

I invite you to open your bibles this morning to today's scripture text which can be found in Matthew, the 5th chapter, verses 27-30. We continue our series today in our discovery of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus's intimate teachings to us, his disciples, Jesus's teaching today cover a lesson of righteousness, revealing the principle of purity.

### Our Fathers Word

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, 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. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, 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.

We have been discovering the blessings of following Jesus in the gospel of Matthew. How Jesus came and declared that he was the great King, and that his kingdom has come in him. He started to demonstrate his kingdom power in his words and in his works. Here in Matthew chapters 5-7 he has gathered his people, his kingdom subjects around him, and has given his first long sermon speaking about the kingdom, precisely, what it is like to live in the kingdom. Now that the kingdom has come, everything changes. We need to live for the king.

We saw in the beatitudes how he described the character of his subjects, those who are members of his kingdom, his disciples, the children of God. We saw especially a focus on the subject's membership; not that they earned their way in; that they recognize that they don't deserve a place. They recognize that they are the spiritually poor, that they are spiritually bankrupt and they need a savior. Then we saw what the people of the kingdom are to live like throughout the world, their basic purpose, their job description we could say; which is to be the salt and the light of the world.

Then, Jesus came as the king to say, not that he came to do away with the Law, but to fulfill it. He fulfills it in two ways; he fulfills it in his own person, by obeying the Law perfectly for his people as their substitute, but he also fulfills it as the great teacher of his people by explaining to us what the law really requires of us. He says he is not here to do away with the law, as if he was here to let us live however we want to live. Since salvation is a free gift of God, our error in thinking is that we can live the way we want to live, and sin all we want.

He didn't come here to give us a free pass into his kingdom, or to give us a get out of hell free card so that you can get in at the end. He teaches what the law actually requires.

That it's not just an external performance. There is a change of heart in the people of God that comes out in a change of life, and it produces a righteousness that's even greater than of the Pharisees. Don't forget that people looked at the Pharisees as the great law keepers of the day. Jesus said they are not keeping the law right. For them it's an external action. It's an external façade, or a covering over of a rotten and wicked heart. He says "I require of you a greater righteousness! A righteousness that I will give you." A claimed righteousness that you will get when you come to Christ in repentance and faith. Jesus also tells us that this is a righteousness that he will work out of our lives in the world as he gives us a new heart, and as his spirit dwells in us.

There will be a righteousness in us that is even greater than that of the external law keeping of the scribes and Pharisees. It's a righteousness that truly comes in line with the law of God, and what God requires in terms of not just our external actions, but our thoughts, and our words, and our motives. If we sew a thought, we reap an action. Sew an action, reap a habit. Sew a habit, reap a destiny.

So, Jesus begins explaining what this greater righteousness looks like practically. Now, we saw last week about murder that begins in the heart, the law thou shall not kill, also includes not hating your brother or sister. The *only thing* sufficient, was never even to wish to commit the offense. A willingness, and a desire, a sense of urgency when it comes to being reconciled to other people.

So now, he moves onto the next area, another explanation of a greater righteousness dealing with the seventh commandment, about adultery. Jesus turns to them and he says,

Mt 5:27 "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' Now that is correct in as far as it goes, that's what the law of God says, that's what the ten commandments say. We are NOT to commit adultery. But with the scribes and Pharisees it ended at the external action. To them they equated adultery with theft. To them you were stealing someone else's spouse. As long as you have not taken them, you have not committed it. They thought it was ok to desire them, to fantasize about them, that didn't matter as long as you didn't steal them.

Of course, what the Pharisees were missing, is that all of the laws of God are tied into the tenth commandment about coveting. That's just like, you could steal in your mind from somebody because you are coveting. You could seek to steal somebody's spouse in your heart, because the tenth commandment says don't covet somebody's wife. So, they should have already known better if they would have just read through the commandments to see the connectedness between all the ten commandments.

But Jesus says, "they have said don't commit adultery" and they are just looking at the external action. There's more that's involved. Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a destiny.

God's not saying that its ok for you to just be seething in lust in your hearts, that its ok just as long as you don't act on it. He is NOT saying this. Our Lord wants a purity that goes to our very hearts, and works out to our actions. Where our inner motive is connected with the outward act. Not to just put a lid on what is going on

inside, as long as you don't let it get out, you're ok. We must have a purity of the heart.

We need to understand what Jesus is saying here, what the law is requiring when it talks about adultery. Adultery, technically speaking, can only happen to someone who is already married, or *with* somebody who is already married.

But as we read the rest of the law, as it's explained in the Old Testament, we learn that under the command that we shall not commit adultery is included all sexual immorality. That the ten commandments are a summary statement. That under the command that we shall not commit adultery, is included every kind of sexual sin. That means that any kind of seeking satisfaction of our sexual desire outside of the bonds of marriage is included. So, it becomes very broad then. Single people could be in violation of this law with other single people. It's not just something directed at those who are married. We need to recognize that this is the breadth of this law. It's dealing with sexual immorality as a whole.

Now we realize that sexual desire is not sinful, God gave it to us. Just like it's not a sin to have a desire to eat. It's a natural desire that God put it us. Or to drink when we are thirsty. It would be hard to follow the command to be fruitful and multiply if there was no sexual desire. So sexual desire *itself* is not sinful. The problem is that our desires become twisted once we are fallen beings. If we didn't have a sin nature we would always seek to fulfill all of our desires in a Godly manner. But because we have a sinful nature, our natural desires get twisted as well. If we didn't have a sinful nature our desire for food wouldn't be converted into gluttony. Our desire to enjoy a gift like wine that God gave us, wouldn't be perverted into drunkenness.

Our sexual desire wouldn't be perverted into something else, and twisted. Because we are fallen creatures we struggle with this, and, what the proper expression of these desires should be like.

People think that churches and Christians are against sex, but that's not true because God created it, and he created it good, before the fall. He created it as something, we see when you read through some of the proverbs, or through the song of Solomon, that it's something to take delight in, within the bond of marriage. So, he's not saying sexual desire is sinful, it's seeking to satisfy that desire outside of the bond of marriage which is sinful.

Jesus gets to the heart of it. He says Mt 5:27-29 **27 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.**

Jesus is saying that there is such a thing as "heart adultery". That sexual immorality goes beyond the action of being involved physically with somebody else that you're not married to. He says it goes to the very heart and the desire; to our thought life. When we are desiring to be with somebody; whether it's in our thought life, or we are talking about it, he is saying we're just as guilty as actually doing it. Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a destiny.

Let's not misunderstand this. He's not saying that you are so guilty of thinking about this that you might as well go do the action anyway because after all you are already guilty. It's just as we talked about last week, you are only compounding your sin.

Because let's face it, in our sinful hearts, that's how we think. Jesus warns about the condition of the heart, and it is to be pure. He is telling us not to pat ourselves on the back for what a good upright person that you are, because you have never acted on the impulse, he says look at your heart.

This is why we all need a savior. Because there is not one of us that stands guiltless in this area. This is why we need a righteousness that goes beyond what we could perform, and we need the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ to cover us. Because outside of that we can't stand before our holy God. When Jesus gives the explanation of this law, one of the first things we should think is that we need a savior. We are in trouble if we are left to ourselves. We might be able to put on a good act, by the effort of our own will, by a mastery of our external actions, to resist actually doing certain things. We could do what we are supposed to do, and yet what we can't do is change our heart. That's what we can't do, we can't change the inside.

We could compare this to home repair. Now, I'm not a builder, I can't fix a house, and I certainly couldn't rebuild it. I could keep slapping coats of paint on the outside so it looks good, while the whole thing is rotting apart from within. That's us, we could make ourselves look good on the outside, but we can't change our heart. God looks at your heart, and says your condemned because of what's going on inside your heart and your mind. That's why we need a savior. Because we don't need to just pretty up the outside, we need to purify our hearts.

So what do we do with this? How do we live a life now, of greater righteousness, *practically* speaking? He's not just talking about having the righteousness of Christ, he's talking about how we live this out in our lives. How do we live so that we have a practical righteousness that flows from the inside out?

We have been given a new heart, we have the heart of Jesus, he has given us the righteousness of Jesus, here's how we have the holiness of Jesus, coming out of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. What do we do now, in order to live lives of practical sexual purity that includes the mind and a pure heart, and not just the acts of the body?

In verse 29-30 Matthew chapter 5 he says, 29 **If your right eye causes you to sin, 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. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, 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.**

Now it *seems like* Jesus is teaching sanctification through mutilation. If your right eye causes you to sin just rip your eye out and get rid of it! Then of course you have to ask yourself is that really going to work? Because I still have a left eye! Isn't that still going to see stuff too? Do we only see things in terms of sexual desire from my right eye, and my left eye is left over for intellectual pursuits? That's NOT what he is teaching here right? Then he talks about cutting off your right hand, well, can't I still touch and feel things with my left hand? We recognize that Jesus isn't talking about self-mutilation. Because you can still have no eyes and no hands and still lust. Blind people can struggle with lust, people with no limbs can struggle with lust.

What he is showing is the urgency, and the radicalness of what we need to do if we are going to live lives of sexual purity from the heart and mind going forward. So, you see, if it's that radicle, then, anything else should be kind of easy! So, we either stop looking with lust or we tear our eye out? No, I need my sight so I'll just stop looking lustfully. Or, I can either just stop touching people, or I'll chop off my hand. No, I need my hands, so I'll just have a hands-off policy. That's what he is talking about here. We think, if I can't do this, then I would rather not have my eye, or my hand. That's how wrapped up we can get into our sin. You will have people that get so frustrated they will say I just wish I could rip my eyes out, maybe that's what I should do! That's not what he is talking about here. It's not going to change your heart! How about just stop looking at those things that cause you to lust, just put those things away! Stop doing these things.

So, Jesus gives us a very practical approach here of having a greater righteousness. On the one side he is saying, remove every occasion for lust in your life. He is using two parts of your body to look at two different areas of life. Your sight and your touch. Because when we are talking about areas of desire we usually see something or we touch something that causes the desire. So, we need to be very careful, don't we? We need to be careful about what we let ourselves see. On T.V., in movies, in magazines, or on websites. The internet has been the biggest boom to the sex industry there has ever been. In the past, there was a certain level of shame involved that you had to overcome to walk into a store to purchase a magazine, a hurdle you had to jump, but now that has been replaced with a click. We need to be careful of what we let ourselves see.

We also need to be careful of what we touch. When we touch each other of the opposite sex, God has created our body's to respond in a certain way. So, we need to be careful of the manner or the way in which we are putting our arm around, or hugging, or holding hands with, or kissing someone, that we are not married to.

Some would say these things are no big deal, but if it were no big deal then you wouldn't want to do it. A small kiss isn't any big deal, some would say. If it isn't a big deal then you wouldn't want to do it, isn't it that simple? That's why in a wedding service there's the part where they say you may now kiss the bride. Do you know what that implies? Up to that point you couldn't, you can kiss her now because your married, because she is your wife, and NOW it is ok in your mind and heart to go forward with that. But up to that point it wasn't ok. How many young people have heard that before, it might be new for them.

Many of us think, as long as I don't physical do THIS, as long as I don't go THIS far its ok. But anything else that incites desire towards somebody you're not married to, is already, if not at least wrong, is dangerous. It's at least as smart as pumping gas and smoking a cigarette. It's right up there with the smart things you could do with your life. It's not very wise, is it? We need to be careful then, of what we see, and what we touch. That's what Jesus is talking about here. You need to be careful of protecting and preserving your own purity.

None of us have the ability in and of ourselves to just break free of this on our own. But Christ gives us that ability. Because he enables us to love him so much that we can say, for Jesus sake, out of love for Jesus I can refrain from this. I can stop lusting after women or men, I can stop watching these movies, I can stop

looking at those magazines, I can avoid the wrong websites, I can put down these books, I can do away with my excuses, not for pleasing anybody else but all for my love of Jesus.

So, the Lord by changing our hearts, can give us hearts that now say, this is not about me, and me fulfilling my own desires, it's about what pleases Jesus.

What makes my king happy, what honors my king, what brings my king delight. Because that's all that matters anymore. My delight no longer matters, it's what delights my Lord and Savior Jesus. My own delight in looking or being looked at, my delight in touching or being touched. It doesn't matter anymore, I want to delight my king. What does he delight in? He delights in my purity, and he delights when I am guarding other people's purity.

We need to pursue purity here, God says. Because if we don't, what does he say? It's a great danger there. Why pluck out the eye? Why be careful of what we see and allow people to see? Why chop off the hand? Why be careful of what we touch or allow people to touch? He says because if we violate in this, if we allow ourselves to continue to live like this, if we continue to live a life of impurity we are liable to be cast into hell. But how can a Christian be cast into hell? Didn't we say we have the righteousness of Jesus? He says if you continue to live a life of impurity, if you continue to live a life of sexual immorality, it means your just not a Christian, that's the answer.

He's not saying Christians who become immoral or impure will be cast into hell, or you'll lose your salvation through impurity. He is saying if you continue to live your life that way your just not a Christian. Can a Christian commit sexual immorality, yes, David committed adultery and then murder.

But could he live in it? No. Are you able to commit adultery as a Christian, yes you are. Can you live your life that way? No. Could there be something such as a Christian pornography addict, probably not. It's a matter of the heart. Sew a thought, reap an action. Sew an action, reap a habit. Sew a habit, reap a destiny.

Your actions show your heart. A heart for Jesus says I'm not going to hate or murder my brother, or the *only thing* sufficient, was never even to wish to commit the offense. Remember, we discovered that last week. A heart for Jesus says I'm not going to live a life of lust or be lusted after, I'm going to live a life of purity. That's what I'm going to pursue.

As Christians we will fail occasionally, we are after all in fallen state. We are not perfect. The difference between us and the rest of the world is that we no longer make provision for our sin. We don't pursue the habit. So, what happens when you do fall, what happens when you do fail? You confess your sin to the Lord, you don't make excuses, you confess it, and you are renewed. You ask the Lord, "help me!" But don't have a hypocritical approach where we refuse to stop making provision for the habit. Then we really don't want the help do we.

Some people say, "I'm struggling with the sin." No, you're not, you're just coddling it so you don't have to do what you need to, to break free from the habit, from the sin. You're still hanging out with the same people, you're still watching the same shows, you're still going to the same websites. Just pull the plug on the T.V.. Turn off the computer if you can't use it properly. There are people in the past that have lived without the tv or computers believe it or not. Without being plugged in you can survive, you can live without a computer. I know, I went to school and didn't have a computer back then. You can survive without it.

But people say, oh but I need these things for work, or for school. Wouldn't it be better for your business work, or school work to suffer a little and not to go to hell? Change for Jesus says, wouldn't it be better to go to heaven, and not have high speed internet and a better computer. See, people cling onto all these excuses for why they can keep all these bad things around them, to make provision for their sin. Instead of getting radical about fighting sin.

If we can't control ourselves with these things around, then we need to do away with them out of love for Jesus. Not out of self-righteousness, "... look everybody I'm so much better than you. I got rid of my tv, I got rid of my computer. I'm good, you're bad." You look at your life, I look at my life. What are the things I need to get rid of because I know these things lead me into a heart of adultery. For you it might be something different. But you know what affects you. So you need to get radical. I know what I need to get rid of to stop leading me into a heart of adultery, you know what you need to get rid of. But that doesn't make us any better than anybody else, because the only reason we stand before our king is because of the righteousness of Christ, not because we have done something so good.

So it's not about picking on other people and telling them where they are going so wrong. It's about looking at our own life. We are only responsible for ourselves. We need to guard our own purity. So out of love of God, and neighbor, we should live a life of purity. Isn't that where all of our hearts should be? You are called to love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength and your neighbor as yourself. When it comes to purity, we are to do that as well. So seek your own purity in your heart and mind as well as in your actions, and seek to guard the purity

of your neighbor who you love. By being careful of the way you touch them, look at them, and the way you speak to them. This is something where we all need each other, we all grow up together to be in the image of our Lord Jesus Christ. This isn't just for the young people. Because you could commit adultery at 90 just as easily as you could at 19. You could commit it in your heart a whole lot easier. Regardless of your age. In the end, we will say here is my Lord Jesus Christ, my king of kings, and he obeyed the law of God for me, so I have a perfect righteousness. He came and he suffered hell on the cross for me. So that I could be forgiven. Out of love for him then, I'm going to seek to live a life of purity, because it honors him, and that's what I want to do with my life, is to honor him. Sew a thought, reap an action. Sew an action, reap a habit. Sew a habit, reap a destiny.

We realize that we live in a society, that is just bent on sexual immorality.

That rejoices and delights in impurity.

That encourages immorality and impurity from all of us.

And yet, you call us to sexual purity,

So help us to stand against the tide by your spirit.

Not just in an external formal way like the Pharisees, but in our hearts and minds.

Seeking to be pure in our thought life. In our speech, and in our actions as well.

Help us to be very careful about our lives. What we allow into our line of sight.

What we are willing to touch.

How we look at others or how we want others to look at us. How we touch them

May we be careful and recognize that we are fearfully and wonderfully made

And that you have created us with a sexual desire that is good.

And you have given us a venue that is good to find satisfaction

that brings glory to you within the bond of marriage.

Help us to be very very careful outside of that Father. That you may be honored.

For those Father who have fallen into this impurity, if not in their actions but in their minds,

give them the heart of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Enable them by your spirit to turn from this sin Father, lest they perish.

To find forgiveness in you, to find in you a new freedom,

That they don't have to live as slaves to their own lust

But could rejoice in your goodness Father, and find delight in you.

And in all things may we live to the praise of your glorious grace

In the precious and heavenly name of Jesus we all pray.