**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 1-23-2022
The Fulfillment of the Law**

Last Sunday I unfortunately found myself driving through a snowstorm. Who has had that happen to you? Not fun, right? And definitely very thankful when you get home.

I had the whole family with me and we were making our way back home following an afternoon out and about. We celebrated my Mom’s birthday and Kara taught a couple of violin lessons and then we were heading back home. But we kind of miscalculated how long we would be and found ourselves driving through the storm on our way home.

At one point, due to the slippery roads and losing some control, I pulled into a Rutter’s. But the thing that I dreaded the most during this drive was hitting red lights. And it was not because I’m incredibly impatient, but it was difficulty for the wheels to start up again, once we would come to a full stop – especially if we were going uphill.

I remember telling Kara that if there were no cars coming and I found myself at a red light, the safest thing might actually be to run the red light, because accelerating was quite difficult. Thankfully I didn’t end up doing that and we were very glad to be back home when we arrived.

I share this, friends, because the conversation about running the red light makes me think a bit about the law. How we view the law of our land is a complicated question. Especially if certain laws are unjust.

An even more important question than how we are to understand the laws of the land is how we are to grasp the law found in the Bible.

Depending on how there is somewhere between 333 law or 613 law.

A huge question that we should ask ourselves is what are Christians to make of the Old Testament Law? In fact, I took a course in seminary that was called *The Mosaic Law and the Christian.*

Christians throughout history have answered this question differently. Some argue that we are under all of the laws and some argue that we are under some of the laws and still others argue that we are under none of the laws today.

And are we to view the law in a positive or a negative way. Is the law a burden or a blessing? This can get confusing.

Depending on how Christians answer this question will impact how they read the entire Bible and how they live out their faith.

Today, we are going to attempt to answer this question as we continue unpacking Jesus’ amazing Sermon on the Mount. I believe that in these words of Jesus, as well as other words from the New Testament, it becomes much clearer how He wants His followers to view the law that was given to Moses and Israel.

Before turning to our Scripture for today, it is important to note that Jesus’ giving of the Sermon on the Mount has many similarities to the Lord giving the Law to Israel from Mount Sinai.

In the Old Testament, it is Mount Sinai. In the New Testament, Jesus is up on a mountain, speaking with divine authority.

In the Old Testament, the Lord is addressing a nation that was delivered from slavery in Egypt. In the New Testament, the Lord Jesus is addressing a people that would soon be delivered from their slavery to sin by the power of Jesus’ sacrificial death and victorious resurrection.

In the Old Testament, the Lord is setting apart a people for Himself. In the New Testament, Jesus is setting apart a people for Himself. But it wouldn’t be about an ethic nation being established, but a spiritual kingdom that includes all who believe in and follow after Jesus.

Finally, the Covenant at Sinai was focused on the giving of the Law and in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, our Lord spends a significant portion of it explaining to His followers how they are to understand the Law.

I now invite you to please turn with me to Matthew 5:17-20.

**17“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. 18For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. 19Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

In verse 17, Jesus makes it very clear that just like the writings of the Prophets are not to be abolished, likewise, the Old Testament Law is not meant to be done away with and have no value.

There are Christians today that believe that the Old Testament and particularly the Laws are of no value in the life of a believer. This teaching is very dangerous actually and it cannot be reconciled with what Jesus has to say here.

To hammer His point home further, Jesus states in verse 18, **“For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”**

Certainly the things Jesus mentioned have not happened yet. So the Law is still important. But how? Are Christians under the Law? Are they bound to legally obey each commandment?

I would answer “no” to this question. In verse 17, Jesus tells His hearers that He came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets.

Brothers and Sisters, Jesus fulfilled the Law. Jesus lived out the Law perfectly, sinlessly. And Jesus died for our sins.

Additionally, there are several New Testament passages that teach us that it is by grace that we are saved, rather than by keeping the Law.

The Book of Hebrews tells us that the New Covenant that Jesus established made the Old Covenant, including the law, obsolete and outdated.

So we are not legally under the Law; we are called to love the law and to want to live according to the spirit of the law. The New Testament clearly does not require all male followers of Jesus to be circumcised. The Lord is also clear that Christians are not required to eat a cosher diet. Furthermore, believers are not expected to keep the festivals that Israel was given.

These things have all been fulfilled in Christ.

Before I finish the Scripture reading, I would like to share what I hope is a very helpful analogy with you. Suppose that there was a business owner that specialized in ‘what-you-ma-call-its.” They make marvelous what-you-ma-call-its of every size and share. And it was a successful business.

But then, the business owner came up with an even better idea. While ‘what-you-ma-call-it’s were great, “thing-a-majigs” would be far better. Thing-a-majigs would be produced far more easily across the world and was simply a better product than the ‘what-you-ma-call-it,’ even though the ‘what-you-ma-call-it was great.

Please raise your hands if you are following me so far. Good.

And now picture this. You are a thankful recipient and an employee to the Owner of the thing-a-majig and you happen to find the Owner’s Manual to the old “what-you-ma-call-it” company. While the business was now legally closed, in it would be a treasure trove of things about the nature of this owner and what he found important in His company.

Friends, the New Covenant established in Jesus Christ for us is the thing-a-majig. As good and as inspired as the Law was, that covenant is now fulfilled. That business is closed, so to speak.

But it is not unimportant. Not at all.

Let’s go back to Jesus’ sermon again for verses 19-20.

**Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these command and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.**

Jesus expected His followers to love and to teach and to live according to the heart of the Laws that God gave to Moses and Israel.

*The reality is that there is a spiritual meaning behind each of those laws*. Jesus calls His followers to seek to grasp this spiritual meaning and to live accordingly.

And so, while we are not going to be reading each of these today, Jesus goes through 6 examples of things from Law and how He wants His followers to live according to the spiritual meaning behind it.

And so Jesus tells them that just as they are not to murder, they are not to be practicing anger or ridicule to a brother or sister in the faith.

Jesus then teaches that while the law forbids adultery, the spirit of the law is to not even look with lust.

Another example of this is divorce. At the time of Christ, men could divorce their wives for very petty things, something as insignificant as burning their toast. Jesus here is saying that marriage must be taken much more seriously. He didn’t want His followers divorcing for petty and minor things. These were strong words of Jesus that raised the value of women in that time and also warmed men to be viewing divorce as a trivial thing.

Jesus does the same thing with oaths. People made all kinds of oaths, swearing by the temple for example, if they wanted to sound very reliable or trustworthy.

Jesus says “all you need to say is simply “Yes” or “No” and anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

People do this when they say, “I swear to God…” Jesus tells His followers to just say yes or no, we do not need to try to impress people.

Jesus then talks about retribution. In the Old Testament, it was an ‘eye for eye’ and a ‘tooth for tooth.”

This was not a bad thing. The Old Testament was actually meant to protect the offender against receiving exorbitant fines by judges. It was not to be a life for an eye, but simply an eye for an eye.

But Jesus tells his followers “if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.”

Or “if someone forces you to go one mile” (which Roman soldiers could legally force people to carry their supplies for a mile). But Jesus says “go with them two miles.”

These actions of turning the other cheek or offering to go an extra mile reveal a heart that has been changed. More important, that legal justice is displaying Christlike character.

Finally, Jesus teaches how loving our neighbor is meant to even include loving our enemies.

None of these words of Christ are contradictory to the Old Testament Law. Instead, Jesus calls His followers back to the heart of the Law and how they relate to one another.

As Jesus clarifies the heart of God in each of these ways, He in no way is critical of the Law. Instead, He calls His followers to grasp the heart of God in His laws.

There are many other laws in the Old Testament that can be unpacked as well. And I would like to do a sermon series at some point on how we can do this with a number of the Old Testament Laws.

Friends, as we process all of this today, what is the big idea? What are we do take with us from this passage of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount?

And it is these 3 things:

1. Jesus fulfilled the Law and we are not legally under it.
2. We are to love the Law and earnestly desire to live according to what the Holy Spirit was seeking to teach behind each law.
3. And we can start with these 6 examples that Jesus gives in the rest of chapter 5 of Matthew.

Sources:

[www.biblegateway.com](http://www.biblegateway.com)

Pentateuch and Joshue – Phil Bollinger – Fall 2013 Course from Evangelical Seminary (citing Dr. David A. Dorsey’s list of 333 Laws in the Old Testament)