

## Faith in the Home

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany. Matthew 5: 21-37: "Thank God for Grace!"

Last Sunday the sermon was titled, "I Am not Ashamed of the Law." I am not ashamed of God's law, and nor should you be, but that said, God's law does bring us shame including me. Plenty of faithful Christians go through periods of time where they feel terrible because as they walk in their faith, they realize how sinful they actually are. Ever have a sin that you deeply wish to quit, but it seems to have a hold on you? Sometimes we forget the depth of God's grace.

Even if you cannot relate to having a sin that has an "addictive" hold on you, today's text from Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," from Matthew 5 cuts right to the heart. Even if you have never murdered another human being, Jesus makes it clear that we have broken that commandment. Even if you have never slept with anyone other than your spouse, Jesus makes it clear that we have broken that commandment. If we are angry with our brother (context here can be interpreted as fellow Christian) we "are liable to judgement." If we call someone a fool or worse, "we are liable to hellfire." If we lust after anyone in our own heart, "we have committed adultery."

If we went through an in-depth study of each of the 10 commandments we all would find out all the ways in which we fall short. This is indeed the second use of the law. Non-believers who read the law of God hate Him and hate us for believing in Him. Believers run to Jesus. The devil tries to throw roadblocks in our way to realizing the depths of God's grace and in turn tries to get us to hate God by driving us into despair over our sinful being.

Even though I fully know the schemes of the devil, even though I want to be righteous on my own, I still feel wretched sometimes and I want to ask God, "why is it so hard to be good?" Paul, in Romans 7 summed it well: "What I want to do I don't, and what a hate to do I do. Wretched man that I am, who will save me from this body of sin?" Why is God's law so strict, and difficult for we who are sinful by nature to keep? Because it shows the depths of God's grace and love for us. It demonstrates the awe of what Jesus did for us on the cross.

In Luke 7, Jesus tells the parables of two debtors. One owed a larger debt to his master than the other one. Both debts were forgiven. Jesus asked the pharisee which debtor would love that master more. The pharisee correctly said the one who had the greater

debt forgiven. Jesus goes on to make the point, "One who is forgiven little, loves little. One who is forgiven more, loves more."

Yes, we fall short, but we can love greatly because Jesus has forgiven us greatly. We can love because He first loved us. The harder the law, the deeper the grace. The devil wants you to be offended that you need this grace. Defeat him by celebrating the depth in which God loves you. Remember you are defined by God's grace and love and not your sin.

### **How do we teach and model these things to our kids?**

1. Praying for God to "stop our sins," or to take away our lust, or end our temper as examples are not bad things to do. However, praying for forgiveness and asking God to for His wisdom to lead you away from temptation is better. Remember, you cannot make up for past sins before God, and Christ's death on the cross forgives those sins. Reading God's Word and listening and trying to more self-aware along with praying are all keys to spiritual growth.

2. Love which is the law of God, is bred from grace. Law without grace is nothing more than an unhealthy desire for power and respect. In our homes we are going to encounter sin. We will sin against our spouse and our children, and they will sin against us. Sin is not okay, but we are called to forgive as Jesus forgives. Think of Luke 7, the greater the forgiveness. The greater the love.

3. If you struggle with anger, bask in Christ's forgiveness and then focus on Proverbs 15:1, "A gentle answer turns away wrath." No matter the circumstance if you can give a gentle answer in the face of anger, even if you feel justified in giving an angry retort, the wise thing to do according to God's will is to respond gently. I am writing this to myself as much as I am writing this to you.

4. If you struggle with the use internet pornography, you need grace and confidential accountability. God's law is serious on lust and sin. You need help, and you cannot do it on your own. You have a pastor who has helped others in this area. I promise confidentiality.

5. Remember when God looks down at you, He sees His baptized child covered in His Son's redemptive blood. "With you He is well pleased."