



Loving Jesus, Loving People, Plowing a Counter-Culture

SERMON TEXT: Matthew 5:17-26

KEY POINT(S): Jesus fulfills God’s law, we do not need to strive for righteousness, but rely on Christ for it.

FOR LEADERS

- **Weekly Resources!** *Each week we provide a Discussion Guide, a Leader’s Podcast, and a Communities Video for all of our Communities Leaders to help them better lead and disciple their groups, but did you know that these resources are available online as well? If you are apprenticing someone in your group, or perhaps have someone new who is facilitating this week and doesn’t have access to the Leader’s Group on Realm, they can still access all the resources online at www.emergencenj.org/weeklyresources/*
- **Leadership Essentials:** *The second module for Leadership Essentials is now available for all of our leaders who are currently apprenticing someone. If you have any questions, or need help getting set up with your apprentice, shoot us an e-mail at Communities@emergencenj.org!*

GETTING STARTED

- [1] Icebreaker** – “What is the most ridiculous law you know of and why?” (Here’s one to get you started – According to N.J.S. 44:4-79 it is unlawful to bring a poor person from one county into another without first obtaining permission from the government...!)
- [2] Communities Video** - Watch this week’s Communities video!
- [3]** What were some things that stood out to you from the sermon this week? Was there anything you found particularly impactful or eye-opening?

LAW ABIDING CITIZENS

In the sermon this week, Pastor Doug explained the role of God’s Law in our lives, and how even the idea or topic of God’s law can be difficult to navigate for the Christian and non-Christian alike.

- [1]** When was the first time you were exposed to “Christianity?” What was your first impression?
- [2]** What is it about the topic of “God’s Law” do you think is such a stumbling block for so many people? Was it ever a stumbling block for you, or someone close to you? How so?
- [3]** Why do you think there is such a tendency to view the Law of God as tyrannical, rather than as freeing and life-bringing? How has your own perspective(s) of God’s Law changed over time?
- [4]** What do you think is the prevailing opinion about Christianity in our culture today? In what way(s) do you think the Church should respond to best represent Jesus and love people well?
- [5]** In your opinion, what do you think are some of the biggest barriers for people today in regard to sharing the truth of the Gospel? How do you think the Church could best overcome those barriers?

Leaders: No doubt, the prevailing cultural “opinion” of Christianity in our society today is not a great one. Today, the Church is most often described as “damning, hypocritical, greedy for unjust gain, closed-minded, unloving, etc., which is much the opposite of who Jesus calls us to be. Discuss this together with your group and focus on what the truth of the Gospel truly calls us to be as Jesus’ people, and how we can best overcome the cultural barriers that prevent us from sharing this truth with others that desperately need to hear it.





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JESUS FULFILLS THE LAW

Ask a Volunteer to read Matthew 5:17-20

[6] There is often an argument that God somehow “changed His mind” from the Old Testament to the New Testament in regard to His Law. What do you think? How do the Old Testament and the New relate to one another where God’s Law is concerned?

Leaders: Our passage this week explains this explicitly!! Jesus does not come to “abolish” the Law, or somehow nullify it, but rather to FULFILL it. Jesus accomplishes what we were meant to (but never could) do! Now, in light of this, Jesus calls us to the Law’s truest purposes. Remember also, that there are THREE WAYS in which God’s Law serves us: (1) to reveal God’s moral will to us, (2) to restrain evil within our broken society, and (3) to reveal to us how broken and sinful we truly are.

[7] What are some of the different ways in which Jesus has fulfilled the Law?

[8] Throughout the rest of Matthew 5, Jesus will invite us to see the Old Testament laws in a new light—the light of Jesus’ coming and His kingdom. Take some time to consider a few of these laws in verses 21-48. How is Jesus adding to these? How does he advance our understanding of what God wants of us?

[9] What do you think Jesus means in verse 20 when He says that our righteousness must “exceed that of the Pharisees’?” In what way(s) can we ever hope to achieve this?

Leaders: This question is a difficult one, and it has a right answer. Allow your group to stew on this for a little while but be careful that you don’t accidentally arrive to an unbiblical answer. Use Matthew chapter 23 where Jesus pronounces His “Woes to the Pharisees” to help you with this. The answer to this question is NOT that we should somehow be more religious, more moralistic, or ritualistic. Rather, it’s that our righteousness must EXCEED that of the Pharisees, meaning that it is only through Christ that we can truly be righteous, as only Jesus can truly fulfill the law.

PRACTICING WHAT WE PREACH

With many of God’s commandments, we either do them or we don’t, meaning that there is no “in-between.” For example, “You shall not murder” is obviously one of these commandments. Jesus, however, goes much deeper than this, and reminds us that God cares not just about what we do or don’t do, but about what is actually in our hearts.

Ask a Volunteer to read Matthew 5:21-26

[10] In what way is Jesus’ spiritual “upgrade” to God’s Law a better way of understanding morality? Explain.

[11] The attitudes that Jesus addresses here are anger, insult and contempt. Where have you struggled with these things in your own life, and how can God’s grace help us to overcome them?

PRAYER

[1] Pray that God would help you to live a life of spirit-empowered thankfulness to Him, and that keeping God’s Law would become a joy to you.

[2] Pray also that God would expose areas of anger, insult and contempt for others in your heart, and help you to walk in sincere repentance and faithfulness in these things.

