

This Present Kingdom
Week 4 - Kingdom Disorientation
Mathew 5:21-32

It's much deeper than that!

“Christian teaching is a vision that resocializes people’s values and habits, that creates a new community of people, a new covenant people who will live together in love and serve as a model for the world of God Himself” (Jonathan T. Pennington, *Jesus the Philosopher*, p. 171).

We know that God has called us and set us apart to be children of God. We are to live “for” the Kingdom of Heaven while living “in” the kingdom of this world. For us to be able to be salt and light, we must go much deeper than our outward behavior. Jesus was not doing away with the law, but going to the root of it.

Jesus made it clear that He had not come to abolish the law but to fulfill it. He alone was able to completely obey the law and thus be the only One qualified to take our place and pay our sin debt on the cross. When we come to Christ, we receive all the blessings of His righteousness!

The last statement in last week’s passage is what Jesus is expounding on in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. He said, “Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matthew 5:20).

“The term ‘righteousness’ and related words in Matthew consistently refer to a person’s obedience to God’s commands and conformity to His character expressed in personal behavior, speech, and attitudes. This does not suggest that either Jesus or Matthew regarded Kingdom entrance as a reward earned by good works. Instead, they recognized surpassing righteousness as the necessary evidence of one’s identity as a true disciple...Superior righteousness focuses upon manifesting divine *character* rather than merely keeping divine *commands*” (*Sermon on the Mount*, Charles Quarles, Loc. 2402).

“The Pharisees righteousness was an external righteousness. The Pharisees and scribes were empty shells. Godliness to them was all about appearances, what people could see and be impressed with” (R.T. Kendall, *The Sermon on the Mount*, p. 108).

This is not behavior modification; this is heart transformation!

I. “You have heard that the ancients were told that you shall not commit murder, but I say to you...” (5:21-22)

“If you take the Sermon on the Mount with these six detailed statements and say, ‘As long as I don’t commit adultery –and so on—I am all right’, you have entirely missed our Lord’s

point. It is not a code of ethics. He is out to delineate a certain order and quality of life” (D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 189).

“For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murders, acts of adultery, other immoral sexual acts, thefts, false testimonies, and slanderous statements” (Matthew 15:19).

Our focus is to love the Lord and to hunger and thirst after righteousness. We are not just to negatively focus on what we are not to do, but instead to actually love righteousness. When my love for Christ surpasses my love for self, sin loses its hold. What once entangled me will no longer entice me. In fact, I will have a growing disdain for sin and a great compassion and empathy for those who are held captive by the enemy.

In humility of heart, I will seek to pray, and help guide others to the freedom for which Christ died. He came that we might have abundant life. Not getting by simply through gritting our teeth and pushing through. It does take mortifying the flesh. But on the other side is the carefree life of trust and joy when we cast all our cares upon Jesus, because He cares for us. He has said that “His yoke is easy, and His load is light” (Matthew 11:30).

II. “If you are presenting your offering...” (5:23-26)

We are called to be at peace with our fellow man. Jesus made it clear that we are to stop worship and go to the person who has something against us and try to make things right. God has called us to the ministry of reconciliation.

Reconciliation: “The restoration of friendly relations” (Dictionary.com).

You can reconcile without resolving all of your issues or experiencing full restoration of the relationship. We are called to seek reconciliation.

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:17-19).

Restoration depends on both parties.

III. “You have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery, but I say to you...” (5:27-30)

How does a broken water main underground threaten to contaminate the water supply? When the water supply is low, any cracks in the pipes are exposed and can actually cause water outside the pipe to be sucked into it, introducing bacteria.

What deep work needs to be done to cleanse your heart and mind?

Jesus stated clearly how serious sin is. It must be cut out or cut off! (v. 29-30).

We need to treat sin like we treat cancer. Cancer is to the physical body what sin is to the soul.

The American Cancer Society gives this explanation for how cancer cells grow:

You are made up of trillions of cells that over your lifetime normally grow and divide as needed. When cells are abnormal or get old, they usually die. Cancer starts when something goes wrong in this process and your cells keep making new cells and the old or abnormal ones don't die when they should. As the cancer cells grow out of control, they can crowd out normal cells. This makes it hard for your body to work the way it should.

Cancer, if left untreated, takes over resulting in death. Sin if left untreated, takes over leading to death eternally.

Sin (cancer) in our thoughts leads to sinful actions as it invades and takes over becoming a compulsion to act. This is called a stronghold. Just like cancerous tumors must be cut out and blasted with chemotherapy or radiation, our sin must be cut off by the blood of Christ and God's Word, the Sword of the Spirit. Unhealthy ways of thinking must be replaced with Christ-honoring thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

“These six examples chosen by our Lord are nothing but illustrations of principles. It is the spirit not the letter that matters; it is the intent, object and purpose that are important. The one thing we have to avoid above everything else in our Christian lives is this fatal tendency to live the Christian life apart from a direct, living, and true relationship with God” (D. Martin Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, p. 192).

“Your future begins with what happens in your heart today” (*This Present Kingdom*, p. 96).

Spiritual Discipline of Silence and Solitude

“Just as the physical law of gravity ensures that sediment swirling in a jar of muddy river water will eventually settle and the water will become clear, so the spiritual law of gravity ensures that the chaos of the human soul will settle if it sits still long enough” (Ruth Haley Barton, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, p. 47).