



THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW STILL STAND!

The Fifth Sunday after Epiphany (02-06-11)

Rev. Steven D. Spencer – Pastor of Messiah Lutheran Church

I. INTRODUCTION

Our text for today is Matthew 5:17-22 please listen carefully once again to the Word of the Lord. Jesus says: ***"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. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 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. So far the text!***

Grace, peace and mercy from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ, Amen! **Matthew 5:18** ***"For assuredly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one little letter or stroke of the pen shall pass from the law until it is all fulfilled.***

Wow! The Requirements of the Law Still Stand! They are still present requiring something from us. How can we bear the weight of such a burden? God's Law is still with us until heaven and earth pass away.

II. THE LAW

But what is this Law of God that we might obey it? Looking at the cover of our bulletin today you might say, *"It's the 10 Commandments!"* Or perhaps you remember your mom and dad teaching you the golden rule, *"Do unto other as you would have them do unto you!"* Maybe even you remember being taught the Law in its simplest form during Catechism classes when the Pastor read the words of Jesus from Matthew 22:37-40 ***"You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." "This is the first and greatest commandment. "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."*** So, how have you done obeying that Holy Law of God? – pause -

Let me give one more example of the God's Law and its requirements. Do you remember the account of the rich young ruler from the Gospel of St. Luke? ***Once a religious leader asked Jesus this question: "Good teacher, what should I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you call me good?" Jesus asked him. "Only God is truly good. But as for your question, you know the commandments: 'Do not commit adultery. Do not murder. Do not steal. Do not testify falsely. Honor your father and mother.'*** *"The man replied, 'I've obeyed all these commandments since I was a child." "There is still one thing you lack," Jesus said. "Sell all you have and give the*

money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." But when the man heard this, he became sad for he was very rich. Jesus watched him go and then said to His disciples, "How hard it is for rich people to get into the Kingdom of God! (Luke 18:18-24). So how have you done in obeying the Holy Law of God? Have you sold all you have and given it to the poor and followed Jesus? – pause -

Matthew 5:19 says **"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven."**

God is judge and will make His judgment plain to all. The "Kingdom of heaven" should not be limited to only everlasting life, although it surely that is surely included. In John 14:15 Jesus says **"If you love Me you will keep My commandments!"** "Commandments" means more than just the moral law. That it means any injunction of God, be it Law or Gospel. This doesn't mean that some doctrines are less importance than others. When Jesus spoke these words He was speaking to the Pharisees, the Pharisees of that day and the Pharisee inside of us. It means that because false teachers consider certain Laws to be less important, they break them by teaching people falsely. That person will be called "least" in the Kingdom of heaven, which means he is condemned. If he twists and breaks God's injunctions and teaches people in this way, God will judge him accordingly, by His FEARSOM LAW!

Just a few verses after our text for today Jesus says: **"Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect"** (Matthew 5:48). How perfectly have you lived the Law? BTW, the Law is not just limited it the Decalogue, the 10 Commandments. In the Old Testament there are actually over 617 different Laws that apply to us. Do you know what they are? – pause - How well have you obeyed them? – pause – **"Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven;** We are condemned, crushed under such a burden, what are we to do?

III. THE GOSPEL

Thank God for the Gospel. St. Paul tells us in our Epistle reading 1 Corinthians 2:1-2: **"And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified"**. Jesus said in our Gospel today **"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"**. The Pharisees love to talk about the Law, how to live it - but can they actually fulfill it. Can you? - - NO! But then neither I who can?

None of us can! There is one and one alone who can and has fulfilled the Law. He filled it with Himself, filling it up to completion with perfection. For Jesus is perfection, He is the Law personified, made flesh to make His dwelling among us. Jesus didn't come to abolish the Law but to fulfill it for you! We couldn't do it, because we are sinners! But He (†) is not. 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: **"God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God"**. Did you catch that? The sinless Son of God became sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God. Not that we don't sin, we still do. But that we are credited with the Law being perfectly obeyed and fulfilled in Christ Jesus. He took our disobedience, our failings, and our sin to the cross and hung it there (†) so that it might be covered with His blood.

The wages of sin is death but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. There (†) on the cross, your trespasses, your sins, your disobedience to God's Holy and Righteous

Law, there on the cross, have been covered with the blood of Jesus marked, "PAID IN FULL!" The wages of sin is death, the death of Jesus. A price paid for you! And there (point to the font) in the waters of Baptism you have been covered with the righteous of Christ, credited with His sinless life and His perfect death.

IV. CONCLUSION

So what about the Law then should it be excluded. No! The requirements of the Law still stand, accusing us of our sin The Law has it purpose it show us our sin (SOS) so that we might see our savior (SOS). 1 John 1:8 says: ***"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness"***. Faith is all about knowing who you are a poor miserable sinner who needs a savior. And you have one, His name is Jesus.

For you are covered in the blood of Jesus and in Him (†) all your sins have been forgiven, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. In Jesus name, Amen and amen!

The peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, AMEN!