

OFFENDERS

PART TWO

“No creature is hidden from God’s sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account”. - *Hebrews 4:13*

THE LESSON: MATTHEW 5

Remember not, Lord, our offences, nor the offences of our forefathers...

Let’s recap. God made the world good. And then humanity chose to rebel, setting the stage for a fallen world, utterly separated from our Creator. But God didn’t give up on humanity. He called the people of Israel to be his chosen people, set apart, a light to the nations, from whom the Messiah would one day come to make a way back.

At the time of Moses, God gave the people of Israel the law, which told them how to walk in obedience so that they would not offend his holiness. The law was very complex. In fact, the people always fell short of fully obeying it. The law showed them that they were sinners who had “fallen short of the glory of God”. This is true for all of us today as well, not just as members of the human race, but as individuals with “dark hearts” that cannot be hidden from the eyes of God.

By the time Jesus’ earthly ministry was taking place, there were distinct groups within Israel who had different attitudes towards keeping the law. The Pharisees prided themselves on keeping it, right down to the smallest minutia. They felt that even if everyone else was “fallen”, they were getting it right. But Jesus challenged them to recognize that though they were serious about keeping certain details, they were missing the very foundation of the law: to love God and to love one’s neighbour; to walk in justice, mercy and faithfulness. He needed to spell it out for them: They were *not* getting it right at all. They – like us – needed someone to get it right for them.

AT-HOME CHALLENGE

Each morning and evening, follow your own rule of prayer.

(IF YOU DON’T HAVE ONE, TRY SAYING THE MORNING AND EVENING PRAYERS FROM THE “FORMS OF PRAYER TO BE USED IN FAMILIES”, WHICH BEGINS ON PAGE 728 OF THE BCP. IF YOU DON’T HAVE A COPY, YOU CAN LOOK IT UP HERE: [HTTP://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER.](http://PRAYERBOOK.CA/RESOURCES/BCPONLINE/FAMILY-PRAYER))

Spend some time reflecting on our text from Matthew 5. What areas of sin in your own heart and life does the passage make you aware of? Confess them by name to God, and close with these words from Psalm 25:6-7:
“Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions; according to your steadfast love remember me, for the sake of your goodness, O Lord!”

- AND/OR -

Take some time to pray through this collect.

O God, the strength of all them that put their trust in thee: Mercifully accept our prayers; and because through the weakness of our mortal nature we can do no good thing without thee, grant us the help of thy grace, that in keeping of thy commandments we may please thee both in will and deed; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(COLLECT FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY, BCP PAGE 217)

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MATTHEW 5: **YOU ARE NOT RIGHTEOUS ENOUGH**

[Jesus said,] ¹⁷“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. ¹⁸For 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. ¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes 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 does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgement.’ ²²But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgement; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire...

²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart...

³⁸“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴²Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you...

⁴⁸You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.