*Introduction*

The sermon on the mount is the sermon to end all sermons. It is the greatest lesson on how we as Christians are to live in a positive way.

We have seen over the past few weeks that Jesus starts his sermon by giving us a run down on who we are - blessed, we are new creations that are to walk differently to the world and we are blessed because of all that God, our heavenly father has given us, no matter what our earthly state.

He want on to tells us that we are salt and light, and as such are to make a difference to the lives of others, we are to bring flavour into others lives, because we are different to the world - we have Jesus! AMEN! and therefore should live in such a way that points men and women to Christ.

But there was also a warning to us, that if we followed the world and its ways, we would loose our saltiness and be good for nothing.

We are to be the light of the world that shows up the darkness of evil for what it is.

We saw last week that Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to fulfil it. We saw that the whole of the OT pointed to the coming of Christ and that He was the one who would fulfil every aspect of the requirements of God and be obedient to the whole of the law. He did this by his sacrificial death upon the cross, by shedding his own blood in order to free us from our sins and the wrath of God that we deserved.

This morning we are not going to start looking at the individual topics, such as murder or adultery, but we are going to try and understand the importance Jesus puts on the spirit of the law rather than the details of the law itself.

He is not doing away with the law and creating new laws, but he is taking us back to how the law should be interpreted.

so...

The comment of Jesus that we are centering on this morning is this:

***21‘You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ... 22But I tell you ..***

Each of the subjects that Jesus goes on to talk about begins with this statement.

Why?

Because he is going to tell us His own positive exposition of the law, and also contrast it with the false teachings of the Pharisees and scribes.

We must keep in mind that Jesus has already stated that

***20For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.***

What he will say about each subject is important, your salvation depends on it.

Let us look at the context of what is happening here. Why is he making this statement over and over again?

This is about understanding true righteousness as opposed to false righteousness

Let us first consider the start of the quotation, " ***You have heard that it was said to the people long ago"***

We already know from last week that Jesus was referring to the whole of the Law and the Prophets which also all pointed to himself, so when he states that you "have heard it said" that he is not referring to the actual written word but some ones interpretation of it.

You see, Jesus lived in what is known as the 2nd Temple era, and it had been hundreds of years since the giving of the law to Moses to the time of Jesus, and the people lived at a time when many were uneducated and would not have had access to the written law and prophets and therefore relied on a scribe or a Pharisee to tell them what the scriptures said.

The Scribes and Pharisees were very hot on 'tradition' and they were always quoting the fathers, like Moses and Abraham, but they were not actually reading the word they were more interested in how it was being interpreted as it was passed down over the centuries and so what the people were getting was a persons interpretaion.

It is a bit like asking the question "Why do you do that?" and the answer coming back is "because we have always done it like that". They were basing their lives on tradition and not on the word.

It was just the same prior to the reformation. The local people, uneducated and poor, did not have access to the Bible, they had to rely on the local priest to read it to them and tell them what it meant, it gave the priests and clergy alot of power over the people, it put obstacles in the way of the people and made the church rich.

If you want some homework, take the Church of England or the Roman Catholic Churches doctrines on Pergatory, praying for the dead, favours, forgiveness through a priest, infant baptism and all sorts of other practices and try and find them in the Bible.

You will not, because they are not there...

***You have heard that it was said to the people long ago***.

The Pharisees saw themselves as keeping the law if they had not actually committed murder, or adultery, or broke an oath. That was easy, but it was also wrong.

Notice that Jesus did not say "You have read in the Law of Moses" or "It was written and you have read", it was not the peoples fault that they did not know in this case, it was because they had been told wrong.

The second statement that Jesus makes is also quite extraordinary, he says

***But I tell you ..***

This is one of the most crucial statements in regard to the doctrine of the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.

You see, He does not hesitate to set himself up as the authority. and by saying ***But I tell you ..*** you could easily think that Jesus was correcting the Law of Moses, but he wasn't. What he was doing was saying "I am interpreting the Law of Moses and it is MY interpretation that is true and not the pharisees.

After all, Jesus is the Word, He spoke the Word and therefore it is true, and therefore my interpretation of it is true.

***John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2He was with God in the beginning. 3Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. 5The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+1&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-26050a)***] it.....***

***14The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.***

So we see here that Jesus is claiming the authority to interpret the Word in all truth because HE IS that WORD!

So, having set the context and Jesus' authority, let us going on to see the principles that Jesus is laying down for our true understanding of the Law and how they relate to us today.

*1. It is the spirit of the law that takes primary position, not the letter of the law.*

The law was never meant to be mechanical, it was and is living.

***2 Cor 3:6 He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant – not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.***

If we take just the letter of the law in regards to murder, then it is easy for us to keep the law, but the spirit of the law takes it from a physical act to an attitude by my attitude being one of living right and loving my fellow man.

In terms of adultery. it is not just the physical act, but its what do you desire when you look!

*2. Conformity to the law is not just about actions (its a different way of putting principle 1 really).*

Our thoughts, motives and desires are of equal importance to the action.

The law of God is as much concerned with what leads to the act as much as the act itself

Jesus is concerned with the heart, and it is from the heart that evil thoughts come. God is not just concerned with what we do or don't do, he is concerned with our inward condition and our attitude. He is always looking at them

***Luke 16:13‘No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.’***

***14The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all this and were sneering at Jesus. 15He said to them, ‘You are the ones who justify yourselves in the eyes of others, but God knows your hearts. What people value highly is detestable in God’s sight.***

*3. The law should be looked on as positive*

The real object of the law is not to prevent us from doing things wrong, but to lead us positively into doing what is right, and love what is right.

If we view the law as negative, we will look at it as "fun killing", ruining our fun.

But God looks upon the law positively in that he wants us to be able to live side by side with all, and get on, and love, and respect.

The Pharisees and Scribes were like men with a stick who would rap you over the knuckles everytime you did wrong. Soon you would hate the law. But if our attitudes were to seek after righteousness, to hunger and thirst for it, our lives would be totally transformed, because we would always be seeking the best for others and that would be best for us too.

*4. The law is there to promote the free development of the spiritual nature.*

Again it is not to be looked on as negative, not to make life, and the Christian walk grievous or hard but to see the possibilities offered to us by the Gospel of Christ so that we can develop and grow into Christian maturity

***1John 5:3 In fact, this is love for God: to keep his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,***

*5. The law of God, and all the ethical instructions in the Bible, must never be regarded as an end in themselves.*

We must never think of Gods law as something to which we MUST CONFORM.

The ultimate aim of the law and the Prophets is that you and I would come to know God.

We are not to look at the 10 Commandments and say, have I kept them, Yes, then I am alright, I am righteous?

That is what the Pharisees were doing

***Luke 18:9 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: 10‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: “God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. 12I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.”***

All the Pharisee was doing was making the law and end in itself. That was all the mattered.

I have kept the law, therefore I am alright.

But Jesus, through the law and the prophets is saying something different, he is saying that it is about relationship, and we should be constantly asking ourselves -

"What is my relationship to God?" "Do I know Him?" "Am I pleasing Him?"

In other words, as you examine yourself after a days work, you do not just say "have I committed murder? or adultery? or whatever? No, ok all is well! You should be asking yourself "Has God been supreme in my life today?" "Have I lived to the honour and glory of God today?" "Do I know him better?"

*Conclusion*

Are you living in such a way that you are just trying to keep the letter of the law? because if you are, you will be miserable and uncontented.

If you come to Church because you think it will score you brownie points with God - it won't.

God wants to know you personally, He wants you to look at the law and see that he loves you so much, that he wants to protect you from harm and wrongdoing and know the freedom you can have in Christ.

If you are trying to keep a set of rules, Jesus says your just like the Pharisees:

***Matt 5:20For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven***

It is only through Jesus Christ of which the Law and the Prophets speak and point to, can we know God.

Will you stop trying... and invite Jesus in to your life and experience the freedom of sins forgiven and a new life in Him.

Amen