

SERIES: **KINGDOM COME- *What might happen if we embraced heaven... here?***

TITLE: **Raising the bar**

TEXT: **Matthew 5:17-48**



HOOK- a new driver for the queen of England- "how close can you get to the wall?"

At some point we all ponder the thought, how close can I get to the wall?-

- **How close can I get without sinning?**
- **What can I get away with?**

(can I smoke this; can I drink that; can I go there; can I watch that; can I do this?)

What we'll find is that Jesus doesn't lower the standard; He doesn't set the bar a little higher; Jesus places the bar so out of reach everyone is left wondering, "how can we ever measure up?"

Jesus speaking to crowds about the Kingdom of Heaven

¹⁷ "Don't think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.

Quick Context- Sin had created a chasm between God & us

God had provided a ladder back to Him- THE LAW

THE LAW- the terms of the covenant between God & His people

Pentateuch (first 5 book of the O.T.), the prophets, the wisdom books, even historical book.

THE LAW= the Old Testament portion of our Bibles

Based on blessings and curses

Jesus implies he's not just introducing a new way; not throwing out the old way;

No, he's here to finish what God started a long, long time ago.

Some would have been burdened enough by it; others would have been worried that Jesus was throwing it away-

What He says next would have astounded them all, "I came to fulfill it!"

NO ONE HAD! EVERYONE HAD FAILED!

¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or one stroke of a letter will pass away from the law until all things are accomplished.

Everything in the Bible points to Jesus

Jesus is the key to the whole bible, and without the whole bible you cannot fully understand Jesus

You cannot understand the O.T. apart from Jesus, and you cannot fully understand Jesus apart from the whole Bible

(hold up your bible, whether paper, phone)

there are at least 3 different bibles in your hand:

- a non-Christians bible (Matthew 7:1, Jeremiah 29:11, John 3:16- maybe some verses in Genesis taken out of context about smoking weed)
- A Christian's functional bible (diff from Christian to Christian, but usually includes some parables, a few psalms, 1 or 2 proverbs, some of the smaller books in the NT, Genesis 1-3)
- The actual bible (66 books; 39 OT and 27NT)

Which bible do you read?

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

¹⁹Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commands and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of heaven.

V20 is crucial to understanding the rest of the sermon on the mount

The Pharisees were meticulous at keeping the rules of the OT/ OC-

outwardly they were good, but their righteousness (or their goodness) did not go deeper than their behavior

There is a difference looking good, even doing good and *being* good

God was never after behavior modification but heart transformation

not about stop doing drugs, getting drunk, watching porn, being mean;

not about volunteer more, give your offering, work hard, say you forgive;

rule keeping cannot transform hearts- only grace can do that

Jeremiah 31:31-34 “Look, the days are coming”—this is the Lord’s declaration—“when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. ³²This one will not be like the covenant I made with their ancestors on the day I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt—my covenant that they broke even though I am their master”—the Lord’s declaration. ³³“Instead, this is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after those days”—the Lord’s declaration. “I will put my teaching within them and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴No longer will one teach his neighbor or his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they will all know me, from the least to the greatest of them”—this is the Lord’s declaration. “For I will forgive their iniquity and never again remember their sin.

That was the plan from the beginning. Which is why Jesus essentially says,

“I’m not undoing everything that God had previously established- I am what it was all about!”

It was never about rule keeping, it was about showing you that you are not capable to keep rules-

the law was meant to expose you! It was good but it could not save, and that’s why Jesus had to come!

Romans 3:20 For no one will be justified in his sight by the works of the law, because the knowledge of sin comes through the law.

Romans 7:7-8 What should we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! But I would not have known sin if it were not for the law. For example, I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, Do not covet. ⁸And sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me coveting of every kind. For apart from the law sin is dead.

“The law” can only reveal sin, but not remove it

The law was like guardrails- guardrails can keep you from going over the edge,

but guardrails themselves don’t make good drivers. Good drivers don’t need guardrails!

Galatians 3:23-26 Before this faith came, we were confined under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith was revealed. ²⁴The law, then, was our guardian until Christ, so that we could be justified by faith. ²⁵But since that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, ²⁶for through faith you are all sons of God in Christ Jesus.

Jesus is about to fire off a bunch of examples of how the law actually revealed their sin, and need of a savior.

In short, the issue isn’t whether you keep the law externally, but that internally you’re stained with sin

THE TENSION- Our biggest problem isn’t what we do or fail to do;

our biggest problem is who we are: sinners.

Our actions and our apathy are mere symptoms of sin.

“You have heard it said” statements come from THE LAW

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to our ancestors, Do not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment.

²² But I tell you, everyone who is angry with his brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Whoever insults his brother or sister will be subject to the court. Whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be subject to hellfire. (RACA- derogatory, sound like spitting)²³ So if you are offering your gift on the altar, and there you remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled with your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you’re on the way with him to the court, or your adversary will hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will never get out of there until you have paid the last penny.

Murder is wrong, we can all agree.....but so is relational abuse and refusal to reconcile

**the real issue is that not just the external act of violence that are wrong,
but the internal attitude of anger & contempt against others**

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, Do not commit adultery. ²⁸ But I tell you, everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Sexual immorality is wrong, most would agree..... but not only in person, but in the mind also

The real issue is not just the sternal act of sexual impurity, but the internal impurity of the heart

Jesus used hyperbole, yes to say sin is serious, but there’s something else;

I can cut my hand off, I can pluck my eye out, but what about my heart????

AH, there is the issue- YOU CAN CUT YOURSELF INTO A STUMP, AND STILL SIN IN YOUR HEART

³¹ “It was also said, Whoever divorces his wife must give her a written notice of divorce. ³² But I tell you, everyone who divorces his wife, except in a case of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Divorce isn’t ideal, most would agree..... but even when it is allowed, it’s not necessarily appropriate

(there’s many layers to this obviously, we can talk afterwards- abusive, abandonment, infidelity)

The real issue isn’t just can you cancel the marriage legally, but what about GOD whom you made your vows before, does He consider this commitment over?

³³ “Again, you have heard that it was said to our ancestors, You must not break your oath, but you must keep your oaths to the Lord. ³⁴ But I tell you, don’t take an oath at all: either by heaven, because it is God’s throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, because it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Do not swear by your head, because you cannot make a single hair white or black. ³⁷ But let your ‘yes’ mean ‘yes,’ and your ‘no’ mean ‘no.’ Anything more than this is from the evil one.

Oaths aren’t wrong in and of themselves.....but there’s something wrong about someone who *needs* an oath to be believed

The real issue isn’t “is it wrong to use an oath?” the issue is that you only need to swear by a higher value when your integrity & honesty is so watered down, that it carries no believable worth

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. ³⁹ But I tell you, don’t resist an evildoer. On the contrary, if anyone slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. ⁴⁰ As for the one who wants to sue you and take away your shirt, let him have your coat as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two.

⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and don’t turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Retaliation seems fair, most would agree.....but restoration isn’t cultivated in the soil of fairness

The real issue isn’t “can I get back at them?” the real issue is “do I desire to get back to them?”

The 1st mile is the obligation- the 2nd mile is the opportunity

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

The first part is an OT command, but the second half is an inference.

The people assumed, filled in the gaps where there was no gaps to fill.

⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward will you have? Don't even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what are you doing out of the ordinary? Don't even the Gentiles do the same?

We can all agree we should love those who we like.....but do you love those who don't like you?

The real issue isn't how good are you to those who are good to you, but can you extend goodness to those who intend harm to you?

I'll admit this one especially is tough, but what if we turned every offense against us into an opportunity for the Kingdom?

⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus doesn't lower the standard, He elevates it, so high up that we come to the realization- I CAN'T

Christianity isn't about us finally making it up there, all cleaned up and leaving all our cares and sorrows behind- it's about Jesus bringing heaven down here and cleansing us with His blood and drying our tears and healing our sorrows

**MAIN TAKEAWAY- You can avoid looking like a sinner, but still be a sinner.
Only Jesus through His sacrifice on the cross can
can take away the sin from within.**

Hebrews 10:1 NLT The old system under the law of Moses was only a shadow, a dim preview of the good things to come, not the good things themselves. The sacrifices under that system were repeated again and again, year after year, but they were never able to provide perfect cleansing for those who came to worship.

10:8-18 NLT First, Christ said, “You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings or burnt offerings or other offerings for sin, nor were you pleased with them” (though they are required by the law of Moses). ⁹ Then he said, “Look, I have come to do your will.” He cancels the first covenant in order to put the second into effect. ¹⁰ For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time.

¹¹ Under the old covenant, the priest stands and ministers before the altar day after day, offering the same sacrifices again and again, which can never take away sins. ¹² But our High Priest offered himself to God as a single sacrifice for sins, good for all time. Then he sat down in the place of honor at God's right hand. ¹³ There he waits until his enemies are humbled and made a footstool under his feet. ¹⁴ For by that one offering he forever made perfect those who are being made holy.

¹⁵ And the Holy Spirit also testifies that this is so. For he says,

¹⁶ “This is the new covenant I will make with my people on that day, says the Lord: I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.”

¹⁷ Then he says, “I will never again remember their sins and lawless deeds.”

¹⁸ And when sins have been forgiven, there is no need to offer any more sacrifices.

Because Jesus has liberated me from the law, I am free to simply pursue Him, know Him more and more daily
You sinned? Repent (turn around) and keep seeking Him

COMMUNION

BULPEN-

James 2:10-1 For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all. ¹¹ For he who said, Do not commit adultery, also said, Do not murder. So if you do not commit adultery, but you murder, you are a lawbreaker.

Breaking one is as bad as breaking all because sin is relational- it is a personal offense against the eternal GOD

Galatians 5:1 For freedom, Christ set us free. Stand firm, then, and don't submit again to a yoke of slavery.

V17-20 Jesus isn't rebelling against "the law". He isn't even replacing "the law". He is fulfilling it.

It all pointed to Him- our need....His willingness....His faithfulness

V21-48 But Jesus doesn't make less of sin now! He exposes how much more we are sinners than we even realized!

V21-22 raised the bar

V23-26 the point: murder is wrong, but so is relational abuse and refusal to reconcile

V27-28 raised the bar

V29-30 the point: sexual immorality is wrong not only in person, but in the heart (motives)

V31-32 raised the bar

The point- divorce may be allowed but not appropriate

V33-35 raised the bar

V36-37 the point- you don't need security for your word if you have honesty & faithfulness

V38-39a raised the bar

V39b-42 the point- don't retaliate, redeem

V43-44 raised the bar

V45-47 React like your Father, not like your abusers

V48 the culmination! HOW??

V44 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *"In intercessory prayer the face that may have been strange and intolerable to me is transformed into the face of one for whom Christ died..."*

Not just did you murder or not- but do you have within you a seed of anger?

Not just did you commit adultery or not- but do you have within you desires for someone who does not belong to you?

Not just did you get divorced or not- but do you have within you contempt for the person who was to be closer to you than any other?

Not just did you break your oath or not- but do you have within you the proclivity to bend the truth or flat out lie?

Not just did you take what was fair or not- but do you even have the capacity to choose restoration over retaliation?

Not just did you love those who you agree with- but do you love and pray for those who disagree with you?

Illus.- years ago Meli and I were counseling a couple on the brink of divorce- He had been talking to some girls on snapchat but had now deleted that app from his phone.....yet she still didn't trust him. Why?

Because we could cut off what causes us to sin, but we can't cut off our sin