

The Mind of Christ - Lesson 77
October 23, 2020

Section 54 The Sermon on the Mount

A. T. Robertson's Harmony of the Gospels

Thank you for joining us for another edition of the "Mind of Christ". This is a very in depth study and I would encourage you, if you're joining us for the first time and you don't kind of understand what we're doing here, you are going to need your Bible. You may even need to hit the 'pause' button, and you may need to think about some things because this is a rather "in depth" study of the mind of Christ. It began many years ago for me, back in 2010 actually, and it took seven years of study ... 21 journals and I model it on the metaphor of "Challenger Deep" which is the deepest place in the ocean because I am searching out the 'mind of Christ' which is very deep. So, as we do that, we are looking closely at everything Jesus says and everything Jesus does in order to ascertain how He thinks.

We are in the Sermon on the Mount right now and we're going to pick up in **Matthew 5:17** and go down to verse 20. And I can tell you this is one of the most challenging sections of Scripture and I'm going to do my best to unravel this and to understand Christ's mind. We're going to be talking about the law and the role of the law, so it's really the difference between the Old and the New Testament, and the covenants between the old covenant and new covenant. It really gets into a very crucial kind of study so let's read what Jesus said.

Matthew 5:17-20

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill.¹⁸ For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.¹⁹ Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

There is a lot there. This may be a little bit longer than normal but I'll do my best to keep the pace going.

In verse 17 Jesus speaks of **abolishing** law or fulfilling it. In 17-20, the positive action words that are included in this section correspond to the effectiveness of *salt* and *light* so the words are "fulfilled", "accomplished", "keeps", and "teaches" which equate to surpassing the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees. So there are essentially four actions that are under consideration here.

Jesus spent a lot of time on the Sermon on the Mount correcting the misunderstandings the Jews had in interpreting the Law. In many ways, they were not very good at interpreting the Law. It goes to show that *societies can hold deeply entrenched deceptions as truth*. They can so 'embrace' these falsehoods so as to distort even the work of the Son of God. So, there is where the tension is. It's between the interpretations of the Jews with the Son of God and His correct interpretation of the truth that He spoke.

If they could explain Jesus' coming as a threat, which they tried to do, that He was trying to abolish the Law and the Prophets, then they could paint Jesus as a villain against Jewish culture and religion; and that's exactly what they were trying to do ... saying that Jesus was coming to wipe away their law, their tradition, to abolish it. This misconception must not stand.

In other words, Jesus must explain that He did ***not*** come to ***abolish*** the Law. It must stand corrected by Jesus. Jesus had to reorient their thinking, and in reorienting it, we get an insight into the mind of Christ. So He was being accused of 'abolishing' the Law or annulling even the least of the commandments teaching others to annul the commandments. Two words come to light: the word "abolish" and the word "annul". We have to understand those words.

The word "abolish" is used, also as a translation, of "destroy". The Greek word means "to loosen down" or to "disintegrate". By implication, it means to "demolish" something. And then, a kindred word to that means "to halt for the night" or "to break up a journey". There is a sense in which ... when you're taking a journey you "***interrupt***" the journey, or you kind of "***break up***" the journey by ***spending the night*** somewhere. This is kind of the idea of ***abolishing*** or ***destroying*** the journey that you're on. You're "lopping it off", you're "stopping it" and this is essentially what is being said here about what Jesus was doing to the Law. The Law had been there and had been in force for all these years, and Jesus came along and He was kind of interrupting it, lopping it off; He was interrupting the journey. This is kind of the "sense" of the word.

The Greek word that is used here is two words. It's "kata" (κατα) which is the intensive form, and then "luo" the English word, (λυο) meaning to loosen. So it was an intense word. Particularly it means to dissolve, or dis-unite the parts of something as in a building. It would mean tearing it apart, taking it apart one by one, taking it down.

I'll show you where this word is used in other places. In **Matthew 26:61** it says, Jesus speaks of "***destroying the temple***". It's the same word. In **Matthew 27:40** the two robbers say, "***You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself!***" In **Acts 5:38-39** it is used for "***destroying the plans of men***". **Acts 6:14** Jesus is ***destroying*** this place or this temple or the altar and the customs of the Jews. In **Galatians 2:18** Paul uses this word to describe his work of ***destroying*** something regarding the law, but what he is doing is the notion that the law was intended to ***save is*** by our ***keeping*** it. So what he was destroying was not the law itself, but the ***notion*** that someone could be saved by the law. In this, he did not destroy the law, but only a wrong notion or idea as it pertained to the law. This is what Jesus was doing. Jesus wasn't destroying the law; He was destroying wrong notions about the law.

Jesus did foretell the days when the Temple would be destroyed in **Luke 21:6** and also in **Mark 13:2**. This happened in A. D. 70 when Rome tore down the Temple and burned it. In the Septuagint which is the Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word is used meaning to unbind. It's talking of caravans there and of travelers. It means to halt or to rest for the night ... it means to put up for the night. The beasts of burden were unharnessed, and were unloaded as in **Genesis 42:27**, and **Genesis 43:21**.

In the New Testament it is used, generally to lodge or to take lodging. In **Luke 9:12** Jesus was sending the multitude away to find lodging. It was used of being a guest of Zacchaeus ... that Jesus was going to come and ‘stay at his house’ that day. It’s the idea that somehow, something is “being interrupted”. The law is being stopped; it’s being “put up” for the night, if you will, for destroying and destroy in the New Testament. There are other words that are used.

The people began to see Jesus as the one who was ‘dismantling’ the laws that Moses gave them; that He was unbinding laws that they believed Moses had bound on them. Remember the statement that Jesus made, **Matthew 18:18**, ‘[whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven; whatever is loosed on earth will be loosed in heaven](#)’? Well, they believed that Jesus was unbinding the laws of Moses bound upon the Jews. And Jesus *did come* to lift unnecessary burdens placed on people by the Jewish leaders as in **Matthew 23**. He mentions this in verse 4. “[They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger.](#)” So Jesus is, in a sense, unbinding the burdensome loads that the Jewish leaders were placing on people’s backs. But it wasn’t the Law that was burdensome; it was actually *interpretations* of the Law of the leaders of the Jews that were burdensome, and He was loosing those.

So, if Jesus was the “loos-er” of the Law, then they were the “binders”, in a sense, because they were binding more than the law actually said. Jesus came to ‘carry’ burdens by **fulfilling** the Law and by meeting all the just requirements of the Law in Himself by perfectly **keeping it**. So when He lived out the Law, perfectly keeping the Law, fulfilling all of the righteous requirements of the Law, He was actually “lifting the burdens”; He was unbinding us from the Law because we are no longer “under Law”, we are “under grace”.

In mentioning the Law and the Prophets, Jesus is covering the entire Old Testament. Sometimes it’s “the Law and the Prophets”, sometimes it’s “the Law, the Prophets and the Writings.” He includes the ‘smallest letter’ or ‘the stroke’ of this law written in Hebrew with a jots and tittles. Since every part of the Old Testament is the Word of God, then every part is valid and must accomplish its intended purpose. The purpose might simply be to convey some historical point or fact, to describe something, or to make some profound revelation of the nature and the purpose of God. But **every part** is important. This is the plenary, verbal inspiration nature of the Word of God...and Jesus is upholding that in this section.

Paul calls this “Scripture” in **2 Timothy 3:16-17** saying, “[All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.](#)” Scripture is profitable to completely furnish the man of God for every good work. In **Luke 24:27** Jesus explained to them on the road to Emmaus “the things concerning Himself in **all the Scriptures**. And then, in **Luke 24:45** He uses the word Scripture again, “[He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.](#)” In **Luke 24:44** He mentions the “Law, the Prophets and the Writings (or the Psalms)” which must be fulfilled.

Jesus is talking about the fulfillment of the entire Old Testament. Now, what does the word “fulfilled” mean?

The word is “pleroo” meaning to **make replete**, to **cram** - like cramming something into a net, to level up a hollow place, it’s where you are putting dirt into a hollow place filling it up. It means to furnish, to satisfy, to execute; there are many different ways this word can be translated. It means to finish, to verify, to accomplish, to complete, to put an end to something, to expire, to fill, to fulfill, to perfect, to supply ... all of these are words that describe this word that is translated “fulfill” in this section.

This word is very common in many different contexts but the picture of ‘filling a pot’ is vivid. I want you to think about that ... filling up a pot. When something is filled, it is not destroyed. When you are filling something, you are not destroying it. The law was hollow, if you will...a shell, a container. It was not the content. The Law has a shape to it ... shaped like a bowl and there needed to be content put into the Law. It only provided some shape or form; it was not useful without being ‘filled’. It was a mere indicator of what the *real thing* would look like.

Imagine a form of a man into which one might pour wax. You have a form in the shape of a man, and you pour wax into the form. You could get ‘some idea’ of what the person would look like from the form; but not completely ... not accurately. You would need to pour the wax in order to see exactly what the person is going to look like.

The Jews studied “the form”; they studied the Law which was the form, but they missed the Man who *fulfilled* the form. And Jesus was the Man who fulfilled the form! He was the One who *fit* into the shell of the Law and *gave it life*, gave it *meaning* and gave it *purpose*. For instance, a prophecy was meant to be fulfilled. **Acts 3:18** illustrates: “But the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled.” The Old Testament Law talked about the sufferings of the Christ, but *until Jesus actually suffered*, those words were just simply an empty bowl. Now, they indicated what was coming, because what was coming was in the shape of that bowl. But until Jesus actually poured His suffering into it, **that’s** when you begin to see exactly what form that was to take.

The words of prophecy were merely hollow forms until Jesus gave *substance* to them by actually doing what God said would be done. In this context, Christ’s suffering was the substance that *filled* the words of the prophecy. The Word, which is logos (λογος), filled the words spoken years ago. Jesus is called the logos in **John 1:1** and He is the One who fills the words of the Old Testament and give them meaning and purpose.

In **Acts 13:7**, the people in Jerusalem and their rulers were ignorant of the prophecies and ignorant of the identity of Jesus as the Christ, but nevertheless did their part in fulfilling those prophecies by condemning, executing and burying Him. They were accomplices to the fulfillment, so in their case, there was no *intention* of fulfillment ... they weren’t *intending* to show how Jesus would fill up this form, but they were accomplices in doing so.

Let’s capture the idea of words, especially as it relates to something we “will” do as being vessels. Words are *empty containers*. If I say I’m going to do something, “I will do this”, that’s an empty container ... until I actually **do** it, and then I fill that container with something. The words by themselves are useless and empty unless filled by action.

So, how was the Law an empty vessel needing to be fulfilled? The rituals of the Law, the Passover, Yom Kippur, animal sacrifices, the priesthood; all of those things were vessels; they had to be filled. They were mere containers or forms, they were not the substance. They were symbols, and types and indicators of the reality that was to come. **Hebrews 9:9** calls these outward places *constructions* and *rituals*. He calls them *symbols* unable to perfect the worshipper, set in place until the time of reformation. But Christ came and He touched reality. The greater and the more perfect tabernacle, He obtained eternal redemption, the only kind that is real, by offering His blood through the eternal Spirit. In this way, He made the covenant valid by adding *substance* to it. So all of those rituals in the Old Testament were *indicators* of something, they were *symbols* of something, but they were not the reality until Jesus came and made them the Spiritual reality.

Now, a covenant or will is useless until it is put into effect and is made a reality in force. Even under the Old Testament, Law was a symbol, a powerless form or vessel until the shedding of the blood of the Son of man. The form could only produce a form of forgiveness, but the substance produced the *real thing* ... it produced real forgiveness. These were a *copy* of the true one according to **Hebrews 9:24**. (For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.) See Hebrews 9 for how the writer fleshes that out.

Colossians 2:9-10 makes it clear that all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form in Jesus. In this case, Jesus is kind of the container, and the reality is the Godhead; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that is indwelling Jesus.

In **Colossians 2:16-17**, “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—¹⁷ things which are a mere *shadow* of what is to come; but the *substance* belongs to Christ.” A shadow has a form to it, but it has no *reality*. It has no *substance* to it. The substance is Christ; He is the one who actually casts the shadow. This is a major theme and figures prominently into the *thinking of Jesus*. He lived in the reality while others dealt in *shadows*.

In **Matthew 5:18**, he’s dealing now with the passing away of Heaven and Earth. The passing away of Heaven and Earth is likely an expression meaning *a very long time*. It is a time-frame that, if it ever happens, it won’t matter anyway because everything will be gone. Also, God will not allow Heaven and Earth to pass away until its *purpose* is completed. God maintains and sustains everything that has meaning and purpose.

The same is true of the Law. Not one smallest letter or stroke will pass away until the law is accomplished or fulfilled. The smallest letter is ‘iota’. It is the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet and the eighth letter of the Greek alphabet. Usually when we say ‘iota’ it is put for a very small part of anything. It’s also talked about as a ‘jot’. In **Psalms 119:73**, if you go there you will see “yoda”. We would give it the spelling “y-o-d-h”, and notice how small this letter is. If you want to see an example of it, go to **Psalms 119:73**, in your Bible, and at verse 73 you will see the symbol. It is the smallest symbol in the Hebrew Bible. It appears like our apostrophe. The Greek letter appears as a kind of upside-down apostrophe. So you can see, it’s just a very small stroke. The stroke here “kerailh” is something horn-like. It looks like a little horn, the apex of a Hebrew letter. It’s just the little stroke above the

Hebrew letter. It's the least particle ... the "tittle" if you will. It is the "marking" that is on the Hebrew words that give them the vowel sounds, because the Hebrew language does not have any vowels in it ... it's all consonants. They had to learn how to pronounce it so they put these diacritical markings over the letters to help the Hebrews to understand how to pronounce these things. Jesus is saying that even those little markings are not going to pass away *until the law is fulfilled*. They have special meaning and pronunciation to the Jews.

Jesus was using hyperbole to say that His *intent* was to fulfill the entire Old Testament...to the brim. He was going to "fill it up" ... not leaving anything lacking. He was not going to miss any opportunity to exactly everything the Law said.

The word "accomplished" in our text today is the very common word "ginomai" (γίνομαι). It means "to cause to be", "to become", or "to come into being". It's a very common word. It's like the word "fulfill". Words and intentions are useless unless there is some power to actually bring about the thing promised or spoken. In other words, something has to "become". You can say that something is 'going to' become, but until it actually becomes, it doesn't exist.

Perhaps this is why Jesus cautions us about making promises or oaths to simply let our "yes" be "yes" and our "no" be "no" because if we say much more than that, we don't have the ability to make all those things; we don't have the ability to make something "become". So one thing that demonstrates the difference and the similarity between us and God is the ability to do what we say ... the ability to fulfill. That's the difference between us and God. God has the ability of fulfill *everything* He says. We don't have the ability to do that. He has complete ability; we have partial ability to do this. This is why we should depend on His word and not on our word.

So, how do we treat this Law? First, we do not seek to annul it ... because Jesus didn't. The idea of annul is the word "luo" (λυο) to loosen, to break, or to destroy. The Law binds us to its obligation. *It creates in us a link to the will of God*. We are *fastened* to Him *through the Law*. We should not deliberately annul the Law ... even the smallest point of it, not teach others to do so by word or by deed. To do so is to say we have **no** obligation when we **do** have obligation. Only God can release us from our obligation to law.

Regarding the least of these commandments, as he talks about here, what is the 'least'? Well, the greatest is to love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, and the second greatest is to love your neighbor as yourself. These are great because they are *foundational*. The rest of the Law is built on these and are expressions or implications of these. Perhaps the least command would be some implication ... one we might not even be aware of. We may not even know the implication of what constitutes the 'least' of these commands.

How might this be applied to us today under the New Covenant? Well, this is a not as easy a question to answer as it might seem because there is another extreme we must avoid, because when we're talking about what is the 'least' of the commands in the New Covenant, we have to be very careful here of where we're going with that. The extreme, where we get ourselves into trouble, is binding what God has not bound. In our eagerness to not annul any command no matter how small it may appear, we must not go to the extreme of making laws that God has not made.

Perhaps the key is the word “*commandment*”... the least of these “*commandments*” He says. The commandment is an injunction, a precept, it’s an order; it’s a directive. **Matthew 15:3, 6** here *tradition is elevated above* commandments which causes us to transgress and invalidate the commands. We’ll have to return to this when we get over to **Matthew 15** and we’re a long way from there. But what he’s saying here is that you can be looking in a commandment for implications, and that implication that you see really is an inference that you make that creates a tradition; and that tradition becomes more important than the *commandment itself*. And Jesus says when you do that you nullify the commandment for the sake of your tradition. But a command is to be obeyed.

Where we have trouble is with examples and with what is called “necessary inferences” in hermeneutics. So let’s just stick to commands. If we stick with the commands, the plain commands of Scripture and we don’t let ourselves venture off into ‘how do examples apply’ or ‘how do inferences apply’, I think we’ll probably be a lot better off.

So, the problem Jesus had with the Law was “the keeping of the Law”. It wasn’t the Law itself. The Law wasn’t the problem; it was the ability of man to keep the Law. Therefore, all that they tell you to do and observe, we’re told in **Matthew 23:3** Jesus says, “therefore all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds; for they say things and do not do them.” So Jesus is saying there’s nothing wrong with most of the stuff they are telling you to do; just don’t follow what they’re **doing** because *they’re* not keeping the Law themselves!

Participation in the fullness of God’s will is found in the keeping of the commands. Obedience brings us into the life of God. If one would know the joys of brotherhood, in the military for instance, or as a first responder, one has to step onto the battlefield or into the fire and actually participate. We do not become like Jesus by *observation* but by *participation*.

Beyond obedience is teaching ... teaching often to ‘be obedient’. So, we teach people to be obedient like in **Matthew 28: 19-20**. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe *all that I commanded you*; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” We teach by word and we teach by deed. We may teach someone, for instance, to **obey** God and give them our example of how to put such into practice, but we must be careful not to make ‘our way’ the ‘only way’ that a command can be carried out. We may give an example of how to carry out the command of God, but that doesn’t mean that that’s the **only** way to carry out that command. We must not confuse the command with our example of carrying it out.

In many fields today we hear what is called “best practices”. These are usually tried and proven methods for accomplishing a mandate. But these are not static. Best practices are not static. They are dynamic ... constantly being changed, improved and built upon. These practices are not the commands, but **mere responses** to the commands. Over time, these practices become *traditions*, and these traditions become our **commandments**. That’s when we get into trouble. Unfortunately, our traditions are developed by sinful men who often do things a certain way, not so we can become more effective in carrying out the will of God,

but so that we can maintain power or control over other people. This is where tradition trumps commands. This is what Jesus battled. This is what He was going after ... the policies of men that trumped the commands of God. Instead of teaching men to obey, the leaders were teaching people the “*loopholes*” so that they would not have to obey! And there are many examples of this in the Bible of where the Jewish leaders were teaching people more about “loopholes” than about how to keep the commands of God.

The idea, at least, of the greatest in the kingdom is interesting, so when we get to this part down here where Jesus says in **Matthew 5:19**, “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven”, this is a problem. This is a problem for me. I’m going to try to straighten it out a little bit here in the next couple of pages.

The idea of least and greatest in the kingdom is interesting. In this context it seems that those who do annul the commands and teach others do remain in the kingdom but simply have the “least place” in it. But then He says that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees, we cannot even **enter** the kingdom of heaven. **Matthew 5:20**, he says, “For I say unto you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” The Scribes and the Pharisees were the very ones who annulled the law and taught others to do so; they shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. They are not least in the kingdom; they are not even in the kingdom, it says! So are they **in** or are they **out**? I hope you can see the dilemma here of trying to understand this.

Well, in **Matthew 23:13** Jesus says that these same people “shut off” the kingdom of heaven from men. He says, “For you do not enter yourselves not do you allow those who are entering to go in.” It’s beginning to look like those people who are trying to **be saved by Law** and teaching other people **how to be saved by Law** don’t even enter the kingdom of heaven. So here again, it seems they are out; and keeping others out!

In **John 3** Jesus told Nicodemus, unless he was born again, he could not enter the kingdom of heaven. So the question is, ‘how does the *least* in the kingdom compare to those not entering the kingdom? So what is this phrase, “the *least in the kingdom*”?’

Well, perhaps it matters with the emphasis placed on the saying, “called least”. Notice it says here you shall be “**called least**” or “**called greatest**” in the kingdom. That is the kingdom of heaven where God calls those ‘who **annul** the Law’ ... we can call them the annulers, I guess. He calls them “the *least*” but those who **keep** the commandments ... He calls them “the great”. Now I’m not sure “this is it” but that’s an idea. So He may be making the distinction that **if you’re going to be great** you’re going to have to keep the commandments, but **if you’re going to go about annulling the Law, you’re going to be least**.

Or perhaps Jesus is not trying to be so technical on the matter. The import of His words is clear... “Do not annul the commands and do not teach others to annul the commands. This would be a profound mistake. You will never attain greatness in the kingdom this way.”

Seeking first the kingdom and His righteousness demands we treat the commands of God seriously. And teach others to do so. The kind of righteousness that we seek is one of the heart ... one only secured by the righteousness of Christ, who not only *fulfilled all righteousness* and *lived a sinless life*, but who *obtained our righteousness on the cross* and *imputed this righteousness to us*. **This is serious** and must **not** be minimized by anyone seeking God's favor.

The word "least" in the Greek means to be less, younger, or to be someone who has less dignity or is inferior. In **Hebrews 7:7** Abraham is described as 'the lesser' who blesses 'the greater', Melchizedek. In regard to quality, it could be the quality of something. In **John 2:10** regarding the wine, if you remember, the second wine that Jesus made was better quality, it was *greater* than the first wine. The first wine was the '*least*', it was inferior. In **Matthew 2:6** Bethlehem was being the *least* among the leaders of Judah, but out of which came a ruler ... so greatness came out of something that was called *least*.

Matthew 18:1-4 there was a discussion about who is the *greatest* in the kingdom of heaven. A child was set before them and in verses 3 and 4 Jesus does mix 'not entering the kingdom' and 'the greatest in the kingdom'. "Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven." He does mix those two. To enter the kingdom, one must be converted and become like little children. One humble, like a child, will be *great* in the kingdom of heaven.

So, there is this discussion in Scripture in the mind of Christ between 'least' and 'greatest'. The only issue here in the text that we have today in **Matthew 5:19**, "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" is whether or not someone who goes around annulling the Law, trying to destroy the Law, or trying to teach people things that are wrong about the Law; if those people are actually *in* the kingdom of heaven. This is because what they were teaching them 'about the Law' was that you could be saved by it which essentially annuls the Law because the Law was meant to be 'filled up' by Jesus and His work of redemption which is a work of grace.

I **use** this to show that Jesus applied '*least*' and '*greatest*' to the things of the kingdom. This is another way of approaching the misguided thinking of the Jews regarding personal greatness and how they viewed the commands of God.

When Jesus was specifically asked, "what was the great command in the Law", of course He spoke first of *love of God* and the second, *love for neighbor*. Then He told why these two were great. *On these two commandments depend the whole Law and the Prophets*. **Matthew 22:35-40**.

In **Matthew 23:23-33** Jesus speaks of the **weightier** matters of the Law: *justice*, *mercy*, and *faithfulness*, as compared to the tithing of mint, dill, and cumin. Jesus always had this sense of whatever is more important, and it stemmed from what was more fundamental.

The *least* commands are always dependent or based on the *greater* commands which are more expressive of the **character of God**. So the closer one gets to the character of God; love, mercy, justice, faithfulness ... the greater the command is. Then, God gives us more specific expressions of these characteristics. Putting truth and righteousness in the proper place was Jesus' task.

So, what Jesus was *doing* in this discussion was saying 'that there are some things that are much more important than what the Jews typically emphasize; and the closer we get to understanding the *character and the nature of God, that becomes our greatest hermeneutic*. We begin to know **Who God is** and in *knowing who* He is, we know *how He thinks* and we know *what He does*, and *what He would be pleased with* ... what would give Him pleasure ... what would cause us to be in His favor.

In **Matthew 5:20** Jesus' summary statement is "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Our righteousness must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees...and it must be kept in this immediate *context*. To Jesus, righteousness means filling up the words. It means *doing what you say* ... *not annulling the commands* and *not teaching others to do so*. This is your righteousness as opposed to His righteousness. Later, in **Matthew 6:33** He will speak of His righteousness.

Jesus is not saying here that *our* righteousness *will earn us* a place in the kingdom. He is saying that we must be serious about being real, to being authentic, to be captive Christians. God does not play. He knows our entrance into the kingdom will require the *death of His Son*, as a totally righteous sacrifice, but He also requires that those who follow His Son *die to self, and take up their cross of discipleship*.

Our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees who were playing so loosely with the Law. And we are not to do that! We are to take the very commands of God seriously because they are the work of our discipleship.

The word, 'exceeds' here means to *surpass*, it is something that is *over* and *above*. In **Matthew 14:20** there is the 'excess' of the fragments (something that exceeded). It means 'to exist in full quantity', to abound, or to be abundant. In **Romans 5:5**, grace is abounding. So the word 'exceeding' here is not just 'nudging them out' a little bit. *He wants us to live an exceedingly different life than the Scribes and the Pharisees did*.

In **2 Corinthians 1:5** *suffering* and *comfort* in Christ is abundant. It means to increase, to be augmented. In **Acts 16:5** the churches were increasing in number daily. He wants us to be increasing in righteousness, to advance, to increase in prominence (**Romans 3:7**), the truth of God abounded, to be abundantly gifted, to be richly furnished.

There are so many places here of how this word is used as an abounding, to exceed, to be exceptional in our righteousness. So Jesus wants our **best**. He does not want "a show". He wants the real me doing my best to please God and to fulfill **His will in my life**. This exceeds the kind of lifestyle of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

We have a couple of “take aways” from this message.

When we talk about the **Law of Moses**, the *Law of Moses* has **not** been destroyed. It is still the **Law of Moses. It's the Law of God!**

But what has happened was, it was a ‘form’ and Jesus now has ‘come into that form’ and He has filled it in order to show us *what the intent of the Law was and what the Law was foreshadowing*; and now we see the **reality in Christ**; and now our new relationship is established in Christ because **we're no longer under law, but we are under grace!**

But the Law still has a purpose for us ... because it still shows us the form of Christ, and it provides us with evidence of all the things that God did back in the Old Testament days in order to *foreshadow* the coming of Christ.

The *Law* should be studied! The *Old Testament* should be studied. We gain much from our acquaintance with the things written in the Old Testament; and what we're going to find in the Old Testament, if we look closely, now, especially through our *knowledge of Jesus Christ*; we're going to find **Jesus** in the Old Testament. We're going to find the **Gospel** in the Old Testament, and by that **Gospel** we are saved.

So, there we have it! That's our lesson for today. We will be tackling the next part of the Sermon on the Mount next week which will take us further into **Matthew 5** and also into **Luke 6**. It'll be a pretty long section. I doubt that we'll get it all done in one sitting.

So again, thank you for joining us today, and we'll direct your attention to our website at <https://www.centraisarasota.org/>. You will find many, many different teachings there; trainings that you can take, and things that you can do to enhance your relationship with our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Have a great day ... until next time.