

Sermon on the Mount Sermon Series

Sermon 15

The Law is Spiritual

One day I was talking with my high school friend whose name was also David. The subject of the ten commandments came up and we wondered how many of them we had broken. I grew up in an atheist family and so the Bible was not taught in our home. So we went to find a Bible to see if we could locate the ten commandments and read them.

We looked at the list.

Hmm. You shall have no other gods before me. I thought to myself, "I didn't break that one because I don't believe in any god whatsoever."

Number Two. Well I never worshiped an idol. To my understanding I didn't worship anything at all.

Number three. Well I used the Lord's name in vain a lot. Cursing was a part of my vocabulary.

Number 4. Sabbath day. Never kept it. Looks like I have broken two commandments so far.

Number 5. I am pretty good to mom and dad.

Number 6. I never killed anyone, so I didn't break that one.

Let's stop right there. I never killed anyone so I thought that I had not broken the 6th commandment. But let's listen as Jesus comments on the law of the kingdom of God.

Matthew 5:21-22 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'²² "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. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

The first thing we notice is that Jesus does not rely on the tradition of the elders to establish His authority. He says, "But I say to you.." Jesus has His own authority.

The second thing that we notice is that Jesus confirms that the Ten Commandments are the law of the kingdom of God. There is a popular notion among Christians for the last 100 years that the ten commandments are not valid and do not need to be kept. Jesus says just the opposite here. He said that it not only needs to be kept, it needs to be kept in a deeper way than the scribes and Pharisees were teaching. It needs to be kept in a deeper way than I thought about when I was an atheist. I was reading the law in its most concrete, literal aspect,

that is, physically taking someone's life. This is the way the scribes and Pharisees would have read the law.

Jesus says that the law goes down to the thoughts and motivations of the heart. Actual murder begins with anger. This is where the problem lies. Deep in the motivations. Have you been angry with someone? Of course you have! What do you do with your anger? Do you want revenge? Do you want to retaliate in some way to compensate for whatever they did to you? Do you cherish feelings of hatred in your heart?

The apostle John wrote the same thing in his letter. Let's go to 1 John 3:15.

1 John 3:15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

If you hate, you are a murderer. If you hate, then you do not have eternal life in you. The law of the kingdom of God is love and hate has no place there. What can you do to conquer this anger and hate that is in you? You can do nothing by yourself. You need a new power in you. You must be spiritually born again.

Matthew 5:22 "And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council."

Raca is probably a transliteration of the Aramaic word reqa which means, "stupid" or "good for nothing." Oooo. Now everyone is guilty, yes? Is there someone here who has never thought this way? God created man in His own image and when we call people stupid and good for nothing we are looking down upon them. We are not loving them at this point. We are breaking the 6th commandment. The law is spiritual.

Matthew 5:22 "But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire."

What is the difference between Raca and fool? There is a difference between someone who does wrong because they are ignorant and someone who does wrong because they are wicked. The latter may be implied here. We are not God and we cannot judge the motivations of the heart.

What is the conclusion of the matter? Everyone is a murderer. We have looked down upon others and cherished revenge in our heart. These attitudes and these behaviors cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven. How can you change your heart? If you do all the motions of prayer and bow with your face to the ground will your hate be turned to love? No. Then that is not the answer.

If you say, "I believe that God is one and that Jesus is a prophet" will your heart be clean enough to go to heaven? No. A simple declaration of belief does not change the attitudes. If you go on a pilgrimage and wear white clothes will your heart be washed of anger? No. That is not the answer. If you wash your hands and your nose and your ears will you love your enemy? No. That is not the answer. We must be born again. We must ask God do to this for us through Jesus Christ. There must be a surrender of our will and our way to God. Then God

will put the Spirit of Jesus in your heart. Only Jesus never sinned. The problem is sin. Only Jesus conquered it. No one else. If you are full of sin you will not go to heaven. Now is the time to get rid of those thoughts and ways. Will ask God for the Spirit of Christ to come into you today? Will you do that right now?

What will be the result of a new heart?

Matthew 5:23-26 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ "leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ "Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ "Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

Every day millions of people worship God. How many of them hate their brother, their neighbor, their classmate, their workmate? Many. God is not accepting their worship. If you hate your brother, your neighbor in your heart, if you are looking down your nose at others, if you are judging their motives, no matter how much you clean your feet and your nose, God is not accepting your worship. Before you come to worship, ask God to give you a new heart, reconcile with the person as much as you possibly can. Then come and give your worship to God.

When I was a child I looked at the law in a concrete, literal way. Jesus reveals to us the spiritual nature of the law of the kingdom of God.

Now I am an adult and I see that the law reveals that I am a sinner. I am guilty and unclean before God. Religious ceremonies don't change the heart. A new birth changes the heart because God will put new motivations and attitudes in you. This is a miracle. The religion that Jesus is preaching is not based on one nation or one ethnic group being greater than another. He is not saying that one language is superior to another because God spoke through a prophet in some language. All those things are very unimportant in the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is about having a new heart, about being a new creature.

Galatians 6:15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone *is* in Christ, *he is* a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Do you have anger in your heart? Do you want to get rid of it? Do you want to be clean before God? Do you want to have a new heart? Let's kneel and pray right now for you to be a new creature in Christ.