

^{vii} **Matthew 5:21-37**

Jesus said, “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny. You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell. It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastely causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”

^{vii} **About the Gospel: Matthew 5:21-37**

Today’s and next Sunday’s gospels come from the section called “the six antitheses” (5:21-48), so named from the repeated phrase “it was said...but I say.” Fundamentally, the antitheses are a statement about who Jesus is and what authority he bears (7:28-29). They also illustrate how Jesus fulfills the law (5:17). He does not pit his teaching against the law, but against the rabbinic interpretations and traditions. Jesus reveals the spirit of the law in a new standard of righteousness.

These antitheses reach back past the Mosaic Law to the original or “creation will” of God. This means that in some cases (murder, adultery, love of enemy) the law has been strengthened; Jesus’ command is “not only...but also.” Attention is shifted from external action to internal intention. In other cases (divorce, oaths, retaliation), the law as practiced is abrogated and external performance is altered.