**Matthew 5:21-37 (ESV)**

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' [22] 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. [23] So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, [24] leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. [25] Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are 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. [26] Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

[27] "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' [28] But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. [29] If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. [30] And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

[31] "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' [32] But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

**“His Word Is His Bond”**

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age, according to the will of our God and Father, to whom be the glory forever and ever. Amen”(Gal 1:3-5). Everyone knows there are consequences in life. If you go this way, you cannot go that way. If you buy this, you cannot buy that. As the age old saying goes, “You cannot have your cake and eat it too.” While the Law of life is not forgiving, we try to find ways around it. A slogan to hear now days is, “So long as it doesn’t hurt anybody, you should do what you want.” Just as we have become experts at finding loopholes in our societal laws, so what is not prohibited must be permissible.

When Jesus preached His Sermon on the Mount, there is no doubt over the Law’s place. God by way of Moses told Israel before entering the Promised Land, “See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.” What sounded simple did not play out so well in the lives of sinners. Their hearts frequently turned away having dire consequences. At the time of Christ, another way arose to manage the Law to their liking. Of course, it was riddled with lies and Jesus revealed the truth. He said, “For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” The just consequence of our sins is great, but Christ mercifully delivers us by His righteousness.

1. **Who cannot miss the consequence of sin that stare us in the face!**
2. What is Jesus NOT saying?

* He is not saying somehow actual sins in life are the same like any other.
* In terms of the 5th commandment murder is still the most damaging act against our neighbor equal to that of the devil.
* In terms of the 6th commandment adultery and divorce are critical demolishers to family and make life worse off for the next generation.
* In terms of the 2nd commandment false oaths or vows scandalize the legal system and leave a mess of disorder.

1. So, what is Jesus saying?

* He is saying while actual sins differ, original sins shows none can escape God’s Wrath.
* Anger has the consequence of simmering judgment in our hearts toward another, even while daring to stand before the altar of God.
* Lust has the consequence of selfishness showing that in our hearts is unfaithfulness, which desires neither purity or love for another.
* Oaths have the consequence of either denying your words in the heart or holding a hidden arrogance of importance.

1. **Yet, Christ faces us offering His righteousness that delivers.**
2. God has felt the fullness of damage against the Law by sinners upon His Son.

* Jesus stood in the place of a murder like Barabbas and received what angry hearts wanted to demand, “Crucify Him!”
* Lust had no hold over Christ, but the joy set before Him longed for the cross to bear the judgment of a sinful world divorced from God.
* At His trial Jesus swore to the truth when the high priest demanded, “I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said so…”(Matthew 26:63-64).
* The consequence of sin is at last hell, but “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us” (Gal 3:13).

1. Righteousness pours out from God’s sacrifice having fulfilled the Law.

* There is no longer anger from God only an altar where a reconciling Word of Christ justly keeps saying to repentant believers, “Your sins are forgiven.”
* The faithfulness of God shows guilt stained eyes how baptism is a daily promise of purity for, “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11).
* What Christ has vowed in His Supper is no small matter, but rather His presence delivering the truth of salvation won for you by His sacrifice.
* The consequence of Christ is heaven for, “The Lord has made known his salvation; he has revealed his righteousness in the sight of the nations”(Psalms 98:2)

1. **Such mercy from Christ is life and goodness for our lives**.
2. This is what first and foremost comes to make a difference in our hearts.

* Those angry wanting control Jesus says, “It is already done!”
* Those lusting for alternatives Jesus says, “No need to shop around look to my sacrifice.”
* Those committed to relationships Jesus says, “My Word is my bond for I am Savior and Lord.”
* Rather than outside change, the inside is where Christ works repentance and faith in Him.

1. This life and goodness worked by God’s grace does make us shine in the world.

* The way of reconciliation is foundational, so that forgiveness reigns as we remain before God who forgives us.
* Marriage is a gift of God to cherish, so no sexual revolution to celebrate only grief and healing for all the brokenness of selfishness.
* We can take oaths to honor authorities, but never lightly or to make our promise greater than God’s Name and His Will.
* Whatever shines with life and goodness always goes back to Christ for us.

Valentine’s Day this week brings that romantic love people long to have and express. Yet, the origins of that day are anything but loving. St. Valentine was a priest in the 3rd century imprisoned and killed for performing marriages of soldiers and for helping persecuted Christians in the Roman Empire. As we gather around God’s Word and Sacrament, this righteousness from Christ is light in a dark world. There are no loopholes with the law and why the Gospel alone saves sinners. Faith in Christ removes the superficial so righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees by God’s grace. More than respecting the Law, honoring Christ is the hallmark of our lives. The just consequence of our sins is great, but Christ has delivered us by His righteousness. Amen. Now may the peace of Christ that passes all understanding be with your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.