

Rimrock Church

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**“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;
I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”
Matthew 5:17**

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All Scripture is New International Version

Matthew 5:17-20



¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Because of the revolutionary way Jesus is teaching about what it means to be blessed, people can easily misconstrue what Jesus is talking about. Jesus wants to make clear what He is saying. Verses 17-20 help us interpret what He is saying, both in His pronouncement of blessing, as well as his practical teaching on the transformed life. First, He is not doing away with what God has revealed in the Old Testament. He is **fulfilling (v.17)** God’s plan and purpose revealed in the Old Testament. Second, Jesus is making a clear distinction with the **righteousness (v.20)** of God, versus the self-righteousness of the teachers of the Law and Pharisees. These two ideas become foundational for understanding Jesus’ teaching on the Kingdom.

Discussion questions:

1. In verse 17 Jesus says, “Do not think”. How does this highlight the radical nature of His pronouncements of blessing? What are some ways that Jesus words in verses 1-16 could be misunderstood?
2. What do vs. 18-19 tell us about how Jesus views the Old Testament Scripture?
3. Verse 19 gives us a two-fold application of transformation in Jesus, “practicing and teaching”. How do these two goals impact the way we think about life with God? How do they impact our relationships with others?
4. Read Romans chapters 1-2. Why is it important that the life of righteousness in Jesus must surpass that of the Pharisees and teachers of the Law?
5. Based on the context of the Sermon on the Mount, is this reference to entering the Kingdom of Heaven life after death? Or, is it in reference to life in Jesus now, in this life? Why is this important to understand? And how does that change the way we interpret the Sermon on the Mount?

Matthew 5:21-26



²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. ²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.”

The Blessed Life is found in Jesus as the fulfillment of all that God has promised. Jesus begins in his sermon to contrast the self-righteous way of life with the new life that is now available in the Kingdom of heaven. Usually when I ask people why they should go to heaven their answer is somewhere along the lines of, “I am a good person”, or “I have never murdered anyone”. This view of reality is based on a self-comparison to another person. The sentiment is, if murder is the worst people can do than I am doing pretty good. Jesus flips this script by introducing a new reality. The reality of who we truly are in the innermost part of our being. Jesus unveils the intentions of the heart in every person. We can no longer self-justify ourselves. Rather we are called to be a new kind of person that addresses the issues of anger in the heart and how we relate to other people when we are in conflict. This reality cannot be hidden from God. Jesus calls us to transformation in our hearts not just our outward appearance.

Discussion questions

1. What does anger say about the human condition? Why does this matter to God and for our own blessedness?
2. How do our words and actions reveal our heart condition with anger? What are some examples of words and actions that reveal a heart of anger?
3. What is the role of heart anger in broken relationships?
4. How does Jesus flip the script on what is important in life concerning relationships?
5. How does our heart condition play a role in conflict resolution with others? Why does this matter to God and our own blessedness?

Matthew 5:27-30



²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”

Jesus begins the next section (through vs. 37) talking about adultery and keeping your word. The self-righteousness of the teachers of the Law and Pharisees based righteousness on outward conformity. Jesus flips this idea into a new reality of righteousness based on the heart's condition with God. The blessed life with God is one that transforms the human heart to the reality of being poor in spirit (humble), mourning (with comfort), meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemaking, and joyful even in suffering. These qualities permeate every area of life, including sexual purity. Self-righteous people point their fingers at the hedonism of the world around them and try to suppress or build fortresses to keep sexual desire at bay. The reality is that the sexual desire is a human condition that needs to be transformed into desire that is good, right, and true. Only Jesus can do this in the human heart. Our response is to recognize the seriousness of the problem of desire gone awry and that we need to address it. It is better to address our sexual desire now than later. Tomorrow might be too late!

Discussion questions

1. How do self righteous people keep the law, but abuse the spirit of the law?
2. How does sexual desire get twisted and distorted in the human heart and actions? Where do we see this in culture and the world around us and in our own hearts?
3. What is the good, true, and right place for sexual desire in the human heart? How have you seen this worked out in your life?
4. Why do you think Jesus makes such a strong point that the transformation of this desire is to be taken seriously? What happens if we don't take it seriously?

Matthew 5:31-32



³¹ “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Remember the message Jesus is addressing is self-righteousness versus God’s righteous life. Using laws as a legal cover for immoral behavior is the issue Jesus is addressing here. The blessed life in Jesus is transforming the inner being of the person. What kind of person are you? Jesus says just because you have legal cover to divorce your spouse does not make it right, good, or true. Jesus continues with the same theme from verses 27-30 talking about adultery. And he continues the same idea in verses 33-37 when He talks about keeping your word. Just because you don’t commit adultery or get divorced does not make you a blessed person in Jesus. The blessed person in Jesus is one whose heart has been transformed from lust and the breaking of promises, even if things seems right on the outside. It is the inner being and heart of the person that matters most to God and is the evidence of the Kingdom (life with God). The bottom line is that divorce is not the kind of life from God. Divorce reveals an adulterous heart that does not keep it’s promise. Only Jesus can transform this broken human condition into one that is able to remain faithful (in your heart) and keep promises based on your heart transformed in Jesus rather than the other person’s actions.

Discussion questions:

1. How can self-righteous people use divorce as a cover up for immoral (adulterous) behavior?
2. The purpose of this sermon is not to beat up people who have divorce experiences in the past, rather it is an invitation to the transformed, blessed life with Jesus today. What are some ways that people who have experienced divorce in the past receive Jesus’ blessing today in their current place in life?
3. Why do you think marriage is such an important issue to God (Genesis 2:21-25; Ephesians 5:21-33)? How does our own heart condition of how we approach marriage make a difference in this relationship?
4. How can the presence and power of Jesus enable you to remain faithful to your spouse? Or remain faithful to God and others in singleness?

Matthew 5:33-37



³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ ³⁴But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.”

This section is connected to the above discussion on adultery and divorce, but it has application in many other areas of life. Remember the root issue is having an appearance of righteousness (selfrighteousness), but not the true righteousness of the heart and character of your being. This is only possible through the presence and indwelling life of Jesus and His Kingdom in our lives.

Jesus is pointing out that making a big show of your commitments and promises is problematic because it reveals a basic disconnect between one’s words and their ability to carry out promises. Because God is a promise keeping God he is inviting us to the plain and simple character of being able to say “yes” and “no” and others being able to count on that. There is no more need for exaggeration, impressive speech, or manipulation to try to get our way. These things all reveal a heart that is far from God. The blessed and transformed life is marked by plain speech and the faithful keeping of promises.

Discussion questions:

1. How does Jesus help us understand the power of words in these verses?
2. Where does self-righteousness reveal itself in our words? How do we swear, exaggerate, or manipulate with our words in today’s language?
3. Read Matthew 15:10-11. How do words reveal our heart condition?
4. How would the world be different if everyone could count on a person’s “yes” or “no”?

Matthew 5:38-42



³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’
³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

Jesus sums up the entire Old Testament law in these words, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind...and love your neighbor as yourself”. This is a love that consumes the will and being of an entire person. This is how the blessed life with God becomes possible. We are people consumed by love no matter how others treat us. Our love is no longer conditional but unconditional, like God’s love towards us.

Revenge is a common theme in our movies and stories. We all have a deep desire for justice and when someone hurts us we want to get back at them. Jesus flips this script! Being consumed by God’s love, we become the kind of person that is unfazed by the actions of others. We look past their actions to who they are and see their value and worth as image bearers of God. Our generosity and giving comes from God, not because of what other people do or don’t do. There are many great stories of disciples of Jesus living this out, but one of the great stories is Corrie Ten Boom who faced her Nazi concentration camp guard, forgave him, shook his hand and told him he too could be forgiven by God. This is only possible for the person transformed by Jesus and his kingdom.

Discussion questions

1. How have you seen the revenge script played out in our world and in your own life?
2. How does Jesus change the revenge narrative in our world to one based on the love of God?
3. Read Romans 12:9-21. What is the relationship between the heart consumed with love and trust in the justice of God and being able to live this out?
4. Some people have interpreted this passage as not being humanly possible. How does Jesus’ invitation to the blessed life make this possible for us now?

Matthew 5:43-48



⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

These verses are the culmination of Jesus’ teaching on the contrast between the way the Pharisees interpret God’s laws and the way God intended His laws to lead to the transformation of the human heart. Jesus’ invitation in these verses is to the righteous transformed life of discipleship with Him. This is a learning to form our being and character in His presence and power for what is good, right, and true.

The ultimate reality of this transformation is the life of love. God is love. His plan and purpose is to dwell with His people who are made in His image of love. Since we have been so shaped by the definition and script of the world in the understanding of love, Jesus must redefine love for us. This helps us understand God’s love towards us and how we are to love in this world. Pay attention to this: God’s love is not based on the actions of others, rather radiates from His being and character. This is the ultimate call of discipleship to be the kind of people that love because our hearts are consumed and transformed by God’s kind of love.

The command to be perfect is not what we might think. Our culture defines perfection in performance. The command here is not performance, but being in right relationship with God. Jesus makes this possible and we experience the blessed life of completeness, fulfillment, and ultimate satisfaction. This is what we were made for!

Discussion questions

1. How does the self-righteousness of Pharisee’s define love? How does Jesus redefine love?
2. How does love for enemies and prayer for persecutors reveal the heart of the Father (v.45)? What does this say about our new identity in Jesus?
3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-8. How is the love of God a supernatural love? How is this different than self-produced love?
4. The command in verse 48 has to do with the character and nature of God. How does this point to the whole purpose and goal of discipleship? How does it change the meaning of this verse to understand the word “perfect” as complete or whole? What does this say about the plan of God for the goodness of being human?
5. How have you seen God’s kind of love lived out by others? How did his love impact you? How did this love bring completeness and wholeness to being human?