



MONDAY 14 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:17-19

Plug In...

[NB: We've spent more time on this section than normal for it is one of the most misunderstood portions of Scripture].

Most probably, Jesus is referring here to the 'commanding' aspect of the Law and the Prophets given he shortly will quote from the commands given to Moses. (The Law given via Moses is known as the Mosaic Law). Jesus says a number of things about his relationship to this Mosaic Law:

1. He doesn't abolish it (v.17a)
2. He fulfils it (v.17b)
3. It continues to have a validity with regard to people in the Kingdom of Heaven (vv.18-19).

Soon, we'll see Jesus give his own commands, which on the face of it are not really part of the original Mosaic command when read in context (i.e., "do not call a brother or sister *raca* [fool]"). Further, Jesus will prohibit something that is not even prohibited in the OT (i.e., "do not swear an oath at all").

When we carefully read "you've heard it said...but I say to you" (5:21-48) we see Jesus is not merely correcting a misunderstanding of the OT law, nor only taking it deeper. In the main he's quoting the law with its original intention and understanding. What Jesus is *doing* to the Mosaic Law is laying his own authoritative commands down next to these famous words of God. In doing so Jesus tells the people his commands are the ones to follow from this time on.

By this, Christians understand they no longer go to the Old Testament Law as a direct guide for how to live. For the person wanting to know the way to live before God, these verses establish that direction is to be taken from Jesus Christ from this point onwards.

The New Testament has much more to say on the value of using the Mosaic Law for wisdom and how it functions now as a sign post to what God's character is like, what he values, and what love for him and neighbour may look like. But it is no longer the go-to spot for learning how to relate to God.

Chew It Over...

Consider these oft-heard phrases and decide whether or not they marry with Jesus' words in vv.17-19.

"The Old Testament is no longer relevant to New Testament Christians."

"Christians are no longer under law, so you shouldn't really judge another person's behaviour."

"The Old Testament was a salvation by law, whereas what we have in the New Testament is a salvation by grace."

Prayer Suggestion

Thank you God that you love us enough to accept us the way we are [the Beatitudes] Thank you God that you love us too much to leave us that way [the Commands].



TUESDAY 15 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:17-20

Plug In...

Jesus is about to talk of a Kingdom-of-heaven-type righteousness that needs to appear in people's lives (v.20). Thankfully he provides this by being our substitute, but he also stimulates it to appear in our lives by his Spirit. By contrast, this righteousness doesn't seem to have appeared in the Pharisees, and that is serious stuff (*cf.* vv. 22, 29-30). Kingdom righteousness needs to emerge in Jesus' followers.

Jesus' commands are ones which are taught both by doing and by teaching. Doing and teaching are brought together in vv. 19-20. Clearly teaching out loud with words to break or minimise a command is wrong. Yet, given

we are called to be salt and light and have our good deeds point back to the Father in heaven (5:13-16), we should know that our actions, behaviours end up having a teaching effect before others.

Chew It Over...

Analyse the last 24 hours. What things about how you see the world and what you hold as beliefs and priorities have you been teaching others you've associated with? What have they learned as they've looked on or interacted with you?

Prayer Suggestion

Ask Jesus to make your life a personal translation of the truth of Scripture. Ask Jesus to make this Kingdom righteousness appear further in you; in fact emanate profusely from you.



WEDNESDAY 16 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:21-22

Plug In...

Jesus says the people listening would be familiar with the commandment “Do not murder”. Jewish people would know such words are God’s authoritative command and must be obeyed.

Looking closely, Jesus doesn’t really do any of the following with the laws from Moses: abolish/cancel it; correct a misunderstanding of the command going around at the time; nor does he necessarily give a ‘truer’ meaning. [In its original context Exod. 20:13 doesn’t contain material where one would have expected or understood that anger was also being referred to.]

Through these next comparisons (vv. 21-48), what we see is Jesus placing his own commands down as authoritative above the authoritative words of Moses. This does not mean that Jesus thinks the Mosaic Law is wrong, or that it no longer reflects the character of God; nor that it is no longer useful to understanding what wise loving behaviour might look like. It means that Jesus considers the era of direct relation to God through the Mosaic laws is over, and now one relates to God directly via Jesus.

Chew It Over...

Maybe it is hard to imagine yourself face-to-face saying to someone: "you fool!" One area of exposure we could think about is how we use social media. Often social media emboldens us be more rash with our language and more at ease to scathe someone publicly. Have you spewed a lot of your anger at people screen-to-screen?

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God to help you carry others burdens and not seek retaliation. Ask God to stop you short of lashing out in character assassination. Ask God to create in you a Christ-like attitude that pursues reconciliation. May God make us merciful and peacemakers (5:7,9).



THURSDAY 17 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:23-26

Plug In...

The sequence of handovers each stand as a little moment before it is too late where we can sort out our horizontal relationships. Taking up the window of opportunity immediately and quickly displays how serious we take the reality of the Judge.

Chew It Over...

Jesus' commands concerning a Kingdom-type righteousness impact right at the heart of our relationships. We have to ask ourselves right now, who has something against us which we know of? Resolve to take steps to deal with it today.

Prayer Suggestion

Ask God to remove our pride, give us a desire to reconcile, the resolve to track the person down, and the wisdom to find words and a posture to settle matters quickly. May we be light in the darkness with these actions.



FRIDAY 18 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:27-30

Plug In...

These are strong words from Jesus, and while they shouldn't be minimised they should be understood. Misunderstanding of this verse has led to much anxiety.

The NIV11 says, "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in her heart".

Regretfully, the NIV11 neglects to include a little word that most other translations have: 'to'. It is a purpose word that can also be expanded into the phrase "*with the purpose to*".

Jesus is not denying that one may find another beautiful. Noticing beauty is not the lust. Continuing to look with the purpose to desire and possess another begins to deny them as being a unique human being. This is lust.

Chew It Over...

How serious are you going to be with your lust? The level of your seriousness will filter down to what you watch, what you joke about. It may mean positioning more space between you and some of your relationships. Using the vivid metaphor of Jesus, what serious steps are you going to take to remove the poison of lust?

Prayer Suggestion

Lord help us to refrain from certain acts, but also give us a renewed heart and will that is not perverted; give us a heart that doesn't want to do the lustful looking at all. The demand of this command casts us back on your all-forgiving love Lord Jesus.



WEEKEND 19-20 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 6:9-15 (The Lord's Prayer)

Plug In...

We will study the Lord's Prayer in more depth later in the Sermon on the Mount. Yet, it is worth noticing that in the middle of the Sermon Jesus invites us to pray to our Father. In the middle of the Sermon which has commands with far-reaching demands, Jesus directs us to where we can ask for and find the resources for this Kingdom-type righteousness.

Chew It Over...

Do you daily level yourself and ask God for the resources to live differently today? Renew efforts to call on God to work through all your relationships and interactions.

Prayer Suggestion

Confess to the Lord how often we quickly enter the day relying on our own resources and strength. Ask him to lead you away from temptation and evil. Ask him to imbue your relationships with forgiveness and reconciliation.