

Matthew 5:17-48

The Ministry of Jesus

I want to start by showing you a painting this morning. This painting by a Russian Artist, titled “Afghans” used to adorn the wall of an elementary school auditorium for decades. Thousands of students, hundreds of teachers passing by this painting, while no one knew exactly what they were looking at. Then a local man visited the school and was intrigued by the painting. So he asked around and no one knew the story behind the 7x10’ painting donated to the school by a local family. The man discovered that this was more than a large painting, this was a masterpiece that was worth close to \$1,000,000. A masterpiece that belonged in a museum, hanging in plain sight in a school auditorium.¹ A treasure in plain sight.

Now, I want you to take your Bible and turn to the Book of Matthew, chapter 5. I am sure that you are accustomed to your Bible, the smell of the leather, the noise the pages make as they run across your fingers, the notes you have put in the margins, the highlights. The Bible is the most widely distributed book in the world. It is easy to miss the indescribable value of something that we see as so common.

But today, I want to invite you to get a little closer to see this treasure in plain sight. Don’t miss what is right in front of you today in Holy Scripture. We face a severe problem across the landscape of the world, a severe problem across this church. The problem is not information, we have enough information, we have enough “read through the Bible in a year” plans, we have enough preachers filling the air with noise, but we don’t have enough clear Christian preaching (this is the reason for my life that has been fine tuned through the many mentors in my life - Danny Akin, Steve McKinion, and others). We are doing our best to remedy this problem by proclaiming Christ according to the Scripture.

There are multiple Christ that are believed upon and taught:

- The prosperity Christ
- The political Christ

¹ <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2007/02/06/local-man-finds-valuable-ignored-painting-thatadorned-mass-school-walls-for.html>

- The moralistic Christ
- The Heretical Christ. This is the Jesus who is born of a virgin, dies on a cross, raises from the dead, but who is not the eternal Son.

But there is only one Christ who saves - Christ according to the Scriptures who justifies us by his grace, who brings our wandering hearts into eternal fellowship with himself.

I am afraid that many of you have been looking at Jesus from a distance. Trying to discern who he is instead of seeing him for who he is in all of his glory. Summer time is coming, it is going to get hot outside, you can either stand staring at the nice cool water of the crystal blue pool, or you can jump in and be refreshed, to feel the heat of the day on your tired sweaty flesh wash away. Let's draw near to God and have him draw near to us. I don't want you to miss Christ today. I want to proclaim him to you through his holy Word.

Would you join me in Matthew 5 today? Begin in verse 21. I am going to read the first few lines of each paragraph until the end of the chapter. Follow along.

READ TEXT

These verses show us the ministry of Jesus. Jesus has come, as Matthew 3:13 tells us, to *fulfill all righteousness*. How does he do that? 3 Truths today about the ministry of Jesus.

1. Christ Is the Fulfillment of the Law

Look at verse 21 again. Christ says you have heard it said, but I say. You and I know the dangers of hearing something said about someone over hearing the one who said it. So much progress would be done in the world if we took the time to read the rest of the story. But, one of the major problems is that we don't read, but beyond not reading we don't listen. You can read and not hear, read but not understand. Of all things, we better make sure that we get this right.

Remember the story in Ezra-Nehemiah when Ezra reads the Law to the people? Nehemiah 8 tells us that all the people were gathered and Ezra stood on a wooden platform and read the Law to the people. But there were some who said Amen before they knew what was being read. They just liked what was being read. So some of the

men helped the people understand what was being read. And the people went from weeping to being told not to weep, for the joy of the Lord is their strength. The difference between feasting and weeping, between joyfully enjoying Christ and begrudgingly keeping the law, is a right interpretation of the Law. Christ is the right interpretation of the Law. Christ is the key to Scriptures.

And when we say Christ *is* we are not referring to someone who stands at a distance that we look upon. When we say Christ, we are referring to the one who gives us ears to hear, who opens our eyes to behold wonderful things, who takes us by the hand and leads us in the way of truth.

Christ comes to tell us, *you have heard that it was said, but I say*. There is a contrast between two things: what has been said, and what Christ says. The question that we have to ask is, "Who is the contrast between?" Christ and Moses, or Christ and the Pharisees? Can we know? How? Matthew 5:17-20. Christ is not saying "don't listen to Moses." Jesus will say to the Pharisees later, *For if you believed Moses, you would believe me; for he wrote of me.* (John 5:46) Christ is saying that his message (which is who he is - he is the message) is the same message of Moses. He was there when the Law was given to Moses. Before Moses was, He is. Most, if not all, wrong teaching about Jesus comes from the question, "What do we do with the Old Testament?" Christ tells us, when we read the Old Testament see Christ as its fulfillment not its abolisher. Why? The Old Testament testifies and looks forward to Christ. In his own authority, because of who he is, he says *You have heard it said but I say....* This statement would be audacious if it came from anyone other than Jesus.

The Law (OT) has a purpose, and the purpose of the Law is to bring us to Christ. I wonder if this is the way that you view the Old Testament. Do you view Scripture as promise? The whole Bible, from cover to cover is gospel, good news in the midst of evil, promises in the midst of disappointment and brokenness, pardon for the guilty, hope in the midst of hopelessness, light breaking through.

Not only is Christ the fulfillment of the Law,

2. Christ Displays the Intent of the Law

Christ was one day asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" How did he reply? *Love the Lord God with a whole heart.* What a fascinating response. In this singular

response he strikes the cord of the intent of the Law. God has never been about us keeping a rule. Some are very comfortable with this from of religion. You come to church whenever you feel, or you read your Bible this many times a week and for this long a day. You give this amount of your time or money, etc. Most of us prefer things that are cut and dry instead of God giving us one law to rule them all. Some of you are still trapped in a system of listing your own accomplishments. You think that if you will behave this way or that that God will accept you. But the demands of Christ are much more than day by day, they are moment by moment. The demands of Christ are all encompassing. As one Hymn writer put it:

*Were the whole realm of nature
mine, that were a present far too
small. Love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all.*

No, God is not after us keeping rules, God is after all of us. His desire, by necessity because of who he is, is to have himself be the object of our affections. The problem with simply keeping some rule or checking off some list is that we tend to cherish *our* accomplishments. Do you see the subtle danger here? If we can achieve righteousness then we become the object of our affections. But if righteousness is something that we desire and something that is given to us, externally from us, not on account of any good that we do, then we cherish the *one* who gives us righteousness. This is why we sing, *Amazing grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me, I once was lost but now I am found, 'twas blind but now I see....* God doesn't want the part of your life that likes to keep rules, God wants all of you. He wants you to say to him, here's my heart Lord, all of it, everything that I am to everything that you are. Have the works of my hands, the meditations of my heart, all of my desires, here's I am Lord, all of me.

The intention of the Law is to bind our hearts to do God's will. Often time's people view the Law as something that is negative, but the intent of the Law is to lead us to Christ. (Romans 5:20) The Law is not here to oppress us, the Law is here to show us the path of life, to have our hearts enjoy the presence of God. Psalm 16:11 says, *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.* The Law is there to tell us the way of life so that we will find fullness of joy, not in rule keeping but in enjoying Christ. This is why John says that his commands are not burdensome, because we who know the intent of the Law and the life that it leads us to in Christ know that this is what it living is all about.

What are we saying? The intent of the Law is so that we may know God. Not so that we can keep some code or check off some list. The purpose of the Law is that we may know God. This is why the Bible says that *Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.* (Romans 10:4). God intends for us to know him, to love him, for us to walk with him. **So what matters is not have I kept a law, but am I loving God? Of course if you love him you will obey him, but you don't obey him to love him, you love him to obey him. The law is not the end, the law is a way to the end and the end of the law is Christ the supreme one who brings us into eternal fellowship with God!**

You see the high standard that Christ has come to raise. How on earth can we achieve what he demands? We can't, that's why he came. There is one final point that we have to make from this passage. A point that reminds us what Christ is accomplishing through his coming. Number 3 this morning:

3. Christ Causes Us to Obey the Law

The Sermon on the Mount is not a new ethic, not some new laws. The Sermon shows us what God requires of us as well as the provision that God gives for us to do his will. The provision to do his will is from the one who audaciously says *BUT I SAY TO YOU*. Never forget who the *I* is that is saying this. He is not just a teacher, not just a prophet, he is the Son of God who has become flesh to present to us the truth of God. And he has come with a message - *The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, the former things are passing away, the new is breaking through.*

He has come to bring a new kingdom, come to bring a new dawn to the darkness of our days, and come to transform darkness into light. He is the author and the finisher of our faith, and through his life he is enabling us to live his life by providing new life for us through his life in the power of the Holy Spirit. He accomplishes this new life for us by his taking our old life upon himself, dying for our sin, and raising our old self to the newness of his life. We then give our old selves to him and he gives us new life. How? By faith in his finished work, not faith in our own attempts to achieve what has already been accomplished, but faith in his finished work for us.

Lloyd-Jones says it best, *The one thing that we have to avoid above everything else in our Christian lives is this fatal tendency to live the Christian life apart from a direct, living, and true relationship to God.* (Sermon on the Mount, 220) If you didn't need him,

he wouldn't have come. But he has come. Now everything we do must be guided by our affections for him. If he is not the center of our affections, then what is? If he is not the center of our affections, then we have missed the very purpose for our existence. Don't miss the greatest thing you could ever imagine - a loving relationship with God. The ministry of Jesus (the incarnate Son) is for us to know God. Do you know God, truly? Are you loving him more today than you did yesterday, and looking forward to loving him more tomorrow than you did today? Listen to his words, let him draw you close to himself.

Pray