

The Rock: 07-03-2022

A year with the master

Title: The Law and the prophets

Scripture: Matthew 5:17-20

(Black bible Pg. 760 ESV)

Theme:

Introduction to the short series on the Scriptures and their importance.

Introduction:

For the month of July, we are going to take some time to frame out why the Bible is important, why we ought to be reading it, and how, if there is a particular way, should we read it.

A lot of questions can and do come up:

Is it relevant for today and to today?

Is it just our opinions on what is written in these pages that matter? Or is there a theme and direction the book is going and teaching us?

Just to name a few as we look forward, but for this morning, the next verses in Matthew will be the basis of what we are going to look at.

Because Jesus Himself is going somewhere with everything he says, and most especially here as we systematically move through the Bible, we find that it is far more directed and far less just a random bunch of teachings meant to help us be better people.

So, as we come to these verses where Jesus begins to frame out behavior patterns for His followers, He seems to start in a bit of a confusing way:

He tells us a few things that are still important for us today. Especially if we want to answer the question: What does He mean when he says: All the Law and the Prophets

First, he tells them that He is the fulfillment of the Law and prophets:

-Matthew 5:17 (ESV)

"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."

More on this in a bit. Second, he tells them, as well as us, that none of these things will pass away until all is accomplished. All what? Well, that too will work itself out.

-Matthew 5:18 (ESV)

"For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished."

Then he says something which is confusing sometimes. These guys, who have been and are your leaders and teachers -well they get it right, but they are doing it wrong.

So, you have to learn what it means to be better than them. Even though you will see me be harder on them than anyone else. I do it because they are the ones who should know better.

That too will clear up, at least a bit as we progress this morning.

It seems clear that Jesus is working within a story, a narrative and world view which people understood and commonly accepted. That is important for us to know.

For, even if we don't always get it or understand it, they did, and if we are going to understand the Bible correctly one of the first things to learn after this is that "it can never mean to us, what it didn't mean to them." -Matt Chandler

It was their history, their story and their identity all rolled into one. What

we would call, their world view. We all have one, and it defines our thinking, our outlook and our decision making.

Jesus' world view, and that of the Children of Israel, was and is found in what we call the Old Testament.

For those who may know all of this already, be patient. Because we all need to be reminded of things we should never forget, and if that happens as others are learning it for the first time, all the better.

The Story:

The Bible is the story of God's children, the people of Israel, and the narrative is found in the Old Testament.

Much like we Americans (some are not) have our narrative, our story and history, found in documents and history books.

And, at times we may have different points of view and opinions on that history, it is still ours and is recorded for us. In more ways that we may recognize, that frames our world view.

(Fourth of July)

That is and what the Bible was for Jesus and Israel. In it is the Law, their

history, their poetry, and "the prophets".

This is what Jesus is referencing here in His statement recorded by Matthew. But the Bible is more than just that, and that is what we are going to begin unpacking.

It is what we are going to try and understand in this series as we tackle this book from the "Big picture" perspective.

Because, the Bible is also a love story, a pursuit actually by God toward His people, and His desire to restore His creation, His people. All along the way, it points us to Jesus. Staring in Genesis 1:1 all the way to Revelation 22:21.

How can we believe it? Why do we trust it, and really, how do we apply it to our lives in the 21st century St. Albans VT?

This morning, it will be good for us to understand what Jesus is saying right here in Matthew, because it will take us on a journey of discovery.

First - verse 17 again:

-Matthew 5:17 (ESV)

"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."

This alone could be an entire week or more of teaching, but I think it will be good to know enough to get us started, and then we have our homework to do during our week.

The Law is the first five books of the Old Testament. "The books of Moses" Gen-Deuteronomy.

-Genesis 1:1 (ESV)

"In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

This statement defines not only the people of Israel, but anyone who believes in Jesus as His son. Please note that it says that God created, it does not state how. (This is then, a theological statement and NOT a geological timeline)

If we don't understand and believe that, "in the beginning God created", then everything else after is nothing more than fairy tales and opinions.

We find in the first two chapters of Genesis that God did create everything, and that He did it from nothing. (Ex-nihilo)

His creative work comes to its crowning achievement when He made man and woman in His image:

-Genesis 1:27 (ESV)

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them."

This is important to know because it is the "world-view", the framework we learned about on Father's Day -the definition of marriage.

It is not a Judeo-Christian invention, nor is it a cultural construct to be messed around with whenever we want. It is, according to the Bible, the creation covenant given by God for His creation.

This is important for so many reasons, but one of the most important is that IT was THE narrative and world view of Jesus and the Jewish people lived by and within.

Anything outside of that, they saw and understood as wrong. Why? Because it had been defined for them from the beginning what was right.

But Adam and Eve, in very real human fashion, sinned. They messed up. God had put them in the garden of paradise to enjoy all of His creation.

They had one directive:

-Genesis 2:17 (ESV)

"...but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

That was it: "Don't do that."

What did they do? "That!"

And, it is then in Genesis 3:15 that we find the first verses for us within this whole creation story which point us to Jesus and His fulfilling of them:

-Genesis 3:15 (ESV)

"I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."

But first, let's look at the question asked right at the beginning of the chapter, where the serpent asks Eve a question:

-Genesis 3:1 (ESV)

"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?"

Did God actually say?

Why is that important? Well, in every way, even to today -and even from within the Church, what is asked? Most especially when we come to a passage we don't like, convicts us or unsettles us. We ask the same thing.

Did God really say? Yes, yes, He did and my not liking it, or agreeing with it, does not remove the Biblical truth that God has said certain things.

Things which are and were always for our benefit, even when pride and self-centeredness tells us otherwise. So, it is good for us to look at it that way. That God is not trying to limit us or keep things from us.

In His telling us, "no", he is actually looking to bless us, protect us and give us good things, all the while keeping us from bad things. Things which harm us, our relationships, our health and spiritual well-being.

Again, as we look at why the Bible, this is important because it was the worldview of Jesus and God's people. So, whatever it meant to them, at the very least, it has to mean that to us. It cannot ever mean something to us that it did not mean to them.

So, back to Genesis 3 where we see Eve's response:

-Genesis 3:2-3 (ESV)

"And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

What's the serpents reply?

-Genesis 3:4-5 (ESV)

"But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

What the serpent (the devil) wants to do, then as with now, is call into question God's goodness toward His people. "He's holding out on you. You should be able to do whatever you want."

Listen to me, please: This is exactly the same formula he uses today. Did God really say? Well, it is clear that yes, He did. Oh, come on, God is love and He would never tell you no to anything.

Question if God really said it, if His word is trustworthy. Cause doubt with

regard to why He would say it. Make you feel like you actually know better than Him, and anyway, again, He would never say no because he wants nothing but unicorns and cupcakes for His kids.

Actually, all of that is true, and THAT is precisely why, as a perfect parent, He says no to us. It is why, in His word here, He gives us a right way to be and to live.

But Adam and Eve chose their own way- "I am my own god. I know what's best for me."

Let's think for a minute before we move on. What actually did God hold back from them? One thing! The tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The one thing, that if they had that knowledge, would remove their innocence and create a rift between them as a couple and between them and God.

Everything else was theirs for their good pleasure. You see, God does want the best for you and for me, as any good parent would. Jesus came to fix this very mess, defined for us at the very beginning of "The Law".

Adam and Eve believed the snake instead, and they ate what they shouldn't have.

They took the cookies from the cookie jar.

In the process of learning good from evil, they lost everything. Every good and perfect gift given to them from their father. This is why Genesis 3:15 is so important.

It is the first promise that God will fix what they broke, and the fulfillment of this promise has a name, and that name is Jesus. "I have come to fulfill all that the law and the prophets, not abolish.

This points us to the cross and the death which will defeat death itself and heal what Adam and Eve tore apart.

Why is all of this so important to us? In asking the question Why the Bible, why the "Law and the Prophets"? We have to look at the Big Picture, the Metanarrative which was the worldview of God's people.

For it to mean anything to us, we need to see why, when Jesus said these things, it meant anything at all to them. We need to know that it makes sense and is cohesive, and that it's not some fairy tale rooted deeply in someone's imagination.

If we believe in Jesus Christ as the risen Lord, could any of us explain in a

good and clear way to someone why we would believe that?

That is the goal. Because it is, if we are honest as I've said in the past, a weird story. When we come to it with our own world-view, perspectives and opinions, and then read them into the Scriptures, we actually can do a great disservice to both the Scriptures and ourselves.

Jesus didn't just appear out of nowhere and begin saying cool things that helped people be better. Ghandi once said: "I like your Jesus, it's your Christian I hate." A statement often quoted to talk about the shortcomings of the Church. Perhaps rightly so.

However, Ghandi did not believe Jesus was anything more than a great moral teacher. He did not believe the claims of Jesus that He was the divine son of God.

So, much like it is good to understand Ghandi and his worldview, it is very good for us to know what our worldview is and how it is framed out in light of the Bible itself.

As opposed to how we frame out the Bible in light of our worldview. There is a difference.

Jesus, here in Matthew, is declaring certain things based upon the promises God made in the Old Testament.

Things which His people would not find weird, but precisely what they were looking for, because God had made those promises, and their world view was framed out in and around those promises.

Jesus in these statements is making huge claims about Himself. This particular one this morning, for example is pretty arrogant. Most especially if not true. He has said, that "I am the fulfillment" of God's promises.

That is not a statement of some cool sage who is trying to help people be better. No, that comes from someone who believes Himself to be God's Son and the genuine fulfillment of all His promises to this world.