

it's all about identity.

Do you know that you are a child of the living God, not because of your good works, but because of Jesus?

Because you've put all your hope and trust in Jesus and you've been adopted into God's family.

That's going to change everything.

We're going through the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7, and it's all about identity.

It's not about external rules and laws, because some laws are silly, aren't they?

I remember when I was in second grade and I was at a new school and either I was just a rebellious little kid or I didn't understand the rule of no chewing gum in class.

Remember those rules?

Well, so I'm sitting there and I'm in my desk seat and I'm chewing gum and the teacher spies me.

And she comes up to me, she says, Steve, come up to the front of the class.

And I go up in the front of the class.

She says, spit out your piece of gum.

I spit it out.

She says, stick it on your nose.

She goes over to her desk, gets some scotch tape, and tapes it to my nose.

And she said, this was not a Catholic school, by the way.

And she said, you're going to wear that the rest of the day.

So for the rest of the day, I walked around that elementary school with cinnamon-flavored gum taped to my nose.

Well, I think that's a silly rule.

I think that's a silly law by that teacher.

But we were driving to church today and coming up Nall, and a few miles south on Nall, we drove past a church.

I'm sure it's a good church.

And they had the beautiful message out front, everyone welcome.

That's A Jesus thing.

I hope that you would say everybody's welcome here, no matter what your situation, how broken your life or what you're involved in, you're welcome here.

But underneath it was, of course, the LGBTQ plus plus plus rainbow sign.

And so I'm thinking, well, Jesus is all about everybody's welcome, no matter how broken you are.

No matter what you're into, you're welcome.

But are there certain principles and precepts of Scripture that Jesus cares about, like identity and gender and sexuality and things that can really mess you up if you play around with them?

And so we're up to the section of the Sermon on the Mount where we're talking about laws, because it can be confusing things.

You know, what laws do we obey

What laws can we release?

What Old Testament laws are we still bound by?

And what New Testament laws are we charged with keeping?

And so it can be a confusing thing.

I think we got a graphic up there.

Yeah, just, have you ever been confused?

I mean, I don't see, let's see, I don't see any of you ladies wearing head coverings this morning.

Why?

It's a law, right?

Or is it really not a law in the new covenant?

And so we're going to be addressing this kind of stuff this morning because it can be confusing.

But it all goes back to Jesus' theme for the Sermon on the Mount.

And especially today, the big idea is this, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

And

That, for you who've grown up in church, this is, oh yeah, I get it, I get it.

But for Jesus listeners, this was shocking.

It'd be like me saying, unless you're better than the pastor, unless you're better than the favorite missionary of yours, unless you're more holy than Billy Graham, unless you're more godly than Mother Teresa, you can't go to heaven.

I mean, that's how shocking it was for them.

And so we're going to look at this morning and unpack what is true righteousness, because that's the whole theme of the Sermon on the Mount.

It is true righteousness, not man-made, not fake, not phony, not legalism.

Because Jesus was surrounded in His day by scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees who believed that certain external laws must be kept to prove your righteousness.

And we'll unpack that a little bit more.

They were focused on conduct, and Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount we're going to see, is focused all on character.

Character over conduct.

And yet conduct matters.

So Rhonda, thank you Rhonda for reading today's text.

Let me just review a little bit of it here in Matthew chapter 5.

If you haven't turned in your copy of scripture or turned yours on electronically, let's look at this together beginning in verse 17 and I'll just read part of it right now.

Do not think that I've come to abolish the law or the prophets.

I've not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.

That's the key.

Jesus is the fulfillment.

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

So my first point this morning is simply this, that if you believe that Jesus threw out the law, I hate to break it to you, but you're mistaken.

You're mistaken.

He did not do that.

That's what many people think.

See, God is in the Old Testament.

He's the God of the Old Testament, right?

He's

He is the God of the law.

Jesus is the God of grace and love.

God the Father is all about rules and justice, but the Son is all about forgiveness and love.

Jesus is a friend of sinners.

Well, let's take a theology check.

Does anybody know what the Shema is?

the most famous passage of Scripture in the Old Testament to every Jew.

The religious ones would wear them in little leather boxes on their forehead or on their wrists, mezuzahs and phylacteries.

And anybody know what the Shema is?

Deuteronomy 6.4, Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Right?

That's where we get our theology from.

One God revealed in three persons.

A triunity, not three separate gods.

Monotheism.

I hope none of you here are polytheists like the Hindus are.

The Hindus are okay with Christianity because Jesus is just one more of 250,000 little gods.

They just add to the list.

And He's not the Savior.

The early church fathers taught that God

had one substance.

They called it being homoousius, right?

And that God was not three separate gods.

Now, if you're a follower of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or Mormon friends, they believe in three separate gods.

And Jesus is a created being to them.

So the question is, if God the Father

was all about laws and justice and not about grace, why would He have sent His one and only Son to die for us, to make us right with the law?

Why would He do that?

If it's not about love, why would God the Father have created us in the 1st place and why does He put up with us?

And why does He want to save us?

And on the flip side, if Jesus the Son did not care about the laws, the principles, the precepts of God that keep us in bounds and give us a better life, why would He have chosen to die for us so that we could be made right with the law, right with justice, so that we could be considered as forgiven of all our transgressions?

Why would He talk so much about keeping the commandments?

Why did He tell the rich young ruler to keep the commandments of God if Jesus is not about the commandments?

And I say, what about the scribes and the Pharisees, though, the religious leaders?

They watched Jesus closely, and one of the reasons they attacked Him is that they thought He

discounted the laws of God that had been handed down from generation to generation.

And so they would push back on him and say, you don't wash your hands before you eat.

You're not ceremonially clean, Jesus.

You pick some grain from the crops out in the fields on the Sabbath.

That's work.

You don't respect the laws of God.

But Jesus would push back.

and say, woe to you teachers of the law and the Pharisees, you hypocrites.

You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are.

So there's this back and forth between Jesus and religious leaders about what laws to keep and what ones are just man-made.

So how do we stay in bounds scripturally?

So let's just have a little bit of theology class, okay?

Here's the first thing.

Remember context.

Do not pull a verse out of its context.

Okay, we could pull one out in the New Testament, words of the Apostle Paul.

It is better for a man to not marry.

How many of you are married?

I am.

No, you're out of God's will then.

We read it.

I quoted a scripture verse.

And you would say, that's foolish.

You're taking it out of context, right?

And so context is hugely important.

One of the rules of systematic theology is...

You see what the whole Bible says, Old Testament, New Testament, all of it.

The words of the epistle writers, the words of Jesus, all of it.

And you see what all of Scripture says about angels or demons or the identity of Jesus or the

true nature of Jesus or sexuality or gender or all these things.

And that's called systematic theology.

So context is hugely important.

The next one is cultural awareness.

Why do I say that?

Because in Jesus' day, by the way, we're not living in the same culture as Jesus.

And in Jesus' day, what was happening with the culture is that these religious leaders, the scribes and the Pharisees, the Sadducees

They expanded God's law to include a lot of minutia.

A lot of you cannot chew cinnamon gum in the second grade, right?

And so they had, certainly, they had the scrolls of the Torah, the prophets, the writings, they had those.

By the way, in the Ark, what was in the Ark?

Ten Commandments.

Aaron's rod that, budded and grew fruit, a pot of manna, reminders of how, what a miraculous working God we are, we serve, and how he had worked.

But also that just wasn't where, it wasn't just the Ten Commandments.

Next to it, there was the book of the law of Moses.

And in that were lots of principles, precepts, and rules and regulations

Some that don't apply to today.

So we have the Ten Commandments.

We have the sacrificial laws that were in the book of Moses, the book of the law.

Those were important for back then.

But how many of you sacrificed animals today to get right with God?

I hope none of you, right?

Those have passed away.

Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the full, He's the final, once and for all sacrifice for your souls to forgive your sins and mine.

There's the civil laws, but this isn't 1300 BC.

And our lives aren't primarily agrarian.

And we're not ruled by judges, right?

It's totally different.

And so even the specific civil laws have passed away.

What about the dietary laws?

I love

Where are my fishermen back there?

I love catfish.

Amen?

I couldn't eat it if I was a person, a Jewish person in the Old Testament, because it has skin and no scales, right?

Those laws have passed away.

What about the laws about skin?

When I was a kid, I was covered in eczema.

I had been kicked out of the Israeli encampment, right?

So these laws have passed away.

And the Apostle Paul comments on this.

He says in 2 Corinthians 3.15, even to this day when Moses is read the laws, a veil covers their hearts, the unbelieving Jews.

But when anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

The Bible says that there is now therefore

no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

The veil of all this stuff has been taken away.

But you know what hasn't passed away?

Is God's moral laws.

What do we call them?

We call them the Ten Commandments.

And just as a reminder, let's read those together to remind ourselves about some principles for life, some rules for good living,

some commandments of God that have not passed away.

You read the fine print, I'll read the other.

So they're organized this way, right?

Number one, no other gods.

You shall...

No idols.

Do not misuse God's name.

Keep the Sabbath.

timeout right there.

Sabbath day.

For them that was Saturday.

Do you know that the Bible teaches that your Sabbath day is meant to be a day of rest and worship?

For most of it's Sunday, but it might be for you, it has to be a Thursday or a Friday or a Saturday or something like that.

The important thing is, two things to know, that in Jesus Christ you can rest from all your work of trying to get to heaven.

That's grace.

but also to know that God created you and he modeled a day of rest in the creation of the world.

And that he made your bodies in need of rest.

Not just daily sleep, but a weekly time of taking a step back and devoting it more to rest of your soul, worship of your God.

And that's what gives us health, people.

You cannot skip that and be a healthy person.

But we continue, honor parents.

Do not murder.

Do not commit adultery.

Do not steal.

Do not lie.

Do not covet.

See, the thing about these Ten Commandments is they are meant to be a law that the Holy Spirit reinforces in your life.

They are principles for living.

And Jesus summarized all these laws, did he not, in two laws.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind.

And when you're doing that, you can love your neighbor as yourself, even when they're nasty,

right?

You can fulfill these laws by those too.

So when we read this again,

Keep this in context, what we just talked about.

Do not think I've come to abolish the law of the prophets.

I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until it is accomplished.

Jesus cares about true righteousness.

And the new covenant, the law of the new covenant,

changes everything.

When commentator wrote this, it was in his death and resurrection that Jesus especially fulfilled the law.

He bore the curse of the law of God.

He fulfilled the Old Testament types and ceremonies so that they no longer are required of the people of God.

He set aside the Old Covenant and brought in the New Covenant, fulfilling the Old Covenant.

So what we're seeing in the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5, 6, and 7, and today's passage is kind of a focal point, and we're going to be parsing it out in weeks to come when it gets down to specific laws of Jesus, the laws of the kingdom of righteousness.

Jesus is moving us all from show to soul.

You know what I mean by that, right?

The goody, goody.

You gotta say everything's great.

You have to act like a good Christian.

You gotta do this, do this, do this.

He's moving all that to the soul, to the heart.

Jesus did not destroy the law by fighting it.

He destroyed it by fulfilling it.

is through Jesus.

And by the way, Jesus is the Jesus of the Old Testament too, you know?

He wasn't just invented in Bethlehem.

He's Almighty God, the second person, and He was involved in the days, the epics, the centuries, and the work of the Old Testament.

A lot of commentators believe that whenever in the Old Testament it reads, not an angel of the Lord or an angel, but the angel of the Lord, that is the pre-incarnate Jesus Christ.

He came to fulfill it, not destroy it.

Example, an oak tree, right?

You can have an acorn.

How do you destroy an acorn?

I guess I could get out a hammer and I could hit an acorn and destroy it that way, but a much better way would be I just plant that acorn and then it dies, does it not?

And then it springs, it sprouts to life that can grow for hundreds of years.

That's what Jesus has done.

through his death, burial, and resurrection.

He allows us to fulfill the law.

Well, the next thing I need to mention is this, that to obey and display the commands of God, that's what reveals real kingdom greatness.

We sang it, right?

It's to trust and obey.

That's what it comes down to, is to trust God enough that you believe he's not gonna wreck your life, he's not gonna

deal every bit of joy in your life, that He's really going to make it better, and so you obey Him.

You trust and obey.

Well, as we break this down, that's what Jesus is saying in the Sermon on the Mount, all three chapters.

You want to be righteous according to my kingdom, not man's kingdom, but according to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven?

Do you want to be right with God?

You want to be blessed?

It comes through obeying.

You become great by obeying.

As IDL Moody once said, if people were true to the first commandment, you should have no other gods before me.

then obedience to the remaining nine would follow naturally.

But it's because we are unsound in that first commandment of putting God first as the only true

love of our lives, the God of our lives putting Him first, that we start to break the others.

It's progressive.

So maybe it's whatever your struggle is with.

Is it buying too much stuff because you're just intoxicated?

It gives you a buzz to have more stuff.

Well, maybe we need to realize we're breaking the 10th commandment.

Yeah?

Maybe for you guys, it's those thoughts that you're dwelling too long on, those gays, those looks.

you're spending way too long on.

And Jesus would say in the Sermon on the Mount, we're going to get there by the way in a couple of weeks, that you're committing adultery of the heart.

We need to be brought back to the purpose of these laws and that God expects us to obey them for our own good.

So what does it mean to relax a new covenant law of God?

Because Jesus in this passage, Rhonda read it, that there will be a penalty for setting aside.

And that word for relax, it means to loose.

It means to break up.

It means to dissolve.

It means to take this thing that's good and say, didn't apply to me.

I'm not going to look at it.

I'm not going to focus on it anymore.

I'm not going to read about it anymore.

I'm not going to be convicted by that.

I want to do my own thing.

And that brings chaos in our lives.

So what does it mean to loosen or relax one of God's new covenant laws?

Well, it's to say that they're not valid today.

That's Old Testament.

Those things of honoring God, those things of sexual purity, yeah, that's Old Testament.

It's not granting forgiveness, even though Jesus requires it in order for us to be forgiven.

He commands it.

It's to not extend grace.

Instead, it's to heap judgment on someone.

It's to compromise God's standard of sexual purity or other types of purity.

It's to spend all of God's money, everything belongs to Him, on ourselves.

It's to believe that you can love Jesus and not obey Him.

Ah, Jesus, I love You.

And You do the opposite of what He's commanded us to do.

Jesus said, why do you call me Lord, Lord, and not do what I say?

That should convict us all.

It's to ignore the fact that people, friends, classmates, husbands, wives, kids, grandkids, are watching us.

They're watching to see how well we not just love Jesus, but do what He says, obey Him.

People are watching.

we set aside these laws when we don't speak up.

When we say, I don't want the confrontation.

I don't want to see them as judging somebody.

So I just let them go in their lifestyle with ever lovingly help them see there's a better one that God will bless.

We're afraid.

You know, that's a story in World War II of our good German forerunners, the good Lutheran Christians in the church during Nazi Germany.

They didn't give up their faith.

They were just cowards.

They didn't want to speak up for fear.

They didn't want to obey.

They knew it all.

They knew it was right.

The teaching of Jesus and they saw what was going on was wrong, but out of fear or apathy, they refused to stand up and push back.

See, God has a better story.

God has a great commission.

that says, go and make disciples, teaching them to what?

Just love me more?

Obey, observe what I've commanded you.

That's the mark of a disciple, is that you love God enough to obey Him.

And that you're teaching others to obey Jesus.

That's A Christ-like thing.

That's a loving thing to do, to help somebody who doesn't know to take those steps of obedience, to follow Jesus.

I mentioned last week I spent that time in Africa and I heard a story from, it was written down from a missionary about being in Africa.

And he was doing some translation work and translating scripture.

Like in that part of Africa where I was, people speak Tonga, they speak Ila, they speak Lanzi,

I mean, there's all kinds of dialects that they speak.

So he was helping a people group in Africa come up with a written New Testament.

So he was translating, right?

And he had a hard time when he came to one word and the word was obedience.

They didn't have a word for obedience, which doesn't say much about that particular tribe or culture, but they didn't.

he was a little bit frustrated by it, but one day he was coming home from being out in the village of the people, going back to his house, and he was walking with an African man, a national man.

And when he got somewhat close to his house, he whistled for his dog.

And the dog came running, right?

Came to his master.

And this African man was just amazed.

And he said in his native tongue, your dog is all ear.

And the missionary said, I've got it.

That's the word for obedience.

So Christians, believers, and I'm talking to myself as well, are we all ears when it comes to our Savior?

When He says, Go, make a difference, obey me, listen to my voice, hear my words.

I'm going to lead you.

I'm going to guide you.

I'm going to protect you.

I've got some principles and precepts written down in the written Word, and I'm the living Word, Jesus says.

I'll help you keep them.

My Spirit's going to help you obey them if you trust Him.

And when you do, it's going to make your life better.

Well, the last thing is simply this, that Jesus is the fulfillment of the law of God because

I can't keep it perfectly.

How about you?

See, the law points us to Christ because the law helps us see that we can't keep it perfectly.

It's impossible to keep perfectly.

To love God with all my heart, soul, strength and mind, I fail daily.

To love my neighbor as myself, I suppose I fail that daily as well.

And in Jesus, who fulfilled all the laws, by placing our trust in Him, we can meet the requirements of the law.

And that is the standard for heaven.

It's perfection.

And you can't get there on your own, and neither can I.

And so I ask every Sunday, is there someone here and, yeah, you believe in God, you believe in Jesus, but you've been trusting in your own righteousness to somehow

get to heaven, to somehow fulfill these laws, I want you to know you can't do it.

So stop trying that way.

How about instead coming through God's appointed man, the Son of Man, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, who's done it all for you.

And by putting your trust in Him and then obeying Him, you can have His imputed righteousness that I talk about all the time.

the righteousness of Christ that He places in us anytime we repent and turn to Him in faith and say, Jesus, I need you.

Well, here's the homework for the week, folks.

I want you to think about in what area of my life have I loosened a law of Christ, a law of God?

Have I put it on the back burner?

And I know it's valid today.

I mean, it's not some sacrificial law.

It's something about coveting or cheating or adultery or having these other gods that I'm enticed by.

In what area of your life have you loosened the law and you know you're being disobedient?

I want you to think about that, and I will too.

And the response is then,

Am I willing to turn back to Jesus to be all ears and listen and obey?

So