

AUTUMN ON THE MOUNT – Matthew 5:17

Starting in **Matthew 5:17** Jesus begins speaking to the Righteousness of the Disciple.

While his disciples had been with Jesus he'd earned a reputation as a law-breaker
This along with His criticism of the religious leaders and Pharisees produced a suspicion that maybe Jesus wasn't fully orthodox in his commitment to the Old Testament and its commands.

Jesus addresses the suspicions in vs. 17 and onward...

READ MATTHEW 5:17-20

Do not think that I have not come to abolish the law...

I'm fully committed to the law and I understand the law's original intent, as I am God.

And He makes sure it's crystal clear:

"The law and the prophets" – his way of saying the entirety of Hebrew scripture.

"the least stroke of a pen" = ***"Jot and tittle"*** - the smallest marks in the Hebrew alphabet.

"until Heaven and Earth disappear." – not yet!

Jesus wants to make it clear: His beef isn't with the law, it's with the interpretations of the law that had hijacked the heart of God behind it.

For I tell you that unless your righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees...

Our perception of the Pharisees: We learn to boo them in Sunday school. They're "bad guys."

His listeners perception: They were the epitome of ethical righteousness.

Jewish leaders had taken God's commands and championed 613 commandments.

- 248 commands and 365 prohibitions.

How do we do *better* than that? How do we *exceed* that?

Is the call to intensify the list even further?

The call isn't to an increase in quantity, but an increase in quality.

This Kingdom of grace takes ground not externally from outside inward, but from the Inside Out.

If the Beatitudes show us the Upside Down Kingdom.

This passage tonight shows us the **Inside Out Kingdom**.

It's about transformation of the heart, not salvation by works. It's why Jesus rebukes the Pharisees later for cleaning the outside but leaving the inside- their hearts- filthy.

In Matthew 23 Jesus would rebuke the religious of his day for practicing religion but neglecting what he calls the ***weightier*** part of the law, the underlying importance, the BASICS – justice, mercy, & faithfulness.

The Pharisees had taken the law so far, made it so detailed, they had forgotten the basics.
Your HEART is supposed to match your DEEDS.

The reality we work toward is this:

**If your AFFECTION is fixed on God,
Your ACTIONS will gradually fix themselves.**

Romans 12:1-2 - *in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*

Give God your worship and **affection**, and your mind and **actions** will be renewed.

This is the **Righteousness of a Disciple**. One that works from the inside out.

This **Inside Out Kingdom** advances not through law change or regime change, but heart change.

This is what Jesus goes on to illustrate...

But Matthew 5:20 is described by some as the interpretive key that unlocks the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. This command:

Exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. Have the righteousness of a disciple.

How?

Replace an external, legalistic perspective with an internal, spiritual one.

That's kind of vague if Jesus was to just drop the mic at this point.

But he instead hits the gas and rattles off example after example.

“You have heard it said... but I tell you...”

There's a pattern in his statements.

He points to what God handed down in the Old Testament.

He alludes to the current interpretation and application within the culture.

And he gives an authoritative pronouncement on the heart behind the law.

MATTHEW 5:21-22 –

You have heard it said do not **MURDER** - but I say anger is subject to judgment, and to call people names is to choose a path to Hell.

Are murder and anger equivalent? No. Anger isn't a sin. Jesus was angry and didn't sin.

Paul says in **Ephesians 4:26 (NKJV) – Be angry.**

Context is key... because Paul immediately says in the same verse:

“don't let the sun go down on your anger...”

He's laying the groundwork for what he will say in verse 31 – *“Get rid of your anger...”*

Anger will happen. Sometimes rightfully so. Somebody offends you. So you get angry.

But you don't get to keep it.

What do you do with your anger? Jesus calls us here to forgive. Extend grace. Reconcile.

Jesus tells us to be reconciled to other people before we even worship God and seek to be reconciled with Him!

In his larger point on the command not to murder, Jesus is saying:

If nobody let their anger burn, would murder happen?

He gets to the source and heart of murder, which is anger. Dehumanizing another person.

The external manifestation starts inside. Get to the root. Change your heart. Change internally.

An external focus on the law encourages us to get as close to the line as possible without crossing into sin.

How much can I get away with?

Jesus says don't even call somebody a name ("raca")

In first century Jewish culture name calling was considered a serious affront to one's identity. It was an affront to their humanity. It was identity theft on a soul level.

Jesus says never demean and overlook another person's dignity. Ever.

If you always see others as a child of God, will you dare murder them?

MATTHEW 5:27-30

You have heard it said, don't commit **ADULTERY**, but I say, don't look lustfully.

Word for looking lustfully is the same as the word for covet, tying the command not to commit adultery to the command don't covet your neighbor's spouse or belongings.

...Then he nonchalantly tells us to mutilate whatever body parts may cause us to sin.

Jesus is using hyperbole. He's talking in extreme fashion to make a point.

His point? Use extreme measures to uproot sin from your life.

If I cut out my tongue for saying mean things, I also wouldn't be able to speak life.

If I cut my hand off for harming myself or others, I also wouldn't be able to give a helping hand.

If I pluck my eye out for lusting, I also wouldn't be able to see the needs around me to help in the first place...

...remember Jesus is pointing to changing ourselves internally.

It's not just about what we shouldn't do.

It's about what we should do.

Live pure.

Start with the root issue. You don't start with adultery.

If there was no indulgence of lust, there would be no adultery.

We've made purity in the church all about sex.

Purity doesn't start with who you let in your bed.

It's about what you let in your heart.

Jesus said blessed are the Pure in *heart*

Be changed inside. Change your affections and it will change your actions.

Dr. Thomas Chalmers, the great Scottish preacher, spoke of:

"The expulsive power of a new affection."

The new affection works inside out.

Adultery is a big deal why?

Because it breaks apart the image marriage gives us – the love of God for his people.

The love of Christ for his church.

Perhaps its why he jumps right from this into **Divorce**.

MATTHEW 5:31-32

At this time a man could divorce his wife for any reason whatsoever.

He speaks to this because not one but two offenses to God were happening.

A low view of marriage. And a low view of women.

Look at our culture and not just divorce rates but the people living together outside of marriage, inside and outside of the Church... we too can treat marriage lightly.

Marriage to be held in high regard.

The OT prophet Malachi says plainly that “God hates divorce” because it tears apart the loving relationship between a man & woman that paints a picture of His love for His people, His church

But the other side to the coin is this:

If you hold marriage in high regard, you recognize when marriage has so broken itself and marred the image of Christ and the Church that it is a mercy to dissolve it.

Ultimately Jesus gets to the deeper weightier importance behind the laws on divorce by saying:

If you hold marriage in high regard, you will never take a provision of divorce and let it translate to a low view of marriage... or women.

To make a marriage vow is sacred.

And from here Jesus steps to vows in general..

MATTHEW 5:33-37

Jesus says let what you say be simply yes or no.

You should have such character and integrity that anything out of your mouth is worth trusting.

We wouldn't need oaths if people were true to their word all of the time.

Jesus would say just DO what you say you will DO. A simple “yes” or “no” is all that is needed for a perfectly trustworthy, honest person. Be that person.

EYE FOR AN EYE - Leviticus 24:20

This was given to judges to administer civil order. And it was given to prevent inappropriate punishment. To equalize justice and prevent injustice.

But people came to use it for themselves instead of taking things to court.

Retaliation through violent resistance was a hot topic amongst the Jews under Roman rule.

Applied wrongly, “eye for an eye” could not only result in people thinking violent retaliation was permitted, but that it was necessary!

But the directive of an eye for an eye was intended to DISCOURAGE individual retaliation, not encourage it. Leave retaliation in the judge's hands.

It wasn't an encouragement to lower yourself to violence, but to rise above.

This is the background that is the setting for Jesus' next famous, oft misunderstood statement,

“If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also”

A slap on the right cheek, referenced like this, would likely be a right handed person who slapped you on the right cheek with the back of their hand.

A backhanded slap wasn't about maximizing pain.

A backhanded slap wasn't about the cheek.

It was a massive insult in that day. It was to get into the victim's head and heart.

It's not about the cheek being struck. Your soul is struck. Your heart and humanity is hurt.

It is about insult, not assaults.

Jesus's words aren't about sitting under pain. This isn't about passively embracing abuse like some masochist. Nor are they a call to be wimps, cowards, or pacifists. Jesus cares about justice.

But insults? Insults only matter to the insecure.

To the secure and strong? There's no need to retaliate to an insult, you can rise above.

LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

Sums up all he's just said.

You have heard it said: *“Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.”*

Jesus is pointing to **Leviticus 19:18** - love your neighbor. *Only it doesn't say hate your enemy!* “Us vs. Them” mentality was just as insidious then as it is now.

It crept into the mindset of God's people then, and it creeps into the church today through politics, racism, and alike. And any time we see flesh and blood as the enemy, we can be used by the enemy.

Heaven's strategy isn't US vs. THEM. It was ME for THEM.

Jesus Christ, giving himself for sinners like me and you who made themselves God's enemies. This ME for THEM is the heart of the Gospel!

It's the heart behind Jesus saying “Love your enemies.” And he can say it because he did it.

Anybody will love those that are kind to them.

I say to you, love your enemies....

So that you may be sons of your Father... you'll have his DNA.

The sun rises on the evil and the good, God sends rain on the righteous and unrighteous...

God gives good gifts to those who love him and those who hate him.

Imitate him.

He doesn't stop there...

"You, therefore, must be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect."

This echoes what God says in Leviticus – *"be holy for I am holy."*

Perfect = "the finished product" // "the completion" // "living up to what its created to be"

God always fulfills his purpose. God lives up to who He is as God.

God is good not some of the time, but all of the time.

He is consistent in being completely holy and righteous.

And yet mankind lives unkind.

Humanity by most measures lives inhumanely.

We aren't living as we are created to live as humans. We're broken.

We're called to love. Our God. Our neighbor.

To share his heart. To share his love.

Here we have Jesus, in this Sermon on the Mount... taking the law and fulfilling it...

And reminding us what humanity is meant to look like again.

The righteousness of a disciple. One that starts internally.

Does it effect your external behavior? Absolutely.

But to follow some 600 plus laws with your actions without changing your heart and affections is hard work. But the righteousness of a disciple isn't hard work. It's heart work.

Internal affections of the heart are the firm foundation for our outward actions.

When you set your affections on God, the actions follow.

The Inside Out Kingdom does work on your heart, and changes us from the inside out.

WORSHIP TEAM....

Mark Twain - *It ain't those parts of the Bible that I can't understand that bother me, it is the parts that I do understand.*

These aren't lighthearted teachings. They're hard. They're bothersome. Even offensive.

Texas A&M – a teacher assigned her freshmen English class the Sermon on the Mount. Many of these students born and bred in the Bible belt. She figured there would be some familiarity and reverence for the text.

First paper opened: *"In my opinion religion is one big hoax."*

The second didn't change in tone, opening: *"There is an old saying that 'you shouldn't believe everything you read' and it applies in this case."*

The third: *"It is hard to believe something that was written down thousands of years ago"*

There was a prevailing undertone of anger to teachings that seemed so absolute and impossible. They weren't so much puzzled as they were furious.

To a culture that treasures common sense and balance, there's something uncomfortably extreme in the sermon on the Mount.

But maybe it's less about extremism, and more about absolutes.

In the Sermon on the Mount we're confronted with absolute holiness.

This holy Heart of God. That is called to come alive in the heart of man.

It would seem impossible and altogether disheartening, if it wasn't met with absolute grace.

Sermon on the Mount – absolute holiness meets absolute grace.

If we are solely focused on our positional salvation, I'm under the blood, and become complacent about personal growth, absolute holiness calls me forward again.

If I focus solely on my experience of working toward perfection and my inevitable constant failing, absolute grace picks me up again.

These teachings in the Sermon on the Mount should give us a “**Restful dissatisfaction**”

Where I find peace and contentment with the work of Christ and the cross, but I'm balanced by a desire to become more like Him.

Divine dissatisfaction.

Good grief.

The Holy Spirit has been working out a divine dissatisfaction with an area in your life.

Over lust in your life. Coveting.

Over a tendency to dehumanize those you disagree with.

Over a tendency to lie, exaggerate, or go back on your word.

Could be something entirely unaddressed, but you know if you're going to set out pursuing Matthew 5:48, it's got to be dealt with.

Let's deal with it.

*May we always remember the fact that absolute holiness is the call,
and absolute grace is the offer.*

May we respond to both.