

The Light of the Gospel

Matthew 22:34~23:14

Lent 4—March 25, 2020

Introduction

Sunday, we talked about how Jesus is the **LIGHT OF THE WORLD**. His light is the light of the **Gospel**. We can't see without light. Light dispels the darkness and makes it possible to see. When we're not used to it, light hurts our eyes. Today, we see what happens when that **Light of the Gospel** shines on the **Law**.

Law & Gospel

I'm not thinking here about comingling **LAW AND GOSPEL**. We're not trying to confuse what each of them do. But we must remember, they **do** work together. We have a better understanding of the Law when we understand it in the light of the Gospel.

The Law of Love

Jesus first shines the light of the **Gospel** on the **Law** and sums up what it's all about. Interpreting the Law as the fleshing out of love is not new with Jesus. All Jews started their day with a prayer called the **SHEMA**. It was **Deuteronomy 6:4-5**—*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Leviticus 19:18* says: *You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord.*

A Relational Law

Summing up the Law in love makes total sense. Life's all about **relationships**. It begins with the relationship of the **Trinity**. People were created to live in that relationship with God and with one another. Sin destroyed man's relationship with God and with each other. Keeping the Law maintains it. As we said last week, **love** is the glue that holds relationships together. So, when the Gospel light shines on the Law, we see that it's all about love. *Keeping the Law is how we love God and others.*

Light Exposes Evil

Jesus then shines His light on the *scribes* and *Pharisees*. These are the ones responsible for keeping and teaching the Law. His message is a warning not to imitate them, because they don't *practice what they preach*. But they have another problem as well. *They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their finger (Matthew 23:4)*. They add to the Law, making it more difficult for people to keep. Men had added over 600 additional laws to the Law of God. But for some reason, these religious leaders acted like they didn't need to keep the requirements they placed on others.

The Cure for Excessive Laws.

Martin Luther had a similar problem with the **Roman** church. The church operated under the false belief that Jesus' death pays the price for our original sin, but we are responsible for the sins we

commit. But, how can we get rid of them? Somehow, we must make **satisfaction** for them. Go to confession and do the penance assigned to you. Light candles, buy indulgences, go on pilgrimages, maybe buy some “extra” merit from monks. When you die, you will spend time in **purgatory**, to pay for any unconfessed sin left in your life. Luther tried all this, but to no avail. He still felt like God was angry with him. He was never good enough. Then, the **HOLY SPIRIT** opened his eyes to the fact that the *just shall live by faith* and everything changed. In faith, sins are payed for by grace. They are all covered by the **blood of Christ**.

The Gospel and Law

The **Gospel** doesn't do away with the **Law**, but it does lighten the burden. The Law requires **perfection**. The Gospel says, “Your perfection is found in Jesus Christ and Him crucified.” We are poor miserable sinners, doomed to death under the Law. But Christ has freed us from that by His death on the cross. The good news is that we are saved by grace through faith in Christ. That's the **LIGHT OF THE GOSPEL**.

*May the peace of God,
Which passes all understanding,
Keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.*
