

Thought for Sunday 12th July 2020

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

Read Matthew 5:17-48

The first five verses we are looking at today are Jesus telling why he has come. Some people thought that the Messiah had come to abolish the law and to bring in a new law, a Messianic law. Jesus says right at the beginning; *'Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law, I have come to fulfil them.'* What Jesus did come to do was to enforce the teaching of his Father, God. Jesus came to show us that when we decide what we believe God wants or expects us to do, usually we get it wrong. You will remember two weeks ago we read Matthew 12:1-14 where Jesus talks about the laws the religious leaders had made around keeping the Sabbath holy. Jesus was calling on them to take the Ten Commandments seriously but also to use a bit of common sense. Verses 18 and 19 spell it out. I have heard some people say the Ten Commandments aren't important, that is Old Testament, but as we look at these verses we can see that they are very important, **read again those two verses...** What the Pharisees and teachers of the law had done, was to make the law impractical, unworkable. Jesus goes on to explain what he means, from verse 21 Jesus talks about murder, but he also says it is not only the deed of killing someone, it is the thought of even thinking about it that is wrong. Paul's letter to the Ephesians 4:26-28 **(READ)** There is a poem by Jason Jackson which sums it up: *'Things are not as they may first appear, something gets lost in the fog, feelings are oft misconstrued in the mire, you need to look deeper, by God. Take time to talk, and listen won't you, let's get it right off our chest, we shall each feel better, if we take some time to digress we shall agree to leave this fair day, as friends.'* Too often we decide we are right and everyone else is wrong, we need to work things out and to talk things through, as someone once said; never go to sleep on a disagreement. Matthew 5:24; *'go and be reconciled to your brother.'* One of the saddest things I see and hear about, are families who have fallen out. Someone has said something, and it may have been misheard or taken out of context but it has meant that family members haven't talked for years. I remember taking a funeral some years ago and brothers and sisters wouldn't even look at each other, let alone speak to each other. Other times people haven't attended a family funeral because of some disagreement or other, possibly years before. I don't watch soaps on the T.V. because they appear to love confrontation. Since the lockdown they haven't been able to record programmes like Eastenders so they have been showing 'highlights' of programmes from years ago. Most of these, so called, 'highlights' appear to be a fights or loud arguments or breakups, and that's just the clip they show advertising the shows. The problem is, they make it seem acceptable, that it is the norm, that it is real life. Many years ago I was the manager of a shop in Crawley. One night I watched a programme on the TV, a police soap, which showed children shop lifting, and how they did it. Prior to that I had never had a problem with shoplifting but the following day things changed. I watched, and caught them. It went on for a week or two until they realised I knew what they were up to. Verses 21, 27, 31, 33, 38 and 43 all start the same (verse 31 slightly different but the same inference; *'You have heard that it was said...'* and each time Jesus has to put them right. **Read verses 27 & 28** Exodus 20:14; *'You shall not commit adultery.'* Verse 31 talks of divorce, Jesus explains this in Matthew 19, I'm not going to enlarge on this, Jesus has said it all. Verse 33 onward says; *'do not break your oath.'* What Jesus is saying is always tell the truth, verse 37 says it all; *'Simply let your 'Yes' be Yes', and your 'No' be 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.'* Then comes the change from the Law of Moses, **Exodus 21:22-25 read...** Now Moses was talking about a particular case; *'If men who are*

fighting...’ the problem comes when we start to use that Mosaic law in other circumstances. This is why Jesus said; ‘*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law, I have come to fulfil them.*’ Jesus had come to explain the law to them. He came to tell them they had got it wrong, but none of us like to be told we are wrong, which is part of what we were talking about a couple of weeks ago when we looked at Joel 3:1-2. Here in verse 38 we see Jesus really turning the law on its head; ‘*You have heard what it says, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’* That seems right to many people, that seems like justice, that seems fair, but Jesus says **NO, read verses 39-41...** This is total submission. I was watching a programme about chimpanzees the other day, and they have one leader in the pack and each of the others has to submit to the leader, that way there is peace in the pack. Each one knows their place in the pack. It doesn’t stop arguments but the leader will always sort it out. Chimps don’t have to have it spelt out, it is part of their make up. We have the advantage of knowing we have a Saviour who looks after us, we just have to walk in His footsteps. Verse 41 says; ‘*if someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.*’ That may sound strange but in those days, you could be called off the street to carry something for one mile, take Matthew 27:32, Simon of Cyrene was forced to carry the cross of Jesus. What Jesus was saying, do it willingly, even if it is tough. The Lord will help you through those times. In Galatians 5:22 we read of the gifts of the Spirit; ‘*Love, joy, peace, etc.*’ when we do things willingly we really can know the peace and the joy of serving Jesus. Maybe Jesus was quoting **Proverbs 25:21-22, read.** Paul knew this passage as he quotes it in Romans 12:20. For the disciples, although they may have known this proverb, knowing and doing are not always the same thing and like much of Jesus’ teaching, for some people it is very hard. We finish chapter 5 with another of Jesus’ tough lessons; *Love Your Enemies!* Not just love your neighbour, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. it comes back to Proverbs 25:21-22 again. How often have I heard people say; ‘*The sun shines on the righteous.*’ And it does but of course that is only half of what Jesus says; ‘*He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*’ We have a God who loves us and cares for us and who asks us to ‘do the right thing.’ Verse 47 says; ‘*if you greet only your brothers, what good are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?*’ What was it the Beatles sang about? *All you really need is love, love, love.*’ So as verse 48 says; ‘*Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*’ Be perfect, now there is a challenge! Keep safe and be blessed. Amen.

*Let there be love shared among us,
Let there be love in our eyes;
May now Your love sweep this nation,
Cause us, O Lord, to arise.
Give us a fresh understanding
Of brotherly love that is real;
Let there be love shared among us,
Let there be love.*

*Dave Bilbrough.
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