

Matthew 5 - Rules of Engagement - Week 4 - March 23rd

Let's pray.

Last week, we finished covering the Beatitudes: The Constitution of Heaven, and we started talking about the Law & Intimacy. Just to recap a bit, part of this study is to show how we engage with God and one another from this chapter. Another reason, which I went over last week, is to show the connection between what appears to be totally different subjects in this one chapter. Matthew 5 appears to jump from the subject of the Beatitudes to talking about Salt & Light, and then jumping into Moses & the Law. I used the example of how women spaghetti their stories and how men waffle their stories (from the book, Men are like Waffles and Women are like Spaghetti). So with women, they speak in a manner that connects what appears to men to be random topics until you get to the end of the story, or the end of the spaghetti noodle and realize it was all connected. With men, they stick to one subject matter at a time, and when they finish, they go on to the next subject, or the next box in the waffle. They go from one box to the next, normally not connecting them together.

Well, even though Matthew was a man, he seemed to be in touch with his feminine side because Matthew 5 is a big long spaghetti noodle. Here, again, is the connection so far:

- The Beatitudes, or the Constitution of the Kingdom, are the 9 principles of living.
- They are connected to Salt & Light because being the salt of the earth (or the ones who flavor the pot until Jesus returns) and being the light of the world, or that light on the lamp stand, is how living out the Beatitudes look to the world. They see our light and they appreciate the flavor we bring to their life. Being salt & light is how the world is able to see Christ in us and serve Him.
- Tonight, I will show how the Law & Prophets found in Matthew 5:17-20, continues the long noodle, connecting the other two topics I just mentioned.
- We will then move on to how all those things are connected to anger, and next week, we will see the end of the spaghetti noodle, seeing how these topics are all related to Love.

For those of you who missed any of the last 3 weeks, remember, you can view them at www.kollidenow.com. Just click on the video tab on the home-page.

Ok, week 4 - Rules of Engagement - Let's begin:

Matthew 5:17 says, *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."* **The Passion Translation says it this way:** *"If you think I've come to set aside the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets, you're mistaken. I have come to fulfill and bring to perfection all that has been written."*

- First, let's start with defining what the law and the prophets are in this verse.
- The law, is not just the terms that Moses laid out to the children of Israel. It's also any rule or command that produces a state approved of by God.
- The prophets are those people who, moved by the Spirit of God, declare what they receive from Him, especially concerning future events.
- There is a common misconception among some in the Body of Christ who think the Old Testament is no longer valid for how we are to live our lives. They believe that now that we have the New Testament, that the Messiah came, anything before Him isn't relevant.
- This verse tells us that Jesus came to fulfill the law and the prophets.

- That means He came to fulfill the terms that Moses laid out, and also all of the commands and laws of God throughout the Bible. That also means that He came to fulfill all the words spoken in the past about the future.
- So, what does the word, fulfill, mean?
- It means to complete and to bring to pass. So in that context, we can see why people would believe those things. They believe He is saying of the law & prophets, "it is finished."
- However, that word fulfill also means to cause God's will to be obeyed. So, He came to not only complete the law and prophecies of Him, He also came to be the cause of us being willing and able to obey God's laws.
- Remember last week, we went over John 15:10: "If you keep My commandments and obey My teaching you will remain in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and remain in His love..."
- We are called to obey. This seems harsh in this era of Grace that we live in because many of us see God's Grace as His forgiveness, as Him overlooking our sins, and as His mercy. That's not necessarily untrue. Those things are included in His Grace, but let's get a better definition.

- Grace is the divine influence that operates in us to sanctify us. To sanctify is to set apart, to free from sin, and to purify. Grace sets us apart from the world that does the opposite of what God says. Grace also inspires us to virtuous impulses and imparts the strength to endure trials and resist temptation.
- His Grace is our strength to overcome our hangups. His Grace is not our permission to stay in our sin, depending on His love to cover it. Once Jesus came, God stopped overlooking sin, He stopped winking at it. We see that in Acts 17:30 in the Message Version - it says, *"God overlooks it as long as you don't know any better - but that time is past. The unknown is now known, and He's calling for a radical life-change."*
- So, Grace doesn't cancel out the need for us to be obedient. God calls us to repent = turn from those hang-ups and get free of them.
- His Grace gives us the inspiration, impulse, and strength to live virtuously, to endure trials without sinning, and to resist temptation.
- His Grace is the encouragement to walk more obediently.
- Some people may say, "I don't think His grace gives me permission to sin, believing that love will cover my disobedience." I have to challenge that thought. 50% of men in church are addicted to pornography, and quite a few women as well only

our pornography is in print and we call them Romance Novels. How many of us overeat, whether our bodies reflect that overeating or not. Some people have a great metabolism that allows them to commit the sin of gluttony without their bodies showing it, so it's not just us big people who fall into that category. How many Christians get divorced for reasons other than what the Bible says is ok? I used to run the Singles ministry and at least half of the folks believed divorce was ok for reasons other than divorce using the excuse, "God must not have wanted me to marry that person in the first place, so it's ok to divorce and start over."

- So, even though we may not consciously be saying His Grace is my permission to sin, our actions prove otherwise.
- So, thank God for forgiveness, thank God that His mercies are new every morning, and thank God that repentance is there for us to embrace.

Matthew 5:18 says, “For verily I say unto you, ‘till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.’” **The Passion Translations says it this way:** “Indeed, I assure you, as long as heaven and earth endure, not even the smallest detail of the Law will be done away with until its purpose is complete.”

- This verse alerts us to how important the law is and how enduring it is.
- It endures until there is no more heaven and no more earth. Or basically, until there is no more need for it. When it's complete, that's when we will no longer need the law and the prophets.
- So, basically, this verse is saying the same thing as verse 17. And, when Scripture repeats itself, that's a call for us to pay attention.
- The law endures until all is fulfilled, so our obedience should endure until our purpose is fulfilled.
- This doesn't mean that we won't mess up, make mistakes, sin, etc. When I use the word “obedient”, I'm not talking about those one-off's, but I'm talking about staying away from the *practice* of sin, staying away from the *habits* that we fall into. His Grace is our ability to finally get free from the *habitual* sins in our life.

- If you really search yourself, I'm sure you can pinpoint the area that God wants you to start working on, getting free from.
- And Let me just say this: If you discover there are many areas of habitual sin in your life, ask the Lord what He wants to work on first. He knows that we can't handle a lot of change all at once. I know this to be true, because one day I was just crying over this mountain that I just kept circling, this thing I wasn't able to get free from, and God told me clearly that He wasn't working on that yet. He had been dealing with me about my eating habits and my laziness for not exercising. That gave me so much peace. His mercy in that area I was still struggling with was there, and His strength to overcome the area He wanted me to work on was there, and let me say this, I've lost 34lbs since that time, I've been exercising faithfully since January at least 3 days a week, and my mindset about food is changing. God is able to deliver us! Of course now that I've testified about that, I'm sure a challenge will come, but I know that if I stick with God, I can overcome the challenge.

Matthew 5:19 says, *“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.”* **The Passion Translations says it this way:**

“So whoever violates even the least important of the commandments, and teaches others to do so, will be the least esteemed in the realm of heaven’s kingdom. But whoever obeys them and teaches their truths to others will be greatly esteemed in the realm of heaven’s kingdom.”

- We look at sin lightly in the age we live in now. Not everyone, obviously, but in general, we have a lighter view of breaking the commandments than I think past generations have had.
- This verse is designed to bring us back into knowing the seriousness of what it means to break even one of the least of the commandments.
- To break, is to loose something or someone that’s tied or fastened. Think of the bond between a husband and wife according to what God says marriage should be, and then think of the fact that God says He hates divorce, and you can get an idea of what it means to break a commandment. He looks at it the way He looks at a husband and wife getting a divorce.

- To break also means to loose someone who is bound with chains, or to release from prison. So, chains we know are almost impossible to get out of and prisons are almost impossible to break out of, so that is how we should look at breaking the commandments, or Gods laws. As almost impossible to do; something that happens rarely, not habitually.
- Now, I know the Word says that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. That's true, and until we become our glorified self, it will continue to be true of us. HOWEVER, and that's in all caps, I know that each of us, or most of us, can look at our lives and see places where we break His commandments willfully or without exerting too much effort to stay faithful.
- And, when you think about this, don't think about the big sins. Most of us aren't Vikings out there murdering, raping, and pillaging. But, how many of us have problems telling the truth? How many of us can't stop gossiping? How many of us overeat? How many of us are involved in those acceptable sins, that we all wink at and make little to no effort to overcome?
- Those are His commandments too, right? Breaking those is wrong in His book as well.

- So, this command to keep His commandments, to not break them, will last until we take our last breath. Don't we want to be as faithful as possible during our time here on this earth. Don't we want to stop winking at sin, and start taking His command to obey seriously?
- Living this way doesn't mean that we won't fall short, because we are human, but it does mean that we shouldn't fall short in gossip every time we pick up the phone or send a text. It means that we shouldn't fall short with gluttony every time we sit down to have a meal or a snack.
- If we live with a respect for keeping His commandments, we get looked at as esteemed citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven. Our esteem, or our reputations become damaged as we partake in sin, in breaking His commandments.
- The Good News is that Jesus will work with us to break free. It's not something we have to do on our own. He wants us to be looked at as esteemed citizens in the Kingdom of Heaven, AND, He understands our weakness, and because he understand our weakness, we should look at Him as rooting for us, not judging us, as He stands at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for us as our Great High Priest.

- Hebrews 4:15 says, *“For we do not have a High Priest who is unable to sympathize and understand our weaknesses and temptations, but One who has been tempted [knowing exactly how it feels to be human] in every respect as we are, yet without [committing any] sin.”*
- Because He went thru His 33 years without sinning, He can show us how to avoid sin and break free from the sins that have us in bondage.

Matthew 5:20 says, *“For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.”* **The Passion Translation says it this way:** *“For I tell you, unless your lives are more pure and full of integrity than the religious scholars and the Pharisees you will never experience the realm of heaven’s kingdom.”*

- What does the word “righteousness” mean in this verse?
- It is the condition that makes you acceptable to God. Let’s go back to John 15:10: *“If you keep My commandments and obey My teaching you will remain in My love...”*. Keeping His commandments helps us remain in His love, which to me is the same thing as being acceptable to Him.

- The word righteousness also means to walk in integrity, virtue, purity of life, rightness, and correctness of thinking, feeling, and acting.
- It comes from the Greek word that means to observe divine laws.
- Verse 20 tells us that our righteousness, our integrity, virtue, purity of life, and our thinking, feeling, and acting, must be greater than that of the scribes and pharisees.
- So what did their righteousness look like?
- Their righteousness looked like following the law, to a certain degree. They kept the commandments, especially the ones that allowed them to look good in front of other people, and if a law didn't allow for them to be seen, then they tweaked it a little bit.
- For example, Moses commanded the Jews to honor their mother and father. He goes on to say that if anyone reviles their mother or father they must surely die. However, some Jews wanted to be "seen" giving. They wanted to be "known" as generous givers, so they actually took what they would have given to their parents and make an offering with it. That sounds good on the surface, but God didn't ask them to do that. He asked them, thru Moses, to take care of their parents. The problem was, taking care of their parents was a thankless act with little to no witnesses. So, their righteousness couldn't be seen.

- Another law they tweaked to suit their own agenda was the law that said they could not call someone to their court at night. It had to be done during the day. Well if you remember, they called Jesus to trial at night, in secret. And they did it so that no one could see their unrighteousness. They did it to protect their reputation.
- The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees also looked like duty. It was religious duty with the hope that their faithfulness to doing what they were supposed to do would garner them favor with God and get them into heaven.
- They weren't righteous for the sake of love, or for the sake of becoming a better person, or for the sake of getting closer to God. It was all for the sake of duty and being seen.
- The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees can be compared to people in these days and times, who go to church and appear to be doing the right thing, but have never really accepted Jesus into their heart.
- That type of righteousness is pointless, useless, and good for nothing.
- Yet, for the most part, the scribes and Pharisees were known for being faithful to keeping the commands of God.
- So, if they could do it without love and without Holy Spirit, then we should be able to do it better and more faithfully with love and with Holy Spirit.

- That's how our righteousness can exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. It has to do with our heart motive and our intimacy with God.
- Let me read this verse again in the **Passion Translation**: *"For I tell you, unless your lives are more pure and full of integrity than the religious scholars and the Pharisees you will never experience the realm of heaven's kingdom."*
- What does it mean to experience the "realm of Heaven's Kingdom"?"
- As believers, the Bible says that we are already seated with Christ in God in the heavenly places, so we are already a part of Heaven's Kingdom. What this verse is saying is that even though you are there, you won't experience any of the benefits of being there unless our lives are more pure and full of integrity than the religious scholars and Pharisees. It's like a person who can't hear or see going to a movie. They are there, but they can't experience it.
- I don't want to live my life like that. I want to experience all that the heavenly realm has to offer me, here and now. We've been blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, and I want to experience that. I don't want my bad habits, my habitual sins, to hinder all that I can experience in God here and now.
- Ok. That's enough of that!

- Now, before we move on to anger, I want to show how these 4 verses we just went over are connected to the Beatitudes and us being salt & light. And, it's pretty simple:
- You cannot live out the 9 principles of the Constitution of the Kingdom, or the Beatitudes, if you are not loving God enough to keep His commandments.
- For example, He commands us to turn the other cheek, right? If someone hits us on one cheek, to give them the other to abuse. Well, if we can't do that, endure a slap on the cheek, then how can we live out the Beatitude that tells us, "blessed are you when men persecute you, revile you, and lie against you? How can we live out the Beatitude that tells us, "blessed are the meek", if we can't even put down our pride and anger to turn the other cheek.
- Following the commandments prepares us to live out the Beatitudes.
- And, we become the salt of the earth and the light of the world when we keep His commandments, and live by the Constitution of the Kingdom.
- We can't flavor the pot with His presence if we are breaking His commandments habitually, and we can't light up the world, if we have the darkness of habitual sin in our lives; sin that we practice, that we can't seem to stop.

Ok, let's move on to our next topic: The Danger in Anger.

Matthew 5:21-26 says this, “**21** "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' **22** But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire. **23** Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24** leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **25** Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. **26** Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.”

Let's start with some definitions from verses 21-22.

Angry: anger, wrath, indignation, temper, a violent emotion, agitation of the soul

Brother: belonging to the same people; a fellow believer

Cause: without just cause

Judgement: a separation from God

- The word anger here isn't talking about the anger you feel that you quickly come down from and repent for. This is the anger that you hold in your heart.
- So, if you are experiencing wrath in regards to your Brother, if you are agitated in your soul about your brother, if you are experiencing violent emotions in regards to your brother, or if you've lost your temper with your brother, without just cause, and you just can't let it go, you are in danger of being separated from God = Judgement
- Anger without just cause is dangerous. It has severe consequences: being separated from the One our heart longs for.
- And, just a side note, not all translations have "without a cause" in them. So that means that this verse could mean that whether you have a reason to be angry or not, if you hold onto the anger in your heart, you are in danger of being separated from God.

- Because this verse is preceded by verse 21 which talks about murderers being in danger of the judgement, separation from God, it is implying that anger and murder get the same judgement; that anger and murder are equally bad in God's eyes.
- I John 3:15 says, "Everyone who keeps hating a fellow believer is a murderer, and you know that no murder has eternal life residing in him."
- In the original Aramaic, this verse says, "if you provoke a fellow believer to anger".
- In the original Hebrew, this verse says, "if you cause offense to the spirit of your brother".
- Isn't that interesting. The anger we hold on to against our brother isn't just about us. It doesn't just affect us. It provokes that brother to also hold anger in their heart. It harms the spirit of your brother.
- That's the danger in anger.

Verse 22 also says, "whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council:

Raca: a term of reproach used among the Jews in the time of Jesus. Like calling someone senseless or empty headed. It comes from the Greek word that means ethically worthless.

Council: this is referring to the Sanhedrin which was the great council of Jews in Jerusalem made up of scribes, elders, prominent members of the high priestly families, and the high priest. The most important causes were brought before this council, and they could actually pass judgements up to and including death, although death sentences had to be confirmed by the Romans. That's the reason they needed the permission of Pilate to crucify Jesus.

- If you call a fellow Believer senseless, empty headed, or worthless, you put yourself in danger of being brought before leadership. The Passion Translation say, "whoever demeans or insults a fellow believer is answerable to the congregation."
- If we look at insults as "no big deal" as the body of Christ, then no one is ever called into account for doing that to their Brother, which means freedom from that behavior won't come.
- This is connected to the anger and the danger of it because what other reason would you demean or insult your brother if you are not angry with them?
- Why call me stupid if I haven't done something that triggers an angry response in and from you?
- And remember, anger doesn't just mean wrath or having a violent emotion for someone. It also means being indignant and having an agitation of the soul (your mind, will, and emotions).

- In the Aramaic the word Raca implies being demon possessed. So when you call your brother senseless or empty headed, God could translate that as you calling your brother, one of His children, demon possessed.

Verse 22 ends with this: whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

- To call someone a fool is the same as calling someone godless.
- When you do that, you are in danger of what the King James calls, "hell fire." Hell here is Gehenna which was an actual place where garbage was burned outside of Jerusalem. It also used to be the sight of child sacrifice.
- I don't know about you, but I don't want to be thrown out with the garbage. What does the Bible say about salt that's lost is flavor? It's good for nothing; it's garbage.
- Why risk losing your saltiness by holding onto anger in your heart.

Verses 23-24 talk about the heart attitude we should have when we are giving our offering at the altar.

- The Amplified Versions says it like this: *“So if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and while there you remember that your brother has something [such as a grievance or legitimate complaint] against you, leave your offering there at the altar and go. First make peace with your brother, and then come and present your offering.”*
- So, let me recap what I said anger meant in the Aramaic and Hebrew:
 - In the original Aramaic, this verse says, “if you provoke a fellow believer to anger”.
 - In the original Hebrew, this verse says, “if you cause offense to the spirit of your brother”.
- These verses support those translations because they make the assumption that your brother has something against you because either you provoked them to anger or vice versa; they were angry with you first, and caused you to become angry, to hold onto anger against them.
- I know this because if it comes to you at the altar of all places, that Bob or Joni or Shanequa or Shamus are angry with you, then it's gotta be something taking space in your heart; something you are holding onto.
- Whether you were angry with them first and your anger provoked them to anger or offense OR

- They were angry with you first and their anger provoked you to anger or offense
- Either way, you're angry, you're holding anger in your heart, and your gift isn't acceptable until you work that out.
- AND AGAIN, you don't call people a fool, or godless, or demon possessed unless you are angry with them about something.

Let's end with verses 25-26, and I will read them from the Passion Translation: "It is always better to come to terms with the one who wants to sue you before you go to trial, or you may be found guilty by the judge, and he will hand you over to the officers, who will throw you into prison. Believe Me, you won't get out of prison until you have paid the full amount!"

- What does this have to do with anger?
- You ever hear the term, "cut off your nose to spite your face"? The definition of this expression is this: "Don't overreact and do something in anger that is more harmful to you than to others."
- It's an expression used as a caution against being self-destructive when seeking revenge.
- Instead of being angry at the people who want to sue you, Matthew is teaching us that it's better to settle with them rather than get in front of the judge and be found guilty. Why?

- Let's say you are in the right. That you have good reason to be angry and that person is suing you under false pretenses.
- This verse is basically saying, without saying it, "so what!" You're angry at this person so you want vindication from the judge, but the judge may not side with you; he may not see things from your point of view, he may be an unjust judge, and all your anger did was land you in hot water.
- I see settling with the person who wants to sue you as just another way of saying, "turn the other cheek." Take the wrong done to you, like Jesus did when He became the innocent sacrifice for our sins.
- Don't we believe that in the end, God will vindicate us? Don't we believe that He restores what's lost by injustice.
- Joel 2:25-27 in the Message version says, "I'll make up for the years of the locust, the great locust devastation—Locusts savage, locusts deadly, fierce locusts, locusts of doom, That great locust invasion I sent your way. You'll eat your fill of good food. You'll be full of praises to your God, The God who has set you back on your heels in wonder."
- This verse is talking about the restoration God brings from the devastation He put the children of Israel through.

- If He restores in that case, when He is the one who brings on the troubles in order to teach and make us stronger, then why wouldn't He restore when people mistreat His children?
- Restoration and vindication may not look like we want it to, but those who wrong us do not get away with it.
- I have a friend who's husband was unfaithful in their marriage. After he was caught, he filed for a divorce. She got an excellent attorney who advised her to take him to the cleaners, and part of her wanted to do it, but God told her no. God told her to be fair to this man that was unfair to her. God told her that He had her. So she got very little in the divorce and there were weeks when she was left with 86 cents in her bank account, but a few years later, God turned everything around for her financially, emotionally, and mentally, and she is living her best life. What if she had listened to her well meaning attorney? She could have gotten an unjust judge who didn't think cheating was a big deal and she could have gotten less than she did. She trusted God and He vindicated her and restored.

Next week, we dive into LOVE.