

The Sermon on the Mount and Right Relationship with God

Kenneth J. Coughlan

October 12, 2019

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus illustrated that God's intent in giving the law was not for us to pile up restrictions to avoid even the mere possibility of violation. Rather, it was to indicate how to be in right relationship with God and with one another. Kyle D. Fedler stated, "The law was seen as a gift because the Jews were privileged to know how to stand in proper relationship with God and with one another." (Fedler 94).

When restrictions enacted by religious leaders became so burdensome that mere outward adherence became the goal rather than relationship, the purpose of the law became lost. Jesus attacked these excessive restrictions and got to the heart of the law. But at the same time, when it came to the central purpose behind the law, He insisted upon an even higher ethical standard. While the legalists were primarily concerned with outward appearances, Jesus demanded allegiance of the heart. Only by addressing our heart issues can we truly get into right relationship with God and with each other.

While we live in a sinful world (and sin will interrupt our relationships), that is not an excuse for failing to strive toward the ethical standards Jesus set. Christ inaugurated the kingdom of God on Earth by "associating with outcasts, healing, casting out demons, forgiving sins, and resurrecting from the dead," all acts which foreshadowed what the kingdom of God will be like once it is fully realized upon Christ's return (Fedler 145-48). In the same way, the full kingdom of God will be characterized by the ethics Jesus described in the Sermon. By striving to exemplify those ethical values today, we are attempting to live in accordance with God's kingdom and thereby strengthening our relationship with Him and with others.

WORKS CITED

Fedler, Kyle D. *Exploring Christian Ethics: Biblical Foundations for Morality*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006. Print.