

# Tradition vs. Intent

Matthew 5:21ff

“You have heard that the ancient were told...but I say to you...”

There are several pin-drop moments in the Bible where you just wish you had been there to see the miracle and the reactions to it:

“Moses answered, “Don’t be afraid! Stand your ground, and you will see what the Lord will do to save you today; you will never see these Egyptians again. The Lord will fight for you, and there is no need for you to do anything.” (Exodus 14:13–14).

“The Lord sent fire down, and it burnt up the sacrifice, the wood, and the stones, scorched the earth and dried up the water in the trench. When the people saw this, they threw themselves on the ground and exclaimed, “The Lord is God; the Lord alone is God!” (1 Kings 18:38-39)

“Now do not be upset or blame yourselves because you sold me here. It was really God who sent me ahead of you to save people’s lives...So it was not really you who sent me here, but God. He has made me the king’s highest official. I am in charge of his whole country; I am the ruler of all Egypt.” (Genesis 45:5-8)

“Suddenly a human hand appeared and began writing on the plaster wall of the palace, where the light from the lamps was shining most brightly. And the king saw the hand as it was writing. He turned pale and was so frightened that his knees began to shake.” (Daniel 5:5-6)

Jesus preaching the sermon on the mountainside was a pin-drop moment. He said things that were revolutionary, but at the same time attacked the very false and self-serving Pharisees and Scribes.

Jesus preached to some of the most religious people in the world and they rejected Him! Why did they reject Him? He was not religious enough, He did not fit their mold of what a religious person should be, He was too “free” thinking and not traditional enough.

The Sermon on the Mount provided the people freedom from the religious traditions of men, and allowed them to be true worshippers of God and to enjoy a true and right relationship with God, for the first time in their lives!

How did Jesus turn their traditions upside down?

- He ate with sinners, but the Pharisees believed that the holy should not associate with the unholy
- He touched the lepers, but the Pharisees believed that the unclean were to be outcast and not be allowed in the community

## Sermon on the Mount

- He went inside the house of the sinners and tax collectors, but the Pharisees would not be caught dead inside the house of a tax-collector
- He allowed loose women to touch Him, but the Pharisees judged Him to be out of His mind!

In this section of scripture Jesus speaks of “righteousness that exceeds...” (vs. 20), and He also defines it with six illustrations:

1. murder (21-26)
2. adultery (27-30)
3. divorce and remarriage (31-32)
4. lying (33-37)
5. vengeance (38-42)
6. love/hate (43-48)

### I. You have heard it said...

#### A. Morality

1. Murder (vs. 21): The Pharisees would have said that they had never murdered anyone. This might have been true in the physical sense.
  - a. What was the **intent** of the law? The intent of the law was to treat others with love and respect, honor and fairness, truthfulness and equity. The **intent** was not to commit murder of the heart.
  - b. The Pharisees were indeed guilty of murdering all the time, murdering each other because of hatred.
2. Five other issues on morality (more on them later)

#### B. Jesus corrects their tradition, not the Law of Moses

1. Many have seen this section of Scripture as Jesus replacing Moses' Law with His own. But that is not the case. He is correcting tradition.
2. “You have heard (the tradition of the Pharisees says ‘don’t murder physically’), but I say (this is what the Law of Moses actually teaches, ‘don’t hate your brother or anyone for that matter!’).”
3. Illustration of leaving home for 6 months and weeds/grass have overgrown. It is time to cut the weeds and shrubs. This is what Jesus is doing, He is pulling the weeds and cutting back the shrubs of the Pharisees' traditions.

#### C. Jesus shines the light on the intent of the Law-the Law of Moses is in the heart of man (21-22). When the 6th commandment says, “do not covet,” that is a heart law. The Jews interpreted the letter of the Law, Jesus interpreted the intent of the Law.

#### D. Jesus was a trailblazer and spoke as someone who had authority, no one spoke like He did! (Matthew 7:28-29)

### II. Jesus corrected the traditions and not the Law, how do we know?

#### A. The context of His teaching...

1. “you have heard it said” versus “It is written” He battled the devil with “it is written (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10) and threw out the money changers with “it is written (Matthew 21:13), not on traditions of men!”
2. On the Mountain sermon Jesus attacks the “You have heard it said” and corrects it with “But I say.”

#### B. The Pharisees and Scribes walked around in their religious dress and phylacteries showing off their religious hypocrisy. Jesus points out how ludicrous they have been in teaching the traditions of men:

1. They say “Thou shalt not commit adultery, and that means don’t take another man’s wife.”
2. But, I say if you even look at another woman and lust after her you have committed adultery. Why? Because the intent of the Law is to guard the heart, keep it pure and maintain a good relationship with God.