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## *The Gospel According to Matthew*

### *Listen to the Law*

*October 20, 2019*

**Sermon Text:** Matt 19:16-30

**Scripture Reading:** Matt 19:16-30

Mat 19:16-30 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"

(17) And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments."

(18) He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, (19) Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

(20) The young man said to him, "All these I have kept. What do I still lack?" (21) Jesus said to him, "If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

(22) When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

(23) And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. (24) Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (25) When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?"

(26) But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

(27) Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed

you. What then will we have?” (28) Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (29) And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. (30) But many who are first will be last, and the last first.

The Bible sets out for us *two* major covenants. These covenants are, you can say, *contracts* by which God deals with human beings. Another word used for these covenants is *testament*, and thus we have the Bible organized into two major divisions, the Old and the New Testaments. If we are ever going to properly understand the Bible, it is vital for us to understand that God is a covenant-making God and that He deals with and relates to us in this manner.

This is really not so strange actually. We make covenants all the time which govern our relationships with one another, do we not?

- Business contracts
- Purchasing contracts (mortgages, car financing, etc)
- Marriage contracts

- Informal, unwritten contracts (ie, friendships)

The two major contracts in the Bible are *the Law* and *the Gospel*. The Bible often refers to the Gospel as *grace/faith/promise*. Here are some examples of Law and Gospel, the two covenants:

**Jer 31:31-33** “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. (33) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

**Heb 8:6-13** But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. (7) For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. (8) For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares

the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (9) not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.

(10) For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

(11) And they shall not teach, each one his neighbor and each one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest. (12) For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more."

(13) In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

**Gal 3:10-14** For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."

(11) Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."

(12) But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them." (13) Christ redeemed us from

the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"— (14) so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

**Gal 3:21-29** Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. (22) But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. (23) Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. (24) So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. (25) But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (26) for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (27) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

**Gal 4:21-31** Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen

to the law? (22) For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. (23) But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. (24) Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. (25) Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. (26) But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. (27) For it is written, “Rejoice, O barren one who does not bear; break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labor! For the children of the desolate one will be more than those of the one who has a husband.” (28) Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of promise. (29) But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. (30) But what does the Scripture say? “Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman.” (31) So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

**Rom 3:19-24** Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that

every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. (20) For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin. (21) But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— (22) the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: (23) for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, (24) and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

And of course we could go on and on with more references just like this.

Each covenant, the Law and the Gospel, was established with a specific purpose. The Law points man in his sin to his need for Christ, while the Gospel is the answer to that need. And there are at least two things we need to understand about these two covenants:

1. They are complementary, yet completely incompatible.
2. The Law is not of grace and thus only condemns. The Gospel is of grace and justifies the sinner by faith in Christ.

*As we will see in a moment, we must understand all of this if we are going to understand why Jesus dealt with the rich young ruler here in Matthew 19 as He did.*

The Law and the Gospel are complementary in the sense that the Law included types and shadows that point the sinner to Christ, and it empowers sin in the sinner to show us our need for Christ. And the Gospel shows us how the Law's demands upon us are answered and fulfilled by Christ for us.

And yet the Law and the Gospel are completely incompatible – they must never be confused and mixed together. There is an Old Covenant and a New Covenant, and *they are not alike just as Jeremiah and Hebrews tell us*. This was Jesus' point in this parable:

Mat 9:14-17 Then the disciples of John came to him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" (15) And Jesus said to them, "Can the wedding guests mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast. (16) No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment, for the patch tears away from the garment, and a worse tear is made. (17) Neither is new

wine put into old wineskins. If it is, the skins burst and the wine is spilled and the skins are destroyed. But new wine is put into fresh wineskins, and so both are preserved."

The Gospel, you see, the New Covenant, is new wine. It cannot be injected into the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant is fulfilled in the New Covenant by Christ, but the Old Covenant is not to be perpetuated. Again, this is Jesus' meaning here:

Mat 24:1-2 Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. (2) But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

And again:

Joh 3:27-30 John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. (28) You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' (29) The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. (30) He

must increase, but I must decrease.”

Heb 8:13 In speaking of a new covenant, he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.

Now, with that background listen to our text again:

Mat 19:16-20 And behold, a man came up to him, saying, “Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?” (17) And he said to him, “Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments.” (18) He said to him, “Which ones?” And Jesus said, “You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, (19) Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (20) The young man said to him, “All these I have kept. What do I still lack?”

What we are seeing here is Law meeting the Gospel. This man’s religion is the Law. Or rather, *it was the misuse of the Law*. The Law was NEVER given to justify anyone before God.

2Co 3:7-9 Now if **the ministry of death**, carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses’ face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, (8) will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? (9) For if there was glory in **the ministry of condemnation**, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory.

And yet, what is it the man is asking Jesus? His question reveals that he believed he could, (and in fact that he had), keep the Law adequately so as to merit eternal life. “*What good deed must I do to have eternal life?*” You see that Jesus immediately points him to his erroneous notion of “good.” Luke emphasizes this:

Luk 18:18-19 And a ruler asked him, “Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” (19) And Jesus said to him, “Why do you call me good? No one is good except God alone.

Here is a basic truth that should be self-evident but which man in his sin and left to himself disregards –

*No one is good except God alone.*

Here is this man throwing around what appears to be a common adjective:

“good” – and yet in his sin he is clueless. HE is not good. NOTHING he does is good. Yet his misuse of the Law insists that he IS and that he CAN.

Now think this through. Is this not the religion of the mass of mankind today? Is THIS not man’s favorite religion?

**Rom 10:5-7** For Moses writes about the righteousness that is based on the law, that the person who does the commandments shall live by them. (6) But the righteousness based on faith says, “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) (7) “or ‘Who will descend into the abyss?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).

“I will be good enough, I will ascend into heaven myself. I CAN ascend into heaven. I CAN effect my own salvation.”

But what does the Law in fact do? Why was it given?

- To condemn
- To curse
- To empower sin

And THIS is why Jesus points this man to the commandments. Jesus cites five commandments, all from the

second table of the Law, ie, all relating to loving your neighbor, which principle Jesus then cites in summary. Love your neighbor as yourself.

[Interesting that Jesus leaves out the 10<sup>th</sup> commandment, *you shall not covet*].

The man boasts in response:

*All these I have kept. What do I still lack?*

And now Jesus gives him the final blow:

(21) Jesus said to him, “If you would be perfect, go, sell what you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me.”

(22) When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions.

As it turns out of course, he had not kept ANY of the commandments. He was a worshipper of the idol of riches and in loving riches he had in fact not loved his neighbor at all. Jesus tells him that if he wants real treasure, that in heaven (eternal life), he must give all of it away to the poor and come and follow Christ. This he was not willing to do. The Law, you see, is spiritual.

It's requirements demand obedience *from the heart*. But the sinner has a bad heart:

Rom 7:13-14 Did that which is good, then, bring death to me? By no means! It was sin, producing death in me through what is good, in order that sin might be shown to be sin, and through the commandment might become sinful beyond measure. (14) For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am of the flesh, sold under sin.

*Jesus met this man in terms of the Law to show him that the Law condemns him. That he was not good. That his arrogant attempts to make himself good by the Law were foolishness. And until this man confessed it, turned from it, and followed Christ, he would remain condemned and headed for eternal death. THIS is the very truth that so many people sitting in churches today need to face. And it is the truth that the "nice" people we run across each day need to face.*

We will plan next time to consider the disciples next question of Jesus, but for now let's end with this challenge and application:

Mat 16:24-26 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. (25) For

whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (26) For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

It is rather easy for us to be deceived in this regard. Why? Because Jesus is not *physically* present here calling upon us to follow Him. We can tell ourselves that we are, when we are not. Many people claim to be "Jesus followers" but aren't following Him at all.

So let's put this question to ourselves:

If Jesus were standing right in front of you, as He was with this rich young man, and He said to you "come, follow Me and you will have eternal life," and then He started walking away from you, what would be tugging at you trying to get you to stay put?

Because **HERE** is the truth:

*The Lord Jesus Christ IS present with you right now, and He IS calling upon you to leave it behind and follow Him. That "thing" you cherish IS tugging at you to pull you back to itself instead of going with Jesus. And you ARE making a decision, just as this rich young man did.*