

Sunday School
April 5, 2020

-Read: Matthew 5:17-26

-Questions to consider and discuss:

- **Q:** As Christians, do we need the Law (or “Torah”) of the Old Testament?
 - **A:** While we are not required to maintain the cultural law practices of the first 5 books of the Bible (such as cleanliness/purity rituals, sacrifices, dietary restrictions, etc.), we *are* obligated to maintain the moral/ethical law practices (no murdering, no illicit relationships, no stealing, making sure to act honestly/honorably/justly, treating the poor and marginalized well, etc.).
 - Some people, including Christians, view the Old Testament as obsolete, completely disregarding it (or at least, subconsciously tuning it out) in favor of the New Testament. Jesus says the opposite of this. He did not come to make the Old Testament null and void, but rather, to reimagine the Law’s requirements in light of what God was doing through Jesus, breathing new life into a *good* thing. The Old Testament is 75% of our Bibles. It would be foolish to simply ignore it.
- **Q:** Why do you think Jesus says “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (v. 20)?
 - **A:** Numerous religious sects existed within Judasim in Jesus’ day (Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, etc.). “Scribes” in this instance simply means “teachers of the Law.” The Pharisees, in particular, were known to have very rigorous standards, trying to maintain piety through a myriad of rituals (special washings, excessive fasting practices, getting hyper-specific and detailed about edge cases within the Law, etc.).
 - Additionally, as we’ll see later in the Sermon on the Mount, the religious teachers had a knack for doing things publicly, in order to be seen and heard by other people, rather than showing true devotion to God.
 - Read: Matthew 13:51-52. This passage comes after *another* section of teachings, specifically, parables (one could even argue that this short passage is a little parable. Jesus says that a good scribe (meaning one who interprets and teaches God’s Word) is someone who keeps some of the old (Old Testament Law, tradition) *combined* with something new (grace through faith, serving Jesus as Lord, new interpretations contextualized in one’s day).
- Jesus states that being angry with one’s brother makes someone liable to judgment in the same way that murder does.
 - You would think that with all the rigorous piety that the Pharisees and scribes showed, they would be stricter than Jesus. However, as Matthew 5:17-48 shows us, Jesus actually sets the bar *way* higher. Jesus basically says, “It’s not good enough not to commit murder. When you hold anger and hatred in your heart towards a fellow human being, that puts you at odds with them and with God.” Jesus gets at the heart issue.
 - Read: James 5:19-20. There’s such a thing as “righteous anger;” but there’s lots of unrighteous anger. Most of us display more unrighteous anger (a selfish kind of anger) than being angry for the right reasons (being angry at what makes God

angry). Generally, we want bad things for our enemies, even more than we actually desire life change for the better (either in us or in them). Sometimes, we *want* to stay angry, and that's not good.

- **Q:** What's the goal/ideal in Jesus' mind? **A:** Reconciliation, which means restoring relationships properly.
- What is one takeaway from this teaching from the Sermon on the Mount that you can apply this week?