*Introduction*

Over the past few weeks we have looked at a number of topics under the heading "Jesus' attitude towards...".

The sermon on the mount that starts in Matthew 5 is the greatest sermon ever preached by the greatest preacher that ever lived - Jesus.

Jesus is the ultimate expert in the Law and therefore whatever he has to say about it is very important and needs to be taken seriously.

We started off by seeing that we as Christians, no matter what our circumstances, are blessed. We have also seen that despite what we go through in terms of persecution, we are to live as salt and light. We are to flavour the lives of others, we are to shine for Christ.

Last time, a couple of weeks ago, we saw that Jesus was primarily interested in the 'spirit' of the law. It is generally easy for us to keep the letter of the law, that's what the Pharisees and the Scribes did, and they thought they were righteous because of it.

But their righteousness was not good enough.

Jesus said "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago...You shall not...

But I tell you....

Jesus did not do away with the law, he came to fulfil it, the whole of the Law and the Prophets pointed to Him and through his life and death, he fulfilled every part of the law.

Jesus in the verses before us this morning shows us what he requires of us and so we are going to look at each one and see what he is telling us and how we are to live in these important areas.

**Murder**

Murder is a serious act, to murder someone means that you have planned their death. It is not an accident, for to be an accident would be manslaughter.

But murder means that you have hated a person, wanted what they have got or something like that, and have deliberately and wilfully planned their demise.

Up to this point the Pharisees believed that it was only the act of murder that came under judgement, all the things that led up to it didn't really matter.

But Jesus states that if you are angry with someone without cause, or you say 'raca' (treat with contempt) without cause or you call them a 'fool' (an expression of abuse)

is as bad as murdering.

To murder is to destroy the physical body, but Jesus says that it is more that that, it is destroying the whole person, body soul and spirit to act in this way.

Today we could align this to 'bullying' someone.

All of these things are regarded as murder in the eyes of God, they hold the same judgement.

Jesus wants us to live lives that are at peace with all people, but there will be times when we justifiably hold someone in contempt for what they have done, or we are justifiably angry.

If you do, Jesus says get it resolved as quick as possible. In a sense and bringing it up to date, Jesus is saying - if your worshipping me in church and you remember that someone has something against you - leave church and go and put it right.

Stop it as quick as you can, settle it before it gets to court. Because if it gets that far, you are going to come under judgement and you could be sent to prison.

**Adultery**

Again, the Pharisees are just looking at the act of adultery itself as transgressing the law, but Jesus takes it back to the heart.

What Jesus is saying here, and in all these things, is that sin is not merely a matter of actions and deeds.

It is something within the heart that leads to the action.

If your eye looks upon a woman and you lust after her - you have done the deed in the eyes of God and Jesus says you are better off if you pluck your eye out, than be condemned to hell.

**Divorce**

When it comes to divorce it is helpful to look at the Mosaic meaning found in the law. Before the law of Moses, things were very chaotic, women were seen as possessions and looked upon lowly with almost no rights, and a husband would almost at will divorce his wife for any reason, the main reason would probably have been lust of another women, In Deuteronomy it states

***Deut 24:1-4 If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, 2and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man, 3and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, 4then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord. Do not bring sin upon the land the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance.***

The NIV has for some reason put displeasing, but this does not really sum up the original meaning, the original meaning is that the woman had some natural, moral or physical defect that he would not have known about before marriage.

But the situation shows a picture of total exploitation of women, they were, in a sense being past around at will. Sometimes they were ending up remarrying the original husband. The law of Moses brought some order and protection to women.

But Jesus again, brings us to the very heart of the matter - its in the heart, the heart is bad and wants to justify our actions and Jesus states, because of this, the only justifiable reason for divorcing your wife is adultery.

Jesus talks of it again in Matthew 19

***3Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?’***

***4‘Haven’t you read,’ he replied, ‘that at the beginning the Creator “made them male and female,”[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+19%3A3-9&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-23767a)***] 5and said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh”[***[***b***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=matthew+19%3A3-9&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-23768b)***]? 6So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.’***

***7‘Why then,’ they asked, ‘did Moses command that a man give his wife a certificate of divorce and send her away?’***

***8Jesus replied, ‘Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning. 9I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.’***

Now for the sake of time I will sum this up in this way.

There is no commandment to divorce, only that if it were to happen a certificate had to be given. Jesus clearly goes right back before Moses and says when a man and woman marry they become one flesh. The only reason to break the marriage is due to adultery/fornication.

If you want to question me further on it, please see me afterwards.

Anything outside of this causes the women to become an adulterer and anyone marrying her becomes an adulterer.

But again Jesus is going back to the spirit of the law in the way we should live.

**Oaths**

Everything we do as Christians is important because of who we are and because of our affect upon others.

The Pharisees were teaching that if you made an oath you had to keep it. But Jesus is saying don't make an oath at all. It should not be required of us. We should be living in such a way that if we say we will do something it will be done.

Simply say Yes or No.

**Eye for an eye**

We live in a blame culture. If there is a blame there's a claim!!

***Ex 21:23 But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, 24 eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, 25 burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.***

The reason the Law put this in was that once again, man, in seeking revenge would always go over the top and so the Law required that - eye for eye, tooth for tooth etc.

It was all about fairness and not allowing anger or revenge to distort fairness.

We have seen this in the recent London Flat fire where people are seeking 'revenge' that is over the top. Demanding houses of a far better standard. Despite the terrible tragedy of this situation it is wrong to expect more that you had previously.

If I accidentally chop off your little finger in an accident, you have the right to chop mine off, but no more.

But Jesus teaches us to be generous and give more than we need.

**Love for enemies**

Is this in the OT, the simple answer is NO.

But this is what the Pharisees taught. In effect what they actually meant was Love Jews and hate everyone else - you could say they were racist.

Your neighbour was an Israelite, everybody else was to be treated not just like an alien in the land, but an enemy.

Jesus says we are to love our enemies, pray for those who hurt you - Why? that you might be like your father who sends rain to all and the sun to rise on all, no matter who they are.

*Conclusion*

The OT Law has always been about the heart, and the Pharisees had made it into a mechanical thing of do's and don'ts and as long as they had kept the letter of the law they believed they were righteous.

But Jesus states

***Matt 22:36‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’***

***37Jesus replied: ‘“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew+22:36-38&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-23910a)***] 38This is the first and greatest commandment.***

In the same way that God loves us, he wants us to love him.

The things we have talked about are sins, they are the symptoms of sin, not the cause.

So Jesus takes each part of the law and takes it back to the heart, where sin is.

Man was born in sin, he can do nothing about it himself. But often we see atonement in doing the right things.

If we don't murder we are alright, if we don't commit adultery, we are alright etc etc.

But Jesus says NO!, these things come out of a sinful heart.

The Pharisees were relying on their own works to be righteous, but Jesus said that that was not going to work.

If it could have, then Jesus would not have to have died.

God had already told the Jews what was required of them, but they didn't listen or they manipulated the law to suit themselves.

In the end Jesus had to come and become sin for us, become the sacrifice for sin, take the punishment for sin.

The love of God for you is so so great, that he was willing to send His one and only Son.

It is our hearts that need putting right, when our hearts are right, our actions will change and become right.

The only way to have a change heart is to look to the cross,

***John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.***

If you are trusting in the things you do to get you to heaven, by keeping the letter of the law then

***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.***

***2 Cor 5:21God made him who had no sin to be sin[***[***a***](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2+Corinthians+5%3A20-24&version=NIVUK#fen-NIVUK-28899a)***] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.***

Will you give your heart to Christ and be saved? - Your life depends on it.

Amen