

Christ - The New and Better Obedience

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 10 March 2019

Preacher: Justin Ma

[0 : 00] Okay, this morning we're going to pray together as a church, and every Sunday during our pastoral prayer, we love to pray for another church, often in Hong Kong. This morning we're going to pray for this church, it's called New City Church in Delhi, and it's just been planted by a man called Ranjit and his wife Deepa, and we're going to pray for them.

I think they've been going for about a year or so, but they've just moved to a new venue, and the day before they moved, Ranjit got kidney stones, got admitted to hospital, so the day before their launch of their new campus, and so I was emailing him this week, and he said, hey, just pray for his health, pray for his family, and pray for this church.

The area where they've just moved to, there's never been a worshiping community in that area for a thousand years. It's a very old historic area of Delhi, and so we're going to pray for New City Church.

There's a couple of photos, but won't you join me as we pray this morning? Heavenly Father, gracious God, wonderful Savior, we've come to worship and adore you this morning.

We've come to lift up your name, to declare that you are God and that we are not, to remind ourselves, remind one another that there is no one else in all creation as awesome and as glorious as you.

[1 : 16] God, help us to know that and to rest secure in that and to glory in that truth. Father, this morning, won't you come and wash us in who you are, that you are sovereign, you are majestic, you are gracious, you are faithful.

You, God, are trustworthy. And remind us who we are in you, God. We are loved, chosen, secure, your children. God, we pray for ourselves. Don't let us be fooled into putting our hope and trust in the things around us, nor let us be seduced by the bright lights of this world.

Lord, God, help us, strengthen us, remind us, draw us back to the truth of who you are and who we are in you. God, may it be in our hearts as it is in heaven, we pray.

Father, this morning, we want to pray for our congregation and for ourselves as we go into our work week. We ask for your favor and your blessing to rest upon us as we work this week. We pray, Lord, that you will keep us humble, gentle, and gracious with those around us.

May our conduct, our gentleness, our humility speak loudly of our security in you. God, in a world in which we so often feel the pressure to hustle, to outdo one another, may our security be in your love for us, God.

[2 : 29] May that cause us to act and behave differently. We pray, God, that your gospel will speak in our work lives, in the conference room, in the lunch table. Remind us, God, you are as interested in the staff meeting as you are in the prayer meeting.

Help us to take both of them seriously. God, we pray for those who are facing difficult work situations. God, difficult bosses, difficult colleagues, difficult challenges.

Help us, God, not to be defensive, insisting on our own way, but to be humble and gracious, we pray. And, Lord, we do pray for those in our church that are looking for work. We pray, God, that you'll provide not just a job with a salary, but an opportunity to grow, to be stretched, to contribute to the city, and to serve others in our city, we pray, Lord.

Father, this morning we want to pray for New City, Delhi, and Ranjit, and Deepa, and their family. We pray that that church will be a faithful gospel witness in the area in which they meet.

For many that are lost and don't know you, to find the true God through this church. Use them to welcome all and to share the gospel. We pray, God, for men and women to be converted, born again, saved, have the life of God breathed into them.

[3 : 40] We pray, Lord. We pray that you, Lord, will raise up leaders from within this community to lead various initiatives and plant new churches in Delhi. And we pray, God, for Ranjit and his health, Lord.

Pray for speedy recovery for his family, his children, the church in this season. We lift them up before you and ask for your favor and your anointing to rest on them, God. And then finally, Father, we pray for Justin this morning and the preaching of your word.

We pray, God, that you will use him to speak your word to us, encourage him. God, I pray that your word will edify us, build us up, strengthen our faith, help us to live out your word this week because of Justin's preaching this morning.

We pray these things in your glorious name. Amen. Amen. Let's listen to God's word being read to us and then Justin's going to come and share the scriptures. The scripture reading comes from Matthew chapter 5.

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.

[4 : 52] 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 called 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.

You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council. And whoever says, you fool, will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go.

[6 : 07] First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison.

Truly I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. This is the word of God. Can you hear me?

Those at the back can hear me too? Okay. So good morning, Watermark. My name is Justin Ma, and I started coming to Watermark about five and a half years ago with my three sisters, Edie, Phoebe, and Iris.

It's a privilege to bring God's word to you this morning. We have been going through the book of Matthew to learn about an upside-down kingdom. Chris talked about Jesus calling two fishermen brothers to follow him, and he promised to make them fishers of men.

We learn that Christ is, in fact, inviting not just the two fishermen brothers to follow him, but all of us. And then we look at the Beatitudes.

[7 : 34] We learn from Kevin that Jesus is not presenting a bundle of optional blessings for us to choose from, but he is presenting a vision of this new way of living in the kingdom of God.

And today, we come to Matthew 5, where Jesus talks about the law of God in the Old Testament. That is the law in Exodus, Deuteronomy, Numbers, Leviticus, etc.

Basically, Jesus is talking about the books in the Bible that we often skip. How do you personally view the law in the Old Testament?

Perhaps you think it has been abolished, so it is no longer relevant to us. Or perhaps you think that we should still obey the Old Testament law, because faith without work is quite dead.

Maybe you have heard that Jesus has replaced the Old Testament law with a new set of law. But you're not quite sure what this new set of law is all about.

[8 : 42] So you start asking questions like whether you should state a non-Christian, whether you should accept a job that demands working on Sundays. But I guess none of you is like King David, who says in the Psalms that he delves in the law, and he meditates on the law day and night.

Now, isn't it weird for King David to do that? But as I was preparing for today's sermon, it starts to make sense for me.

I think today's passage actually gives us a refreshing perspective on how we should approach the law of God. And it's actually quite key to our Christian faith.

And if you're not a believer, welcome to be with us. And I believe this passage would also fundamentally change your understanding about the law of God. And also the Christian faith itself.

In today's passage, I think Jesus talks about three things. That the law prophesies about Jesus. That God demands from us the righteousness of Jesus.

[9 : 53] And lastly, I'm going to talk about what it means to live in this loving worship of him. I'm coming to my first point about the law prophesying about Jesus.

If you look at a bulletin in verse 17, Jesus says, 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.

Jesus is saying that both the law and the prophecies in the Bible prophesy about his coming, his death on the cross, and his resurrection.

So his coming does not abolish the law and the prophecies. His coming actually fulfills both of them. See, if Jesus was merely talking about his obedience with the law, he would have used the word obey.

But he deliberately chose the word fulfill. The same word he uses when he goes to a synagogue on the Sabbath day in his hometown Nazareth. And he read from the scroll of prophet Isaiah and told the synagogue that Isaiah's prophecies have been fulfilled.

[11 : 08] Jesus is saying that the law is like the prophecies in prophesying about a Savior that is coming and his death and resurrection.

Now, what does this mean for Jesus' audience? His audience were Jewish men and women who thought that they have to obey the Old Testament law strictly so that they could earn a ticket to heaven.

At that time, there was also a group of influential people called the scribes and the Pharisees. And they spent much time studying and interpreting the Old Testament law.

And they have come up with quite a complicated system of law. In this system, you not only find the Old Testament law, but you also find many laws that are added to the Bible.

The audience that Jesus was addressing must have felt quite tired, exhausted, and even burned out by trying to obey the law.

[12 : 14] But we see in Matthew 5, Jesus telling them that the law is actually here to remind you that you're not your own Savior. The law is to remind you that there is a Savior that is coming, a Savior who will save us by his death and his resurrection.

But is this message still relevant to us today? I think it is. Because all the religions in the world, in one way or another, talks about a system of law that we ought to obey so that we could achieve something spiritual.

But it's only in Christianity that we find the law prophesying about a Savior, his death and his resurrection. And don't we all have colleagues and friends who ask us whether Christians ought to do something or not do something?

Perhaps next time we could tell them about this law of God, but we also can tell them, hey, you know what? I didn't obey this law so that I could please God.

This law of God actually is a prophecy. It talks about a Savior that is coming, a Savior who died for me, a Savior who resurrected, so that I can come near God, so that you can come near God.

[13 : 39] But can we really see Christ, his death and his resurrection in all the law in the Bible? I believe we cannot unless God opens our mind.

Because in Luke 24, after Jesus' death and resurrection, he says to his disciples, These are my words that I spoke to you while I was with you, that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.

It's very similar to what he was telling the crowd in Matthew 5, that he came to fulfill the law and the prophecies. But then he says something very critical. He said, Then he opened the disciples' minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and on the third day rise from the dead.

Jesus had to open the mind of the disciples, so that they could see in the law clearly, that they could see Christ and his death and resurrection. So I would encourage you, after the sermon today, to read one of the books in the Old Testament, that talks about the law.

And when you read, be praying, that Christ please open my mind, like you opened the minds of the disciples, so that I could see in the law yourself, your death and your resurrection.

[15 : 08] Now, I have to confess, that I don't have an answer, for how in each and every law in the Bible, you could see Christ. But I would like to take you, to just two places in the Bible, where I could see Christ clearly personally.

And the first one, is a Passover lamb, in Exodus 12. When Israel was still slaves in Egypt, God sent Moses, to bring them out of slavery.

So Moses asked the king of Egypt, to let his people go. But the king of Egypt refused to do so. And God performed many miracles, against Egypt.

Then God said, there is a final miracle I will perform, and after that, Egypt will let Israel go. God said, he will go into Egypt, and kill every firstborn in the land.

Now that is a problem for Israel, because the Israelites, were actually living in the same land of Egypt. So God commanded Israel to do this, that each household of Israel, is to kill a lamb, without any defect, and take the blood of the lamb, on the doorpost of the household.

[16 : 29] So when God comes into the land of Egypt, and he sees the blood of the lamb, on the doorpost, he will pass over the household, for his judgment. So the blood of this Passover lamb, saves Israel, from God's judgment.

And God commanded Israel, to kill this Passover lamb, year after year. This Passover lamb actually, prophesies about Jesus himself, whose death on the cross, and whose blood will save us, from God's judgment.

Remember the first song we sang today? We sang this morning, that our God is a lamb, the lamb that was slain, that was killed, for the sin of the world.

So this is an example, to show that in the ceremonial law of the Bible, we would see Christ. How about the moral law?

I would like to take us to Deuteronomy 21, where it talks about a rebellious son, and then a man hang on a tree. It says this, If a man has a stubborn and rebellious son, who will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and although they discipline him, will not listen to them, then his father and his mother shall take hold of him, and bring him out to the elders of the city of the gate, at the gate of the place where he lives.

[18 : 02] And they shall say to the elders, This, our son, is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey our voice. He is a glutton and a drunkard.

Then all the men of the city shall stone him to death with stones. And then he says, If a man has committed a crime punishable by death, and he is then put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall bury him on the same day.

For a hanged man is cursed by God. Now wait a minute. How can we see Christ? In the passage, it talks not only about stoning a rebellious son, but also about hanging this son on the tree.

But if we really think about our heart, are we not all this rebellious son this passage talks about? Are we not stubborn in our sins and refuse again and again to obey God's voice?

God has plenty of testimonies to pronounce a judgment of death against us. Yet Christ is the perfect son who became the cursed man on the cross for us.

[19 : 26] And I wrote something which I believe represents the reality that Deuteronomy 21 actually points to us. It talks about this perfect son.

God has a perfect and righteous son who obeys his voice. Although God did not discipline him, he obeys his voice.

God gave this testimony about his son to Israel. This is my beloved son, with whom I am well pleased. The son gave himself up willingly to the authority in Israel.

And though no testimony was given to establish any wrong done by him, Jesus was crucified on the cross, becoming the cursed one where the God's curse against us can be taken away.

Isn't the law marvelous and wonderful? Does it now make sense to you why King David could delight and meditate on the law day and night?

[20 : 35] I now come to my second point about righteousness. In verse 20, Jesus says, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of God.

As I said earlier, the scribes and the Pharisees came up with a complicated system of law that adds much to the Old Testament law. And they taught the Israelites that in order to be righteous, that is, in order to live in the right relationship with God, they ought to obey this complicated system of law.

So the people at Jesus' time thought that the Pharisees and the scribes were the most righteous people in the land. No one can possibly be more righteous than them.

But then Jesus shockingly demands from us a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and the Pharisees. How can we attain this righteousness?

Well, if you think righteousness means strict obedience with the law, then you definitely cannot have a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes, and the Pharisees. But I think what Jesus is really saying here is that our understanding of righteousness has been totally wrong.

[22 : 04] In order to live in the right relationship with God, strict obedience with the law is not enough. In fact, no human efforts will be enough.

it is a humanly impossible and it is righteousness of God. In Romans 10, it says, since they, referring to the Israelites, did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own righteousness, they did not submit to God's righteousness.

righteousness, but Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. We can only be righteous by having Christ's righteousness.

righteousness. What that means is we can only live in the right relationship with God by having Jesus' relationship with God. What is Jesus' relationship with God?

He is the perfect Son of God. He experienced temptations to sin, but He never sinned. He even willingly went to the cross for us as this is the Father's will for Him.

[23 : 22] God the Father said, this is my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased. Christ, in fact, is the only one who ever lived in the right relationship with God.

And Romans says that His righteousness is available to everyone who believes in Him. Available to you and me if we believe in Christ.

Now, what does this mean for us practically? I think oftentimes we as Christians ask questions like the question I posed at the beginning of a sermon. Should I date a non-Christian?

Should I take this job that demands work on Sundays? And I think oftentimes we ask these questions with the same motivation as the Pharisees and the scribes.

That is, what shall I do in order to become righteous? what shall I do in order to come into this right relationship with God? And I think that really is the language of the law.

[24 : 31] But Christ says we cannot be righteous without efforts. And we need His righteousness that is available to us if we believe in Him. So after we put our faith in Christ, we know that we are already in this right relationship with God and that should change the language of the law into the language of love.

So instead of asking what shall I do to become righteous? That is the language of the law. I think we are now able to ask in light of Christ's love for me, His sacrifice on the cross for me, His righteousness given to me.

How shall I live to love Him, to honor Him, to praise Him, to worship Him, to testify about Him? I think that is a language of love.

And that brings me to my last point about living in loving worship of Jesus. Jesus in Matthew 5 gave a number of examples about what it means to live in loving worship of Him.

And today I will just focus on the first example He gave about anger. In verse 21, Jesus refers to the sixth commandment that you shall not murder.

[25 : 58] Have you wondered why Jesus then suddenly talks about the issue of anger? Well, in Genesis 4, we see the first murder in the history in the history of mankind.

That is Cain's murder of his brother Abel. Cain murdered his brother Abel because the Bible tells us he was very angry. Christ says that the sixth commandment against murder actually points us towards the issue of anger.

And that is no longer an issue on the outside that the Pharisees and the scribes care about, but an issue on the inside, an issue of the heart.

Jesus is not talking about anger with what a person does, but He's talking about the anger with the person himself or herself. To cry out against a person you fool demonstrates this profound sense of hatred and even total disregard for the welfare of this person.

is kind of, is like looking down the person as if that person is no longer made in the image of God and no longer fit for salvation in Christ.

[27 : 19] Have you had an outburst of anger against someone recently? Perhaps someone who has wronged you and you lash on that person. or perhaps you're a less confrontational person, so you're on good terms with everybody, but deep down in your heart you're quite angry and bitter against a lot of people.

when you come to pray before God do you think of those person? Have you realized that Christ hates that person's sin against you and also your sin but Christ loves you and the person so much that he came he went to the cross for both of you.

Now if you realize this Christ says leave your gift at the altar and go to seek reconciliation and we will know that living in a Chinese society to apologize to someone that you are rightly angry with what that person did to you but you are quite wrong to treat that person less than a person made in the image of God as a person not fit for salvation in Christ isn't that the strangest thing ever?

And don't we lose faith doing that? But for people at Jesus' time to leave the altar while the act of sacrifice is still unfinished is also deeply improper.

Christ knows there is a cost to such reconciliation in each and every culture but he asks us this question in light of his love for you his sacrifice for you on the cross his righteousness given to you would you give up your face to love him to honor him to praise him to worship him to testify about him you may be sitting here and think this is just too much for you do you feel powerless Christ knows we're too weak on our own so he actually not just give us his own righteousness he also gives us his spirit to empower us last week Kevin talked about this famous passage in Ezekiel 37 where God shows us we are all dry bones with no sign of life but God promises that one day he will put his spirit within us so that we are empowered to live to worship him we're empowered to give out our face and seek reconciliation with those we have sinned against shall we now pray for the spirit to empower us

[30 : 32] Father God please open our eyes so that we could see Christ in the law so that we could be like King David to delight in the law and to meditate on it day and night how beautiful and marvelous is the law Father God we thank you for Christ's righteousness we cannot fully understand why we could be counted righteous through someone's righteousness through Christ's righteousness it's such a profound mystery and I pray that you help us understand it and more importantly help us believe in Christ's righteousness and please help us God to abandon the language of the law we no longer want to ask what we could do to please you to become righteous we are righteous in Christ already and now we are enabled to speak a language of love to do everything we could think of to love you to worship you to honor you to praise you to testify about you but one issue we all face is the issue of anger

Father God we confess we cannot control our anger we are angry towards people as if they are not people made in the image as if they can no longer be saved Holy Spirit we are powerless and we are too weak to do anything about our anger issue we hold on to our face because we dare not lose it in the Chinese society Holy Spirit would you help us see the wonders the glory and the beauty of Jesus and help us willingly give up our face to reconcile to people help us Spirit please help us we pray this in your son's holy and precious name