

Sermon on the Mount Iii - Restoring the Purity of Our Origins in Christ

by Michael Flowers

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living according to God's original intent, which is to adore and worship Him, and to refocus our disordered desires and passions back to Him.

Duration: 24:49

Scripture: Matthew 5:13-17, Matthew 5:21-22, Matthew 5:27-28, Matthew 5:31-37, Matthew 5:48

Topics: "Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the first four misunderstandings of the law mentioned by Jesus. He acknowledges that these topics, such as anger, murder, lust, adultery, divorce, and oath taking, are complex and could be studied in depth. However, the speaker chooses to place these issues within the larger story of redemption. He emphasizes the importance of understanding God's original intent and aligning our desires and passions with it. The sermon also highlights the need to receive and press into God's love, even when it is challenging, and to hold firm to our profession of faith.

Transcript

Pray with me. We've got an easy text to deal with today. This is one of those seeker sensitive passages of scripture, you know.

We submit to the lectionary, right, so that we don't avoid certain passages of scripture. There's a lot of those to avoid if, you know, if we're insecure about the original intent of what scripture is saying. And that's what we want to get out today.

So pray with me that I would hit that original intent that Jesus, I believe, is getting at in these passages. So Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart, that which you have poured into me this morning, sitting before you, that you would pour it out this morning to nurture us, build us up in the faith, to encourage us, to let us know that you are a holy and gracious father. And in your infinite love, you made us for yourself.

Amen. We can go home knowing that. In his infinite love, he made us for himself.

It's a good father, right? Father's a good word, too. Mother's a good word. It's not our idea.

It's the father's idea. We're also dealing with wrong views of God coming at us and screaming within us sometimes, right? Coming from that wrong place that is disordered through sin and death. The good news is that Jesus Christ came to reconcile us back to the father, the God and father of all.

Amen. So we're going to be dealing with some of the issues in between that we all struggle with between the first coming and the second coming of Christ. Living in this present evil age, we all are, but we're receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken.

The writer of Hebrews says in this kingdom is coming at us in so many different ways, but it's embodied in Jesus Christ in his resurrection. And in Christ now, he is our hope of glory because it's Christ in you, the hope of Christ in you. So that's kind of the agenda today is how do we live out of Christ in us when the spirit and the flesh are still warring against the full intent and the original intent of why we were created? He created us for himself.

We're really fighting for that. That's a battle. That Jesus is one.

And in our unity, as we cling on to him, we get a glimpse of that, but we're still fighting, we're still wrestling with principalities and powers and with the flesh and the lust, the flesh and the boastful pride of life. Another writer, John, gives it to us that way. We're dealing with Matthew five, beginning with verse twenty one.

We've been walking our way through the Sermon on the Mount. We are beginning a new section in chapter five, beginning with verse twenty one, where Jesus begins to address common misinterpretations of the law in the previous verses. Jesus clearly says that he has not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it.

To perfectly satisfy its demands by accomplishing and enacting all that was spoken of him in the law, the Psalms and the prophets. He thus meets the demands of God's righteousness as the second Adam and through his whole life, incarnation, birth, life, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension. You see, our redemption is tied up in all of that, not just the cross.

He does meet the demands of God's righteousness as the second Adam, the second human being. It's really how you want to hear that through his whole life, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension reconciles us. He reconciles us to the father.

By sharing his life in us. In Christ, therefore, becomes the new status shorthand in Christ. Paul uses it all the time.

I'm glad that he found something that was shorthand because some of those paragraphs that Paul uses with no commas or anything run on sentences and everything like the first chapter of Ephesians. I'm glad it's not always like that, that he can boil all that down to a single sentence. And say, no, all of that is in Christ.

In Christ becomes the new status for the people of God, in Christ becomes the new status of the people of God. Savor that shorthand for the story of redemption. And he gives us what was mentioned in the preceding verses as an exceeding righteousness, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

What is that all about? How does this exceeding righteousness as salt of the earth, light of the world and a city on a hill manifest? Well, he begins to clear up common rabbinic misinterpretations of the law in this

verse, 21 and following six of them. I'm sure there's many more, but he only chose six on the Sermon on the Mount. What do I mean? Jesus does not begin with the common phrase, it is written that I say to you.

So he's not contradicting the law. This is a clue, along with the string of references to the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees throughout this sermon. Makes mention of them, and at the end, Jesus, I believe, is addressing an oral tradition and wants to correct it in these six verses.

The scribes and the Pharisees teaching would always reference a certain rabbinic school of interpretation, Hillel and all of these contemporaries of Jesus. And they had their own little school and ways of interpreting the law, and most of them really made it easier to do the law. Of course, it's not doing the law that way.

And so everybody knows this. Jesus is the only one that could fulfill it anyway. Right.

I intend to abolish it. I came to fulfill it. And the scribes and the Pharisees were trying to lessen the demands in order to fulfill it.

But that was impossible. And so the scribes and Pharisees, they would always quote their sources as a means of their authority. Right.

And this is why, upon hearing Jesus teaching at the end, the hearers conclude with amazement. This man teaches with authority, not like the scribes and the Pharisees. Who quote every other rabbi to make their point.

Jesus is the new rabbi, the last rabbi. And he's come to set it straight, all the false teaching, all the misinterpretations. You have heard that it was said, not you've heard it's written.

You've heard that it was said that I say to you, OK, that's that's my understanding of where we're going and why Jesus is doing this. He chooses six misunderstandings of the law and seeks to correct and clarify their original intent. And so this homily will consider the first four, not in any way attempting to expound on these four areas.

We would never be able to do that satisfactorily. You could do a whole course or you could get a Ph.D. in anger. Right.

And emotional disorders and all of that. Right. From a psychological or a theological perspective.

We just know what anger is. We know what murder is. I don't have to spend much time on that.

Right. We get it. But rather, I want to place all these things.

Anger, murder, lust, adultery, divorce and oath taking, which is assuming that we lie. I want to place them within the larger story of redemption. This is where I was going as I was reading and preparing for this.

This sermon, I just said, Lord, this is a 15, 20 minute thing. And so how do you do this? Anger, murder, anger and murder go together. Lust and adultery go together.

Divorce and then assuming adultery go together and oaths. He begins with murder and then it leads to the foundation of murder, which is he begins to address anger. What we want to do is set this in a liturgical context because that's what we're here for today.

And it's all about reconciliation and how to live a reconciled life because we don't get along. Only in Christ we can get along. It's hard for human beings to live through the covenant of marriage.

It's hard for Christians to to love each other. Right. I mean, the New Testament's just it explodes with all of the stuff.

That's why we have the New Testament. I mean, it's what Paul's addressing is most of our problems of not being able to get along or living disordered of passions and desires. Right.

He's addressing that disorder and he's always bringing us back to the indicative. But this is who you are. You're struggling with lust, but this is who you are.

You're about to divorce, but this is who you are. Right. I know you're angry.

You could actually look at the structure of this where a lot of relationships enter into matrimony, not with anger, lust and divorce, but with lust, anger and then divorce. That's kind of the sequence of the erosion. Right.

Lust can bring us together, but it won't keep us together. And then the anger starts and we start blame shifting, just like right back in the garden. It's this woman you have given me and this woman has been talking to snakes.

This is the human condition. And this is what the liturgy, this Eucharistic prayer, if you want to memorize it, it is powerful, holy and gracious father. To savor that, because he must for God to be God, he must be holy and he must be gracious.

We've got to believe that and experience that a holy and gracious father. In your infinite love, who God is out of his being, out of himself, in your infinite love, you made us for yourself. I mean, gosh, man, I could just stop right there.

And if we could sign off on that and go, I'm convinced we're convinced. But then we get jostled a bit in the real world or in our relationships or in our marriages or whatever. And at work, we're challenged to hold our profession of faith right to to really like I am living into this in your infinite love.

You made us for yourself. But when we had fallen into sin in the garden and become subject to evil and death. You, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal son, to share our human nature, to live and die as one of us.

Therefore, to reconcile us, to reconcile us to you. Here it is again, the God and father of all. That's the big story.

Where are we in that? God created us for himself. To use the Latin word to adore him, adore, adore to the mouth, that's what adoration means in Latin, and that's where we get all kinds of terminology, right? Oral hygiene, all of that, you know, the mouth, it's all about the mouth to the mouth, mouth to mouth. God gives us mouth to mouth resuscitation, eyelash to eyelash.

You see, when you're mouth to mouth, your eyelash to eyelash, that's another image. And that's what Adam and Eve were doing in the garden. It wasn't resuscitation, it was communion, mouth to mouth communion with their creator.

No conflict, no lust, no disorder desires. And they were listening to their father coming in the cool of the day, in the cool of the evening, and they would walk together in some way of fellowship and communion. That's the picture.

And so this adore, who wants to be adored otherwise in the garden where there's this creature who can't stand human beings and he and he has fallen from grace and he and he's present some way in the form of a serpent or an image of a serpent. That's the image of evil. And he begins to pull human beings away from mouth to mouth with God, adoring God, worshiping because he knows that orthodoxy, which is right worship, produces orthopraxy, right living.

And so he comes to disorder their worship. As God said, and, you know, the rest of the story, when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, these four things and many other things that anger, murder, lust, adultery, divorce and oath keeping, you know, I swear by heaven, I swear by the temple, you know, all this stuff, all of this has come in as a result of that back story. We must live into the second human being, the second Adam, our redeemer, our reconciler, in order to live in this present evil age, as it were, naked and without shame, without shame.

That was the original intent, to live openly and naked before God and without shame. It's interesting that Jesus is talking about anger and alter and murder in the passage. You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not commit murder.

Whoever murders will be liable to the judgment that I say to you, that everyone who is angry with his brother or sister, I'd say, will be liable to judgment. Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council and whoever says you fool be liable to the hell of fire. And then he brings in this thing.

So if you're offering your gift at the altar. And there, remember, your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go first be reconciled, first be reconciled or you won't have orthodoxy, which is right worship. What biblical passage could Jesus be alluding to in anger, murder, alter? Cain and Abel, absolutely.

And it's the first murder in the Bible. And it was all about anger because there was heterodoxy and orthodoxy involved. Bad worship, heterodoxy and orthodoxy, right worship.

And the guy who did it right got snuffed. Righteous Abel. And it's mysterious, but he offered from the flocks of his herds, the shedding of blood.

The backstory is not told, but it still Cain couldn't understand why isn't my offering acceptable? And the Lord says sin is crouching at the door and it seeks to master you. But you must master it. Well, thanks be to God, the greater righteousness that Jesus is talking about.

And sin itself and death itself got mastered in Jesus. Yeah, I think that's an allusion to Cain and Abel, which speaks so much about what God wants is reconciliation and reconciliation in worship. They're inseparable.

OK, so now we're looking at murder, anger, lust, adultery, divorce, oaths, so on and so forth. Jesus doesn't give us a laid out theology like Paul does about Paul lets us know that in this big story, he says a part of it is that we have crucified the flesh. We have crucified the flesh, what? With its passions and desires.

I have been crucified. I no longer live. I live by faith in the son of God who gave himself up for me.

It's an exchanged life now. And the more we're struggling with anger, murder, lust, adultery. Pornography, whatever, all of that.

This is why I don't even have to emphasize that stuff, because that's what we've been delivered from. And it's through the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. I have crucified the flesh, that part of me that wants to draw in and give attention to my lust and my disordered desires.

This is the difference between a Christian on the way and a Christian in bondage. Stuck in sin and not knowing how to get out. And when I say stuck in sin, I mean the statistics that so many are stuck in with pornography.

Leading to adultery and feeding lust, and so the original intent is what? Sexual purity. That's the original intent. And that's what we're dealing with today, not disordered sexual relationships, but a healed, reconciled, in Christ perspective of who you are in Jesus Christ.

Taking authority over lust because it's a powerful principality, taking authority over all of these things because he's given it to you in Jesus. All authority has been given to me. Get out there in that place where it's going to be tough.

Go into all the world. And boy, Paul did that and the disciples did that. They took the nations with that single focus of adoration to God.

They went forth mouth to mouth with God. We can choose who we will worship and adore. And I would just say this morning, there is God's voice is calling us all to adore him.

And if you've not been adoring him, this is the time to re up because we're going to confess our sins. And we do we confess our sins every day and in all the liturgical gatherings, because it presupposes that we struggle with sin and we're sinners, right? That's no surprise to us. That's the means of grace to be reconciled with God.

Holy and gracious father in your infinite love, you made us for yourself. Holy and gracious father in your infinite love, made us for yourself. And when we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, you, in your mercy, sent Jesus Christ, your only and eternal son.

To share our human nature, to live and die as one of us and to reconcile us to you. But I have all of these desires, right? And C.S. Lewis addresses that, and I brought the book today so I don't have to botch the quote. The thing is, is that desire is a good thing.

Disordered desire is what we're dealing with today. When we had fallen into sin and become subject to evil and death, does that mean the eradication of desire? No. One thing I desire that will I seek, David said.

It's refocusing our disordered desires and passions back to God's original intent that draws us near to him. Cleanses us, reconciles us and just baptizes us in his love, because that's who God is so good. But sometimes it's so hard to receive.

You get it? It's hard to receive sometimes. It's hard to press into it. It's always there, though.

I want you to know that. And I want you to know, yeah, it's hard sometimes to receive it and press into it. Yeah, I get it.

But we press in. We still march into the truth and we still proclaim the truth against our disordered desire. In affections that are pulling us, as it were, like gravity back into bondage.

No. OK. And so C.S. Lewis addresses this and he says, we're not trying to kill our desires.

That would be more from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward, the promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that our Lord finds our desires not too strong. But too weak, we are half hearted creatures fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us.

We're half hearted creatures fooling around with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us. Like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are too easily pleased.

This is the war, the battle, this is the fight we need to encourage each other in knowing this, right? We're all in the same boat, G.K. Chesterton says, and we're all seasick. Here's the deal. Rather than lustful intent and anger and all of this disordered passion, it sounds really right.

Who wants to go to that party? C.S. Lewis ends in his great sermon, The Weight of Glory. He basically says that if we could only understand the person sitting next to us and the glory to be revealed, we would be tempted to fall down in worship. That person, and this is what Paul means when he says, we no longer know each other after the flesh, lust, anger, ambition.

But now we no longer know each other after the flesh. You don't know your wife after the flesh. You don't know your husband after the flesh.

You don't know your brothers and sisters after the flesh. After the flesh, what does that mean? That old creation that's been, you know, full of evil and sin and death.

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