

Matters of the Heart

by Pat Kenney

The sermon explores the Beatitudes as essential characteristics of true discipleship and the attitudes that lead to a fulfilled life in Christ.

Duration: 1:01:16

Scripture: Matthew 5:1

Topics: "Heart"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of discipline in the lives of believers. He highlights the need to discipline one's eyes, mind, and heart in order to be effective in the kingdom of God. The speaker also addresses the issue of sexual impurity and encourages listeners to deal with it, offering help and assurance of victory. He references the story of Achan in the Bible to illustrate the consequences of sin in the camp and the need for repentance. The sermon concludes with a call to present one's body as a living sacrifice to the Lord and to allow God to search and work in their lives.

Transcript

I appreciate Pastor Mark and Pastor Jeff kicking off Chapter 5 for us. I kind of knew we weren't going to get through Chapter 5 on just one Sunday. However, I am going to endeavor to go through Chapter 5 this morning, not commenting as much on the first few verses because I think Mark and Jeff really did some wonderful studies on those first 17 verses or so.

But let's open to 5 and just get the context and get the flow and go through it because this is such a critical portion of Scripture. You know, we're looking at the first sermon that Jesus, that we have recorded of Jesus, and it's not like an evangelical sermon in Madison Square Garden. He's taking His 12, He's taking His disciples, that group of just a few guys and bringing them aside and instructing them because He knew the time would be soon that He wouldn't be here anymore.

So He was imparting into them these truths. And as we open up the Beatitudes, we start looking at the Sermon on the Mount, we begin to realize that this is what a disciple is to be. If we say we're following the Lord, these are the character traits that we should be seeing in our own lives.

So this is a good self-examination. And maybe you can look at those and go, and I'm learning that, I'm learning that. Or you're looking at and going that, I'm convicted by that.

And if you're convicted by that, then you need to repent. Because this is, this is not option, this is not just what super spiritual people do. This is what a normal disciple looks like.

These are the characteristics of a disciple. So seeing the multitudes, Jesus went up on a mountain, and when He was seated, His disciples came to Him. And then He opened His mouth and He taught them, saying, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

The entrance into the kingdom of heaven, we realize, is not just sweet by and by. It's not just when we die, it's what's happening right now. If we're born again, and Jesus is our King and our Lord and our Savior, then we're living under His rule now, and will be forevermore.

So this is the beginning. And poor in spirit, or poverty of spirit, comes as an inevitable consequence of seeing the Lord. When you see the Lord, when you realize what God has done for you, the sacrifice that has been made for you, when you begin to catch a glimpse of how holy and awesome and powerful God is, you don't have any room to boast.

And so one who is pompous and thinks he is something, hasn't seen the Lord. A true vision of the Lord is always humbling. And really what it is, is I see the truth about me in the light of His holiness.

I see how holy God is, and I realize, I fall way, way short of that. And I really believe that humility is essential to all future growth in the Lord. You've got to be poor in spirit.

You've got to have that broken and that contrite heart. So blessed, you're blessed and happy and full of joy are the ones that are, and that do see themselves that way. It's a great blessing to know the truth about yourself and to be utterly in awe of the Lord's grace and mercy towards you.

You know, it's one thing to have the truth about yourself revealed and then have your face rubbed in it. Amen? I mean, really. But to know the truth about yourself and then to realize that God loves you, that God has poured out His grace and His mercy, you realize you don't deserve anything from Him.

But He loves you so much that He wants to give of Himself to you. And what should that do to us? Lord, I'm not worthy. Lord, that humbles me.

And that's when you know you're really starting to walk with the Lord, because you realize you don't deserve any of this. If you're still kind of thinking like, well, yeah, I'm a pretty good person and, you know, and yeah, you know, I've got this down. I think Jeff pointed it out last week.

You haven't even begun yet. Because when you really know the Lord, there's a brokenness towards yourself, particularly. And God forbid that you boast in front of others like you're somebody, because we're not.

He's everything. We're saying praise and glory, wisdom and honor, power and strength and thanksgiving be unto me. No, thank you, brother.

Be unto God. Amen. I'm going to sit down.

Thank you, Lord. So we need to be in awe of what God has done. Verse four, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

And this is not, I think Mark pointed this out a couple of weeks ago. This is not talking about, you know, when you go through hard times and you grieve through loss and so forth, but rather it's more of seeing the truth about myself brings me to tears. That's more what he has in mind here.

Seeing the truth about myself creates that brokenness in my heart, a repentance, a repentant heart over my sinfulness. And the wondrous promise is given. I will be comforted.

Not crushed. Isn't that amazing? Isn't that amazing? Because we deserve to be crushed. And yet instead of being crushed, the Lord wants to comfort us.

That's sweet. What comfort is forgiveness and salvation? Blessed are the meek. Verse five, for they shall inherit the earth.

And one commentator said meek is the combination of two words, meek. I can relate to that because meekness is an absence of boastfulness. Meekness is an absence of boastfulness.

In the light of the Lord, I have the proper estimate of myself. In the light of the Lord, I say, woe is me. I'm undone.

I'm a man of unclean lips. But look at the promise. When I'm out of the way, there's this promise of inheriting the earth.

How different that is from the way the world operates today. World operates based on, you know, you got the most, the more experience you have, the more you're going to inherit. You know, the more power you have, the more money you have.

But here the Lord is saying, the more meek you are, the more the inheritance is yours. First Timothy 6 says, Paul said there, now godliness with contentment is great gain. I think we need to learn that.

The idea of inheriting the earth. One of the brothers in the church, Chris, I can't pronounce your last name, Chris, if you're here, but he sent me a study on this and a Greek study a little bit on what it meant to inherit. And he said, it's the ability to enjoy to the fullest, whatever material and spiritual blessings God permits us to have here on the earth.

The ability to enjoy to the fullest, whatever he gives us. And I think Mike was speaking of that a little bit when he was talking about, you know, experiencing what he did over in the Philippines and, you know, sometimes thinking, this is so hard and I'm struggling so much. And here's people that have absolutely nothing, at least compared to what I've got.

And they're rejoicing in the Lord. They're just so glad. I think the Lord wants to bring us to a place where we're not caught up with the seductiveness of covetousness, where we're always looking at the things that the world hasn't taken.

Oh, that's going to make me happy or that's going to fulfill me. Or if I just have that, I'll have made it. I'll be somebody.

But rather, the Lord wants us to learn to be content with whatever he blesses us with, whatever you have right now. You can walk in the fullness of God right now. You can walk in the joy of the Lord right now.

You can have a thankful attitude and heart towards what you have right now. Lord, thank you for what you've given me today. Thank you for the circumstances that I'm in today.

Lord, you're at work in my life. What a difference in attitude that makes rather than saying, oh, you're doing this. This is all falling apart.

That's not them. They're doing this. And it's just you get around a person like that and you go, oh, look at the time.

Got to go. You know, you don't want to hang out with that because it just drains you. And I want to learn to be that way, you know, to have that meekness of attitude of wherever I'm at.

Thank you, Lord. Thank you, Lord. I want to learn to be content in that.

So in light of the recognition of the truth about me. It creates within me a hunger and a thirst. After righteousness, we can see each of these characteristics kind of progressing in a logical order.

So verse six, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. You know, I realize that in my flesh dwells no good thing, but in seeing the Lord and seeing him, I hunger and thirst after him. So you see the flow here.

First, you're poor in spirit. Then you're mourning over your sin and you find yourself meek. And now that you've gotten rid of all that self-grandeur and self-glory, you find yourself hungering and thirsting after the Lord and the things of God because you're emptied of all that other junk.

All the things that don't really satisfy. What does satisfy the believer? It's not the things of the world. It's the things of God, hungering and thirsting after him.

I think it's true. You can't really be filled until you're first emptied. And these first three or four beatitudes really speak of that emptying process.

As a believer, I need to be emptied of me that I might be filled with him. Because it's only him that's going to change people for eternity. Oh, I can affect people, you know, maybe today I can get them mad at me or they could give me an attaboy or something.

But that has nothing to do with eternity. And God has saved us that we might impact people for eternity. So blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

Blessed are the merciful, verse 7, for they shall obtain mercy. And again, Mark pointed out a couple of weeks that the word for mercy is really a word that we get our English word empathy from. And to empathize means to completely identify with the plight of others.

Mercy is the... Chris, our Greek scholar, shared this with me, too. He said mercy is the voluntary desire to experience the suffering of others and then seek to do for them what we would like done for ourselves if we were in a similar plight. Should I say that again? Okay, I will.

It's a long sentence. But mercy is the voluntary desire to experience the suffering of others and then seek to do for them what we would like done for ourselves if we were in a similar situation. That's powerful.

So powerful. And you know what? It's not only powerful, but it's necessary. It pays to be merciful because each of us will be judged by the same measure with which we judge others.

Jesus said that in showing mercy and kindness and forgiveness. You know, it may be possible that you're showing it to someone who doesn't deserve it. But I would rather err on the side of mercy than on the side of judgment.

You know, if I'm going to make a mistake, I'd rather it be because I was merciful. And I think that's a good rule to follow. So the progression seems to continue here because the more you're emptied and seeking the Lord, truly, folks, the more merciful you'll be.

The more sinful and prideful a man is, the more harsh and critical he will be. Blessed is he, Psalm 41 says, who considers the poor. The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble.

A great blessing promised. Verse 8. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. You know, God does search our hearts.

And because God search our hearts, we need to be sure our hearts are pure. In fact, the very word, the word pure there means to have a clean house. So part of our work as believers is let's make sure the house stays clean and keep it open and yielded to his searching.

A pure heart is a simple heart focused on the Lord, undistracted by that which has nothing to do with seeing God. Psalm 51.6, David said, behold, you desire truth in the inward parts and in the hidden part you will make me to know wisdom. And we'll see as we go through the Sermon on the Mount, particularly the latter part of this chapter, that the Lord is really dealing with matters of the heart.

He's really dealing with the condition of the heart, not what you're saying on the outside, but what's going on, on the inside. And so we need to examine our hearts continually. Say, Lord, search me, test me, try me, know me.

Lord, I want to be pure before you. As we're aware of God's presence and his hand everywhere and in every situation, the flow continues here. We find ourselves at peace.

And not only are we at peace, but we bring peace. Verse 9, blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. You know, as a Christian, as a follower of Jesus, I should be a peacemaker, not a troublemaker.

When I'm in a situation where there's conflict, I should seek to resolve that conflict peacefully. Notice that this is an active, observable characteristic and activity of the disciple. The disciple is observably a peacemaker.

And the greatest peacemaking work, of course, is introducing people to the Prince of Peace, that is Jesus Christ. Because people, so many people are not at peace with the Lord. And it doesn't matter what philosophy that they might be into.

If they don't know Christ, if their sins are not forgiven, they're not at peace with God. And you may want to wonder, well, what's next after all of these things? Where does one who possesses these characteristics go from here? Moreover, how do you think the world responds to such a man or a woman as this? Do you think that possessing these characteristics would lead to popularity? Probably not. Instead, they often

produce enemies.

Notice what Jesus says in verse 10. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, and we know when he's speaking of righteousness, he's speaking of that right relationship with Jesus Christ.

Because we're walking in fellowship with him. It doesn't say, you know, blessed are you if you're persecuted because you're obnoxious and weird. You know, and some people do get really off the boat on these things.

But the righteousness that we're going to be persecuted for that God looks at as righteousness that will make us blessed is that which is because we're being conformed to the image and likeness of Jesus. And we are walking poor in spirit, with meekness, showing mercy, walking humbly before our God. The world persecutes such a person.

Why? Because he makes the worldly person feel very uncomfortable. Not so much by design, but just by who he is. Later on in the next few verses, it talks about you are the light of the world.

Pastor Jeff talked about that last week, about being a light. What does light do? It exposes darkness. So if you're just a light bulb, you're not going around going, you're in darkness, you're in darkness, you're in darkness, you're going to hell, you're going to burn.

No, you're just, I'm in love with Jesus. You know, you're a light. How can I help you? How can I serve you? Oh, the Lord loves you so much.

And somebody that's in the world is going, why? Because that light of the love of Jesus is exposing their sin and they're reacting to that. They're not reacting to you, they're reacting to that light and that love that's in you. And they want to run, they want to hide.

John chapter three, Jesus said this. He said, this is the condemnation that the light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light. Why? Because their deeds were evil.

For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light lest his deeds should be exposed. So a person living in sin is very uneasy around a person who is pure in heart. And you've perhaps experienced that when you come into work or you go into a situation where people know you're a believer.

And as soon as you walk in the room, it's like they go, shh, preachers are, you know, kind of a thing that happens, happens all the time. I like to have breakfast early in the morning on Sunday morning at one of the restaurants in town. And there's these guys that sit at the bar, they're always there, 6.30 in the morning, they're always there.

And they're just going on and on and on about their adventures over the previous weekend, you know, and, and so forth. And I kid you not, every week, every, every Saturday, I walk in and there's just a hush that comes over the thing, you know, and I tell them I'm praying for them and stuff. But you know, it's, it's like, they know there's something about, I never, I'm not condemning them.

I'm not laying a trip on them. You know, I'm not, you know, insulting them. I'm just walking in with my Bible.

That's all. Hallelujah. So Jesus is saying, be happy, rejoice, because your reward in heaven is going to be great when men persecute you, and they will.

And I might point out that this persecution is not restricted merely to the outside world. Because it can happen within the church itself. It can.

Think about your response. Think about it just for a moment. Your response to the brother or sister who is really pure in heart, and all they can think about or want to talk about is Jesus.

Do you crave fellowship with that person? Or do you avoid them and write them off as too spiritual? I think we need to be careful about that. I want to be with people who love Jesus. I want to be in that place where I can be challenged and edified.

There's a lot of things going on in the world that we can spend time talking about, right? A lot of things. Christians can get together and talk about everything but Jesus. And then when somebody says, well, let's talk about what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, and people are going, keep it in church.

But we are the church. Everywhere we go, we're the church. This isn't the church.

Like Jeff said last week, this building isn't the church. We are. So blessed are you, verse 11, when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. And Jesus said in John chapter 15, verse 20, he said, remember the word that I said to you, a servant is not greater than his master.

If they persecuted me, they'll persecute you. If they kept my word, they'll keep yours also. But all these things they will do to you for my name's sake, because they do not know him who sent me.

So just get used to that. You know, you're going against the flow when you're walking with the Lord. You're going against the flow of this world.

And becoming a Christian does not mean you're politically correct. It's just the opposite. You're biblically correct.

You're right on in giving God the glory and fearing God. The world generally is not going to respond positively to that unless the Lord has already prepared somebody's heart to come to him. So as Christians, we've got to understand we're not here to let the world look at us and go, look how great you are.

We're here to live for Jesus Christ. Some will glorify God. Some will.

And others will persecute because they can't stand the light. So let's understand that as we're walking with the Lord, this is not just a bless me club to give me gain that I can be more popular and more successful in this world. No, we're to be broken to this world and to be sold out for the Lord.

So we summarize the Beatitudes. These are the attitudes that characterize the true follower of Jesus Christ. And which will lead to a real fulfilled life in the Lord.

Be exceedingly glad, the Lord says here. I think believers are to be exceedingly glad. The word there in the Greek means to jump for joy, to exalt poverty of spirit, mourning over sin, meekness, which no longer struts but submits hungering and thirsting after righteousness, mercy, purity of heart, peacemaking and persecution.

These are the marks of the follower of Jesus. Now, Jesus instructs his disciples in verse 13 on the influence they are to have in the world in which they live. Given all of these things, we are to be an influence.

You are the salt of the earth. Verse 13. If the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It's then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

Jeff pointed out the things that that salt does last week. Well, salt makes people thirsty. Ask yourself, are people thirsty, people around me, around us? Are they thirsty for the living water of Jesus? Do they see something in you that creates a thirst for what you are enjoying? Salt makes people thirsty.

Salt also preserves. Heavily salted meat killed the surface bacteria to prevent the spoiling and the rotting of the butchered meat. Are we a holy influence in our society and culture, retarding the rottenness of the world around us? So that's what the Lord calls us to.

We're not to be just, you know, subtly doing the same things the world is doing, just not as upfront as the world is. But we're to be different so that our difference is having an effect. I like what I think.

I'm not sure which service there was that Jeff mentioned this last week, but he talked about how the moon reflects the sun. But it's not just a reflector. It also has an influence on the tides and the weather systems of the earth.

We are in our reflecting of Jesus. We also are influencing this culture around us. So be salt.

Be salt. Don't let the rottenness creep into your turf, into your sphere of influence. Be a purifying influence wherever you're at.

And obviously, that means, well, I got to have a pure heart in myself. I've got to be seeking purity and walking in purity myself if I expect to have a godly influence and a purifying influence in the world. You understand that? You know, I can't just say, well, you know, as long as I'm not hurting anybody else, it's okay.

No, because if you're not walking purely, you will not retard the rottenness that's around you. The power is letting the salt do its work. Salt also promotes healing.

It stings when it touches a wound. When it's put on, it has a cleansing and a purifying effect on a wound. Some of us had a chance to go to Israel a few years back, and we went to the Dead Sea.

And in our hotel, which was right on the Dead Sea, they had the Dead Sea water pumped into one of the pools. So we decided, well, let's go soak in the Dead Sea water. And sure enough, you got in, and the chemical consistency of the water is so different from even normal sea water, and you actually float.

You can't stay down. It's like trying to hold a cork underwater. You go down, and it pops right back up.

You can sit back and just read a paper. You know, that's how buoyant you are in that water. But if you've shaved, you know, or ladies, and you did that a couple hours earlier, and you get into that, everything's tingling.

Any little bite you had, but it's amazing what it does to your skin. Because when you come out of it, there's just like, hey, it doesn't itch anymore. It's not red anymore.

It's just had kind of a healing effect. And a lot of people go there and like to soak in those heavily salted things as a healing thing. But that's what salt, that's what we're to be in other people's lives.

Not opening up the wounds, but healing. It's a great picture the Lord gives us. And it talks about losing its flavor, becoming insipid, flat, tasteless.

And interestingly, it's the same word that in other places in the Bible is translated to act foolishly, losing its flavor to act foolishly. And that's interesting because Jesus, in effect, is saying, either be a purifying influence, or you're going to be trodden under and crushed by a rotten world. May be an influence in that world.

And I think it is. It's indeed, it's a foolish thing if we're salt to have lost our savor. That's a foolish thing.

To say you're a Christian, but not be influencing the world around you. But God calls us to this. And it's true of us as individuals, and it's true of the church as a whole.

Verse 14, you're a light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Brothers and sisters, you can't really hide a true relationship with God, nor are you to hide it.

Your relationship with God is not something you keep in your closet. It's not something you just do at church. And I know a lot of people in the world would say, hey, whatever you do at church, that's fine.

Just keep it in church. Don't bug me with it. But you got to say, I apologize.

I'm sorry, but I'm a light. The light's on. You know, I can't do anything else, but be the light that God's called me to be.

And that's why Christianity is just so despised and so resisted. But folks, that's what we're called to be. To be a light.

Jesus said, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father but by me. The world's in darkness, and we have the light.

We have to let our light shine. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand. And it gives light to all who are in the house.

So the purpose of life is to give light. It's to give. It's not to keep and hide.

It's to give. So, verse 16, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. Your light shines in your good works.

And when men see those good works, they don't glorify you, but they're drawn to God himself. Whenever Jesus would work his miracles, you read this in the Gospels, whenever Jesus would work his miracles, the people would go away glorifying God. Oh sure, there were those that would look at the miracle and go,

we're in trouble.

We got to eliminate this guy. He's going to erode our power base. But as you read the general accounts, the people saw what Jesus did, there was a glorifying, not of Jesus, but of God.

They'll know we're Christians, the Bible says in John 13, because of our love one for another. And that should be what they, when the world looks at the church, they should see the church as that influencing of the world for the glory of God, not for the glory of our own church. And sadly, many religious kind of organizations and churches have made that mistake of the glory coming to them and look how great we are, rather than humbly and brokenly serving others.

And then when people see that true service, they know, hey, there's something different about that person. That's real evangelism. And that's how our work should shine.

Now in verse 17, Jesus said, do not think I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I didn't come to destroy, but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

And a lot of people say, well, I'm not under the law, I'm under grace. Excuse me. Jesus said something real important here.

Jesus had a very high respect for the law. In fact, fulfilled the law. And he said, whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Now the term law here is used for the first five books of the Old Testament, what's called the Pentateuch. And the issue of the law was a major concern to those who heard Jesus teach.

Because he was not a traditional Pharisee who were typically, the scribes and the Pharisees were the typical teachers of the law. He wasn't a doctor of the law. He hadn't gone to the appropriate schools, nor rose through the traditional ranks.

And yet he taught the people with great authority. Because of that, his relationship to the law was a matter of great concern. And we read here that Jesus not only believed and taught the law, but made it clear that what the Pharisees and scribes were teaching was not the law.

They thought it was, but it wasn't. So he specifically states that he did not come to destroy the law, but rather to fulfill or complete it. Again, that's not replacement theology.

Many today speak ill of the law, stating their opinion that they're no longer under the law, but under grace. And they look at the law in a negative way. But the Bible tells us the law of the Lord is perfect.

Psalms 19, the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. The testimonies of the Lord are sure, making wise the simple. I mean, the law is good.

There is nothing wrong about the law of God. The only problem with the law is we can't keep it. That's not the law's fault.

It's ours. The law is good for the purposes for which God intended the law. And God intended the law to expose man's sinfulness.

And toward that purpose, it is very good. It was never intended by God to make you righteous. You see, by the law, we have the knowledge of sin.

The law cannot save us or make us righteous. It can only expose us in our state of sin and thus condemn us. And it's very good at that, isn't it? Because you think through the Ten Commandments.

If you've ever bothered to learn the Ten Commandments, and you think about that, and you go, whoops, blew that one, messed up that one, lost that one, disobeyed that one. And what does the law do? It says, guilty, guilty, guilty, guilty. Galatians 3.24, when I look at my life with the standards God has set for me, I realize I'm a sinner.

And then I will seek God for his help because I sure can't keep them as he requires. So what does the law do? Galatians 3.24, the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ that we might be justified by faith. The law says we're guilty.

It drives us to the Messiah. It drives us to the Savior. Romans chapter 3, verse 20 says, therefore, by the deeds of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight for by the law is the knowledge of sin.

So a proper understanding of the law always brings us to the cross. It always drives us to Jesus. John 1.17 says the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.

Now, note that though the grace and truth that comes through Jesus Christ does not negate the law. Jesus said, I didn't come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. The ceremonial law, for example, the principles of worship before a holy God still applied, but not specific practices.

Procedures for sacrifices, for example. The idea was always to bring alienated man into fellowship with God again. But now, because Jesus became the sin offering for us, that's why we no longer take a lamb before the priest.

Once and for all, he paid the price for our sin. If you walked in here with a little lamb and saying, Pastor, could you sacrifice this lamb for me because I'm a sinner? I would say the lamb has already been sacrificed for you. The lamb of God has already bled for you.

Put your trust in him. Again, there's no fault in the moral law. Really, is there? I mean, loving God, having no other gods before you, you know, not taking the name of the Lord your God in vain, keeping the Sabbath day holy, don't steal or kill or commit adultery.

There's nothing wrong with the law. It's all good. Amen? Those are all good commands.

So grace is no excuse for not keeping the law. Just because you say you're a grace doesn't negate the law. That's okay.

I'm under grace, as if grace was some kind of an indulgence card, a get out of jail free card. No, it's not. We find that we're really called to walk the walk and not just talk the talk.

The point of the law was obeying it, not just explaining it. Pharisees and scribes are really great at explaining it, but were they living it? And Jesus is going to expose that they weren't. And I can tell you from

experience that it's much easier to study God's laws and tell others to obey them than to put them in practice.

And as believers, we always have to be on the guard for that. It's easy to study about it. It's easy to point out the faults in others.

It's a whole lot harder to live it and commit yourself to living it. So I would ask you this morning, how are you doing at obeying God yourself? I can pick out the faults in a lot of other people, but isn't it interesting when you notice the faults of others, that it's usually something that you yourself have a problem with, and that's what you're quick to judge in others. Ask yourself, am I obeying God in here? I don't know what you're doing.

I don't know what you're doing, but what am I doing? Am I walking with him? Oh, that just so ticks me off when I see that impurity on the television or this, that, or the other thing. And that ticks me off and I rave about it, but in my private heart, when I'm by myself, what am I dwelling on? What am I thinking about? Am I allowing those same impure thoughts to be taking over in my mind? Then I'm not walking. God said God wants me to purify the inside, and that's so critical.

So now the shocker, verse 20, he says, for I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. The Pharisees spent their whole lives trying to keep the most minute details of the law, and they added all kinds of things onto it just to try to show how perfect they were in keeping the law, how possible it was to keep the law. But here the Lord says, and then to the average person, you got to understand, didn't have the scriptures like we do.

I mean, the scrolls were very rare. The common person didn't have a pocket New Testament or a pocket Old Testament. They had to rely on what the teachers were teaching them.

They didn't have the access to that. And so for them, for Jesus to say that your righteousness needs to be more, it needs to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, the average common man would say, well, there's no hope. I guess I'm not going to enter the kingdom of heaven.

How can I possibly do that? They're the closest thing to perfection that exists. But what Jesus is really saying is, you know, if you think you can make it into the kingdom without me as your savior, you better be awfully good. In other words, you better be perfect.

And neither of us are. We fall so short. And one of the problems that I often see is that rather than dealing with the issues of our own heart, we get a pharisaical kind of an attitude at times because we look at others and we look at the failures of others and then we kind of say, well, I'm not that bad.

And that's what the Pharisees did compared to everyone else. They thought they looked pretty good. But compared to the standards Jesus presented, the Pharisees were spiritual runts, just like everyone else.

The problem with their righteousness was that it was all outward. It was all a show. Their hearts and attitudes were rotten.

How quickly they sought to kill Jesus because of his popularity with the people. They weren't really walking with a pure heart to please God. Now, in the last part of the chapter, Jesus compares six teachings of the law and contrasts with what contrasts them with what the Pharisees were teaching to

God's intent behind the law.

Again, he starts this section off by saying, so you have heard, because many of them hadn't read. They'd heard. And so he says, you've heard that it was said of those of old, you shall not murder and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.

And that's true, the law does teach that. Verse 22, though, but I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council.

And whoever says you fool shall be in danger of hellfire. What's Jesus telling us here? He's saying that it's anger towards a person that leads to murder. It starts in your heart.

Murder always begins not with the physical act, but with the attitude of the heart and the boiling over that happens inside. And then it manifests itself with that act. The Lord is saying you already committed it if it's going on in your heart.

If you look at somebody and go, you're a vain, worthless, empty-headed, sorry excuse for a person. And you look at another person and not regard their rights. Be careful of that.

Be careful of anger. If anger is brewing inside you, it'll lead to danger. Anger leads to danger.

And it's not just beating someone to death or shooting them, but it's having disdain for that person. That's the seedbed for murder. Not having a high regard for life, bigots, those involved with genocide, ethnic cleansing.

It all starts from folks having a low or non-existent regard for the sanctity of life. Guard your heart. When you get ticked off somebody, you know, when you find that anger brewing and, you know, road rage, you know, somebody cuts you off.

I'm amazed the stuff that comes up in my heart when I'm on the freeway. I'm just amazed at it. I've preached about it so many times and yet, but where does it start? It starts in here.

Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, an unresolved issue, go first to them. Leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.

Make things right with your fellow man and then you can make things right with God. Agree with your adversary quickly while you're on the way with him. Lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer and you're thrown into prison.

Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there until you've paid the last penny. So what's the counsel? Make peace quickly. Settle your differences.

Get it right before you end up in court. And in the legal system of that day, if you had something against someone, it'd be your job to find him and drag him in physically and forcibly before the judge. So here the Lord is saying within that understanding, that system that they had to learn to apologize quickly and do your best to make things right.

Little issues tend to grow into huge crises if not dealt with quickly. Stubborn pride can so complicate and confuse circumstances that you often end up with no way out. So agree with your adversary quickly.

Somebody has aught against you. You take the initiative and make it right. Don't wait for them.

Go. I'm not going to forgive them until they do. You know, some people are that way.

I'm not going to. I'm not going to go to them. They're the ones that messed me up.

I'm not going to go to them. They need to come to me. Be careful.

Agree with your adversary quickly. You take the initiative to heal that and then look at the attitudes. Look at the characteristics of a disciple.

You'll find that God will give you the grace to step into those situations and bring peace and healing. Second issue here. You have heard it said of old that you shall not commit adultery.

But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. The issue isn't what you're doing outwardly. It's what's going on in your heart eternally and internally.

Sin begins in the heart, men, women. Sin begins in the heart. And I'll talk to the fellows just briefly.

Guys, we cannot spiritualize what Jesus is saying here. First Corinthians 6:13 tells us that the body is not for sexual immorality, but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. Verse 18 of First Corinthians 6 says, Flee sexual immorality.

Men, I'm talking to you. There is no place for sexual immorality in a believer's heart, and you need to take steps immediately to deal with that. And if you think you can handle it on your own without surrender to the Lord, you're only fooling yourself.

And he'll address some of the seriousness of that going on. But I got to tell you, as godly men in the 21st century, we cannot let our eyes go where the world's eyes go. We cannot allow things to come into our home through our computer or through our televisions.

We can't allow our eyes to roam, men. And ladies, please be aware of that, that guy's eyes do roam. And it is summertime in Southern California, so please be modest.

But gentlemen, you need to learn to bounce your eyes. And that is like, don't have laser vision, where you see a pretty girl and you lock and load. You know, because if you do, men are stimulated sexually by their eyes.

All they got to do is see it and they're off. So what do guys need to learn to do? They need to discipline their eyes and they need to discipline their mind and they need to discipline their heart. And I want to encourage you.

I want to encourage you guys. Trust what the Lord is saying here. It's very serious.

And your effectiveness in the kingdom of God, your effectiveness as a man of God, in your home and in your community is just squashed if you're allowing sexual impurity to rage inside you. You got to deal with it. And we're here to help you because we've battled it too.

But I can stand here and tell you that there is victory and you can walk free from it. But you got to look at what Jesus said here. If you don't look at it like Jesus looked at it, you're going to be in bondage to it.

If you don't approach it the way the scripture says to approach it, then it's going to eat you up. These are serious issues. And so Jesus gives some radical examples for shock value.

And they are shocking to show us how important it is that you keep your heart and your mind pure. So he says, if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. Now, are we to take that literally? I think we're to take the warning literally.

Otherwise, we'd all be walking around with sockets. And you know what? We'd still be sinning in our heart. Remember the whole context of this passage is that it's the matters of the heart.

You can cut off your hand, but you can still sin. But what he's telling us through plucking it out, saying that if one of your members perish, it's more profitable to you than your whole body being cast into hell. What he's saying essentially is deal violently and directly with any part of your being.

That is your activities, your hobbies, your schedule, which is leading you into sin. Don't take it lightly. Get rid of it.

Sin is so destructive. So deal with it decisively. Don't play around with it.

We're out of time. Wouldn't you know it? Verse 31, whoever divorces his wife, dealing with the whole issue of divorce, is that a problem today? Jesus says, I say to you, whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

I think we'll start there next week. What do you say? I mean, it's only going to get better. Honestly, I'm just so grateful for this passage.

Because the world tells us everything opposite. The world says it's no big deal. And Satan is so manufactured it that we live in a day where the things that are right are looked on as wrong.

And the things that are wrong are looked on as right. There's been a flip-flop. And I'm thankful for the word of God to bring us back to where we need to be.

And I hope you are, too. There's nothing more important than being a disciple of Jesus Christ and recognizing that that walk of discipleship begins in your heart. And so I would ask you this week to review these passages, to look through chapter 5 and chapter 6 and chapter 7, because we'll be in that for the next few weeks.

And examine your heart. And where there is sin, where you find yourself way far away from what God has called you to do, then be courageous and take the steps to draw near to God and to turn from your sin. To confess your sin.

You know, the Bible says, confess your faults one to another that you might be healed. It says that in the book of James. And so we realize that there is an importance of us holding each other accountable.

You got a problem? You got an area that you're struggling with that you know the Bible tells you that's not what pleases God? But are you too proud to come and confess that to me or somebody else in the body?

What, because we'll think, well, because you've been, we thought you were a Christian. That was, that was certain. We thought you were above that.

Tell you what, I know me good enough. I know myself good enough that I could never say that. I could never say that.

Oh, I'm above you. And you thought you could talk to some of the men in this church and the leaders and the other pastors. And I've got to be an open book before them.

We need to learn to be that way with one another. Is that risky? Yeah, yeah, it is. But if we're walking as disciples of the Lord, along with the honesty, there's going to be mercy.

And there's going to be meekness. When we see someone, we have another brother come and confess their sin. We're not going to both go, no way you did that.

Oh, I can't believe it. I'm never going out to lunch with you. I'm not going to Rubio's with you again.

Forget it. Bible says not to dine with, you know, some, you know, no. No, rather it's going to be, you know what? Praise the Lord.

Praise the Lord that you would confess, that you would be man enough, be woman enough to confess your sin and your utter, absolute need for the power of God to work in your life. That's starting to grow in the Lord. You're afraid to confess your sin.

You're walking in fear, not in faith. And the Bible says without faith, it's impossible to please God. We want to be disciples.

We want to be the people that kind of what Jesus is doing with us this morning. He's taking us aside. We're by and large, the group here, we're believers.

If you're not a believer, God bless you for being here. And I pray that before we leave, we get a chance to talk and you will surrender your heart to the Lord. But see, this is instruction for believers, for disciples, not for the masses as a whole, but it's for us.

That we might be the people God's called us to be. I love the Gospels. I love this particular passage.

I pray that you will fall in love with it too. Oh, it might. It might stir up some things, but stir it up, Lord.

Because the last thing we want to be is stagnant. Last thing we want to be is, you know, kind of like having the sin of Achan. Remember Achan? You know, when the children of Israel came across the Jordan and they defeated Jericho and the Lord said, don't take anything from it.

This whole thing is going to be an offering to me. And brother Achan, he decided to take a bar of gold and a Babylonian garment, a couple other things and buried them under his tent. A couple of days later, they go up to a piddly little town called Ai.

They sent 6,000 or so troops up there and they get wiped out. They get wiped out. And Moses is on the ground.

Oh, what's that? Or Joshua. What's happening? And the Lord says, get up. There's sin in the camp.

What are you whining to me about? There's sin in the camp. And God just said, take this tribe and this family and this, and it narrowed it right down. And it was judged and it was dealt with.

But the armies of Israel were powerless while there was sin in the camp. Church, do we want to make an impact in our community? A continuing impact? I believe we've made some good impact, but I believe there's a whole lot more work to do in our families, our neighborhoods, our community as a whole. Get right.

Whatever you do, determine today that I am not going to let sin reign in my mortal body. I'm going to present my body as a living sacrifice to the Lord. I'm going to present my instruments as an offering to the Lord, not my guitar or harmonica, but my being to the Lord.

And I learn as I'm going through the sermon in the mouth that it begins in my heart. Search our hearts, Lord. Deal with us as you would.

Because we know God loves us. Hey, if he's going to be convicting you of sin, it's not to crush you. It's to bring you to a place of peace and victory.

Amen. Let's pray. Father, thank you for the time this morning.

God, we ask your blessing. We ask you, you're searching, you're working in us as we go from this place today. Lord, you've got so much more that you want to teach us.

So many more things you want to do in our lives, Lord. God, we just ask you to do that work. And we fall before you, Lord.

We come before you. We know that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, that outward show, we can put on an act, but you see the heart. And you came, Lord, that our hearts would be born again, that we might have the life of the spirit in us.

And that's not something of our doing. That's a surrender to you. And you do it in us.

Well, Lord, help us not to be afraid to surrender. Lord, may we come before you and honestly confess and deal with those matters of the heart, that we might be the light in the world, and that you might use us for your glory. And we ask this this morning in the powerful and precious name of Jesus.

Amen. Can we stand together? The pastors will be down here at the front to pray for you. The ushers will be in the back to pray for you.

People at the donut table will be there to pray for you. Wherever you're at here, you'll find people who will pray for you. If you need prayer, if you need to confess, fellows particularly, not saying that ladies don't have a problem with this sexual immorality stuff, but guys particularly do, and Christian guys do, and we as Christian men need to deal with it.

And so we would be here to pray with you and for you and guide you and disciple you and show you that there is victory. Let's deal with sin in the camp, folks. Amen.

That we might be the people God wants us to be. The Lord bless you and keep you and cause his face to shine upon you. May he be gracious to you.

May he lift up his countenance in you and give you his peace. God bless you richly as you serve him.
You're dismissed.

You need prayer?

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