

## ***“Loving Your Neighbor”***

**Christian Liberty**

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December 9, 2016

**Sig:** Father God, stir up Your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us. And because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let Your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with You and the Holy Spirit be honor and glory now and forever. Amen.

**Men:** Amen.

**Sig:** Just so you don't panic and think you're going to get two weeks of me, we have the pleasure next week of the Right Reverend Dr. John—see, everyone wants to call his last name Bishop!—Dr. John Rodgers, a bishop in the Anglican Church of North America, will be our teacher. So hold on to your hats and mark it on your calendar.

Anyway, gentlemen, I hope you have a handout. It's very brief and I'll try and fill it in as best I can.

I wanted to start off the conversation today, and please feel free to ask questions or clarify things. The book that I'm referring to today is *Knowing Jesus Through the Old Testament* by Christopher Wright. Now it's a very thick and very thorough and very deep book. Being paperback I thought it was going to be fun and a nice summary. But you'll find out as you study further, and get beyond what's on the bookshelves at your local Christian bookstore, that the books beyond that are not summaries. They are detailed. They give you all the background as to how we got to where we are today.

And that's what Christopher Wright has done in showing how Jesus in His time, in what we call first century Palestine, walked on the earth, and what a lot of things meant to Him and what He referred to when He referred to God as being holy. And He referred to the Pharisees and would say things to them that would get them all upset. And we read three sentences or three words and wonder why they would be so upset over that. But nonetheless, I'll try to share with you as much as I can in this brief time we have together. But I wanted to let you know that Mr. Wright explains very brilliantly about why we should be motivated to be obedient to the law of loving your neighbor. Many times, when I hear that phrase “loving your neighbor,” it's easy. Of course I love my neighbor. But it's a commandment from God. It's not the grace of God. But it's because of grace that we're able to love our neighbor. So I want to look a little further as to what that means and how we can really do that, because, you know Jesus summed up the law in two very simple phrases that we all know. The first is to love the Lord your God with everything you've got, and to love your neighbor as yourself. And Jesus said that that summarizes all the Law and the Prophets.

But it's commandments. So how do we do that? How do we live that way?

So in the outline I identify four points of motivation.

But I wanted you to know that when Jesus said that, He's not telling the Jews of His day anything new. I mean, they knew that. They knew that this summed up the Law and the Prophets. And they knew that it expressed the simple essence of the Hebrew

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Scriptures. They didn’t call it the Old Testament. They called it the Hebrew Scriptures. We didn’t have a New Testament when Jesus was here.

So we want to hold on to that essential simplicity. Most people think of the Old Testament as law. And it’s awkward and it’s difficult, and if we really dove into it it would lead us to legalism. But the opposite is really true. If we have our orientation correct, we find out that there’s a clarity and simplicity in the fundamental values and priorities of the law.

And this is what Jesus learned when He was in the wilderness. He came back to Satan with the Scriptures, most of it from what Moses had taught the Israelites as they were leaving Egypt.

But there’s a simplicity and a clarity in which Jesus would come back to Satan about why we should follow the law, and what the word of God really means. And this is what we’ll find in these teachings of Jesus—this restored true perspective, an essential point of the law. There’s an urgent appeal of Moses for single-minded, uncomplicated loyalty to God Himself.

So if we look at Deuteronomy 10, and this passage I’m about to read to you—most of the things I’m going to read. I’m also going to ask some of you men to read things for me, so hopefully your Bibles are at hand.

But when Moses gave this single-minded, uncomplicated loyalty to God, it was after the golden calf incident. And it was after he had noticed that and had thrown the first set of tablets down and broken them, and then went back to mediate on our behalf, that God would again be kind to us and try it a second time.

So Moses says, *“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD which I am commanding you today for your good?”*

So consider then the values of the Old Testament law that are reflected in the teaching of Jesus. And when we read the Gospels, you can see that the common people heard Jesus gladly, and responded to His invitation to enter the kingdom of heaven, not because He made it easy, but because He made it simple.

The law is a response to grace. Before God gave Israel His law, He liberated them and became their Redeemer. As Christopher Wright says in his book, Moses didn’t come down the mountain with these tablets hidden under his cloak, hoping that if the Israelites behaved and obeyed the law that God would save them. No, it was quite the opposite, the other way around, as he says. It was precisely the other way around. He saved Israel and then asked them to keep His law in response.

The law was never intended as a means of achieving salvation, but rather as a guide for responding to salvation by living in a way that pleased God for those of us He has saved. Wright points out that this is why the Ten Commandments begin with a statement, not a command. And as we all know, at the beginning of the Ten Commandments, Moses said, as he quotes from what God had told him, *“I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”*

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God’s righteousness was demonstrated in the Exodus. Israel’s righteousness was their right response, pulling them in a tight relationship with God, just as Bruce has taught us. That’s what righteousness is—being in a right relationship with God.

Obedience flows from grace. Obedience does not buy grace. To tie it in with Bruce’s teaching from last week on the fruit of the Spirit, Mr. Wright states, “Obedience is the fruit and proof and sustenance of a relationship with the God you already know.”

It’s the same priority of the relationship with God that is found in the teachings of Jesus. When Jesus started His public ministry, He came out and gave this wonderful Sermon on the Mount. He first sketched a portrait of the happiness that comes from a character oriented to God. The Beatitudes are not laws. They are descriptions of a quality of life lived in relation to God. Christopher Wright says, “The Beatitudes reflect a person’s attitudes, stance, commitments, relationships, priorities and loyalties. Blessedness flows from having all these dimensions of our lives centered on God.”

Jesus’ call to get one’s life into the right relationship with God was there in order to please Him. It’s curious how Jesus’ portraits of God are always as a generous Father, a waiting and forgiving Father, a generous vineyard owner, a creditor who releases an enormous debt. All of these speak to the priorities of grace. Jesus taught that obedience flows from love. And Jesus taught in our case that such love flows from the grace of being forgiven.

I think Frank turned up the heat in here. My mouth is dry. Hope you’ve got more water there, brother. Oh, thank you!

I wanted to read a famous story for us that we all know. It’s from Luke 7, beginning with verse 36. This is to illustrate that love flows from the grace of being forgiven.

*“One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him. And He went into the Pharisee’s house and reclined at table.*

*“And behold, a woman of the city who was a sinner, when she learned that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment. And standing behind Him at His feet, weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head, and hissed His feet and anointed them with the ointment.*

*“Now when the Pharisee who had invited Jesus saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this Man were a prophet, He would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.’*

*“And Jesus answering him said, ‘Simon, I have something to say to you.’*

*“And he answered, ‘Say it, teacher.’*

*“A certain money lender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii and the other fifty. When they could not pay, he canceled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?’*

*“Simon answered, ‘The One I suppose for whom he canceled the larger debt.’*

*“And He said to him, ‘You have judged rightly.’ Then turning toward the woman, he said to Simon, ‘Do you see this woman? I entered your house. You gave me no water for My feet. But she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss. But from the time I came in, she has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not*

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*anoint My head with oil. But she has anointed My feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little loves little.’*

*“And He said to her, ‘Your sins are forgiven.’*

*“Then those who were at table with Him began to say among themselves, ‘Who is this that can even forgive sins?’ And He said to the woman, ‘Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.’”*

I can relate to this story. I think I might have shared with you some time ago that I heard a deacon preaching on this passage. And he had a very simple short sermon. And I identified with it completely. He said, “I’ve wept in my day. But I have never wept enough that my tears would be sufficient to wash someone’s feet.”

And can you picture this woman at the feet of Jesus? No matter where He was, she had to find Him. She had to come to Him and thank Him. She knew who He was. And she wanted to show her gratitude.

I know what my sin is. I know all of you do. We may not share it with each other. But to have that lifted off our backs and to be released from that burden of sin. There’s an outpouring that many of us have experienced in our lives. It’s probably why many of us are here today. God has touched us in that way. But He has released us from a burden that was intolerable. And tears just flow.

And I know that when we hear of other people’s stories, we’re overwhelmed. And that joy comes back and reminds us of the day when God first touched our lives.

So what I want us to ask ourselves is what motivates us to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness? So I lay before you four points of motivation.

*Motivation for obedience.* It’s a feature of the Old Testament law. God wanted to instill a guiding belief of intelligence and willing moral behavior in Israel. The following four points of motivation in the Old Testament law should sound familiar, as we remember the teachings of Jesus.

So my point A. is *gratitude for what God has done*. Sheer gratitude should trigger obedience out of a desire to please our God, our God of such faithfulness in salvation.

I’m going to read first from 1 John 4 verse 14. *“And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent His Son to be the Savior of the world. For whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God. For we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love. But perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment. And whoever fears has not been perfected in love. We love because He first loved us. If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar. For he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God, whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.”*

You know, the Israelites were instructed to treat vulnerable people in their society. And much of the law is written in that regard—to take care of the poor, the stranger, the debtor, the slave. And examples from the Old Testament command us and commanded

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the Israelites to be compassionate and provide generous behavior based on Israel’s own past experience.

So if any of you have an Old Testament in your hands, would someone look up Exodus 22 verse 21? It’s right after Genesis, I think. It’s the second book in there.

**Participant:** 22:21?

**Sig:** Yes, Brian.

**Brian:** *“You shall not wrong a sojourner or oppress him, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.”*

**Sig:** Thank you. Could someone look up Leviticus 19?

**Participant:** I’ll do that.

**Sig:** Okay. And while you’re getting that, could someone look up Deuteronomy chapter 15 verse 7? Are you ready, Don?

**Don:** Yes.

**Sig:** What took so long? Wow, good. Leviticus 19:33-36.

**Don:** I could have had you do it, you know. *(Laughter)*

**Sig:** I could have.

**Don:** Yeah, that’s right. Okay. *“And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as yourself. For you were strangers in the land of Egypt. I am the LORD your God. You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight and volume. You shall have honest scales and honest weights, an honest ephah and an honest hin. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt.”*

**Sig:** Thank you. An ephah, by the way, is twenty-two liters, and a hin is about four quarts, which are their terms of measurement. Don, don’t lose that page!

**Don:** Okay.

**Sig:** Uh-oh! Do you still have that?

**Don:** Yes.

**Sig:** Can you read further down in Leviticus to chapter 25?

**Don:** Wait a minute. Go to chapter 25?

**Sig:** In Leviticus.

**Don:** Okay.

**Sig:** Verse 35.

**Don:** All right, here we go. *“If one of your brethren becomes poor and falls into poverty among you, then you shall help him like a stranger or a sojourner, that he may live with you.”*

**Sig:** Can you jump down to verses 37 and 38?

**Don:** Yes. *“You shall not lend him your money for usury, nor lend him your food at a profit. I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, to give you the land of Canaan, and to be your God.”*

**Sig:** And then verse 42.

**Don:** *“For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt. They shall not be sold as slaves.”*

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**Sig:** Thank you.

**Don:** You're welcome.

**Sig:** So we see the pattern here, that God is instructing His people to care for sojourners and strangers and people in the land, the poor and whatnot, just like they were when they came out of Egypt and they wandered in the wilderness for a while. Does someone have Deuteronomy 15 verse 7?

**Participant:** Yes. *“If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns in the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hard hearted or tight fisted toward your poor brother.”*

**Sig:** And verse 8, too. I'm sorry.

**Participant:** *“Rather, be open-handed, and freely lend him whatever he needs.”*

**Sig:** Can you jump down to verse 13, Bob? Read 13-15.

**Bob:** *“If a fellow Hebrew, a man or a woman, sells himself to you and serves you six years, in the seventh year you must let him go free. And when you release him, do not send him away empty-handed. Supply him liberally from your flock, your threshing floor and your winepress. Give to him as the LORD your God has blessed you. Remember that you were slaves in Egypt, and the LORD your God redeemed you. That is why I give you this command today.”*

**Sig:** Very good. Thank you. And we can see, moving fast forward to the New Testament, when Jesus tells His parable of the ungrateful debtor. And I'm assuming that many of you are familiar with that story, where Jesus portrays the story of a king who decides to call in his debt on some of the people he rents his land to. And he wants them to pay up. And this one man comes to him and he says, “I can't! It's too big!” And he weeps and he falls on his knees. And the king generously forgives him his debt.

And then that same day the man is walking through town and sees a man who owes him much less of an amount of money. He grabs him by the throat and says, “I want that money you owe me! I want it now!”

And the man falls on his knees and begs for his forgiveness and asks for help and mercy, and the man doesn't give it to him.

Well the king hears about this and calls this man back in and says, “What the heck is going on? I just forgave you this, and you turn around and demand much less of an amount from somebody else. Didn't you see what was going on here?”

So mercy received should lead to mercy offered. And Israel, of all people, should have known this. And the only reason I bring this up is because we know that the context in which Christ came into the world was much different. There was a lot of law that was strangling. The people were being strangled by the law. And obedience to the law, as presided by the Sadducees and the Pharisees, was like a yoke. Jesus referred to His yoke as being light, in contrast to the Pharisees' yoke which was heavy.

So mercy received should lead to mercy offered. Israel, of all people, should have known this. Yes, Don?

**Don:** Sig, there are some people who say that when Jesus uttered the Golden Rule in Matthew seven, that this was something new. And I dispute that. I think that these passages that we just read show that this was in the Old Testament too.

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**Sig:** Right.

**Don:** And Jesus was just reinforcing it and letting these people know what they should have known all along.

**Sig:** Absolutely! Excellent point. That’s exactly right. And we’ll see that as we go further. In fact, that’s why I’m taking us back to the Old Testament first, to remind us of the ground that was laid. In fact, one thing I want to make clear from what I’ve studied in the Old Testament is that, as I grew up in the Christian church in the twentieth century, none of this was really brought to my attention. It was sort of “Jesus loves you, and has a wonderful plan for your life. We know you’re a sinner. Ask God to forgive your sins and live your life for God.” There was never any basis of how Jesus got to this point. It was all about Jesus and forgiveness, whereas we had no idea—at least I had no idea, very little of an idea—of what led up to that. Ted?

**Ted:** I was just looking in Leviticus 19, where it says “when the stranger sojourns with you in your land.”

**Sig:** Yes.

**Ted:** I’m wondering if that is a legal or an illegal sojourner. (*Laughter*)

**Sig:** You had to go there. (*Laughter.*) But do you know what, Ted? I don’t know for sure, and I know you’re trying to throw a question that would get me stuck and embarrass me in front of all these men. (*Laughter*) But the one thing I can say, Ted, is that even if he was an illegal sojourner, the mercy of God would be to allow him into your house and share what you have with him. Is that the right answer, Ted? What’s that?

**Participant:** Since Ted brought up Leviticus 19, here is a good tie-in. If you look at Leviticus 19:17 and 18, it says, “*You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin on him.*” And in 19, verse 18 it says, “*You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people. You shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.*” So it’s right there in the Old Testament. Love your neighbor.

**Sig:** Brilliant!

**Participant:** Indeed.

**Sig:** Brilliant, Brian. You’re about three pages ahead of me, because that’s exactly where we’re headed. At the end of Leviticus 19, like you just said, it says to love your neighbor as yourself.

So in this parable we just talked about, we see the king as God forgiving us. And Jesus’ parable ends on a sober note of warning. God threatened judgment for disobedience.

And in his book Christopher Wright says, “It is a feature of the Torah that love is commanded. Love is an act of the will which is demonstrated in obeying God’s commandments.” I thought that was a nice, tight little summary there. “Mutual forgiveness is an essential mandate of the King. Behavior to one another must prove the genuineness of their gratitude to the God of incredible, unbounded forgiveness.” That’s all from Christopher Wright.

So we look in Matthew 25, where He says, “Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters, you did for Me.” That summarizes it too, very nicely.

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Well let's move on to the next point: *the imitation of what God is like*. The law was meant to enable Israel to be like Yahweh. The way God acted was *motive* and *model*. An Old Testament expression that we see often, right from the beginning with Abraham, was “walking in the way of the LORD.” And that referred to obeying His commands, doing what He would do.

You know, we have the wrist band that we've sort of criticized many times. “What would Jesus do?” But that is what the law is—for us to understand or think, or get whatever we can of the mind of God. I think, “Well, what would God have me do?”, even if he's a foreign sojourner.

So in Genesis 18:19 it says, “*Walk in the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice.*” Well what are the ways of the Lord? Does someone still have a finger in Deuteronomy? Could someone read Deuteronomy 10, verses 17-19?

**Participant:** “*For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial, and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore, for you were sojourners in the land of Egypt.*”

**Sig:** Thank you, Bill. Israel's social behavior was to be modeled on the character of God in all its richness. It must love God, as God loved Israel when they were needy foreigners in a strange land, or homeless wanderers in the wilderness. And as Brian pointed out, do for others what God has done for you. Love your neighbor as yourself.

And in Leviticus 19, the reason behind this, right at the beginning of chapter 19, God says, “*Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy.*”

I wanted to read for you just a short portion of what Christopher Wright summarizes as being holy, because I look at that as if there's a glow. If I say everything right, if I'm really holy, I say things just the right way. I don't live in anything that you might think is less. I think there's this aura of mystique and probably some inappropriateness or incorrectness of what holiness really means.

And I think Christopher Wright put it rather brilliantly. He said, “Rather, it shows that the kind of holiness God has in mind, the kind that reflects God's own holiness, is thoroughly practical and down to earth.”

He summarizes Leviticus 19. He puts it into our words. He says, “Look at the details of Leviticus 19.”

And Christopher Wright says, “Holiness means generosity to the poor when you get returns on your agricultural investments, fair payment and treatment of employees, practical compassion for the disabled, and respect for the elderly, the integrity of the judicial process, safety precautions to prevent endangering life, ecological sensitivity, equality before the law for ethnic minorities, honesty in trade and business. We call such matters social ethics or human rights, and think we are very modern and civilized in our age for doing so. We go to great lengths to get them written pompously in the declarations for this and that charter, for this and that code, for something else. God just calls them holiness.” I thought that was a brilliant summary of Leviticus 19.

So when we look at Jesus in His contrast with the Pharisees, there's a dynamic there in many ways, because Jesus would say to His people, “Listen to what they say, but don't do



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what they do,” because they were the keepers of the law. They did interpret the law. They were bright men. In fact, one time He even says that your righteousness should exceed theirs, in a way sort of endorsing some of their righteousness. It was accurate. It was good.

Both Jesus and the Pharisees shared a consuming desire that God’s people should be holy. The Pharisees pursued a program of holiness that demanded performance to perfection. Unfortunately, holiness was characterized, unfortunately, by exclusion. Jesus also looked at characteristics of God in the Torah. But His, as we just read from what Christopher Wright summarized, would be a benevolent Creator, Provider for all humanity, even His creatures, merciful forgiveness and incredible grace. The covenant with Abraham was for the blessing of all nations.

And you know, that’s another aspect that comes into play with Israel. They tended to keep to themselves. The typical story we look at is Jonah. When God calls him to go to Nineveh, he heads the other way and doesn’t want anything to do with it because he knows it’s a foreign land, a foreign country. His life could be in jeopardy. But he also knows that God is going to do something mighty and powerful.

The Jews weren’t real good at evangelism. Some were; some sects were. And I’ve heard that even some sects today are very good at it. But it’s not their natural tendency. They like this idea of having the Prophets and having all the patriarchs and keeping to themselves, and keeping the temple to themselves. Yes, Don?

**Don:** I think it’s interesting, Sig, that all of the constant predictions in Isaiah, for example, about the Gentiles coming to faith, and the Jews seem to have forgotten that. Of course, in the book of Acts they wanted to stone Paul for going to the Gentiles and everything like that.

**Sig:** Yeah.

**Don:** They had forgotten all the predictions. And the reason they existed was to evangelize to the nations.

**Sig:** Absolutely. In fact, I don’t know if I’ll have enough time, but I wanted to get into when Jesus was cleansing the temple and what was behind all of that. But we see the contrast here between Jesus and the Pharisees. And it’s best illustrated when Jesus spoke of loving your enemies, which again echoes Leviticus 19.

So look at this little summary again from Christopher Wright. And he puts together Luke 6 and Matthew 5. And these are familiar to you, but I think we need to see it together. It sheds a different light.

So Jesus is echoing Leviticus 19, and understands that holiness is the perfection of loving mercy.

This is from Matthew and Luke. *“But to you who are listening I say, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who mistreat you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes*

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*what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.”*

You know, it’s kind of curious there that at the time of Jesus they were under Roman authority, Roman governors. And when I read this part, I say, “Well, what are you talking about?” If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. I mean, I don’t know many people that come up and ask for your coat. But in those days it was not uncommon for a Roman soldier to ask a Jewish man for his cloak, to ask for his coat, or to ask him to carry his bags, because that’s another one of the aspects that Jesus talks about. When someone asks you to carry his bags for a mile, take it for two miles.

It was not unusual for Romans to harass the Jews. Or actually, maybe the soldier needed a cloak because he didn’t have one. And so what Jesus is saying is that if they ask you, give it to them.

And then he compares it to the lilies of the field. They neither sew nor spin and they have everything they need. And your Father in heaven who loves you, don’t you think He’ll give you everything you need?

So I thought that contrast was interesting in light of the day that Jesus grew up in, and the phrases that have become so commonplace to us. If we look at the Old Testament and what Jesus is saying to the Jews who were the bulk of His ministry at that time, although He included the Gentiles and the Samaritans and all the others who would tick the Jews off, His message was to the Jews. “To the Jew first and then the Gentile.” And He wept over Jerusalem; He wept over Israel.

Well let’s look at point C. I’ll try to wrap this up. Point C. was *being different*. Being holy means being different—set apart, distinctive, separate. “You must be different because I am a different kind of God.” And God said and Moses prayed that He would have a nation of priests and a holy nation. In Exodus 19 verse 5 it says, “*Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be My treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel.*”

So *holy* is looking back from whence they came, and looking forward to where we are going. And holiness was not being snobbish. They were a people of God. We are a people of God. Jesus told His disciples in the Sermon on the Mount, “*You are the light of the world.*”

And that was not a new thought either. That’s something that Moses and the Prophets said to Israel years ago. And light in a dark world, if it shines, the actual practical way of light being seen is through our obedience, through our love for others. And then it raises questions about the God that you worship, and the social quality of the life that you exhibit. So it’s a clear call from Jesus to be different, to exceed the righteousness of the Pharisees. Love others, not just those who love you. I mean, even Dick Clouser does that! *(Laughter)* And others, too. He’s a very generous man. He’s the only name I could come up with. I was trying to think of Ted Wood’s name, but it slipped me. *(Laughter)*

Anyway, go beyond the familiar patterns of relationships and ambition in society. Yes, sir?

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**Participant:** You know, that statement to love others, and even to love your enemies, even though we’re doing it in a lost community, is when someone commits a crime, and he does something really terrible, the family will always say, “But he was such a good guy. I don’t understand why he did that.”

**Sig:** Yes.

**Participant:** But the revealing part of that is that he’s a good guy to people who he’s close with, or who are his family.

**Sig:** Yes.

**Participant:** That’s what it really means. The point that Jesus is trying to bring out is that because someone is benefiting you and your family, and you’re close to your family, of course they’re going to think you’re a good guy taking care of your family, making payments and stuff, that’s what he does, and that’s fine. But going beyond his family and his friends, he’s not a good person anymore, right?

**Sig:** Yes.

**Participant:** Because they’re taking advantage of people, but they’re not seeing that, because “he helps me out all the time. He’s such a great guy.”

**Sig:** Right.

**Participant:** I think it’s pretty revealing.

**Sig:** Thank you. What’s your first name?

**Participant:** Robert.

**Sig:** Robert, thank you very much. Love others, not just those who love you. Good point, Robert.

So my last point is why do we love our neighbor? Well, *it’s for our own good*. Who benefits from you loving your neighbor? God doesn’t need your good works. Your neighbor does. Who said that, Don?

**Don:** Martin Luther.

**Sig:** Very good, very good! Who’s interests are being protected in the law? The weaker, the poorer, the defenseless, the people in our community, as it was in Israel—the debtor, the slave, the homeless, the widow and orphan, the landless worker, the prisoners of war, the refugees, women and children. The law was given for the people’s sake, not for God’s sake. The purpose of the law was not to make God happy, but to make us happy.

And in his book Christopher Wright says, “The law was a gift of grace, a blessing, a treasure, one of many great privileges God had entrusted to Israel for its own good, and then for the blessing of the rest of humanity.”

And we see how Jesus clashed with the legal experts of His day. I don’t think I’ll have the time to go through all of that. But we see how He clashed with the legal experts of His day. And what was He trying to say to them? I’ll just point out one thing in particular. Of course the Sabbath was a big area in which they clashed.

And I’m often wondering. The Sabbath was for everyone in the day of Christ. Even the animals rested. Your slaves rested. Your hired hands, everybody rested. Can you imagine if we held to that in our society?

## ***“Loving Your Neighbor”***

There are a privileged few in America who get the weekends off, and certainly Sundays. But there are a lot of people who work so that we can have a day of leisure. Could you imagine if we stood to that.

I don't know if you know this or not, but Bruce was drafted by the Baltimore Orioles. He was a good football player. He was a good athlete. And I said, “Bruce, why didn't you go?” I love baseball. “Why wouldn't you take that?”

**Participant:** He'd play Sundays.

**Sig:** Exactly right, Dick. They played on Sundays. It's like “Chariots of Fire,” when that young man in the Olympics running for the British crown wouldn't race on Sundays.

And I just think. How important is that, that day of rest? And there's a lot more to it than just taking a day off. But God wanted us to rest. He also wanted us to work six days. So this weekend idea, guys,-- *(Laughter)* Yes, Brian?

**Brian:** You bring up a good point. It's something we in our family are working through. But we've been following the Sabbath, being Sabbatharians for about two years.

**Sig:** Great!

**Brian:** It's not great.

**Sig:** It's a challenge. Yeah.

**Brian:** It brings strife within the family. It brings strife with others, because if you follow it, if you really truly couldn't do anything that causes another to have to work,--no buffets on Sunday, no this, no that. And you'll be surprised at how much of a challenge it is if you—

**Sig:** Oh yes, tremendously. Thank you for that. Keep us posted. That's a remarkable challenge.

You know, it's curious. I'll wrap up with this. Jesus said to the Pharisees that there was a tithe. Everybody tithed, right? And so a lot of people tithed agricultural items and gave them to the poor. Well this is what the Pharisees tithed.

Jesus said to them, *“Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice and mercy and faithfulness. Those you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.”*

I mean, you know what mint and dill and cumin are, right?

**Participant:** Spices.

**Sig:** They're spices. I've got more of those on my shelf than I know what to do with. These guys didn't tithe the ox, the bull and the wheat from their crops. And I think that's part of what Jesus is saying.

Anyway, one last point here. I know I've had a lot of last points. *(Laughter)* But obviously the conclusion of all this is that we would love our neighbors, and that Jesus demonstrated His love for His disciples. No longer are they just His disciples, but they are His friends. And love leads to obedience. Jesus' love for us leads to a new commandment.

In John 13 Jesus said, *“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.”*

And He goes on in John 15. He is quoted as saying, *“As the Father has loved Me, so I have loved you. Abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My*

## ***“Loving Your Neighbor”***

*love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you that My joy may be in you, and your joy may be full. This is My commandment.”* This is a new commandment I’m about to read to you. This is not in the top ten. *“This is My commandment: that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.”*

And as Bruce was teaching us last week, John goes on to say, *“You did not choose Me, —John quoting Jesus—“you did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit. And your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in My name, He may give it to you. These things I command you so that you will love one another.”*

Let’s pray. Oh God, who for our redemption gave Your only-begotten Son to the death of the cross, and by His glorious resurrection delivered us from the power of our enemy, grant us so to die daily to sin, that we may evermore live with Him in the joy of His resurrection, through Jesus Christ Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Men:** Amen.

**Sig:** Go in peace to love and serve the Lord! *(Applause)*