

1/25/26

Sermon Title: Righteousness Beyond the Law

Preacher: Pastor Kim Soonbae

Scripture Passage: Matthew 5:21-48

### **Murder**

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’

<sup>22</sup> But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister<sup>[b][c]</sup> will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

<sup>23</sup> “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,

<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

<sup>25</sup> “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

<sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

### **Adultery**

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

<sup>28</sup> But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

<sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

<sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

### **Divorce**

<sup>31</sup> “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’

<sup>32</sup> But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

### **Oaths**

<sup>33</sup> “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’

<sup>34</sup> But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;

<sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.

<sup>36</sup> And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

<sup>37</sup> All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

### **Eye for Eye**

<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’

<sup>39</sup> But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

<sup>40</sup> And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.

<sup>41</sup> If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

<sup>42</sup> Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

### **Love for Enemies**

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

<sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

<sup>45</sup> that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

<sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

<sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Jesus demands from His disciples a “greater righteousness” that is worthy of entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

The Jews lived by regarding the Law of Moses as an absolute standard.

However, Jesus presents a far higher standard.

He elevates the observance of the Law from the level of outward actions to the level of the heart.

The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, who observed only the external form of the Law while ignoring its inner meaning, was not true righteousness in the genuine sense.

Jesus expands the meaning of the Law by presenting to His disciples—who lived by considering the Law of Moses as an absolute standard—a criterion of “better righteousness” that surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

Jesus explains how the Law is expanded through this “better righteousness” by contrasting it with the Law across six topics: murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and love for one’s neighbor.

First, He interprets the sixth commandment of the Ten Commandments, which concerns murder.

The Jews, including the disciples, believed that as long as they did not directly commit the act of murder, they were keeping the commandment “You shall not

murder."

However, Jesus teaches that not only those who commit physical murder, but also those who become angry with their brothers or hate them, will be subject to the same judgment as murderers.

<sup>21</sup> "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.'

<sup>22</sup> But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister<sup>b)c</sup> will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

He teaches that reconciliation with one's brother is the way to avoid judgment, and that being reconciled with one's brother is more important than offering a sacrifice.

<sup>23</sup> "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,

<sup>24</sup> leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

At that time, Jews went directly to the Jerusalem Temple to present offerings and sacrifices to God.

Therefore, going all the way to the Temple in Jerusalem, then turning back to reconcile with one's brother, and then returning again to the Temple was by no means an easy task.

Nevertheless, Jesus' command to do so emphasizes how important it is to restore broken human relationships.

Jesus teaches that judgment will come upon those who, without any sense of hesitation, worship God while being unable to control their anger toward their brothers—hurling threats and curses—and therefore He urges them to be reconciled immediately.

<sup>25</sup> “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

<sup>26</sup> Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Citizens of the Kingdom of God must not stop merely at keeping the commandment “You shall not murder,” but must also refrain from placing themselves in God’s seat and passing judgment or hurling insults at their brothers.

Please remember that anger toward a brother was manifested as the very first murder.

Those who have been set free from sin as citizens of God’s Kingdom are not people who become insensitive to sin, but rather those who become even more sensitive to it.

Second is the interpretation of the seventh commandment of the Ten Commandments, which concerns adultery.

In the Old Testament, adultery refers to the actual, outwardly manifested act of sexual immorality involving a married woman.

However, Jesus teaches that in light of God’s original intent in giving this law, even if no physical sexual act takes place, harboring lustful desire for a woman is already adultery.

Here, “a woman” refers to a woman who is married and thus is another man’s wife.

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’

<sup>28</sup> But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

The people of God's kingdom are not free from this commandment simply because they have not physically committed sexual relations with another person's spouse.

They must not regard the opposite sex as an object of lust, but instead treat them with a wholly pure heart.

Jesus warns that if a part of one's body causes one to stumble, it is better to remove it than to suffer the punishment of hell.

<sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

<sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

The third teaching concerns divorce.

Under the Law, divorce was effected by writing a certificate of divorce.

However, Jesus forbids divorce without a legitimate reason such as sexual immorality.

Jesus is not rejecting the law concerning divorce that was given through Moses. Rather, by revealing God's intent contained in Deuteronomy 24:1–4, Jesus makes it clear that this law must not be used as a justification for easy or casual divorce. (Deut 24:1) If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house,

(Deut 24:2) and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man,

(Deut 24:3) and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies,

(Deut 24:4) then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the LORD. Do not bring sin upon the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance.

The requirement to give a certificate of divorce was intended to limit the absolute authority of husbands in ancient society and to compel them to act responsibly toward their wives and their wives' families.

It provided the legal basis for a divorced person to remarry.

The certificate of divorce served as proof that remarriage was permitted.

Nevertheless, the Jews frequently abused this law and often dismissed their wives.

In such a situation, Jesus teaches that even if an action is legally permissible, if the inner motive and intention are not right, it is sin and must be forbidden.

<sup>31</sup> “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’

<sup>32</sup> But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

The fourth teaching concerns oaths.

At that time, the Jews applied the command “Do not break your oath” only to oaths made to God.

They thought that oaths sworn by heaven, by the earth, or by anything other than God could be broken, so they made such oaths lightly and did not keep them.

Jesus tells them not to swear at all.

Human beings do not have the ability to keep oaths.

<sup>33</sup> “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’

<sup>34</sup> But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne;

<sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King.

<sup>36</sup> And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black.

The Jews did not dare to swear by the name of God, but they often swore by heaven, by the earth, by Jerusalem, or even by their own heads.

However, Jesus teaches that one must not swear by anything at all.

Instead of making oaths, he instructs them to say "Yes" for what is right and "No" for what is not.

<sup>37</sup> All you need to say is simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

Human beings find it difficult to take full responsibility for their actions and words.

Therefore, we should not easily swear or make guarantees over either great or small matters, but should always be careful with what we say and do.

We must live by humbly seeking God's grace and help.

God's intention in giving the Law was to make people truthful.

If we always speak and act truthfully, there would be no need for oaths.

Thus, a sincere heart is more important than swearing.

The fifth teaching concerns retaliation.

The law of retaliation—"an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"—was God's provision to prevent personal vengeance from escalating in scale or severity and to ensure fair judgment.

However, Jesus reinterprets this law and teaches that even in situations that call for judgment, we are to show mercy and overcome evil with good.

<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’

<sup>39</sup> But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.

<sup>40</sup> And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.

<sup>41</sup> If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

<sup>42</sup> Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also; if someone demands your tunic, give your cloak as well; and if someone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

The sixth teaching concerns enemies.

Contrary to the command, “Love your neighbor and hate your enemy,” Jesus teaches us to love our enemies and to pray for those who persecute us.

Jesus teaches that Christians must be different from unbelievers.

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’

<sup>44</sup> But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

<sup>45</sup> that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

<sup>46</sup> If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others?

Do not even pagans do that?

The love of Christians must go beyond humanistic love or mere philanthropy.

love is not a concept of giving and receiving, but unconditional love given without expecting anything in return.

Jesus perfectly practices this love and teaches that just as God the Father is perfect, we as His children are also to be perfect.

<sup>48</sup> Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Even when sinners who had betrayed and disobeyed God nailed Jesus, the Son of God, to the cross in order to kill Him, Jesus showed His love for them to the very end by praying that their sins would be laid upon Himself.

As God's children, Christians must turn away from a self-centered life that seeks revenge or retaliation based on personal feelings, and from a life that follows the temptations of the world.

Instead, they are to live a life that follows Jesus Christ.

Beloved members of Church of Godly Dreams,

Bill Clinton, the 42nd President of the United States and a graduate of the world-renowned Yale University Law School, was once the subject of worldwide ridicule when a recorded video surfaced showing him inhaling cocaine with prominent figures in Arkansas during his time as governor.

In response, he offered the astonishing defense, "I did put marijuana to my lips, but I did not inhale it."

We are called to live in obedience to the Law.

However, keeping the Law does not mean merely observing the written statutes in a literal sense.

It means understanding the intent and purpose contained within the Law and upholding its spirit.

Jesus refers to this as a "better righteousness" and commands us to live by it.

The new commandment Jesus gives as this “better righteousness” is love for one another.

(John 13:34) A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

This is not the abolition of the Law.

Rather, it is the fulfillment of God’s intent within the Law.

Jesus desires that we not merely keep the Law in a literal sense, but discover God’s will embedded in it and obey it.

Let us all go beyond the Law and keep the new commandment given as a “better righteousness.”

Let us live by loving one another.