



Week 13 – Jesus Illuminates the Law

In this long section of text (compared to others we have looked at) Jesus tackles 6 very difficult areas of inter-personal relationships and what they are meant to look like in the kingdom of God. Or more plainly, in His church, among His people. On Sunday we took a high level view at all 6 and the common theme behind Jesus' teaching. Now in your Life Groups we will take a closer look at each of the six and talk about some practical and personal ways they show up in the life of the church and how we can respond in the light of God's grace.

Read each passage and discuss. You may want to select 3 or 4 out of the six for time purposes.

Matthew 5:21 – You shall not murder

It is in verse 23 that Jesus describes how expansive this command really is. In the scenario that Jesus describes, who is taking the initiative? What are they to do? According to v24 what can unresolved conflict interfere with? Describe a time when you have had an experience like this. According to verses 25-26 what are the potential long term results of unresolved conflict.

Matthew 5:27 – You shall not commit adultery

Twice now Jesus has talked directly about hell in relation to the internal attitudes or conditions of our hearts. Will it be enough to say to God, "I wasn't a murderer, I didn't assault anyone – that's good enough isn't it?" How do these verses compare to the popular notion that "Hell is just for bad people like Hitler"? Jesus says that keeping ourselves pure from this sort of sin is serious.

Of course cutting off our hand or plucking out our eye can not stop us from sinning in our hearts – but instead of cutting off our hand, what could we cut ourselves off from? What is coming into us through our eye that should not? Where do our hands take us we should not be?



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Matthew 5:31 – *Do not divorce easily* (Pastor Paul paraphrase)

For greater context read Matthew 19:3-9. The key phrase of the pharisees question is “for any cause”. Jesus says in the next few verses “No, not for any cause, only for one. God gave you greater freedom under Moses because your hearts were not capable of more, but that was not the original intent, and I’m here now to put that back into place.”

What does Jesus quote as a reason for taking such a strong view on marriage? What other purpose does the covenant of marriage serve according to scripture? (See Ephesians 5:32) What is unique about marriage that Jesus feels it needs to be guarded so strongly? How does that compare to your own experience, or the marriages of friends and family?

Matthew 5:33 - You shall not swear falsely

Jesus says here that people of his kingdom will treat each other honestly. In business and in personal commitments. What happens to a community of people if every commitment requires oaths and contracts to be trusted? Where there needs to be collateral or insurance to protect every transaction? Conversely, what is it like to be part of a community where people follow through, and every interaction, large and small can be trusted? Which would be a blessing to live in?

Matthew 5:39 – (Do not) Demand an eye for an eye

People living in community together incur “debts” towards one another both large and small on a daily basis. Some are from negligence, and others from malice. Jesus starts by referring to people who intentionally do harm, but by verse 42 expands the law to include people who are in need. What does Jesus say the Christian response is to all debt we feel others owe us, regardless of how it was incurred?

Matthew 5:43 – (Do not) Only love your neighbour

Remind yourselves of Luke 10:25-37. The priest and the Levite were concerned about what would happen to themselves if they helped the man. The Samaritan was worried about what would happen to the man if he *didn't* help. Discuss on whom the primary concern of our heart should be placed? Who do disciples of Jesus think of first? What is our hope for everyone? Does it matter who they are or what they have done?

Pray that in each of these six very difficult and real circumstances in our lives, we can show ourselves to be image bearers of God as a church in our community. Pray for how you personally can be a part of that.

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