

Sunday, June 21, 2020 am

**THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS (10)**  
**Sermon on the Mount (9)**  
**“But I Say to You”**  
**Matthew 5:21-48**

This morning, since we have begun assembling again, I wish to resume my theme that we began last year. Because of the delay and also the depth of this topic, I will likely continue this theme through 2021.

The theme I have been presenting this year is the teachings of Jesus. We have begun with an in-depth study of the Sermon on the Mount, a lesson that was likely early in the ministry of Jesus and one which message was likely repeated often as He taught for the coming 3 years or so. This sermon addresses the nature of the Kingdom Jesus came to establish and what life in the Kingdom of God is like.

Thus far in this sermon, since it has been some 2+ months since we addressed this, we have noted the “beatitudes” – attitudes that will shape the lives of the godly; the importance of proper influence – we are both salt and light; and then a discourse on the purpose of Jesus and our life as we live in His kingdom – including that Jesus came to fulfill the Old Law (not destroy it) and He expects us to manifest TRUE righteousness (better than the hypocritical and self-serving righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees of that day). We will elaborate more on this in just a moment as we begin today’s lesson.

**I. You have heard...but I say...**

- a. We just noted that as Jesus gave what is likely the theme of this sermon, “Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees...”

The idea of righteousness is doing what is right. In this case, the emphasis is upon doing what is right where God is concerned.

- b. From the statement of Jesus, it is clear that the Pharisees, scribes and other religious leaders were NOT doing what God expected. They had perverted the LOM in many ways by replacing or modifying it with their own ways. That is a part of what Jesus is dealing with.

In challenging His audience to proper righteousness that EXCEEDS that of the corrupted leaders, Jesus proceeds to give some examples – 6 of them as a matter of fact. They are seen in this, “You have heard...but I say... format

- c. **You have heard that it was said...** What exactly was Jesus addressing? Was it simply the strictness of the LOM on a matter? Or had they changed it?
- i. Consider the statement, “You have heard” seems to imply it was going further than what had actually been taught – so these statements, WHILE founded upon the LOM, actually disregarded the intent of what God demanded.
  - ii. Understand that Jesus taught the keeping of the Old Law and He did so Himself perfectly – Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:21-22. He understood not only the commands, but the intent. Again, be reminded of what He said just prior to this – the LAW would remain in effect “every jot and tittle” until it was fulfilled (Matthew 5:18)
  - iii. BUT Jesus saw that these religious leaders had manipulated and corrupted the LOM. When we addressed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees some 3 months ago, we noted numerous ways their righteousness was corrupted –They were hypocrites, prideful and opportunistic. They were prejudiced and inconsistent in their judgments. BUT mostly, they manipulated the LOM to justify their own selfish pursuits. IOW, they made God’s law say what they WANTED it to say instead of what it actually taught, INCLUDING its intent.

Example: Matthew 15:1-9 where they had added to God's laws and bound that upon others AND they had punched loopholes into God's commands.

1) They added to the Law by demanding hand washing before eating. Likely, this was not about sanitary practices, but ceremonial.

2) They took a very specific command, "honor your father and mother" and created loopholes that would excuse one of his obligation.

In so doing they corrupted both the law itself AND its intent.

- iv. **WHEN Jesus says, "You have heard that it was said..."** and then quotes, PART of what He says can be found in the LOM, but He also more is added to it – likely the oral traditions that the Jewish leaders were now binding. They had neglected the intent behind the law.

d. **But I say to you...** What was Jesus teaching? There is discussion over whether Jesus is here teaching:

i. What the Law of Moses actually taught AND intended –

1. Some advocate that the "But I say..." was actually what the LOM taught and intended (especially the heart of the matter), while the "You have heard..." was the traditions of the rulers. Jesus was contrasting these.
2. This is worthy of consideration considering His audience and the way these religious leaders had corrupted God's the true Law.
3. Also add to this what Jesus had just said previously that ALL the Law would remain until it was fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18).
4. This is also different from how Jesus typically addressed the Law. Typically, He would say, "**It is written**" (cf. Matthew 4:4, 6, 7, 21:13, etc.). But only here do we have this type of language.
5. There is no doubt that Jesus was addressing the Law of Moses in His teachings here and how it had been corrupted by these leaders.

ii. OR He was describing the new law He was bringing in to replace it.

1. Clearly, Jesus came to replace the Old Law with a better covenant for all (Colossians 2:14, Hebrews 8). And much of His teaching emphasized this. Jesus could be emphasizing the nature of that New Law.
2. This position could be supported by the fact that Jesus elaborates on the proper solution by going deeper than the LOM specifically stated in many cases – to the heart of the matter!
3. One author describing this notes that the distinction here is "*a contrast between the Pharisaic corruptions of the Old Testament and the true righteousness of the kingdom – a righteousness that was anticipated in the law and brought to its fullness in Christ.*"
4. I personally believe that much of the teaching of Jesus was directed toward the future kingdom/church He came to establish (cf. Matthew 16:18-19). And would not rule that out, even in this Sermon on the Mount

iii. Could it be both?

1. I do not say this to avoid the discussion, but for us to consider HOW God demands not only obeying His commands, but the heart that is behind it.
2. And this has ALWAYS been what God expects!  
The part of the LOM that was lost to so many that Jesus encountered (and Isaiah, Moses, the apostles, Paul, etc.) was the motives that led to their actions. That is why many saw the Law of Moses as a works-based law with which you EARNED your standing with God. Some believed that simply being Jew was just about your automatic ticket to heaven.  
That led to many arrogant and corrupt attitudes – both THEN and NOW!

3. Consider ***The HEART of the matter.***

- Understand that the Law of Moses was ALSO a law of the heart –

Deuteronomy 6:4-7 – love God with all your heart, the commands were to be in the heart; and they were to teach these things to their children.

Isaiah 29:13, *Therefore the Lord said: “Inasmuch as these people draw near with their mouths And honor Me with their lips, But have removed their hearts far from Me, And their fear toward Me is taught by the commandment of men,*

- We TOO are under a law of the heart – Romans 10:10, 2:29 – true circumcision is that of the heart; Ephesians 3:17 – that Christ may dwell in your hearts.

Colossians 3:16 – we praise God in song “with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”

Colossians 3:22 – bondservants were to obey their masters, not as men pleasers, but in sincerity of heart, fearing God.

iv. ***LESSON: We must NEVER dismiss the intent of God’s will, regardless of which law one is under.***

We must also obey His commands AS He intended them to be obeyed. And why, because our heart is in the right place – (1 John 4:19 – we love Him because He first loved us).

II. **Jesus then addresses 6 different areas they had corrupted God’s laws and He clarified.**

- a. Murder and anger – Not only is it wrong to murder, but the motives that lead to murder – hatred and anger (that lead to murder) are just as evil in God’s eyes. That is why we must seek restitution before we come to Him.
- b. Adultery and lust – certainly, adultery is sinful – a violation of a God ordained covenant; but equally sinful is the lustful motives that can lead to adultery if not dealt with.
- c. Divorce – a scourge on any society, it shows a lack of respect for God’s intent that this be permanent. Clearly, God doesn’t view this the same way man does
- d. Oaths – it is sad when our word is not our bond.
- e. Retaliation – another danger and often out of control behavior that leads to ugliness. Think of our recent looting and other ungodly behaviors (it is ugly and sinful regardless of your thoughts about the cause).
- f. Loving your neighbors and hating your enemies – a most difficult thing to do, but think how much better society would be if we would all learn to REALLY love each other.

In future lessons, we will focus on these as we see Jesus emphasizing the nature of His kingdom and therefore how WE ought to live as His disciples. Now, ***YOU CAN SAY*** all day long ***what you THINK*** God ought to accept and teach it to others, BUT in the end ***HE WILL SAY that which is truth*** – both in attitude and action. And you will stand before Him and answer for what you have done (2 Corinthians 5:10).

What will you say when you stand before Him? Think about it! Are you His disciple? If not, how can we help you with that today?