

Living God's Holy Law

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[0 : 00] Well, if you're new to Watermark Church, my name is Kevin and one of the leaders here. And we're going to spend some time praying now. This is called a pastoral prayer. And this is a time when we as a church pray. I'm going to be doing the one speaking.

But this isn't just me praying. This is us as a church family praying. And so I want to invite you to join me by listening in and agreeing with me. We're going to be praying for a church called Emmanuel English Church here in Hong Kong.

As we pray for them, you be praying for them as well. But let's come before our Heavenly Father in prayer this morning. Heavenly Father, great and glorious God, gracious God, we come to you this morning because you are where we find true rest.

You, God, are where we find genuine encouragement, life-changing hope, and enduring freedom. Jesus Christ, you are our true rest. And, Lord, we admit that we are tired, we are weary, we are burdened, we are exhausted, and so we come to you because we have great need of you, Lord. Father, we confess that much of our exhaustion is because in our heart of hearts we've been running from you or we've been fighting for control in our lives. Father, if we're honest, many even of our religious efforts have been efforts to control our own lives rather than worshipful devotion to you.

[1 : 23] And so we do pray, won't you forgive us? Help us to love you supremely. You are, O God, the living water that our souls were made to drink from. You, O God, are the true bread of life that our souls were meant to feast on.

Father, so often we look everywhere except coming to you to satisfy the longings of our hearts, and we know that that won't work. And so this morning we come, we quieten ourselves, and we wait for you.

Father, come and have your way in our lives. Come and be first, we pray. We want to drink of that living water that you spoke about, Jesus. Come and have your way in our hearts.

Father, this morning we do want to lift up our friends at Emmanuel English Church, Evangel, and the other leaders there. We thank you, Lord, for the rich history that church has in preaching your word and being a faithful light in this city.

For the leaders who have remained faithful to you despite many challenges. Lord, we ask for your profound blessing and goodness to rest upon that church. Father, as we read in the book of Acts, we see how absolutely vital your presence and your power and your Holy Spirit is to all ministry.

[2 : 35] And so we pray for Emmanuel Church that you, Holy Spirit, will be powerfully present in their work. We pray for their Sunday gatherings. We pray for their small group meetings. We pray for their members as they go into Hong Kong throughout the week.

God, will you go with them? We pray, Lord, that where your word is preached and your gospel is sung, that you'll be present ministering to them. God, as they go and salt and light this city, may they be ambassadors speaking on your behalf.

And, Lord, we pray for many conversions, God. We pray for men and women to be genuinely saved and born again. God, bless that church, we pray. We ask for your anointing to rest upon them today, God.

And, Lord, this morning we pray also for the people of New Zealand. We pray for those particularly in Christchurch who are reeling from the attacks this week. We pray for those, Lord, that have lost family members and loved ones.

God, many of them will be Muslim. Many of them would not know you. We pray, God, that you'll be a comfort to them. We pray, Lord, that your church will stand and be a light and love those, even those that don't believe in you.

[3 : 39] And pray, God, that many will find the hope that is in you, Lord Jesus. God, we pray that events such as this, which are born out of evil and hatred, will not fuel more hatred and evil.

Father, may the plans of the evil one come to nothing. We pray, God, that peace will prevail. We pray, God, for your wisdom for New Zealand leaders and world leaders around the world that are dealing with terrorism.

Lord, we know that the hope for humanity is not found in more laws or police officers. It's found in Jesus Christ's changing hearts. And so we pray, God, that our hearts in Hong Kong and across the world and New Zealand this morning will be melted by the wonder of the gospel of Jesus.

God, we pray that in New Zealand, as we do in Hong Kong, for more gospel proclaiming, salt and light living, mission driven, gospel hearted Christians and churches to bring true comfort and hope in the midst of life's tragedies.

We pray. We pray these things in your name. Amen. Amen. Let's listen to the reading of God's word this morning. The scripture reading comes from Matthew chapter 5.

[4 : 49] Please follow along in your bulletins or on the screen. 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.

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.

Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Again, you have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.

But I say to you, do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king.

[6 : 06] And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply yes or no.

Anything more than this comes from evil. You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil.

But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

[7 : 19] For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others?

Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. This is the Word of God. Great. Thank you, Justin and Chris.

Okay. So, this morning, we are looking at this passage in Matthew chapter 5. And in many ways, this is part B to the sermon last week.

The sermon that Justin preached for us last week. And I must just tell you that this passage, especially the first kind of paragraph, is a very complex and technical passage.

And I didn't realize just how complex it was when I gave it to Justin in January. And then as we worked through it together the last few weeks, I realized, oh my goodness, I've given him a passage which many experienced preachers have stumbled at.

[8 : 23] And yet, Justin did such a good job last week. And for that, we are very grateful. But what's happening in this passage is that Jesus is explaining a principle. And we're going to get to that in a bit.

We're going to revisit it. And then he spends almost the rest of the Sermon on the Mount unpacking that principle and showing how it plays out in the life of his followers. And so, Jesus, again, gives this principle.

And then he gives five or six applications of how this works its way out in our lives. And Justin last week explained the first one, which is how this principle plays out in the area of anger and retaliation.

And this morning, we're going to look at a couple of other examples. But this is the principle or the question that Jesus tackles. He asks and then answers the question, what bearing do the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, have on the Christian, the Christ follower today?

What bearing do the moral and the ethical teachings of the Bible, especially the Old Testament, what bearing do those have on our lives today? In other words, is Christianity all about grace and mercy alone, not by works?

[9 : 38] And therefore, all the moral and ethical teachings of the Old Testament have no say in our lives. We should just forget about that and just focus on the New Testament. Are they just there to show us that we actually can't live by them anyway, and so we might as well not even bother and just trust in Jesus?

Or should we still approach them saying, this is God's word, we need to obey them, but then aren't we in danger of legalism and trying to earn our salvation by good works and by moral efforts?

What bearing do the moral and ethical teachings of the Bible, particularly the Old Testament, have on the life of a follower of Jesus today? So for instance, how should we think about honoring the Sabbath?

Or taking God's name in vain? Or what about tithing? Should we still do that? What about drinking alcohol? Are Christians expected to honor the technicalities of the Old Testament law, or are we free from such instructions?

And so that's where we're going to look today. And so I've got three points today, very simple. How Christ fulfills the Old Testament law, what is the essence of the law, and what that looks like in all of life.

[10 : 49] Okay, so let's dive in. So let's look at verse 17. We're going to revisit the principle that Justin laid out for us last week, and then we're going to apply it to our lives. So Jesus says this in verse 17.

He says, Do not think that I've come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. In fact, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until it is all accomplished.

So what's Jesus saying here? He's saying all the Old Testament, the law, the prophets, all of the Old Testament is God's word. It's good. It's righteous. It's from God.

And we shouldn't abandon it. Just throw it out the windows if it doesn't apply anymore. He says, Don't think I've come to abolish it. No, I've come to fulfill it. I've come to accomplish it.

Now, if you're new to church this morning, the Bible talks about this word, the law. And it's not talking about Hong Kong law or our national laws. The law is the body of teaching that God gave to Moses for the people of God about 2,000 years before Jesus came.

[11 : 55] And it's generally found in the first five books of the Old Testament. And it involves over 600 different laws and commands and rules and regulations for the people of Israel, how they are to behave, etc., etc.

And I've got to be honest with you, it's sometimes difficult reading, right? Reading all these lists of these ancient laws to an ancient people. But this body of teaching generally, not perfectly, but generally falls into three categories.

There's the ceremonial law, which has everything to do with the priests and the temple and sacrifices and what they can wear and can't wear and how they are to go about their things. Then there's the national law, which governed how the nation of Israel was to be governed as a nation. But then thirdly, there's the moral law. And in fact, most of these commands fall in that category. The moral law. And the moral law instructed the people of God how they were to live out their lives as a community before God.

And so sometimes as Christians, we can think, oh, the law, this heavy weight. And we can think, now Jesus has come, let's tear out our Old Testament and just read the New Testament because that's all gone and dead and buried.

[13 : 06] And Jesus says, not at all. Until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota. That's the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet. Not the smallest stroke of the pen will be done away with until it is all accomplished.

I haven't come to abolish it. I've come to fulfill it. Now, what does Jesus mean when he says, I've come to fulfill the law? What does it actually mean? Well, again, it means many things. But let's look at three things it means. The first way Jesus fulfills the law is he fulfills all the pictures that the ceremonial law pointed to. So the Old Testament law, when you read Exodus and Leviticus and Deuteronomy, it's full of all these analogies and these pictures.

And all of them tell the story. And the story is that God is holy. God is righteous. God is just. And that humanity, we are sinful and we are broken. And we need forgiveness of our sins.

And the way that we are forgiven of our sins is not just that God turns a blind eye to it and pretends it's not there. Somebody atones for our sins. Somebody else pays the guilt on our behalf.

[14:10] Friends, can you see how Jesus fulfills the law? Jesus is the true high priest. Jesus is the true temple. Jesus is the true Lamb of God that was sacrificed for the sins of the world.

As one famous preacher, Justin Marr, once said, every religion has a set of laws which you must obey. Only Christianity has a law which points to a person, to Jesus Christ.

Christ fulfills every picture to which the law points. But there's another way Jesus fulfills the law. And this is that he fulfills the righteous requirements of God's moral law.

So, remember, God's holy law condemns all that's sin. And the sentence that he pronounces is death. Death must pass upon all that have sinned against God and broken his righteous and holy law.

And Jesus comes and says, I haven't come to abolish that. I've come to fulfill it. Well, how does he fulfill it? He makes sure that the sentence which must be passed is passed.

[15:15] He makes sure that the sentence for sin is carried out. It must be fulfilled. God cannot put it to one side. God doesn't do away with his own moral code by simply sweeping it under the carpet or brushing it aside.

The righteousness of God and his law demands that the punishment for sin is paid. It must be fulfilled. Friends, don't you see how Jesus came to completely fulfill the law on our behalf?

He upholds the requirements of the law by becoming the atoning sacrifice for us, by taking the punishment that God's law demands and that you and I deserve on himself so that we can be absolved of our guilt, so that we can stand before God guiltless and free, as we sang about this morning.

But additionally, Jesus says, in addition to just atoning for our guilt, his righteousness, in other words, his perfection, his life of obedience, he now credits to the account of those who trust him.

Jesus is our righteousness and fulfills the law in that way. But then there's a third way that Jesus fulfills the law. And this is actually what almost the rest of the Sermon on the Mount is all about.

[16:25] Jesus fulfills the law on our behalf by becoming an atoning sacrifice for us. But in addition to that, he fulfills the law in us by giving us the Holy Spirit, by changing our hearts and then writing his law in our hearts and then giving us the Holy Spirit, empowering us to live out the demands of the law.

In other words, Jesus, when we become a Christian, if you are a Christian this morning, Jesus gives you this Holy Spirit, which is sometimes called the Spirit of Jesus. He then rewires your heart, which is the control center of your life, and empowers you to become the kind of person that starts to do the things that the law required.

Okay, does that make sense? Let's see if we can work through it, okay? So Paul writes this in Romans chapter 8. He says, If you're a Christ follower this morning, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

Why? Because Jesus fulfilled the law for you. Jesus died in your place. The punishment of God was put on him. He took the wrath of God. You now stand before God, holy and righteous and clean.

There is no condemnation for you. Remember the song we sometimes sing? Before the throne of God above, I have a strong and perfect plea. I've forgotten the rest of the lines.

[17:43] Ellen, help me out here. The great high priest, whose name is love, whoever pleads for me. That sounded better when I rehearsed it this morning.

There's this great song with some great lines, okay? The lines I was actually thinking of was this. When I'm tempted to despair, and when Satan tells me of the guilt within, upward I look and see him there, who made an end to all my sin.

And so God, there's no condemnation for those who are in Christ. Then it says, For God has done what the law could not do. Well, what could the law not do? The law couldn't change our hearts.

Couldn't make us love God. It could tell us what we needed to do, but it couldn't actually help us to do that. But God, by sending his own son, to take the punishment of sin for us, condemned sin in the flesh, this is the important part, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit.

So this is what Paul's saying. When Jesus died on the cross, and you become a follower of Jesus, you put your trust in him, two things happen. Actually, many things happen, but two in this case. One, Jesus fulfills the law for you.

[18 : 58] And so you stand before God, and God says, Why can you stand righteous before me? Because Jesus did it for me. But secondly, Jesus fulfills the law in you, by giving you the Holy Spirit, and changing your heart, and making you the kind of person that then walks according to what God's holy requirements are.

So let me see if I can give you an example, analogy. It's not a perfect analogy, but let's see if it'll make sense. We've got a bunch of people here that are writing big medical exams. See, Grace, and Carlo, and Joyce, and I think Graham's somewhere around.

All these med students, right, that are writing big exams. Now, I'm sure they're all amazing students, but just imagine you are a med student, and you've got this big exam, and your name is not Grace, or Carlo, or Joyce, or Graham, or anyone.

Your name is James. No, not James, because there actually is a med student, James. Let's pick Peter. Your name is Peter, okay? And you, Peter, you've done pretty well, but you've got your final exam, and the requirements of your final exam are to get 100%.

90% won't do, 80% won't do. You have to get 100% to pass this final exam. But you just can't pass it. You've taken this exam so many times, and every time you fall short, and you just cannot pass it.

[20 : 17] Well, it's no point going to the medical board and saying, listen, I've passed most of my exams. That doesn't help. The requirements of the medical school is that you have to pass all your exams, and you have to pass this final exam.

So in order to become a doctor, you need to fulfill the requirements of the medical school. But now just imagine that by luck, there happens to be a professor of the medical school who has the same name as you.

His name is also Peter Lee, just by chance. And through some technicality, the requirements of the medical school is that Peter Lee sits the exam. And so this professor, through some technical detail, is allowed to sit the exam and write the exam on your behalf.

And because he's a professor, he helps sit the exam. And so he writes the exam for Peter Lee, and he passes the exam with flying colors to the most minute detail, and his pass is now credited to you. And so you get the letter saying, well done, Peter Lee, you have passed your exam, and you're now qualified as a doctor. He has fulfilled the requirements of the law for you. Now, in some ways, that's what the gospel is like.

[21 : 23] Jesus fulfills the requirements of the law on our behalf. Christianity isn't about self-help. It isn't about improving yourself or trying to get yourself a bit better. It's about coming to the end of yourself and realizing, I can't do it.

Somebody else needs to do it for me. Jesus fulfilled the requirements of the law on your behalf. But here's the problem. As a doctor, it doesn't help having the certificate on the wall if you didn't actually pass the exam, right?

Which patient wants to come to the doctor that passed the exam technically, but not in reality? And so this professor comes to you and says, there's one requirement. I'll write the exam for you, but then for the next 20 years, I'm going to mentor you.

You've got to come work with me, and I'm going to train you, and I'm going to impart my brilliance to you, and I'm going to impart my knowledge to you, and I'm going to impart my wisdom to you. And everything that makes me a professor, I'm going to impart to you until you become like me, until my brilliance becomes your brilliance, my wisdom, your wisdom, my insight, your insight, until you are a doctor just like me.

It's one thing for him to fulfill the requirements of the law, but if you're actually going to be a doctor, that which the test is trying to examine, you need to get that inside of you so that you can become that in reality.

[22 : 35] Now, it's not a perfect analogy, but this is what Jesus is saying. He's fulfilled the law for us on our behalf, but now he gives us the Holy Spirit to fulfill the law in us that we become the kind of people that actually do what the law requires.

And this is what God promised throughout the whole Old Testament. Remember, God comes to Jeremiah, and he says, I'm going to give my people a new covenant, a new way of relating to them. But the difference between the old way and the new way is this.

I will now write my law on their hearts. I will take out their heart of stone. I won't just give them a plate that says, this is what you should do. I'll now put it inside of them, and I'll give them my Holy Spirit so that they can live it out.

See, sometimes as Christians, we read God's moral law, and we think that's such legalism, not interested in that, and obeying those rules and regulations. And Jesus is not at all. He says, that's my law.

That's my heart. But now, I don't think I've come to abolish it. I've come to fulfill it. And in my grace, I'll fulfill it for you, but in my grace, I'll help you to do it. Now, what does that actually look like?

[23 : 40] What does that mean in modern life? What does that mean when we date someone that maybe doesn't share, isn't a Christian? What does it mean about your clothing, what you can and can't wear? How revealing is revealing?

What does it mean about watching Netflix series that aren't super helpful? Should we do it?

Shouldn't we do it? What does the law actually say? Remember, one day, someone comes to Jesus and says, Jesus, what must I do to inherit eternal life?

And what does Jesus answer? Jesus says, what does your law require? See, Jesus doesn't say, well, let's just forget about the Old Testament because now I'm here and that doesn't matter anymore.

No, Jesus says, what does the law require? And the man thinks about it and the man summarized the entire 600 laws of the Old Testament in two sentences. He says, love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength.

And love your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus says, you're dead on. For these two sentences summarize the entire law and the prophets.

[24 : 45] Do this and you'll live. And friends, this is the essence of the entire law. This is the essence of everything that the Old Testament is about. And that brings us to our second point, which is the essence of the law.

You see, what does it mean when Jeremiah says, I will write God's law in your heart? What does it mean to have God's law written in your heart? What does it look like when God empowers us to live out his holy law? What does it look like to obey and walk according to God's ways?

It means loving God supremely with every facet of our heart, every part of our lives. It means for Christ to be our highest treasure, our deepest delight, for him to be supreme in our hearts.

And it means to love one another more than ourselves. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, your strength. That word strength, by the way, is actually resources. It's your financial strength.

And love one another more than yourself. And that's why Jesus says the strangest thing in verse 20. He says here what seems to be a shocking thing. He says, I tell you the truth, your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and the Pharisees.

[25 : 49] Otherwise, you'll never enter the kingdom of heaven. Well, Justin explained it to us last week. The scribes and the Pharisees were the most religious, the most fastidious, the most law-abiding people in the planet.

They came up with thousands of other laws just to make sure to protect themselves, to make sure that they never broke God's law. So for instance, the fourth commandment, you know, you should honor the Sabbath.

They came up with about 35 other laws just to make sure what they could and couldn't do to make sure that they never broke the fourth commandment in any way. They were extremely law-abiding. So how come Jesus now says, you must exceed their righteousness? Well, what's Jesus saying? He says, because this is what the law is about.

Love God supremely. Love God more than anyone else. Love Him first in your heart. You see, friends, the Pharisees and the religious leaders were very concerned about obeying the technicalities of the law, the rule book, but they'd completely divorced that from any sense of relationship from God.

[26 : 54] They weren't loving Christ supreme. They weren't loving God above all other things. They weren't loving their neighbor. In fact, they were using their religion as a way of keeping themselves in control of their own lives.

Who did the Pharisees love supremely? Themselves. That's right. They loved themselves. Even their religious observance and rule-keeping was just a way of making them feel good about themselves, making them feel justified, a way that they could feel like they were front and central in their lives and Jesus says, if you do that, you have no part in me.

You do not know me. Remember at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, there are a bunch of people that come to Him. They're going to say, Lord, didn't we prophesy on your name? Didn't we cast out demons? Didn't we lead a wonderful church and preach and run CG?

And Jesus says, I never knew you. Depart from me. Why? Because we weren't loving the Lord our God with all our hearts, souls, mind, and strength. And so the rest of the Sermon, Jesus is going to contrast obeying the rules versus loving God supremely.

What does it look like in every area of our life to obey the rules, divorce from relationship with God versus loving God supremely? Let me give you an example from my life of how I do this so easily.

[28 : 08] I remember when I was a little boy, 10 or 11 years old, I remember playing cricket with my brother in the garden. Now, if you don't know cricket, it's a wonderful game and it's similar to baseball-ish.

All the cricket fanatics, I'm sorry. But essentially, in the most basic terms, you've got this. You've got a batter, he's got to hit the ball, and you've got a bowler, someone who pitches the ball. And you've got all these fielders and the batter hits the ball somewhere in the field and then he's got to run.

Kind of like in baseball, you've got a diamond. In cricket, you've got these two points. You've got to run between them. And every time you run between them, you get what's called a run or a point.

And so, what happens is you kind of run between these points, you accumulate some points, some runs, and then at the end of that, when the field has got the ball, instead of him getting you, if you don't stop running, he's going to get you out.

He's going to throw it back to kind of like the home base and you're going to be out. So in order to stop doing that, you call out, over. And then that kind of kills the play. Everybody knows it's the end of play and you go back to the beginning and you restart and have another play.

Okay? So I remember playing with my brother and I was the batter and I hit the ball into the garden and my brother goes and fetches it and I run three runs. One, two, three.

[29 : 21] Now I'm far away from my home base, but he's got the ball. And so in order to not be out, I call, over. And then I can walk back to my home base. Except this day, I didn't quite say over.

I said something that sounded like it. I remember saying, over. So my brother thought, okay, it's the end of play. And so he walks back and he says, how many runs are you on? I said, four.

He says, four, but I thought you only ran three times. I said, no, I didn't say over. I said, Oliver. You see what I did there? Now, technically, was I right?

Yeah, technically, I didn't say over. Technically, did I lie to him? No, technically, I didn't. I didn't say over. But I cheated him and technically constructed a system to obey the rules that I didn't feel bad like I lied to him and said I could accumulate more runs and win the game, right?

Or maybe here's a, that's a technical example. Maybe here's a more simple one. Chris gave me this analogy this week. If you're a parent here and you've got young kids, you'll know this. I say to my kids sometimes, please come to the dinner table.

[30 : 29] We're going to have dinner now and nothing happens. Please come to the dinner table. We're eating. Nothing happens. You speak a couple of times. Eventually, I go pick up my daughter and I put her on the chair and I say, now sit there until you've eaten.

Don't get off the chair until you've eaten all your dinner. Do you understand me? And she might say something like, on the outside, I'm sitting, but on the inside, I'm standing up.

Okay? Do you see what's happening there? Technically, they're obeying the rules, right? But their hearts are as divorced from obedience as night is from day. Now friends, that's exactly what the religious people in Jesus' day were doing.

They were going through the motions. They were obeying the rules technically. They were doing this, doing that, nothing so that somebody couldn't accuse them of breaking God's law. But where were their hearts? Were they loving Christ supremely?

Was God first in their hearts? Were they loving one another more than themselves? No, they were loving themselves. I think the craziest example of this is the Pharisees try and arrest, or they get Jesus arrested.

[31 : 34] They take him to Pontius Pilate's house in the middle of the night. They go to Pilate, and they say, he's broken all the laws. He needs to be put to death. But it says, they would not go inside

Pilate's house lest they became unclean before the Passover.

So here they are busy constructing a system to kill the Christ and to have him crucified, and yet they will not step into a wall unless they become technically unclean according to the law.

Now friends, you and I do the same thing. Every one of us daily face the temptation to resort to some kind of religion, some kind of legalism, to do what the laws require.

We read our Bible for three minutes in the morning. We pay our tithes. We attend CG. We come to church. We go through the motions so that God won't look at us and say, you haven't done what I've asked, and yet the temptation is for our hearts to be divorced from him because actually we're loving ourselves.

And so the question Jesus asks us is this. In each and every circumstance in life, when your colleague lets you down and you want to climb into them, when your spouse disappoints them and you want to show them just how often this happens, in your approach to money, in your approach to the poor, in your approach to sexuality and pleasure, the question Jesus asks is not what does God require, but who are you loving supremely?

[32 : 52] Are you loving me or are you loving yourself? And so that brings us to the third and final point, which is what does this actually look like? And Jesus now gives us six examples of how this plays itself out.

Justin gave us the first one last week of how does this play out when somebody riles you or when someone has offended you or you've offended somebody else. I want to look at just two of them. And the first one, I must apologize, it isn't in your bulletin because I changed my mind late in the week.

And so it's on the screen, but if you've got your Bible, look at verse 27 with me. Jesus gives us an example of what this looks like with our sexuality. He says, you've heard that it was said.

Now, where did they hear this? They didn't have their own personal Bibles. They hadn't read it in the Old Testament. They heard it from the religious leaders and the teachers. They had been teaching, this is what God's word said.

And so Jesus says, you've heard that it was said from the religious leaders that you shouldn't commit adultery. Now, that's a good thing. That's what God also said. You shouldn't commit adultery. But what does it mean for our sexuality when Christ is first in our heart?

[33 : 56] What does it mean for our sexuality when God's law is written on our hearts, not just in a rule book? What does it mean when we're loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and loving others more than ourselves and our sexuality?

Well, look at what Jesus says. Verse 28. I say to you, this is what the law of God written on your heart looks like. This is what the kingdom, the upside-down kingdom ethic looks like. Do not even look at someone with lustful intent.

For to do so is the same as committing adultery with them in your heart. You see, those that are religious can go and say, oh, well, I actually haven't slept with someone that's not my spouse. Remember one famous president saying that?

We didn't technically have intercourse. But you might as well have because every time you look at that person, you're undressing them in your mind and you're thinking what they look like undressed. Jesus says, you might as well have because in that moment, who are you loving supremely?

Not Christ and not your neighbor, but yourself. Jesus says, I didn't come to abolish the law. I came to fulfill it and I came to help you fulfill it. Let's look at one other example. Look at verse 43 here.

[35 : 03] Jesus says, you've heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor, but don't worry about your enemy, him you can hate. Well, that's what the religious leaders were saying. If you're a Jewish man or woman, you encounter another Jewish person, they're your brother, they're your sister.

Lend them money, don't charge them interest, they're your brother. Look after them, look after them. If they're in trouble, you go over to their house and you help them. But if a Gentile comes, hey, well, that's another story, right?

And if a Roman comes, well, that's a whole nother story. You can't murder them. Okay, that's crossing the boundary. But who says you can't despise them? Who says you can't hate them? Who says you can't have animosity in your heart? But friends, what would it look like to treat an enemy, someone who makes your life difficult, a colleague or a neighbor? What would it look like to treat them when Christ is first in your heart?

What would it look like to live out the law of God in our hearts? Well, Jesus tells us. He tells us in verse 48, verse 44, he says, it would mean praying for your enemies. Not praying that God would destroy them.

[36 : 07] That's not the kind of prayer he has in mind. Praying that God would bless them. The very best prayer that you could pray for yourself, you pray for your enemy. Pray for their job.

Pray for their marriage. Pray for their finances. Pray for their children. Pray that God would come and encounter them. It means you'd look out for their well-being and warning them of danger.

Imagine you've got a colleague that just makes your life a nightmare and they're doing something wrong and you think, serves them right, they're going to get in trouble.

It means going to them and saying, hey, can I just point out I think this formula isn't right and I think we should re-look at it, right? It means refusing to speak badly of them behind their backs and even defending their reputation when somebody is slandering them.

Someone making your life difficult in the office, they're talking about that person and you know that what they're saying isn't true and you say, actually guys, I don't think that's quite true. I don't think they were quite that bad. Now friends, here's the question.

Why would you do such a thing? Why would we love our enemies like this? Well, look at what Jesus says in verse 45. He says, so that you may be sons and daughters of your Father who is in heaven.

[37 : 15] See friends, if you're a follower of Jesus this morning, how did your Father treat you?

How did your Father treat me? How did God treat us when we were his enemies? How did Jesus treat us when we threw our fisted rage at him, when we rebelled against him, when we declared our independence and said, God, I'm going my own way.

I don't want to serve you. How did God treat us? Well, Claire read it to us this morning. For God so loved the world that he sent his son to die for us. And what is the prayer that Jesus prayed as he's being nailed to the cross about us suffer for the sins of the world?

He prays, Father, forgive them. Forgive them. You've heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor but hate your enemy. I say, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you that you may be like your Father in heaven.

Friends, the question is, who will do such a thing? How can we become such people? I'll tell you how. Because we've had our hearts and our resolve and our self-justification melted by the indescribable love and the mercy of God seen in Christ on the cross.

We'll become the kind of people who have come to the end of ourselves because our honor and our reputation and our self-justification and our own glory isn't the defining feature of our lives.

[38 : 34] But we've come to the end of ourselves and we've found that there, Christ is ready to receive us and love us and accept us even though we are broken and messed up. Friends, such a person is someone who has seen how Christ has loved them unceasingly despite all the stuff in our hearts and all our sin and someone for whom Christ has become more important than their own reputation, their own glory, their own rights, their own kingdom.

Friends, does this describe you? Have you met this Christ? Have you encountered Him like this? Friends, has your self-righteousness and self-sufficiency been melted by the glory and the wonder of Jesus and His grace?

Or is your religion like the religious leaders ticking a box and going through the motions that you can stand and say, I've done what is required and yet your heart is still trying to control your life? Friends, Jesus' invitation this morning is come and lose yourself. Come and lose yourself. Let go of your self-justification. Let go of your religion. Let go of your rights. Let go of your kingdom and come and find Him.

And in that place, you'll find what your heart has been looking for. Friends, the good news of the gospel is that Jesus Christ so loves you that He came for you. He came and He died. He came and He lived the life that you should have lived and He died the death that you should have died.

[39 : 50] And now He promises to write His ways on our hearts. He promises to fill our hearts with His ways. Not because we deserve it, but because He loves to. Friends, come to Him.

Come to Him who loves you more deeply and more profoundly than anything in this world can offer. Friends, when you do that, you'll be free from a wondering and an anxious heart. You'll be free from having to justify yourself.

You'll be free from comparisons. You'll be free from the self-accusing and self-justifying arguments in your own head. You'll be free from the dead works of religion. You'll be free from running from

Him and you'll find the one that you were made to worship.

Friends, come to Him now. Come to Him and let Him be your Lord. Come to Him and love Him supremely. Come to Him and let Him define your life. Let Him be your righteousness, your hope. Come and confess your sins and your need for Him. Ask Him to forgive you. Tell Him that you love Him and you want to live for Him. Come and do that now. Let's pray together.

[40 : 57] Heavenly Father, we come to You, God, because we, as we said earlier, God, You are the one that holds true life, God. Lord, Your Word is full of all these rules and commands, Lord God, that we are honest.

We don't obey even the first one. We don't even love You, God, supremely. God, the natural disposition of our hearts, Lord, is to serve our own kingdoms, to be our own gods. And yet, God, that hasn't worked out well for any one of us. And so, God, we come to You because we need You. God, we are so grateful for the cross, Jesus.

We're so grateful, Jesus, that You died on our behalf to fulfill the requirements of the law for us. Thank You, Lord Jesus, that now we stand before our Father completely spotless because of Your death on the cross.

Oh, God, how we love Your mercy. Thank You, Lord Jesus. But, God, more than that, Lord, thank You, God, that You've promised to write Your law in our hearts.

[42 : 03] You've promised, God, to make us the kind of people that do love You supremely and that love one another more than ourselves. God, we ask for us as a church and as a church family.

God, make that true of us. Oh, Lord, we don't want to be religious. We don't just want to obey the rules for the rules sake. God, we want to honor You. We want to love You supremely. We want, God, in every area of our life for You, Christ, to be first and foremost.

Oh, Holy Spirit, come and have Your way in our hearts. Take out our heart of stone and give us our heart of flesh.

Jesus, make us more like You, God. Lord, we pray that when people encounter us that they'll see something of the wonder of Jesus because You've changed us, God. God, though we are great sinners, You, Christ, are a greater Savior.

And we delight in that, God. We delight in that. Got it.