

# Why Jesus Came (Part 2)

Matthew 5:17

31 December 2023

10:30 Halifax

## Introduction

Last week, we looked at a subject that is brought to mind at this time of year: the coming of Jesus Christ into the world.

- The Lord and His apostles did not institute the celebrating of His birthday in the church. The first mention of it is more than three hundred years after His birth.
  - That is why we don't have any special celebration of it as a church. We want to maintain of the unity of the teaching of the apostles and follow our Lord's mandate that we neither add nor take away from what He has instituted.
  - Nevertheless, we are glad to talk about His coming when many people are thinking about it!

Many people, including many avid Christmas observers, are very ignorant about why He came.

- So this year, I decided to take a look at what Jesus said about His reasons for coming.
  - He describes it from many different angles.
- Last week, I focused on John 10:10 where He says that He came that those He calls the sheep that His heavenly Father gave Him might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.
  - We saw that by life, He referred to spiritual life.
    - We looked at Ephesians 2 where it talks about how we who have been saved by Him were dead in trespasses and sins but were made alive by His saving work.
  - When our first parents rebelled against God, we all died as far a right relationship with God. We could no longer live as people are meant to live, devoted to our Creator, and His purpose for us:
    - that we would be a beautiful living expression of His character on a human level—being made in His image.
    - that we would exhibit His love, goodness, kindness, wisdom, justice, and so on—all on a human scale.
  - We became twisted, corrupt image bearers who were only fit to be cast into pit of destruction as a repulsive, unclean thing.
    - We do not readily grasp just how detestable we are because we are masters at covering up and excusing our corruption. It is part of being spiritually dead.
      - But when He makes us alive, we become aware of our sin and we see that we need Christ to save us. We repent (or turn from) our sin and come to Him for forgiveness and eternal life.
      - He graciously makes us alive who were before dead in trespasses and sins.

Today, I want to look at why Jesus came from a slightly different angle.

- I want to take up what He said to us about His reason for coming in what is perhaps His most well-known sermon: the sermon on the mount.

- The sermon provides us with the fullest example we have (it runs from Matthew chapter 5 to Matthew chapter 7) of what He preached when He went from city to city, from synagogue to synagogue, preaching the good news of the kingdom of God.

Moralists, who think man is good and doesn't need the kind of salvation that Jesus brought, often speak highly of this sermon.

- Do you know why?
  - They like it because it doesn't say very much about Him as our Saviour.
  - Moralists like that because they believe that we humans are able to save ourselves. They pick up on many of the themes—such as “go the extra mile,” or “don't pray to be seen by others,” or “do to others as you would have them do to you.”
- But the fact is, there is one place that is quite central to the entire sermon where Jesus speaks very plainly about what He came to do.
  - He doesn't yet get into the fact that He must go to the cross because even His disciples weren't ready to hear that—but He shows clearly that He came to meet what God requires for us to be saved from our sin.
  - The whole sermon cannot be properly understood without it. There is not good news without it.
  - It is in Matthew 5:17-18.
    - He says: Matthew 5:17-18: **“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.”**
    - This is what I want to focus on today.
      - Before moving on, I will have our scripture reading which is the first part of this sermon—starting in Matthew 5:1.

Here is the precious and holy word of God.

**Matthew 5:1-48:** And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup> **“Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>4</sup> Blessed *are* those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. <sup>5</sup> Blessed *are* the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. <sup>6</sup> Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. <sup>7</sup> Blessed *are* the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. <sup>8</sup> Blessed *are* the pure in heart, for they shall see God. <sup>9</sup> Blessed *are* the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. <sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. <sup>11</sup> Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all**

**kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great *is* your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

<sup>13</sup> **You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. <sup>14</sup> You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. <sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.**

<sup>17</sup> **Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say**

to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>21</sup> You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. <sup>23</sup> Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

<sup>27</sup> You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast *it* from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole

body to be cast into hell. <sup>31</sup> Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

<sup>33</sup> Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; <sup>35</sup> nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

<sup>38</sup> You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. <sup>40</sup> If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. <sup>41</sup> And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. <sup>42</sup> Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

<sup>43</sup> You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Thanks be to God for His holy word.

Let me again draw your attention to Matthew 5:17.

- Here Jesus tells us that He came to fulfill the Law.
- What does that mean?

**I. First, it means that Jesus came to do what is right in God's eyes.**

A. God's law sets forth the right way that human beings are to live.

1. The most basic summary is, first, that we are to love God with our whole being, and second, that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves.
2. The Ten Commandments provide a more detailed summary—
  - a. In loving God, that we are to have no gods before God's face, that we are to worship Him and approach Him the way He wants (not to make up our own way), that we are to revere Him and all that is associated with Him, that we are to observe the weekly Sabbath, when we praise Him and give thanks to Him for His works of creation and redemption and seek His blessing.
  - b. In loving our neighbour, that we are to honour our parents and to be honourable as parents, that we are not to murder, that we are to be chaste and faithful in our marriages, that we are not to steal from others, that we are not to lie, that we are not to covet but to rejoice with our own wife and property.

B. In the sermon on the mount, where our text is taken from, Jesus shows us that God's standard for righteousness (what is right) is much higher than what most people think.

1. For example...
  - a. He speaks of how the command not to murder means that we are not even to hate anyone or be angry without a cause...
    - And the one about adultery speaks of how we have committed adultery if we even lust after someone to whom we are not married.
    - He talks about how loving others even includes loving our enemies and doing good to them.
  - b. He says that is not acceptable to do our service to God with a desire to impress other people.
    - Our fasting and giving and praying should be with an eye to God.
  - c. And He says that we must trust God and His goodness instead of worrying about food and clothing and such.
    - It is all in His hands, and we are to trust Him to give us what is best for us to honour Him.

2. In Matthew 5:48, Jesus summarised the standard like this:

- Mt 5:48: **“Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.”**
  - We are made in God's image—meaning that we are to be a human sized picture of Him—just, holy, wise, kind, merciful, gracious, loving, faithful, etc.
  - Since God is perfect on a divine level, we are to be perfect on a human level—a perfect reflection of Him.

C. Need I say that nobody has ever met God's standard?

1. The world had been around for 4000 years when Jesus came, and nobody had ever fulfilled God's Law, so He came to do that.
  - As He says in our text, He did not come to modify the law, to destroy it, but to fulfill it.
  - God's honour was at stake, in a certain way, because He had made man to bear His beautiful image and we did nothing but misrepresent Him—until Jesus came.
2. Jesus was the first person to fulfill God's law.
  - Now for the first time, there was someone to glorify God in this way... and He did it beautifully.
  - Hebrews says that He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sin.
    - There was never a single wrong action or thought toward God or toward anyone else.
3. Jesus gloriously reflected God in human flesh which He took to Himself.
  - With Him we were able to see what God's love, justice, wisdom, mercy, grace, kindness, and truth are supposed to look like in man, His image.
  - He was a beautiful sight to behold and He is revealed to us in His word.
    - The Father was very pleased with Him.
    - He met the standard that God has given to every human being!

TRANS> Fulfilling the law as a human individual was a grand and marvellous thing in itself,

- But He also came to fulfill God's law in another way.

## **II. Jesus also came to fulfill God's law for the people God had chosen to save.**

- A. God declared through the Law and the Prophets that He had chosen a people to save.
  1. Because we all failed to keep the moral law that Jesus kept, we were all highly offensive to God.
    - As we saw last week, the wages of sin is death. That is, the penalty for it.
    - Therefore, God consigned us all to the pit of destruction with the Devil and his angels who led us into rebellion.
    - We were entirely unfit to dwell with God, so He sentenced us to the pit forever.
  2. But the LORD declared that He had chosen a people to redeem.
    - He would restore these people to be His people.
    - He would be their God and they would be His people.
  3. As perfect as Jesus was, like Adam, it was not good for Him to be alone!
    - For God to be properly represented by us as His image bearers, there needed to be a whole kingdom—worshipping Him as they ought, loving each other as they ought. A great multitude was needed.
    - In the Law and the Prophets, God raises up a nation to be redeemed as His own people—to live for Him and to bring forth Christ the redeemer.
- B. The Law and Prophets declared what must be done for these people to be made righteous—to fulfill His law or to do what He requires.

1. First, He said that He must give them a new heart devoted to Him as their God.
    - This would be a heart of repentance.
      - They would see their sin and loathe themselves.
      - They would turn from their sin to serve God.
      - They would look to Him for forgiveness and new life.
    - God brought about this change in them by putting His Spirit in them so that they could receive His call to repent and turn to Him for salvation.
  2. Second, the Law and the Prophets show what Christ had to do to fulfill all righteousness for them.
    - a. First, He had to be Himself a righteous man—what we saw already.
      - He is the standard bearer in the righteous kingdom.
      - He is the representative of all the other members of what is acceptable before God.
    - b. But besides that, if He was representing them, He had to bear the penalty of their sin Himself.
      - God established sacrifices to atone for sin where an animal was killed in place of a sinful human.
        - He appointed a temple with priests and many sacrifices offered to take away sin—showing that this was required of His people to pay for their sins.
        - With these ceremonies He showed what was required, but the ceremonies did not provide what was required.
      - The Law and the Prophets declared that Christ would come to bear the sins of God’s people.
        - **Isa 53:6-8 declares: All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. <sup>7</sup> He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. <sup>8</sup> He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.**
      - So Jesus came to fulfill what God’s law required to make sinners righteous—an acceptable sacrifice to take away His people’s sins!
- C. Jesus came to fulfill God’s Law for His people, and did it perfectly, too.
1. He went to the cross and He bore His peoples’ sins.
    - He Himself, the Son of God in human flesh, was the acceptable sacrifice.
    - He fulfilled what God required to redeem His people on the cross.
  2. Now the Father could be glorified by a whole kingdom of righteous people forever!
    - They are given a new heart to turn back to God and to look to Jesus for salvation.

- And Jesus has secured their pardon and gives them His Spirit forever.
- He fulfilled the righteous requirement of God's law for the whole kingdom.

### III. Make sure that you are in this righteous kingdom.

A. Jesus concludes the sermon on the mount with these words of solemn counsel to all who hear His sermon.

- Matthew 7:24-27: **“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: <sup>25</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. <sup>26</sup> But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”**

1. The point of the whole sermon is that Jesus came to fulfil God's law.
  - The law showed us what God requires—and it is a lot more than most people think—and Jesus is the one who came to fulfil it.
2. When He preached this sermon, they did not yet grasp what He would do to fulfil the law for the kingdom.
  - He did not begin to explain it even to His disciples until they came to see that He was the Christ (or the Messiah), the Son of the living God.
    - That did not happen until Matthew 16 when Jesus was just a few months away from the cross.
    - It was at this time that He told them He must die on the cross.
    - They could not fathom Him as the accursed sacrifice for sin until after He was indeed offered and raised again for their justification.
    - Then they went everywhere proclaiming the good news that Jesus had fulfilled what God requires for the salvation of His people.
      - He fulfilled God's law.

B. In this sermon, Jesus describes what the people are like who receive the blessing of the kingdom—the people to whom the kingdom belongs.

1. In Matthew 5:1-16, He describes them as people who know that they need God to make them righteous.
  - They know that they cannot fulfil God's requirement themselves.
  - Do you recognise that? Do you recognise that you cannot meet what God's law requires? It is a righteous standard that you cannot possibly meet.
  - Look at how Jesus begins: **Matthew 5:3: “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**
    - They see that they are spiritually impoverished—they need God's salvation.
    - He goes on to speak about how they mourn over their condition (v. 4), how they are meek, they fully yield to God (v. 5), and how they hunger and thirst for righteousness (v. 6)—they want it!

- And then Jesus says, “I came not to destroy the law (to get around the law) but to fulfill it!” That is why He came.
  - To fulfill what God requires for us all. Nobody else can do it.
  - His kingdom does not belong to you in truth unless you are trusting in Him to fulfill what God requires of us.
2. As I showed you, Jesus spends much time showing that God’s standard of righteousness is much higher than the righteousness of the Pharisees that was so highly regarded in Jesus’ time.
- God is perfect and His standard for His image bearers is perfection.
  - We must look to Jesus to fulfill what is required for us all.
3. So what do you want the righteousness that Jesus came to fulfill for His people?
- Then ask for it, as Jesus says in Matthew 7:7-11: **“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup> Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup> If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”**
  - Jesus came to fulfill God’s standard for His people, and He has done it.
    - We become righteous in God’s eyes when we believe in Him——or trust Him——for our right standing with God.
    - We meet the standard with Jesus, not on our own.