



This morning we enter back into Matthew 5. You might be wondering why we're coming back to Matthew. I mean, you may have understood why we moved from Matthew 5 into Daniel when we studied verse 12, where Jesus said, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."<sup>1</sup> The following verses talk about how those who follow Jesus are salt and light in this world. Then we went to Daniel to see the example of a prophet in exile – and how he pointed to Jesus, as well as how he served as an example to us of how we are to point others around us to God. We ended in Daniel, moved into a couple New Testament places talking about Kingdom and exile. We should be done, right? Why come back to Matthew 5? Well, because Matthew 5 is a Kingdom sermon. If you remember, the first and last Beatitude blesses people with the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus is essentially declaring the Kingdom to his followers, and he's revealing to them how Kingdom citizens are to live. That's why we've come back to Matthew 5.

If you trust and follow Jesus, you have a dual citizenship. Like Daniel, you live in this world, but your home is elsewhere. Our greatest allegiance is to our King Jesus. So, let's continue to investigate how Jesus and his Kingdom ought to shape how we live. The main idea of the sermon today is that **Jesus came to fulfill the Law, even through those who trust him**. Even though Jesus hasn't seemed to take up much time up to this point in the sermon, he has said a lot. Listeners to him, both disciples and the intrigued audience, are probably quite confused by what Jesus is saying. So much of what he speaks here seems to break with the traditions of their days – and the religious leaders of their day. As Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven (and is, by the way, essentially pointing to himself as the Messiah), I can imagine the listeners wondering if Jesus is breaking completely from Judaism. Their traditions so soiled the message of God that the average person didn't separate tradition from the Scriptures. To them, Jesus sounded radical and contrary to the Old Testament.

This reminds me of when I went to college. I went to a Christian University, and within a few weeks of arriving, I remember having a conversation with another person across the hall from me. He stated some beliefs he had, and while my jaw didn't drop, I was utterly shocked. In my head, I thought to myself, "So, you don't believe the Bible?!" What I didn't realize was that his belief was actually a debated issue amongst solid Christians for hundreds of years. But I was only taught one view – and I was taught it as though it was central to the faith. But then being on campus at the fundamentalist University, I realized even other teachers on campus didn't agree on that point. This was an eye-opening experience to me. Have you ever had situations like that? Situations where you're confronted with your view and then you realize that either your view is entirely shaped by tradition *or* that your view is potentially not as central as you thought? If you've gone through that, you can probably relate to a degree with the disciples and audience of Jesus' sermon here. "What is Jesus actually saying? Is he

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 5:12.

against the Law and Prophets?” In addition, if you’re ready to follow Jesus, this sermon can sound impossible to actually live out. Persecuted peacemakers, who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness are welcomed and encouraged by him? People who know their spiritual weakness are welcomed into Jesus’ Kingdom? This doesn’t sound like the religion of the Pharisees! Maybe Jesus is breaking from it all. Maybe he doesn’t even believe the Bible.

But that’s the wrong conclusion. Jesus didn’t come to break with the Old Testament. In actuality, the Pharisees had. And so before Jesus goes further into his discourse on Kingdom Living, he wants all to know that he actually values what we refer to as the Old Testament. Instead of breaking from it, he says he came to fulfill it. And because he has come to fulfill it, all who follow him can actually obey the original intent and commands of the Scriptures. Jesus came to fulfill the Law, even through those who trust in him.

We’re going to break down this main idea into two points this morning. But before we do, I simply want to say that this sermon serves as a bedrock for the rest of the sermon. When we talk about lust, anger, marriage, making vows, we’re going to hear words from Jesus that sound *very strict*. These words should both level people and also encourage Christians. These words should level people because all should see their spiritual neediness. That’s the first beatitude. Blessed are the spiritually bankrupt! But these words should also encourage us because in the verses we’re looking at today reveal that Jesus’ mission is to fulfill the Law – and to fulfill it even through all who trust him. That means, we can grow in obeying God! Jesus has a mission. He accomplishes all he sets out to do. And, Christian, we’re part of his mission! Now, let’s jump into these verses that serve as a basis for Kingdom Living.

### **1. Jesus came to fulfill the Law (v. 17-18).**

Jesus says, in verse 17, “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”<sup>2</sup> Before anyone gets the wrong idea and goes down the wrong path thinking Jesus doesn’t embrace the Scriptures, he corrects them. He did not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. Now, what does the phrase “Law or the Prophets” mean? The phrase actually was shorthand for what we refer to the Old Testament. Jesus didn’t come to abolish Genesis through Malachi. And, in case you question him on this, he emphasizes this statement again: I have not come to abolish them.

This is extremely important to emphasize even in our day because many Christians in our day tend to think Jesus doesn’t care so much about the Old Testament. And, even if Christians wouldn’t verbalize that, we might treat the Old Testament that way. We read our Bibles and cherry-pick which books of the Old Testament are good, and which ones are kind of unnecessary. Maybe most of Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus, Deuteronomy. We are intrigued by the stories of Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Esther. But do we need to know the minor prophets? Or, even Ezekiel? We don’t want to be bogged down by the Law, right? We’re in days of grace! So, we focus on the New Testament, but I think that’s a tragedy. Our heritage is found in the Old Testament. I want to read from a portion of a sermon from a man named Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a preacher in England in the mid-1900’s. He said this: We must never drive a wedge between the Old Testament and the new. We must never feel that the New makes the Old unnecessary. . . . It was the Holy Spirit who led the early Church, which was mainly Gentile, to incorporate the Old Testament Scriptures with their New Scriptures and to regard them all as one. They are indissolubly bound together. . . (Lloyd-Jones, pp. 166-67). He goes on to say that we cannot fully understand the New

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<sup>2</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 5:17.

Testament without the Old. For example, we cannot understand Hebrews at all without the Old Testament. To add to this, we wouldn't understand Jesus' mission and death on the cross without the Old Testament. We wouldn't even understand Revelation and the glories that we await to its fullest without the Old Testament.

Jesus didn't come to abolish the Old Testament. "Ok, but if Jesus is coming proclaiming something new happening, then what's the purpose of the Old?" Jesus tells us in his next line. He came to **fulfill. Think of fulfill as meaning "to fill full."** The Old Testament is like a beautiful, ornate cup. It's decorated with meaning and significance. You see pictures of humanity, brokenness, the need for humanity's rescue. The need for God to bring forgiveness and grace to humans and the entire cosmos. But this cup needs to be filled with the cure. You need to be able to drink from it. And so it must be filled with what it points to – the Living Water, Jesus himself.

Jesus came to fill full the Old Testament. From the very beginning, in Genesis, we're looking for the seed of the woman to come crush the serpent. Genesis continues with lineage from women, going all the way to Jacob and his sons. We enter into Exodus and see a rescuer named Moses, but he is not the One to fulfill the prophecy of the serpent crusher. Moses himself prophesies one greater than he (Deut. 18:15ff). We move throughout the Old Testament to see a nation's need for God to rescue them. But then we also see they need more than physical rescue. They need hearts that actually want God. Through types and figures of a tabernacle and a temple, we see God's willingness and plan to fellowship with humans and to bring them back to himself. Through kings, God reveals he's *the* King, and that there's a King to come. Through the lives of the prophets, we see there's a greater prophet to come. Through the Priests, we see there's a greater Priest to Come. The "cup" of the Old Testament has this longing to be fulfilled. Then Jesus comes and says that *he* is fulfillment.

By the way, anyone can *say* they're the fulfillment. But we know that Jesus actually *is* the fulfillment. He's the Serpent Crusher. He's the One who was prophesied in Isaiah 53 to take the sins of people on himself. He was murdered, but he also rose from the dead, for hundreds of people to see! Now, he calls all people to turn to him for forgiveness and reconciliation with God. Have you turned from your sins and turned to Jesus? Oh, I hope you have. What King takes the punishment for his subjects? What King looks at rebels with love and says, "I will take God's just wrath in your place?" Why live another day with sin, guilt and shame ruling over you when Jesus has paid it all? He fulfills the Scriptures. Do you feel your heart resists God? Do you want him to change your heart? Will you cry out to Jesus and trust that only He can take you, a spiritually bankrupt one, and give you this rescue? In the book of Jeremiah, God promised this would happen for people: I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me. <sup>41</sup>I will rejoice in doing them good, and I will plant them in this land in faithfulness, with all my heart and all my soul.<sup>3</sup>

At this moment in Jesus' sermon, there should be awe from the listeners! God isn't about abolishing his Scriptures. He's about fulfilling them! Jesus, the God-Man, fulfills the Scriptures. So, as the apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 1:20: **all the promises of God find their Yes in [Jesus].**<sup>4</sup>

Now, I want to make something clear to all of us at this point. You could be tempted to think that Jesus has filled full the Old Testament 2,000 years ago. There's nothing left for Jesus. He died. He rose from

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<sup>3</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Je 32:40–41.

<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Co 1:20.

the dead. It's done, right? So, the Old Testament doesn't matter now, right? Wrong. Look at verse 18: 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.<sup>5</sup> An "iota" and "dot" were the smallest symbols in Hebrew writing. Jesus is saying that the Old Testament will remain until heaven and earth pass away. There will be a day that there will be a New Heaven and New Earth. That comes when the Old Testament is filled to the full. That means that Jesus has not fulfilled all the Old Testament yet. There are promises yet to be fulfilled. There are pictures and types in the Old Testament that still await completion. I know many of you know this. But you may think this only refers to end times prophecies. That's not the direction Jesus goes in the next two verses. He doesn't speak of end times, cataclysmic events. Instead, he shows his listeners that part of the fulfillment of the Old Testament is that God would have a people who would obey him in this world. They would be imitators of their Savior, Jesus.

## 2. Jesus came to fulfill the Law through his disciples (vv. 19-20).

Read verse 19 with me: Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.<sup>6</sup>

Verse 19 begins with a "therefore." This is very intriguing, isn't it? Jesus came to fulfill the Law; therefore, "whoever relaxes one of the least of the commandments will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. . . ." Wait a second. If Jesus fulfills the Law, then who cares about what we do. That's a wrong conclusion. I want to read to you from Romans 8:2-4. You can follow along on the screen with me: **<sup>2</sup> For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. <sup>3</sup> For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, <sup>4</sup> in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.**<sup>7</sup> Did you pick up the phrase in verse 4? The righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled *in us*.

The cup of the Old Testament is filled full with Christ, and it's filled full with all of us who are united to Jesus through faith. If you have trusted in Jesus, the Bible uses a phrase to speak to our union with him. We are in Christ. Therefore, the Old Testament is filled full with us because of Jesus.

Do you realize that now we, as Christians, are called to a similar mission as Jesus. We aren't the ones who save people from their sins. But did you know we too are to be serpent crushers? Romans 16:20 says, **"The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."**<sup>8</sup> I read from Jeremiah, who said that God will rescue a people who will know his love and will love him in return. That's many of us here! Then we have stories of exile in the Old Testament, and the New Testament Christians are to fulfill what that looks like until heaven and earth passes away!

Ventura, listen carefully to Jesus' words here. If you claim to be a Christian, but you think God's commands aren't that important. Or, if you think it's legalistic to think about following and obeying the Lord, you may not even be a Christian. Jesus set out on mission to rescue a people who he would give grace to fulfill the Law. To put another way, the apostle John wrote this: **The reason the Son of God**

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<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 5:18.

<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 5:19.

<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 8:2-4.

<sup>8</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Ro 16:20.

**appeared was to destroy the works of the devil. <sup>9</sup> No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God's seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God.<sup>9</sup>**

Does this mean that Christians are perfect? No. Even John said that if we say we have no sin, we are liars and of the devil. That said, we can't then say, "Phew! Growth in obedience doesn't matter!" Jesus uses an illustration here. Imagine you teach the Bible to people. That may not be hard for you to imagine. You might teach your kids at home. Maybe you teach Sunday School. You emphasize what God declares and calls us to do, but in your life, you don't live it out. You don't love God and his righteousness. When you're alone, you seek after things you'd never want people to know. Jesus says, "You're least in the Kingdom of Heaven." And that phrase probably refers to not even being saved. To use another illustration, you're a prisoner in the Kingdom. You're destined to the prison cell of Hell. And, at this point, you might quickly think, "Ok, what do I have to do to prove myself to God." You've missed it. There's nothing you can do. You're spiritually bankrupt, left to yourself. You need to pray for the mercy of Christ. He will save.

Others of you might say, "I know I've been rescued by Christ, but I've been coasting." I do believe that's possible. And today, I want you to hear these words as a warning call to repent! Christianity isn't a game. There's an eternity. There's a Savior. In addition, we've been given the greatest privilege we can imagine! Jesus will fulfill the Law through even us! Is that not amazing?! So, let's not only teach, but let's also rejoice that Jesus will fulfill his promises in us.

Let me get practical with this. I used to think this way, and I know many who have thought this way – and I don't think it's very Christian. They live their days fighting sin. Wait. What's wrong with that? They focus on their sin. They focus on trying to get rid of sin. They are burdened by their guilt and shame and they just want to beat the sin. The problem is that their focus is still on sin and its power. They're focused on how bad it is – and in reality, I think those individuals fear sin more than they fear God. If you walk away from this sermon still focused on sin and yourself, you've missed Jesus' point here. Jesus is stating a promise in these verses. He will fulfill the Law through us! Now, let's rejoice! When you wake up in the morning, rehearse the reality that Christ, by the Spirit, is at work in and through you. Jesus has done what the Law couldn't do. The righteous requirement of the Law will be fulfilled in and through us!

How can this be the case? Well, because, first of all, the Bible says that Jesus grants us his righteousness, like a robe. So, our acceptance before God is set. We are righteous in the sight of God. But then Jesus also promised he would send the Holy Spirit to guide us into all truth. Now, we can obey!

This is entirely different than the Pharisee's way of living. They depended on themselves. They tried hard. They had great willpower. They accomplished a lot, but they missed the point. They missed the relationship with God. They missed relationship with people. They thought following God was simply trying hard and making themselves individually better. This makes much of them, not God. But the way of God is calling people to himself – to love him. And, in loving God, we grow in loving others. So, Jesus says in verse 20, "<sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."<sup>10</sup> The word "for" that begins this verse means that this is building off of the previous verse. Don't relax the Law. Teach and obey it because the Pharisees just teach the Law, but they don't really obey it's intention. Therefore, they don't enter the Kingdom.

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<sup>9</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 1 Jn 3:8–9.

<sup>10</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Mt 5:20.

We need a righteousness that actually shocks the world. We don't merely need morality according to worldly standards. We don't merely need more religious people. Jesus came to give people who actually radically and faithfully love God and radically and faithfully love others. These people do this not to make a name for themselves, but instead they do this because God loves them and they love God. Jesus came to fulfill the Law, even through them!

**With this passage, we can move forward in the following weeks to press into Jesus' teaching. We can love and not lust. We can be kind and not be angry. We can keep our word. We can truly be salt and light in this world. And, even if this world persecutes us, we can rejoice and be glad. Why? Because Jesus came to fulfill the Law, even through those of us who trust in him!**