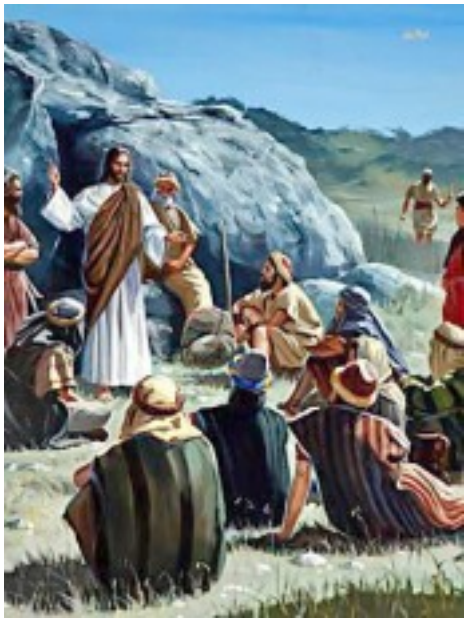


How often in our lives have we sought perfection? As students we needed to write that perfect paper to get the A we so desperately wanted. As professionals we may have wanted to deliver the perfect presentation so that our evaluations resonated with accolades. Even as parents, we may have tried to raise the perfect child.

It all sounds a bit shallow, doesn't it? We know that the perfect paper is still in our thoughts waiting to be written. If we had achieved perfection in our writing, then, why continue? No matter how perfect a presentation, there would always be those who found reason to complain. As for the perfect child---well, we know that our role as parents is to help our children grow into caring, loving adults. Perfection has nothing to do with it. We want our children to be happy, not perfect!

Even the Olympics can teach us a lesson about perfection. Some who thought they were perfect didn't end up being so. There were challenges or obstacles they weren't counting on. For some, perfection didn't necessarily mean winning a medal but achieving one's personal best.

What does being perfect really mean? What does Jesus mean when he tells us: "So be perfect, just as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48)? What a challenge! In Matthew's gospel, we hear: "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your heavenly Father, for he makes his sun rise on the bad and the good, and causes rain to fall on the just and the unjust." (Matthew 5:45-46)

This sounds like an insurmountable request. It is if we try to achieve it alone. We can only find perfection through and in God. It is only with God's grace that we can strive toward perfection. I use the word *strive* as I see this as our constant struggle---our forever challenge. Our daily task is to follow in the footsteps of Jesus so that we can one day achieve perfection in the arms of God. It's as if we are continually working on that "perfect paper." Keep working.