

Faith in the Home

The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany, Matthew 5:13-20: "I Am Not Ashamed of the Law."

How we all live matters. What we do, matters.

Jesus pointed that out when He called His disciples the "salt of the earth," and the "light of the world." Salt, because we add good flavor instead of bitterness, and we are to preserve what is good. Light, because our righteousness is to shine before all. How do we do this? We do this by letting God's Law guide us.

Jesus began this sermon with a Gospel message that He has come bring us healing. "Blessed are those who mourn, they will be comforted," and so on. But God's grace does not abolish the Law for us. Again, Jesus pointed that out in that same sermon. "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."

God's Law still matters to us. The problem, is our sinful desire to look good, and judge others has us at best only following the letter of the Law rather than the spirit of the Law that is love. I want to look good so that I am not judged. I want to avoid being corrected and criticized. I want to be seen as good, and good at things. That said, I often want to do that by doing the least amount of work possible.

That's true for everyone. Have you ever had a conversation where you and someone else too justified something that was wrong. Have you ever treated God's grace in Jesus as a justification to sin. I shouldn't do this but God will forgive me. Yes, this sounds like the "sting" of the Law. Which, thanks be to God Jesus did abolish that sting on the cross for us. This doesn't mean that the Law is bad and that we should not try to honor it God in His Law demonstrates just how valuable we are to Him. This is why we are not to relax it and say that it doesn't matter anymore. God's Law is not regressive, but is uplifting.

We must remember that we do not want do God's Law to look good, but to actually breath love into the world around us. Even to those who are outside of the Church. We are not saved by the Law, but through God's grace. While the sting of the Law is abolished, the Law is our guide to shine a real light to be seen, and to give a flavor to this bitter world. We can do this because Jesus first loved us. We will not always be perfect, but there is grace that saves and changes us.

So how do we teach and model these things to our children?

1. It does help us to remember that God's Law works in 3 ways. It can warn us not to do what God doesn't will. It convicts us and points us to our need for Jesus when we do break it. Finally, as God's redeemed people it is our guide to love. There are times where we read sections of the Bible and God is stern with warnings because He doesn't want us to die. Think about teaching a young child to cross a street. "Look both ways," and "Hold my hand." We do this because we don't want our kids to be killed. God doesn't want us to die either. There are times where God disciplines because His people did not listen. Parents also discipline because they want their children to be good, solid, wonderful human beings (we need God's help). There are times where in the Bible we receive instruction on how to be loving. Parents do the same with their kids. This is why God is our Heavenly Father.
2. We are counter cultural in many ways as God's people on Earth, and we should be. We are the salt that gives flavor to what is otherwise bitter. We are the light in a dark and evil world. Although God ordains us to be these things, we cannot use God's Law as instrument to think of ourselves as better than others. We fall short just like everyone else. We received grace to be God's people. Sadly, people will take offense at us, but we must strive not to give offense.
3. As a parent, what "keep's me up at night" when it comes to raising a Christian household is that our views on sexuality, marriage, and the exclusivity of salvation coming from Jesus Christ alone, deems us as offensive and hateful. However, this really is nothing new under the sun. We must remember that God is truly loving, and trust that He does know best. Praying for God's will to be done by us and around us is key. We are not going to impact that world in a truly loving way without God.
4. God sees Christ in you because you are baptized. With you He is well pleased.