

The Inside-Out Kingdom

by Dr. Timothy J. Keller

Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.

You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

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. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands

will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matt. 5:11-20)

The Sermon on the Mount teaches what it means to live the Christian life. How is the Christian life concretely lived out? The first part of Jesus' sermon, the beatitudes and the woes, shows that the Christian life is based on a very different set of values than that of the world. Therefore, the first step in understanding the Christian life is to notice how Christianity is distinct from the world, and all that that means.¹

Before you get into the specifics of Christian practice in the Sermon on the Mount, another introductory distinction has to be made or you won't understand Christianity. Christianity is not just different from the world. Christianity is also distinct from religion. Every place where Jesus says "Pharisees and teachers of the Law," it would help if you just put "religious leaders." Jesus is saying that "Christianity is different than religion." This is key to understanding Christianity.

Swiss theologian Karl Barth suggested there is an anti-semitic way of speaking about the death of Jesus. Some people, out

Timothy Keller is Senior Minister at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, where this sermon first was preached.

¹See Keller's previous sermon, "Life in the Upside-Down Kingdom," *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 17:3, pp. 48-63, from Luke 6:17-26.

of anti-semitic bias, say that the Jews killed Jesus. Barth said that this is not only anti-semitic, but it's nonsense. It doesn't help. It's not illuminating. Here's what he means. Imagine somebody saying, "The Greeks killed Socrates." You'd say, "Okay. Socrates was Greek, his enemies were Greek, and his friends were Greek. Of course Greeks were involved in the death of Socrates." It's not specific enough. It doesn't tell you who killed Socrates. In the same way, Jesus was a Jew, His friends were Jewish, and His enemies were Jewish. To say, "Jews killed Jesus," is not specific enough. It doesn't really tell us who killed Jesus. Barth says, "Who did kill Jesus? Religious people killed Jesus."

Not only that, but everywhere in the New Testament you see hostility by Jesus toward religion. When Jesus gets near people from the world, worldly people, He's very patient and kind. But when He gets near religious leaders, He's very sharp. And it's religious people who were the most angry at what Jesus said. Over and over again the crowds, the *hoi polloi*, the common people of the world, were fascinated with Jesus, though maybe they didn't always believe what he said. But the religious people reacted to Jesus with anger.

One of the main points of the New Testament is you're never going to understand Christianity unless you see that it is something utterly different from religion. Not only that, it's the key to understanding the whole Sermon on the Mount. At the end of the Sermon on the Mount—both in the version we have in Luke 6 and the version in Matthew 5 to 7—Jesus says, "In summary and conclusion, I put before you these two ways." They are very famous statements. He says, "There are two paths. One leads to life, and one leads to destruction. There are two trees. One has good fruit, but one has poison fruit. There are two houses. One is built on the rock, but one is built on the sand." Jesus says, "Choose." He says that you have two ways, two trees, two houses, two ways of life. On the surface they look very much the same. But one of the ways is poison. It poisons its eaters. It destroys its travelers. It collapses on its residents.

What are those two ways that Jesus puts in front of us at the end of His Sermon? Not *that* way, *this* way. Not *that* tree, *this* tree. Not *that* house, *this* house. What are they? Traditionally—and I have to admit I have also read it and preached it this way—people understand Jesus to be saying, "You can either live according to the Sermon on the Mount, according to the law of God, the commandments of God, or not. You can either obey God's laws or disobey." Life or destruction. Good fruit or bad fruit. You live either obeying God's laws or disobeying God's laws.

But a commentator changed my whole understand-

ing of the Sermon on the Mount. He said, "Does it make sense that Jesus Christ would say, 'In summary, there are two ways. They look extremely *alike*, but one of them has poison fruit?'" Does it make sense that Jesus would talk about two ways at the conclusion of a sermon, and not have talked about those two ways in the sermon? Does it make sense that those two ways He's putting in front of us—one of which He's enjoining, and the other He's warning against—are good and bad, peo-

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ple who outwardly obey God's law and people who outwardly disobey God's law? How could those be two trees that look *alike*? How would those be two houses that look *alike*? When you go through the Sermon, you don't see Jesus saying, "Here are the people who are obeying God's law, and here are the people who aren't."

He doesn't say, "Here are people who pray and people who don't pray." No! He says, "You pray like that, but you should pray like this." He doesn't say, "Here are people who give to the poor, and there are people who don't give to the poor." No, He doesn't say that. He says, "Some people give to the poor like that, but I say to you, 'Give like this.'" Does He say, "Here are people who obey the ten commandments and there are people who don't."? No. He says, "You hear the commandment, 'Thou shalt not murder.' You obey like that, but I say to obey like this." Here's the scary thing. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ does not contrast two ways—one obviously good and the other obviously bad. Rather, both ways look good in that both groups of people obey God's law. Both groups of people follow the ten commandments, give to the poor, go to church, and study the Bible. Yet one is poison. You can see it in this very text.

Look at verse 19: "Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven." Notice that both groups of people in verse 19 are in the kingdom of heaven. Some are doing well. Some are doing not so well. But they are both *in*. Then suddenly in verse 20

Jesus says, "However, there are the religious people who are not in the kingdom of heaven at all." He says, "Your righteousness must surpass their righteousness." What He is saying is not "They're good and you're bad or you're good and they're bad," but "You're both trying to do the same thing. You're both trying to obey God." Jesus is saying, "Christianity is vastly beyond, it surpasses religion. It's something utterly different than religion." That's what He's saying. Don't mistake Christianity for religion. Don't mistake Christianity for going to worship, praying, and giving to the poor. Don't mistake Christianity for that. You can do all that and be poison, on your way to destruction, a house on

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the sand. Does that scare you? It should. Maybe you're saying, "You're kidding. I thought Christianity was about leaving the immoral lifestyle and trying to live according to the Bible and the example of Christ and the law of God. Isn't that it?" The answer is "No." That's part of it. That's clearly involved. But you miss the point. The key, as Jesus says, is if you want to be in the kingdom of heaven, there's a gospel goodness that vastly surpasses religious righteousness. How does it surpass? Four ways, and they build on each other. Gospel goodness is brighter than religious righteousness because it's deeper. It's deeper because it's sweeter. It's sweeter because it's higher. So gospel goodness surpasses because it's brighter and deeper and sweeter and higher.

Number 1: *Brighter*. Literally, Jesus says, "You are the light of the world." Notice there are two groups of people doing good deeds. One is doing it under a bowl, while the other is doing it in the way that attracts and delights the world. Therefore, the first difference between gospel goodness and religious righteousness, the first way for you to be able to tell the difference, is in its relationship to the world. Christianity is "attracted to" and "attractive to." Do you hear that? Christianity is attracted to and attractive to people with whom you don't agree, people who don't live the way you do, people who don't believe what you believe. Christianity is attracted to and attractive to, but religious people are turned off by it.

First of all, Christians are attracted. Notice where it says they are salt. "You are the salt of the earth" (5:13).

What is salt? Back in those days, the main thing salt was used for was as a preservative. You didn't put salt into water because water doesn't go bad. You put salt into meat because meat goes bad. It falls apart unless you put salt in it. What this tells us is that Christians, by the nature of their Christianity, when they see things falling apart, get in there. When you see somebody emotionally falling apart, you go in, like salt. When you see a neighborhood socially or economically falling apart, you go in. Christians are attracted in. They're salt, bringing in deeds of love and mercy.

Religious people, however, are under a bowl. What does that mean? It means they really want to stick together. They don't like being out there with all those people who are different. They are not at all attracted to neighborhoods that are falling apart. They are not at all attracted to people who are falling apart. They look around and pull their skirts in. That's the difference between religiousness and Christianity. Not only that, Christians are not just attracted but are attractive to people who disagree with them, who live a very different life, and who don't believe what they believe.

Notice that not only do you have the idea of beautiful light, of something that preserves, but salt has another side to it. The other job of salt was to make something taste good. I don't know about you, but I can't stand corn on the cob without salt on it. When I have eaten a piece of corn on the cob that I really like, I put it down, and what do I say? "That was great salt." No, I say, "That was great corn on the cob." Why? Because the job of salt is not to make you think how great the salt is, but how great the thing is with which it's involved. What if you are salt in your small group Bible study? If you're salt, people won't go away saying, "That person really knows the Bible and had all the answers. Showed me up!" No. What happens is when you go away from a small group in which you have been the salt, people don't say how great you were. They say, "What a great group!" "What fascinating truth!" This is pretty simple. Salt makes you feel better about life. Christians make you feel better. But religious people always make you feel condemned. They make you feel worse.

Later on in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus contrasts the two ways, saying, "Judge not lest you be judged" (7:1). He says, "You hypocrites, don't take a speck out of your brother's eye and miss the plank in your own eye" (7:3). What's all that about? Some people have said, "That means you're not supposed to make moral evaluations. You're not supposed to try to persuade people your religion is right. That's judging." Of course, that's not true. Why? Because to say you must not make moral evaluations is to make moral

evaluations. To say you must not persuade people that your religious point of view is right is to persuade people that your religious point of view is right. It's utterly impossible not to make moral evaluations. As soon as you say, "Let's not do it," you've just done it. You have to do it in order to deny it. You have to use it in order to say you're not going to do it. What is Jesus saying? Judging is doing moral evaluations with superiority. Let me press it.

A Christian is somebody who always sees his own sin as a plank and the sins of other people as specks. Religious people, on the other hand, always see their own sins as specks and everybody else's sins as planks. That's the reason religious people always make you feel worse. They make you feel condemned. It's also the reason Christianity is salt and light. A quick caveat before we move on. I didn't say Christianity's *beliefs* are popular. My goodness, no! I'm not saying that. When I say that gospel goodness is attracted to and attractive, I'm saying gospel *goodness*. I'm not saying the gospel. The gospel is still very repugnant to people. As soon as you open your mouth about what you believe, you'll get some trouble. Here's the difference. If you have gospel goodness in you, you never act or feel superior to anybody else, especially those who are different from you. This is the reason, by the way, your attitude toward New York City is one of the best ways to tell whether you're a Christian or a religious person. Because when you take a look at New York City, you're going to see two things. First of all, you're going to see some things falling apart. Religious people say, "Who wants to live there?" It shows you have no saltiness at all. Religious people look around and say, "What's wrong with these people?" That, of course, amounts to saying, "My sin is a speck and yours is a plank." Not only that, when you take a look around New York City, one of the things you see right off the bat are people who do not obey the ten commandments. Christians aren't turned off by that, but religious people are. So the first point is that gospel goodness is brighter. It's attractive. Why? Let's move on.

Second, gospel goodness is *deeper*. Here we're not talking about the relationship with the world. We're talking about the relationship with your own heart. When Jesus Christ said, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven," (5:20), He knew that everybody listening must have been utterly amazed. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law did full-time obedience. That was their job. They had worked out the Bible into something like 635 laws. They had the checklist: positive laws and negative laws, things you had to do, things you were supposed to avoid. They spent all day

working on it. When Jesus Christ said, "Your righteousness has to surpass," right away people must have said, "How could that be? Who in the world could be more righteous than the teachers of the law and Pharisees?"

So what does Jesus mean when He says you have to surpass? Over and over again (in verses 21, 27, 31, 33, 43) He says, "You heard, but I say." He goes through the ten commandments. "You heard you shall not murder."

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"You heard you shall not commit adultery." "You have heard it said you shall keep your promises and not lie." What is He doing? In every case He says, "You religious people are concerned with the external. I'm concerned with the heart." You can have the external, and the heart will still be just like everyone else in the world. If your heart is completely new, you'll have the external as well. Here's what He does. This sort of thing will make you sink in your pews. Jesus says, "Okay, let's take a look at murder. You have heard it said 'you shall not murder.' Religious people are concerned about not physically murdering somebody. But I say to you, 'If in your heart you have ill will, if you despise them, if you think of people as fools, if you disdain them, if you're indifferent to them, you've killed them.'"

Then He goes on to sex. "You have heard it said, 'You shall not commit adultery.'" The Christian sex ethic is no sex outside marriage. What is that all about? Jesus shows you. When you have sex outside marriage, you're saying, "I want to have physical, external nakedness and vulnerability, but I don't want to give you personal nakedness and vulnerability. In other words, let's be naked physically. But I don't want to give myself to you in every other way. I don't want to marry you. I don't want to give up my independence. I don't want to give up my options. I don't want to back up physical nakedness and vulnerability with complete personal nakedness and vulnerability." Jesus Christ says, "When you ask for physical nakedness and you don't have the integrity or guts to back it up with personal nakedness or are not willing to put your whole heart there, that's lust." When you do that—even in fantasy—you're stabbing yourself in the heart.

Then Jesus goes on to speak about telling the truth. He says, "You have heard it said that if you take an

oath, you better stick with the oath." But He says that's external. You signed a contract. If you break the contract, lawyers will come after you. He says, "I say unto you, let your 'yes' be 'yes' and let your 'no' be 'no'." What does He mean? Your heart should be so full of integrity that every single thing you say, every yes and every no, should be taken as seriously by you as if you have just sworn on a stack of Bibles. External consequences should mean nothing. When He talks about turning the other cheek or not paying back, He means

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not just refraining from paying back, but still hoping for a relationship. You're hoping for that person. You want him some day to kiss you. That's why you turn the other cheek. You don't turn the other cheek in order to get hit. Jesus' whole point about turning the other cheek is to say, "Don't you dare just refrain from vengeance externally. I don't just ask for that. I say to you that when you look at the person who has wronged you, no matter how messed up and how vicious they've been, you need to treat them with hope, you need to treat them with forgiveness. If you're going to oppose them, you should never oppose them except in love and good will."

By the time you get to the end of this whole section of the Sermon on the Mount, you're like a mass of smoking wreckage. Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, any teacher of ethics—there has never been a teacher who has asked for this, never a teacher who has wanted to go this deep. In a way, verse 20 is easy. He says you have to surpass the Pharisees and teachers of the law. You have to surpass the religious people. What He really means is, "I want you to have your heart changed." Religion only worries about the externals. A lot of people follow the law. They do not commit adultery or kill, and they make sure to tell the truth. But they do it exactly the way the world does, out of fear and out of pride.

A religious person says, "I tell the truth. A worldly person cheats and lies." The religious person says, "I don't lie. I'm not like them." Why does that worldly person cheat and lie? Fear. Some of the thinking behind lying is, "Oh, my goodness, I might lose my money or

reputation." Fear. The other is pride. It is as if you say, "Aha! I'm going to get them! I'm going to pull a number on them." Fear and pride lead people to lie. Why does a religious person choose not to lie but to tell the truth? Here's what Jesus says: fear and pride! The religious person would say, "I'd better not lie. He's going to get a hold of me. He's going to take me out." The other reason a religious person might give for not lying is that he is not like those kinds of people who do lie. "I'm not a liar. I'm a good person." Out of fear and pride these people over here don't lie, and out of fear and pride those people over there do lie. Jesus says, "What's the difference?" One kind of goodness is selfish goodness. Religious goodness is selfish goodness; it wants leverage. "If I tell the truth, God will have to be good to me. If I tell the truth, I can feel superior to other people." This is why religious goodness is so alienating and shallow, but gospel goodness is brighter, because it's deeper. Why is it so deep? Here's the answer.

Third, because it's *sweeter*. Gospel goodness has a center of sweetness. The good news about the Sermon on the Mount is that when you read through it carefully, you see that Jesus Christ does not say, "Try to live like this, and then God will be your Father." Oh no. All the way through He says, "You can live like this if you already know God is your Father." In verse 16, He asks, "Why are you going to be able to let your light shine? Why are you going to have an attitude toward the world that's noncondescending? Why are you going to love people who disagree with you? Why are you going to be light? Why are you going to be bright?" His answer: because God is your Father.

Let me go deeper into the Sermon on the Mount. In chapter 6 Jesus says, "Don't worry. Have no anxiety about anything." You say, "What kind of a command is that? How can I stop worrying?" If you treat this religiously, you say, "Oh, my goodness, I have to stop worrying. How do I do that?" Jesus says, "Wait! Have no anxiety about these things. Don't you see God taking care of the birds and the lilies of the field? Don't you understand that your heavenly Father, if He cares for them, sees you as much more valuable?"

Here's what Jesus shows us: the Sermon on the Mount is impossible unless you know you're valuable to God. It assumes it. The difference between religion and Christianity is that religion obeys the law of God, trying to get value. In chapter 6 it says the reason you give to the poor is so people will honor you. In chapter 6 it says the reason you pray is to get God to listen to you for your many words. A religious person tries to get value. A religious person says, "If I do all these good things, God will have to listen to me and people will honor me." That's why you alienate others. That's why,

deep inside, you're filled with fear and pride. But Christianity means obeying God's law *out* of value, not seeking value. That's amazing. It's a center of sweetness, a knowledge that you, His child, are of incredible value to Him, that there's nothing He would not do in order to hold onto you and keep you. He's a Father, not a boss. If you are an employee and you're good, you have a boss. If you're bad and you disobey laws, you're fired. If you're a child and you have a father or mother and you're good, you have a father or mother. If you're bad, you have a grumpy father or mother, but you have a father or mother. In fact, fathers and mothers, you know something, don't you? This is something very weird. If you have three children (like I do) and one of them is being disobedient, so often the disobedient one has your heart the most. Why? It's the nature of parenthood. Jesus says, "The secret of the difference between gospel goodness and religious righteousness is that you have God as a Father." That happens before you can obey. It's not something you obey in order to get, but it causes you to obey. When you know God as your Father and you have that center of sweetness, it changes everything. Religious people, for example, never do anything unless it's about them. Why do you help the little old lady across the street? It's not about her; it's about you. Maybe God will answer your prayers and you'll feel like a pretty good person. Why do you help the poor? It's not about the poor; it's about you. It's the reason why, very often, the religious people's help of the poor is so condescending and ineffective. It's filled with superiority. Why does the religious person pray? It's about you; it's not for Him. That's the reason why your prayers are filled with petition and very little adoration and repentance.

How do you become a child of God? How is it possible for you to know He's your Father? Somebody out here is saying, "Wait a minute! Isn't God the Father of everybody? God is the Father of all!" But Jesus says, "Yes, in one sense, but not in the sense I'm talking about." Knowing God as your Father is the heart of what makes you a Christian rather than a religious person. Not being sure about God's love and not being sure who you are is the heart of religiosity. Using goodness is about you. It's not about the people around you or God. It's leverage goodness. You do good in order to get leverage. It's manipulative goodness. "I do it in order to get people and God to do the things I want." That's the difference.

Therefore, gospel goodness is brighter because it's deeper, and it's deeper because it's sweeter. Why is it sweeter? It's sweeter because it's *higher*. The answer is in verse 17, the secret to the whole thing. Gospel goodness has a higher view of the law of God than any other

kind of goodness. I am sure when Jesus Christ gets to this verse, He says, "I bet you all are thinking (because I'm talking about God as if He's your Father) that you can be sure of His love and acceptance no matter who you are or what you are. I'm sure you think I have a low view of the law. But, actually, I have a higher view of the law than you do." Why does He say that Christianity has a higher view of the law than religion?

There are two kinds of religion. One kind is what I'll call liberal religion. Liberal religion says basically that God loves everybody. You just try your best. Will that

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give you an inner sense of sweetness? Will that make you absolutely and totally sure that God loves you utterly? Will you be amazed by what God has done in order to love you? No. That's just sentimental, liberal religion. On the other hand, you have conservative religion. Conservative religion says, "These are the rules. Do them." Conservative religion knows you're a sinner. It doesn't really know you're loved. Liberal religion knows you're loved, but it doesn't cost God anything to love you. Jesus Christ comes along and says, "I do not come to abolish the law. (That's against liberal religion.) I come to fulfill it. (That's against conservative religion.)" What does He mean when He says, "I have come to fulfill it"?

Look again at the Sermon on the Mount. First of all, He's the only one who has ever lived the Sermon on the Mount. Be amazed by the beauty of character in the Sermon: It's Jesus. Jesus is the only person who has ever lived like this. Not only that, He didn't just fulfill most of the Sermon on the Mount. He fulfilled the beatitudes. Here's how He fulfilled them. He said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." But Jesus Christ, though He was merciful, did not obtain mercy: He was condemned. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." Jesus Christ, who was pure in heart, did not see God, but rather had God turn His face away from Him on the cross. That's why He cried out, "My God, my God, why have you turned Your face away?" Jesus said, "The meek will inherit the earth." He was absolutely meek. But He was disenfranchised. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness." Nobody hungered and thirsted after righteousness like Jesus Christ, except He wasn't fulfilled. He was emp-

ried out. He said, "I thirst." Why? Here's why. He, though meek, lost His inheritance so that you, though you are not meek, could get it. He, though pure in heart, didn't see God so you and I, who are not pure in heart, could. He, though merciful, obtained no mercy so that you and I, who are not merciful, could. Jesus Christ said, "I have utterly fulfilled the Sermon on the Mount. Therefore, when you believe in me, not only does everything that you deserve come onto me, but every-

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thing I've done comes onto you." That means that when God looks at you, Christian friends, He sees someone who is as beautiful as the person who does the Sermon on the Mount every day. Absolutely every day. That is high. That's a higher view of the law. Jesus Christ says, "I take the law more seriously than any religious person! The religious people say 'Do your best.' I say, 'No, you have to be perfect!' Absolutely perfect! I've been perfect for you." That great hymn by John Newton has these words: "To see the law by Christ fulfilled and hear His pardoning voice, transforms a slave into a child and duty into choice."

So what does all this mean? First of all, by the phone booths and bus stops all over New York, there's an ad showing a beautiful model in undergarments which says, "Inner beauty only goes so far." I'm going to say something to get your attention so you can say you heard a Presbyterian minister say it. "That's a damned lie!" Damned? "Absolutely!" It's making fun of the values of the kingdom of God. You will never have the upside-down kingdom—where instead of looking for power and success and approval, you live a life of sacrifice—unless you have the inside-out kingdom. The inside-out kingdom says that what really matters is who I am to Jesus and who I am in my heart, and not whether I look right. The wealth I need, the reputation I need is all wrapped up in Him. That makes Christians radically free. We're not self-conscious. We're not scared about our bank account. So you can never have the upside-down kingdom unless you have the inside-out kingdom.

Second, verse 19 says that one of the ways you know you're a Christian is that you love to study the law of God and obey it. If you're a religious person, you're scared of the Word of God. If you're a relativistic

person, you disdain the Word of God. One of the ways you know you're a believer with gospel goodness is, as Psalm 1 says, "Blessed is the godly man. His delight is in the law of God, and on it he meditates day and night." In other words, one of the ways you can tell you have gospel goodness is you love to have God tell you what to do. You delight in meditating on and finding out how you can change. That's one of the best ways to know if you really understand the gospel of grace. If you read the Bible and Sermon on the Mount and you feel terrible and say, "Oh, my goodness, how could God ever love me?", you still don't get it. You still don't understand what Jesus means when He says, "I came to fulfill it." You're still stuck in a certain amount of religiosity. If you don't love to have Him tell you what to do and where you are wrong, and instead of giving you delight it crushes you, you still don't get it. It's a test.

Lastly, if you're not sure whether or not you're a Christian, let me suggest something. The Sermon on the Mount is not a ladder. It's not a way to climb up to God by doing certain things. It says there are two ways. One way is to say, "Out of my goodness I will seek to get God and other people to give me what I want in my inner emptiness; that is, a feeling of approval or worth." Or you can say, "I'm going to build my whole life and my approach to God on what Jesus has done for me." Be your own savior or let Him be your savior. There's a Y in the road. The Sermon on the Mount is not, "Here's the ladder. Climb on up." No. Choose. "See the law by Christ fulfilled, and hear His pardoning voice, transforms a slave into a child, and duty into choice."

Let's pray.

Father, we thank you that you have shown us the difference between Christianity and religion. We all need to see this, whether or not we are Christians, or whether we are not sure what we are. If we're not sure what we are, we need to know and understand this. There are people in this room now who are seeking to find out how to connect with you. I pray that they would learn what this means: "I have come to fulfill the law of God." Father, there are some of us in this room who know that a lot of our goodness is religious, even though we're Christians. It's one of the reasons we don't revel and rejoice in Jesus' fulfillment of the law for us. As a result of that, we really don't delight in the law of God. Our prayer life is filled with deadness. We pray that you would help us to rejoice in the gospel today in such a way that this week we're conformed more into the likeness of your Son. Therefore, we will live brighter, deeper, sweeter lives. We pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen.