Vicious Minded Party: Well, I don't and you can consider it a gift when I pay you.

Virtuous Minded Party: That's very thoughtful of you to say that.

Vicious Minded Party: See, you don't know everything. I'm a very generous person. Where do you think all my money goes? Straight to the American Indian Movement to help those in need.

Virtuous Minded Party: So, you donated the money I loaned you to charity? Did you get a tax-receipt?

Vicious Minded Party: No, it wasn't a registered charity. That makes it extra generous.

Virtuous Minded Party: Good luck and I mean that. Some people are too generous for their own good. I understand.

Vicious Minded Party: [I'm going to actually pay it all back or die trying unless I get distracted. Either way, I'm supporting a good cause.]

The mystery plays and/or morality plays featured in weekly sermons may be revisited with live performances at church events in the future, including any tent revivals on the road. Such will entirely depend on funding and interest.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <https://www.heal-online.org>