

Christ and Torah
Sermon on the Mount #4 | Matthew 5:17-20
June 27, 2021

Scripture Reading

Matthew 5 ¹⁷“Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. ¹⁸For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

Pre-Sermon Remarks | Framework

1. Jesus is setting up a new kingdom
2. How do we get into this kingdom? Beatitudes.
3. These kingdom people are going to be different. Salt and light.
4. Today: one last piece of framework. What does the government transition look like?

PRAYER

Introduction

- Our nation’s peaceful transition of power is remarkable | 2016, 2020
- Israel *used to be* a Kingdom, but now ruled over by foreign empire
 - Jesus comes to say “The Kingdom of GOD is here” | even bigger than Israel
- If Jesus is inaugurating the Kingdom of God, what is the relationship between his kingdom before, the earthly kingdom of Israel, this new kingdom? How does it all work? **TORAH**
- Extremely complicated question. New Testament, centuries of church history
 - Not going to “solve” it in the next 30 minutes

Big idea: Jesus is the key to understanding and living the kingdom

Goals for today:

- 1) Know what tools we’re using (when reading the Bible)
- 2) Avoid some of the big mistakes surrounding this passage
- 3) Bring it home to our personal lives

I. Using Good Tools

Big Word of the Week | Hermeneutics = the science and art of biblical interpretation

- You have unconscious assumptions when you come to any book or movie
 - Last Dance vs. Star Wars vs. local news vs. Dumb and Dumber vs. NBA playoffs
 - Shakespeare vs. Spy Novel vs. H.W. Longfellow vs. Sno county code
- The bible is a big book, actually a *collection* of books

- Thousands of years in writing, dozens of authors, multiple genres

Henry Virkler and Karelynn Ayayo When we hear someone recite or read a text, our understanding of what we hear or read is usually spontaneous—the rules by which we interpret meaning occur automatically and unconsciously. When something blocks that spontaneous understanding, we become more aware of the processes we use to understand (for example, when translating from one language to another). Hermeneutics is essentially a codification of the processes we normally use at an unconscious level to understand the meaning of a communication.

Four Gaps to Bridge

1. Historical gap | events: Ellis Island, Jonah and Nineveh
2. Cultural gap | customs: fireworks on July 4th, New Moon festivals
3. Philosophical gap | beliefs: materialistic/naturalistic vs. spiritual
4. Linguistic gap | words: KFC in China, turns of phrase in 3 languages!

Using Good Tools

Tool #1: Genre

- Poetic statements in the Psalms, “I am poured out like wax”
- Case law in Leviticus, examples to shape the thinking of the ruler
- Theological history in John, not camera footage but a documentary
- Apocalyptic in Daniel and Revelation

Tool #2: Author’s intent

- Divine author, God. Unified story, so ask “what does this link on to?”
- Human author. Ask questions like “why would they include that?”

Tool #3: Fallen-condition focus

- **Bryan Chapell** The corrupted state of our world and our beings cries for God’s aid. He responds with the truths of Scripture and gives us hope by focusing his grace on a facet of our fallen condition in every portion of his Word. No text was written merely for those in the past; God intends for each passage to give us the “endurance and the encouragement” we need today (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13)...The Fallen Condition Focus is the mutual human condition that contemporary believers share with those to or about whom the text was written that requires the grace of the passage for God’s people to glorify and enjoy him.

Tool #4: Biblical storyline

- Creation > Fall > Israel [promise > slavery > formation > monarchy > exile > return] > Redemption > Final consumation
- Understanding the big picture helps us better understand the smaller pieces

Tool #5: Christ/gospel

- Matthew 5¹⁷ Don’t think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.
- Luke 24²⁷ Then beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted for them the things concerning himself in all the Scriptures.

*Recommended: *Dig Deeper* by Nigel Beynon and Andrew Sach

II. Dispelling Myths

Myth #1: Jesus abolished the Torah and Prophets

- If you think I'm being funny, I'm not. Famous preachers and influential scholars
- To be fair, Paul says some things that sound like he's contradicting Jesus here
 - Ephesians 2:15 ...*abolishing the law of commandments expressed in ordinances*
 - Context: Jew + Gentile people of God not marked by Torah observance, but Jesus
- Context in Jesus' day: Roman occupation and radical polarization
 - Progressive Sadducees: *radical* reinterpretation of the Torah
 - Conservative Pharisees: get back to the Torah, but adding rules and burdens
 - Separist Essenes: you are all corrupt, we're going out to the desert away from you
 - Regular folk: how do I obey God? How do I get today's food? How do I avoid Rome?
- Fulfill: Jesus faithfully embodies everything that Torah points to, not just letter but spirit
 - Offspring of Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Prophet, Temple & Sacrifice
 - *****New series this fall**
- Abolish: get rid of it, and act like it was never there

Myth #2: Jesus taught something brand new

- Read through the Sermon on the Mount. No new topics!
- Jesus was firmly connecting himself to the Torah | verses 18-19
 - *Many who leave the faith don't like the OT, but we can't just unhitch ourselves*
- No new teaching, but correct interpretation
- **Craig Blomberg** Many have seen Matthew's portrait of Jesus, therefore, as one of a new Moses or new lawgiver...[H]owever, Jesus is not proclaiming a new law but announcing what he believes is the legitimate interpretation of God's will as contained in the already-existing Torah.

Myth #3: Jesus' fulfillment of Torah changes nothing

- People who want to go back to sacrifices, temple, etc.
- **Hebrews 7**¹² For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must be a change of law as well.

Analogy: blueprints that lead to new construction of a house

- As it's being built, some builders freak out because it doesn't look how they expected
- Some builders want radically different, some builders are adding load-bearing walls
- The architect himself shows up and says: "let me interpret I'm the one who wrote them!"

III. Bringing it Home

Myth #4: OT salvation was by works, NT salvation is by grace (Jesus is easier)

*****This doesn't work for several reasons**

1. This misunderstands the Torah | rescue from Egypt came before commandments
 - a. Salvation is *always* by grace, obedience is *always* a response
2. This ignores Jesus' intensity | 5:19-20, 5:48 (be perfect!)
 - a. Jesus is caller for a greater allegiance, a higher bar

3. This forgets the foundation of the beatitudes
 - a. vs. 20 “unless your righteousness *exceeds* the scribes & pharisees”
 - b. They’re playing the game well, but I’m inviting you into a different game
 - c. Beatitudes: poor in spirit, mourn, humble

True righteousness is a gift from Jesus

Gift Righteousness

1 Corinthians 1 ²⁶ Brothers and sisters, consider your calling: Not many were wise from a human perspective, not many powerful, not many of noble birth. ²⁷ Instead, God has chosen what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen what is weak in the world to shame the strong. ²⁸ God has chosen what is insignificant and despised in the world—what is viewed as nothing—to bring to nothing what is viewed as something, ²⁹ so that no one may boast in his presence. ³⁰ It is from him that you are in Christ Jesus, who became wisdom from God for us—our righteousness, sanctification, and redemption ³¹—in order that, as it is written: Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.

True righteousness is a gift from Jesus

It’s all a gift! He fulfils the Torah perfectly, then grants his righteousness to those who humbly ask

- You become/remain a part of the Kingdom because of the gift of Jesus’ righteousness
- Also, you can have stability in your heart before God

We all waver at times, we all fail to live up to the standards in the Sermon on the Mount

- Wrong solution #1: it’s fine, God doesn’t care, you’re fine the way you are
- Wrong solution #2: self-flagellation, I sure hope you feel bad, “shame on you”

Gospel solution: my righteousness—my right standing as a citizen of the kingdom—was never based on my performance in the first place. Come with humble boldness before your God.

Benediction

1 Peter 5 ¹⁰ The God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, establish, strengthen, and support you after you have suffered a little while. ¹¹ To him be dominion forever. Amen.