**BCM Bible Study: April 1/2, 2020**

**Matthew 5:17-30: A Deeper Righteousness**

Intro and Check In: Check in to see if anyone memorized a beatitude and if they saw opportunities to live that out this week. Ask for any other reflections on what it looks like to be salt and light in daily life.

Righteousness Redefined: In your view, what is the relationship of the Old Testament law to the New Testament?

**Read Matthew 5:17-20**

* What is Jesus saying about the law? Is this surprising to you? Why or why not?
* Why is it tempting to think that Jesus came to abolish the law?
* What does it mean that Jesus fulfills the law and prophets?
  + It is important to understand the purpose of the OT law. In short, the purpose was to show what God is like and how to live in such a way that mirrors God. God’s character is seen in the law and He is glorified when creation lives that way. When Christians live this way, we serve as salt and light – others see our lives and are drawn to Jesus by seeing a glimpse of God’s love. In this sense, Jesus fulfilled the law. He is the perfect image of God (He is God) and he shows us the true heart of the law – to love God and love others. These principles are at the foundation of every part of the law. (see John 1:18, 1 John 4:12, and Deut. 4:5-8 for more)
* What does it mean to be righteous?

**Read Mark 7:14-23, Matthew 23:1-7**. How do these verses define righteousness? Why do the Pharisees fall short of true righteousness?

* + How do we fall short of the righteousness God requires?
  + What does it look like to have righteousness greater than the scribes and Pharisees?

Jesus is saying that the Israelites’ inability to follow the law is the result of hard, sinful hearts. Sin keeps us from knowing God and living in a way that honors Him. The best we can do is follow the letter of the law, which will ultimately lead to a Pharisaic lifestyle. Jesus’ death and resurrection give us an opportunity for restored relationship with God. The Spirit gives us a new heart, one that can finally obey God. So, to be more righteous is to experience a “radical interiorization, a total obedience to God, a complete self-giving to neighbor.” (J.P. Meier) This goes below the surface to an actual change of heart.

* + In what ways have you seen Jesus change your heart?
  + What does it look like to allow the Spirit to mold and lead your heart?

Anger: **Read Matthew 5:21-26**

* What is Jesus referring to when he says, “You have heard it said”?
* What is significant about Jesus saying “But I say to you”?
  + Jesus sets himself on par with God who gave the Old Testament law. Jesus is going to expand the commandments by going to the root of the outward expression of sin.
* What is the relationship between anger and murder?
* **Read Ephesians 4:25-27**. Is anger a sin? What is the difference between righteous and unrighteous anger? (think of Biblical examples)
* What are some things that cause you to lose your temper with people? How was your anger resulted in sinful thoughts and speech?
  + How has anger impacted your relationships?
  + Why do you think God takes these things so seriously? What does anger indicate about your heart?
* What do vv.23-26 teach us about broken relationships?
  + What is the nature of the broken relationship in vv. 23-24?
  + Why is it difficult to want to restore this kind of relationship?
  + You cannot control other people’s anger. You may be ready to reconcile while they are not. People may hold a grudge against you when you try to reconcile.
    - How do these situations make you feel?
    - What does it look like to forgive when the other person is unwilling?
  + Why is it important to seek immediate reconciliation? How does unreconciled anger affect our ability to worship?

Lust: **Read Matthew 5:27-30**

* How does Jesus explain the more inward meaning of the commandment about adultery?
* Why do you think that lust is such a powerful feeling?
* How have you seen the pervasiveness of pornography and sexuality in popular media shape the sexual conscience of our society?
  + What does lusting after someone else indicate about your heart and how you think about others?
  + How have you seen pornography and lust hurt yourself or others?
  + In what ways do you think that unchecked lust could impact your marriage?
* Jesus does not mean that we should literally mutilate ourselves. What is he suggesting that we do in vv.29-30?
  + In what way can you practice this suggestion? Are there certain situations that would be better for you to avoid?

Conclusion: Consider taking up one of the two challenges:

1. Reach out to someone with whom you need to reconcile. Perhaps you know that someone has something against you or someone has hurt you. Reach out and seek to humbly restore that relationship.
2. Confess your struggles of lust to someone in your family group. Ask for accountability. For pornographic issues, [covenant eyes](https://www.covenanteyes.com/) has been known to be a useful resource.