

TRINITY 6

July 8 2018

Old Test: Exodus 20:1-17

Epistle: Rom. 6:3-11

Gospel: Matthew 5:20-26

Standing...

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Let us pray. May the words of my mouth and the meditations of all our hearts be acceptable in Your sight O Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sitting...

Driving from North Carolina back to Kansas—somewhere about the ten-hour mark, the billboard read, **Real Christians Obey Jesus' Teachings.**

Thinking about this kept me awake the rest of the way home,
because...it's not the whole story.

There needs to be more billboards.

For you see, we have just heard Jesus teach—specifically about righteousness, righteousness required to enter heaven. So, if we go by the way of the billboard, to be a real Christian, *(whatever that means)* you better snap to it, and obey.

And as you do, keep this in mind:

The commandments are more than just avoiding the bad things you're not supposed to do. It's doing all the good things as well...

helping your neighbor in his bodily needs, defending him,

honoring marriage, honoring authority,

honoring God and loving your neighbor from the heart—

and doing all of this, all the time—every commandment from birth.

The Ten Commandments do not say, "Do your best!,

Try your hardest!", or, "If at first you don't succeed, try, try again!"

No, they say, "You shall!, and, You shall not!"

They demand sinlessness—

showing no mercy, no sympathy nor any loopholes.

For doing this—and only this—is who God gives His heaven to.

For all intents and purposes the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day were the most righteous people on earth. They kept the Ten Commandments. But they did so by altering what God required so they could pretend they kept them.

For example, since God commands, "You shall not murder,"
 then as long as we don't kill someone with our hands, we're good.
 Care for your neighbor? Love your neighbor?
 To them, the commandment only dealt with the outward act of murder.
 Thou shalt not commit adultery?
 No problem—as long as a husband doesn't have another woman on the side,
 the Sixth Commandment is kept.
 Limiting the number of steps taken on the Sabbath,
 along with a host of other Sabbath regulations,
 then the Third Commandment is kept too.
 And on and on it went.
 Righteousness? The scribes and Pharisees had it in spades.
 Until Jesus begins to teach...

Jesus not only condemns murder,
 but anger, insults—even calling someone a fool.
 He not only condemns adultery,
 but lust in the eye and in the heart.
 He condemns divorce,
 wherever sexual immorality has not already broken the marriage,
 and He condemns swearing falsely, telling lies,
 even condemning those who embellish the truth with an oath.
 Jesus does not relax a single commandment.

It's like He picks up the mirror of God's law—
 and after wiping away decades of the grime of neglect and the filth of false teaching,
 He then holds the law of God before the eyes of His listeners, telling them this:
*I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the
 scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.*

What?! How in the world is that possible?
 To exceed the righteousness of those constantly engaged in spiritual exercises—
 I mean, their clothes, food, their walking down the street, everything they said—
 their business was an outward, observable righteousness...
 How can one exceed *their* righteousness?
 Because...they have no righteousness—

not before God and certainly they don't have a
righteousness to get them into heaven.

Theirs was a righteousness that originated from within themselves—
which according to God's own mouth is no righteousness at all.

Gang, it is a dangerous deception of the Devil to think this only happened back in dusty
ole' Palestine.

For countless people die in their sins every day because they do not have a
righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees—
rather, they have a righteousness identical to them—manufactured from within.

So again—one use of the Law is to accuse—to convict.

Given to show our failure to please God;
and to demonstrate our desperate need for help.

The righteousness the Law requires is too far above us.

—it's too perfect.

—too holy.

So, we give up.

Of our works.

Of our efforts.

We give up on all of our attempts to stand before God
on our own two feet...

and we look to the righteousness of *Another*.

For the only righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees
is the righteousness found in Christ Jesus—

His is a righteousness worked entirely outside of you—
that doesn't come by doing, but by believing.

This righteousness is alien to you—

It is imputed to you—

It is credited to you, through faith in Him.

It is as if Jesus says,

"What you do not find in yourself—find in Me."

Though you deserve the fire of Hell for the breaking of His commandments,

Jesus suffered Hell for you,

and will give you bliss in heaven.

For your murder and violence, your anger and insults,
 for every time your tongue has wounded and slain,
 Jesus was wounded and slain on the cross.

Jesus was insulted, was called a fool,
 He was mocked and murdered to make atonement for your sins
 so that you might be called a child of God.

For your lust, your nakedness and shame,
 Jesus was stripped of His clothes so that He might clothe you
 and cover your nakedness and sins.

For the lust of your eyes, His eyes closed in death
 so that you when close your eyes in death,
 you might be with Him in Paradise.

If you have been faithless, Jesus says, "Look to Me, for I am faithful."

Isn't that why you're here today?
 Because you have heard and believed that Jesus' righteousness exceeds the
 righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and that He gives it to you...

For example,
 Jesus pours His righteousness out to you in baptismal waters washing you clean.
 Jesus pours His righteousness out to you through the lips of the faithful pastor who
 absolves you and preaches the cross into your ears.
 Jesus pours out His righteousness for you—the very cup of salvation given and shed for
 you for the forgiveness of all your sins. It's here—all for you.

The billboard read, **Real Christians Obey Jesus' Teachings.**
 It stands right now, accusing everyone who drives by.
 It's pure demand—the result of which is either pride or despair.

The next billboard needs to say,
**The salvation you could never earn,
 the righteousness you desperately need,
 Jesus freely gives.**

Beloved, this is our comfort. This is our peace.

But maybe there needs to be another billboard after that one—a third one.

This is getting very expensive, I know,
but it's not unlike the three billboards headed to Lawrence—
Rock / Chalk / Jayhawk.

I don't want you to think that now, through Christ, the Law doesn't matter to us.

That we no longer care about God's law
and can go out and embrace the pleasures of the flesh. Certainly not.

The Law of God is what God has established for us—

it is His good and gracious will,
the best way to live in this fallen world.

Sure, they serve as a mirror to convict,

but they also serve as a guide to instruct—and for this we rejoice.

They instruct us in the "new obedience" as the children of God,
in righteous attitudes toward God and our neighbor and in righteous behavior.

So, we learn God's law,

letting them do the work of digging the specks and the logs out of our eyes,
thinking about how to put them into practice—

asking the Lord to show us our sin and to soften our conscience.

And when you find that you cannot do what they require,

then pray earnestly to God for Him to change you,

for Him to create a clean heart within you,

(11:00 only—as we will do in just a moment).

What then should be on the third billboard?

Something similar to what we read in the Epistle—

For those who bear His name,

branded on them in Holy Baptism, live a holy life—

for you are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This is the goal of every Christian.

God gave His Son into death in to order to make righteous people out of unrighteous people, that we may live without fear and without guilt, sheltered from God's righteous wrath by the righteousness of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

May God grant it to us all...

In the Holy Name of Jesus, Amen.

Standing...

And now may the peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

8:15—We sing the Te Deum

11:00—Remain standing for the Offertory