

What Really Matters?

Text: Matthew 5:17 - 20
Subject: What Really Matters In Your Life!

Introduction

◆ The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5,6,7) is all-embracing (with 7 main sections).

1. In (5:3-12) Jesus addresses our **character** (in the beatitudes).
2. In (5:13-16) Jesus addresses our **influence** (as salt and light).
3. In (5:17-48) Jesus addresses our **righteousness** (in the heart).
4. In (6:1-18) Jesus addresses our **devotion** (in prayer, fasting and giving).
5. In (6:19-43) Jesus addresses our **ambition** (what we really value).
6. In (7:1-12) Jesus addresses our **relationships** (and how not to judge).
7. In (7:13-27) Jesus addresses our **destiny** (we either build on rock or sand).

(And in this greatest sermon ever preached)

- ◆ Jesus shows us what really matters in your life!
- ◆ He shows us how to be a whole person from the inside out.
- ◆ He reveals to us - how to be healthy, contented, joyful, peaceful and genuine.

(The question today is)

◆ What did Jesus mean in v. 20 when He said:

“Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven”?

(Grasp the context of our text)

◆ In v. 17, Jesus says, *“I didn’t come to destroy the Law, I came to fulfill the Law.”*

In other words

- ◆ *“You accuse Me of de-emphasizing the Law of Moses, and over-emphasizing love and grace.”*
- ◆ *“You accuse Me of pushing forgiveness, at the expense of law and justice.”*
- ◆ *“You think I minimize the Old Testament and what the prophets said, but that’s not true at all.”*(In fact)

(v. 17) ***“I didn’t destroy the law, I fulfilled it.”*** (which means):

1. The Law was a written code for living life - but I am a live person to illustrate how to really live.
2. The Law was only a rule for behavior - but I am the Spirit behind the rule.
3. The law was an external code requirement of regulations and obligations - but I give the Spirit and life and power from the inside out to live a whole life.

(In fact beloved)

- ◆ The scribes and Pharises had thousands of rules and regulations to keep—but it didn't make them sweet and humble and godly and joyful!
- 1. The Scribes were a class of scholars devoted to spelling out the principles set forth in the Law.
- 2. The Pharisees were a group of laymen who separated from society to carry out all the regulations developed by the Scribes.

(Remember)

- ◆ In the 3rd Century, externalism and legalism became very repressive.
- ◆ The rules and regulations were codified in the Mishnah (800 pages of rules).
- ◆ Soon after, commentaries emerged to explain the Mishnah (these were known as Talmuds).
- ◆ There were 12 printed volumes of the Jerusalem Talmud and 60 volumes of the Babylonian Talmud.
- ◆ Thousands of rules that were oppressive:

(Rules like)

1. "Don't move a new lamp from one place to another on the Sabbath."
2. "Don't put a saddle on a donkey on the Sabbath."
3. "Don't do this, don't wear that, don't step here, don't minister that way."
4. "Don't cut you hair, do cut your hair, don't shave, do shave, don't wear pants, do wear pants."

Question: What was the result of legalism and externalism?

Answer: Two things:

1. Some people felt **unspiritual** (because they couldn't find the power to keep all the rules.)
2. Other people felt **superspiritual** (because they had mental records of all the rules they were keeping). (**The first group was frustrated, the second group was arrogant.**)

And Jesus comes along and says,

- ◆ "Hey, wait just a minute here."
- ◆ "Unless your righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharises, you'll never enter heaven (and enjoy your life on earth in the meantime)".

In other words,

- ◆ True piety consists of **substance** - not form!
- ◆ Spirituality is not measured by **outward charisma** and external appearance!
- ◆ Surpassing righteousness comes not by working harder-but by **going deeper!**

In other words,

- ◆ The outward stuff changes from generation to generation.(But God is after the heart!)

(In other words - God probes the inner man!)

- ◆ His **eyes won't allow us** to hide behind nice clothes, educational degrees, handshakes, a computer screen, a TV set, secret fantasies, religious exercises, or a nice church service.

Why not?

- ◆ Because six times after Matthew 5:20, Jesus reveals the kind of heart He is looking for.
- ◆ Six times Jesus says, **“You've heard it said in the Law, but I say unto you.”**

Question: What is Jesus doing in all of this?

Answer: **He's peeling back the onion (the outer layers) to circumcise the heart.**

(Why?)

- ◆ So that what you see on the **outside** is really flowing from what's on the **inside**!

In other words,

- ◆ Jesus knows that it's possible to come to church and go through outward motions (yet not address deeper issues that affect us when we leave).

Illustration

- I bought ten beautiful ears of corn at Wegmans. When I peeled off the husk of one, a worm was looking back at me.
- ◆ As Laura and I were having breakfast one morning in a hotel I picked up a beautiful banana, peeled back the skin, saw that it was rotten and threw it away.
- ◆ One night we had company over for dinner and our guests brought dessert; a beautiful banana nut cake with icing. I bit into it and crunched down on two pieces of glass hidden in the icing.
- ◆ Laura and I were in a restaurant one night; I bit into a fork full of cole slaw and it crunched. I nearly swallowed a metal bottle cap.

Question: What am I saying?

Answer: It's what **we don't see** outwardly that can choke us and destroy us inwardly. It's what we don't address that will eventually rob us from our fullest potential! It's not what people see, it's what God sees!

Question: So what kind of a heart is a healthy heart (that can enjoy the journey here on earth)?

Answer: It's revealed here in four simple words:

- ◆ Four words that really matter to God!
- ◆ Four words that allow God to go deeper!
- ◆ Four words that will increase your wholeness, fruitfulness and joyfulness!

I. **Word #1 is Humility** (which protects you from the destruction of an angry spirit)

- (v. 22) Is anyone angry?
- (v. 23) Remember any conflict?
- (v. 24) First be reconciled!
- (v. 25) Go quickly!
- (v. 26) After we're gone it's too late!

Question: What is Jesus saying? That...

- #1. Justified anger is disciplined, controlled, never selfish (and seeks to reconcile in a peaceful way).
- #2. Unjustified anger holds contempt, ridicules, festers into malice and wants people to suffer and be hurt like you hurt.

- ◆ The Law says. "Don't murder."
- ◆ Jesus says, "Humble yourself and do everything possible to make things right with other people."

Fact: the word "humble" comes from the latin word "humus" which means "down to earth".

In other words

- ◆ Instead of surrendering to those who have hurt you, surrender to the One who was hurt for you! (I repeat)
- ◆ There are only two options when you are hurt and in pain:
 1. Run from God and claim that God is not fair (or)
 2. Run to God and let Him heal your wounded heart.

Question: Why is this so important?

Answer: #1. Humility will keep your heart tender.
#2. Because God won't accept our worship to the same the degree that we harbor anger against someone else! (I repeat)

II. **Word #2 is Purity** (which protects you from the destruction of a lustful spirit.)

- ◆ The Law condemns adultery (sex with someone who is not your spouse).
- ◆ Jesus addresses lust (which is a desire for an illicit relationship).
- ◆ The Law says avoid committing the physical act of adultery (which is sin).
- ◆ Jesus says avoid filling your mind with fantasies that would be sinful if acted out.

In other words

- ◆ Sex is a gift from God to enjoy be blessed...
 1. To express your love to your spouse in the most intimate way (and)
 2. To create life and raise children for the glory of God.

On the other hand

- ◆ Lust is the inner desire (in your thought life) to feed your sensual appetites outside the protection and covenant of marriage.

Remember this truth

- ◆ You can't have a great life without a pure life,
- ◆ You can't have a pure life without a pure mind and
- ◆ You can't have a pure mind without daily washing it in the Word of the Lord.

Question: How does Jesus say to deal with lust and impure thoughts?

Answer: v. 29 ***“Pluck out your eye.”*** and v. 30 ***“Cut off your hand.”*** means:

Take drastic measures to cut off any avenue that is not helping you cultivate a pure thought life (erotic books, movies, DVDs, magazines, TV shows, computer websites - anything!) Get radical with anything that is polluting your thoughts!!! Why?

Because every evil thought is sin in its embryo stage and sin that is destroyed in your mind will not become a part of your history! Remember: Your life will always go in the direction of your most dominant thoughts!

III. **Word #3 is Gratefulness** (which protects your marriage from the destruction of a complaining spirit).

- ◆ (v. 31) *“It’s been said, anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.”*
- ◆ (v. 32) *“But I say unto you - not so fast.”*

(Here’s the issue at hand)

- ◆ Divorce was rampant in the first century.
- ◆ The religious leaders permitted easy divorce and remarriage.
- ◆ Men could divorce their wives if they burnt the toast or had certain complaints.

(Jesus comes along and says **“Wait a minute.”**)

1. Marriage is intended to be **exclusive** and **lifelong**.
2. If there is failure, it can be forgiven.
3. If there is a subsequent remarriage, it can be happy, fruitful and blessed by God! (There is life after divorce.)

Just don’t look for the easy way out . (Remember)

- ◆ It takes two for a marriage to work
- ◆ It only takes one for it not to work.

In other words

- ◆ Instead of making unfair comparisons, be grateful for who you’re married to.
- ◆ Instead of magnifying your spouses weaknesses, be grateful for their strengths!
- ◆ Instead of complaining, murmuring, griping, and yelling at each other; looking for a way out - look for the things to be grateful for.

This gratefulness is even reflected in our speech.

(v.34) *“Swear not at...but let your communication be yea or nay.”*

Question: What’s the issue?

Answer: The issue is, that, in the Old Testament, God insisted that oaths were to be honored and kept.

- ◆ The scribes devised escape clauses from binding oaths and promises.
- ◆ Jesus shows how frivolous and carnal this attitude is.

In other words

- ◆ Simply let your “yes’ be “yes” and your “no”, “no” (or)
- ◆ Let your speech be trustworthy and true (or)
- ◆ Tell the truth so people can trust you (or)
- ◆ Be transparent (hiding nothing) so that what you say reflects the character of God within.

Fact: Gossip is saying behind a person's back what you would never say to their face

Fact: Flattery is saying to a person's face what you would never say behind their back.

IV. **Word #4 is Forgiveness** (Which protects you from the destruction of a wounded and bitter spirit).

- ◆ In v. 38, "You've heard it said, an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth."

"I say unto you"

- ◆ In v. 39 - "Turn the other cheek."
- ◆ In v. 40 - "Give your coat away."
- ◆ In v. 41 - "Go two miles instead of one."
- ◆ In v. 42 - "Be generous in giving."

In other words

- ◆ The law of "an eye for an eye" was to limit retaliation and restrict excessive punishment.
- ◆ Jesus goes deeper than outward retribution.
- ◆ He addresses the attitude of heart (private revenge is to have no part in us.)

In other words

- ◆ Jesus isn't doing away with police departments and war when necessary.
- ◆ He is addressing the attitude that says "so-and-so cheated me (or hurt me), wait till I get even with them."

So much so

- ◆ That Jesus says, surpassing righteousness shows generosity to the one who has committed wrong.
- ◆ And people will see God in you when you forgive others the way that God has forgiven you.

Why so important?

- ◆ Unforgiveness is the poison we drink while we wait for the other person to die!
- ◆ Resentment is allowing someone you despise to live rent free in the house of your mind!
- ◆ If there is someone you haven't forgiven, they own you!
- ◆ If you're in pursuit of vengeance, be sure to dig two graves.

Fact: Forgiveness frees you from the control of what someone else has done to you!

In other words

- ◆ Anybody can want pain for those who have offended them.
- ◆ Spiritual people are good forgivers because they know the debt that they once had that's been erased.

Notice the power of forgiveness.

(In v. 43) "The Law said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy."

(In v. 44) "But I say unto you, love, bless, do good and pray for those who hurt you."

In other words

- ◆ Human nature wants to put its personal rights before the sake of the gospel.
- ◆ Human nature wants to withhold mercy from those who hurt you!
- ◆ Human nature wants to retaliate against people who offend you.

Question: What does Jesus say?

Answer: That it is more important to give mercy than to receive it.

Conclusion

- ◆ What's the secret to implementation and life change in our text?
- ◆ The secret is found in v. 48:

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

(What does it mean?)

- ◆ The word “perfect” is the Greek word (teleios)
- ◆ The word teleios means (not sinless perfection) but **maturing, growing, changing and transforming.**

So to “**be perfect**” means...

1. To agree with Jesus and what He says.
2. To act upon the truth and receive His conviction for yourself.
3. To respond to the truth so that the truth can free you from what is keeping you from growing, changing and transforming into His image!

(In plain vanilla)

1. Are you **angry** at anyone who has hurt you and you need to humble yourself before God?
2. Are you **feeding lust** in any way and need to get radical with sin?
3. Are you **at odds** with your spouse instead of grateful?
4. Are you offended or wounded in any way, needing to forgive someone (not for them - but for you)?

Altar Call
Bill Kirk