

The Sermon on the Mount – Part 2

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 6th March 2011

Intro-

- Last week noted that the Sermon on the Mount is a hugely important teaching of Jesus, but we noted that it must be interpreted correctly and in the light of other clear scriptural teaching. We said that the context of the sermon was to smash the (then) current ideas on the kind of righteousness needed to enter heaven, perpetuated by the teaching of the Pharisees. We made 4 observations from the passage we read:
- That we should **evaluate blessings from God's perspective** rather than the world's- e.g. Blessed are those who mourn, the meek, the poor in spirit, thirsting after righteousness- Jesus was saying that it is those who are humble enough to realise their need of God's forgiveness and gift of righteousness that characterise those going to heaven.
- **Give up trying to get to Heaven by good works**- our righteousness has to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees even to enter heaven, and they were the 'righteousness' experts at the time, fasting twice a week, praying 3 times a day etc.
- **Trust in the One who is our righteousness.** We noted that the law wasn't bad, but good, the problem is we are bad by nature until we come to know Christ. We noted that Christ didn't come to destroy the law but to obey it fully on our behalf, so we might have His perfect righteous standard given to us as a gift.
- **Live as an example to the world of what God's grace can achieve in a person.** We noted that we, as the people of God, are meant to be salt and light, and it is only as we appreciate the grace of God given to us that His grace will truly flow out of us to those around us. We are saved for good works, not by them.

Read Matt 5:21-48

Here, after making and a hugely controversial statement, Jesus starts to illustrate what He means by this statement. The statement was that you needed a righteousness greater than the religious leaders of the day in order to get into heaven. He now goes on to show five examples of how they were misinterpreting God's law, so that even though it looked like they were keeping it, they really were not. We will look at these five areas of their understanding of the law, and see where the Pharisees were going wrong. We will look at what it means to us today.

1. You shall not murder- v21-26.

- The Pharisaic understanding of the law was that as long as you had not transgressed the letter of the law you were okay. They made up many of their own extra laws to keep them from disobeying God's law. This made them appear to others to be righteous. However, even though they appeared to be holy to other people they were really unclean. What Jesus was doing was revealing a true righteousness, and getting to the spirit behind the law rather than a mere appearance of righteousness.
- The Pharisees, thought that as long as they had not actually murdered somebody they had kept the law 'do not murder'. This meant that they could do everything up to actually murdering someone, but still appear to be holy. Jesus went on to show them that murder was really the final end of the scale of a hatred towards fellow

man, and that deeds done out of hatred towards our fellow man actually violated the righteousness of this law.

- Often people view themselves as being "good". They would say that they have never murdered anyone. When we describe ourselves in this way, we are being like the Pharisees. How many times have we insulted other people? How many times have we felt like throttling someone? If we have done it even once we have transgressed the law 'you shall not murder' and become lawbreakers.
- Murderers are mentioned in the book of Revelation in chapter 21 as having their part in the lake which burns with fire, meaning Hell. 1John 3:15 is even more specific 'Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life in him '. This is concerning- are we to conclude that if we have ever hated a brother or sister in Christ we are going to Hell? Yes, if we are relying on our own righteousness to save us, because we've all done it. That is why we need a greater righteousness than our own. That is why we need the righteousness of Christ!
- What does a murderer look like? They look like you and me. My experiences visiting people in prison who have committed murder and nursing people who have. Me throttling my brother, and running after a kid who did a 'typewriter' on my chest at school- we all have it in us. Saul (Paul), once a violent man (death of Stephen, first martyr), chief of sinners. David. Barabbas- insurrection, released by Jesus, soldiers nailing Jesus to the cross 'forgive them Father they don't know what they are doing'. There is forgiveness for murder today in Jesus Christ.
- **Application-** are you holding on to guilt for something you have done to someone in the past? Do you need to know their forgiveness? Apologise to them if you are able. Bring any sin to God and ask for His forgiveness. His blood is more than adequate to cleanse you. Decide to forgive yourself and enter into the freedom Jesus died for you to have.

2. You shall not commit adultery- v27-32.

- There are some sins that people are quick to condemn others about. Murder is one of these. Adultery is another one. The Pharisees thought that adultery was a terrible sin. We see this in their eagerness to condemn the woman caught in adultery in John 8:3. Jesus' response is one of grace. He did not condone her sin, but told her to go and sin no more.
- The Pharisees thought that if they had not committed adultery, literally, then they were not guilty of this sin. Jesus showed them that the commandment 'do not commit adultery' was to be obeyed internally as well as externally. He showed them that lusting after someone else was a breaking of this commandment. This means that in God's eyes, if we have ever lusted after someone else whilst being married, we are guilty of adultery. Jesus explains that we commit adultery 'in our hearts'. This was a Hebrew way of saying 'in our minds'. It is when we fantasise that we are with someone else who is not our husband or wife. This might be done through the medium of a romantic novel or through pornography, or simply by using the imagination. Jesus is saying it is not only the act, but everything which leads up to the act.
- Jesus adds another example of where the Pharisees were wrong about adultery. There was a debate amongst the Jewish scholars about Deuteronomy 24:1. This verse mentions that if a man finds 'something indecent' in his wife and divorces her, and she marries another man, then he is not to re-marry her at a later date (i.e. God wanted them to understand the seriousness of marriage). From this passage, some Jewish scholars concluded that God almost commanded divorce under certain circumstances. The debate was over, what 'something indecent' meant. One side said that 'something indecent' meant sexual sin. Another side said that 'something

indecent' meant anything from burning the cooking, to being unattractive to her husband. Jesus gives the right interpretation of this passage in Deuteronomy as meaning serious sexual sin, and even then it does not necessarily have to end in divorce. In other words, Jesus was saying 'remain faithful to your marriage vows'. In today's society, there is a thinking that when people get married if it does not work out, they can easily have a divorce. Whilst this may not be violating the laws of the country, it is against God's ultimate plan that a man and a woman commit themselves to one another for life in a loving marriage.

- The fact is, if we are honest, most of us in some way have transgressed the law 'do not commit adultery'. Paul says in 1Cor 6:9. "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God..." This means we are in trouble if we are relying on our own righteousness to get into heaven, but we are not. Paul goes on to say; '...And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.'
- **Application-** Do you need to know today that you are sanctified by the blood of Jesus? Do you need to know, like the woman caught in adultery, that Jesus does not condemn you, and that you can go and be released to not sin again. We live in a fallen world, and in a society, which says it is okay to live together outside of marriage. When people come into the church, they come with a history. We need to show love to people and understanding, whilst at the same time upholding marriage. Are you married? Choose to be faithful to your spouse, not just by physically not committing adultery, but also mentally. Are you single? If you would like to get married, be patient, keep yourself pure, and when you have the possibility of becoming married have a mindset of making the marriage work. Are you divorced? God wants you to know this healing. If you remarry, He wants you to have faith to make the marriage work. God knows the heartache of divorce, and that's why he wants to protect us from it. He loves us and wants the best for our lives.

3. The keeping of oaths- v33-37.

- This next section has a quotation, which is not in the Old Testament. However, the law states that we should not give false testimony, i.e. tell a lie. It was a common practice in the Old Testament to say 'as the lord lives.' People would swear by the Lord, that they were telling the truth. However, this began to be distorted by the Pharisees. They would say that people did not have to keep their word if God's name had not been used when the people had sworn. Therefore, they said that if someone had sworn by the temple, but not used God's name then they were not bound by their vow. People would swear by the Earth, or by Jerusalem, or on their own lives. Again, the Pharisees said that if God's name had not been invoked then the vow had lesser need to be fulfilled.
- Jesus countered this by saying that we needed to simply tell the truth. The very need that people had to start swearing meant that they were not people who were telling the truth. He was really convicting the Pharisees of breaking the commandment 'you shall not give false testimony'.
- Rev 22:15 says that outside the new city of Jerusalem (Heaven) are those who "...love and practise lying" (NASB)- i.e. they didn't get in to Heaven.
- **Application** – Have you ever told a lie? Even a white lie? If so, you have become a lawbreaker. In James 2:10, it says 'For whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all.' In John 8:46 Jesus

challenges the people 'Can any of you prove me guilty of sin? If I am telling the truth, why don't you believe me?' Jesus always told the truth, and often said 'I tell you the truth'. Do we need to know God's forgiveness for lies we have told? Do we need to apologise to others? How trustworthy, are we with the things we say? It's our word, our bond?

4. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth- v38-42

- There was a law in the Old Testament, which allowed for people to settle disputes. This law allowed people to take from an offender that which had been taken from them. This law limited the desire we have for retaliation. It meant that no more could be taken from the offender than was done to the victim. However, this law was abused so that people started to use it as an excuse for a lack of forgiveness, and the need to always get even. Jesus brought out the heart of the law, which was that it was actually better to forgive. The law was given as a concession, rather than a command. Jesus was getting at the heart of the situation and revealing that deep inside mankind is the desire to make other people pay up, whilst we get off lightly.
- **Application** – is there someone that you really want to get even with? Has someone done harm to you? Are you planning revenge? Are you bitter? Are you over obsessed with your rights? We all need to know the wonders of God's mercy. So that we are in turn merciful to others.

Rom 12:9 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Deuteronomy 32:35 It is mine to avenge; I will repay. In due time their foot will slip; their day of disaster is near and their doom rushes upon them." We need rather to feel sorry for those whose feet will slip in due time, for it will surely happen.

5. Love your neighbour, hate your enemy- v43-47.

- Jesus then addresses exclusivity. It is so easy to love those who love us and hate those that we don't get on with. However, God loves everyone. There was a mandate upon the children of Israel to disperse the godless wicked people from the land of Israel. From this mandate, the Pharisees took things further. They began to hate, certain people who did not fit their expectations. They hated the Samaritans, the tax collector's, the Romans, and anyone else they considered unclean. Jesus had a different approach; He loved all people, despite their background. He said. 'It is the sick who need a doctor.' and He particularly ministered to those who were on the outskirts of society.
- Although everyone considered the Pharisees to be the most godly people, Jesus clearly showed that because they were so exclusive, they were actually no better, in reality than the tax collectors that they so hated for being disloyal to the Jewish people. The Pharisees themselves were disloyal to people by their exclusivity.
- **Application** -are we exclusive? Do we greet our brethren only? How welcome does a newcomer feel when they enter the building? Who are our enemies? Who do we find it hard to socialise with? The book of Romans says that while we were yet enemies of God, He reconciled us to himself. When we realise the full implication of this it makes us want to do it for others. What enemies, do you have that you need to reconcile to yourself? How will you do that?

Summary Matt 5:48

- Jesus sums up the righteousness needed to enter Heaven by saying 'be perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect'. In saying this Jesus is really saying that the standard of lawkeeping necessary to enter Heaven is actually perfect lawkeeping that never falters, such as God displays. He was preparing people to receive, by faith, His perfect righteousness given freely to all who believe. Hallelujah!

- As we have been reading through various things that Jesus said you may have felt the conviction of the Holy Spirit. If you know that there are areas in your life that you need to address then respond to God in these areas. Bring any concerns you have to the cross of Christ. Ask for his forgiveness and choose to trust in his righteousness alone.
- Are you a Christian who started off trusting simply in the grace of God, but now are trusting instead in your own righteousness? Maybe you feel condemned, because you are not practising spiritual disciplines. Maybe you feel caught in a certain sin. Choose to come back to the grace of God alone. Celebrate his victory on your behalf, and believe that he has overcome all the power of the evil one. Ask him to fill you afresh, with his Holy Spirit and choose to walk in his power. Choose to believe that his grace is sufficient.

Song: Jesus, We celebrate Your Victory