

# OpenTheo

## February 16th: Genesis 46 & Matthew 5:21-48

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Jacob's descent into Egypt. Fulfilling the Law in the Sermon on the Mount.

Some passages referenced:

Genesis 21:25-33 (the naming of Beersheba); Genesis 26:23-25 (God appears to Isaac at Beersheba); Genesis 10 (seventy nations); Exodus 15:27 (twelve springs and seventy palm trees).

Deuteronomy 24 (teaching on divorce); 1 Corinthians 7:10-11 (Paul's reference to Jesus' teaching concerning divorce).

Reflections upon the readings from the ACNA Book of Common Prayer (<http://bcp2019.anglican church.net/>).

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## Transcript

Genesis chapter 46. So Israel took his journey with all that he had, and came to Beersheba, and offered sacrifices to the God of his father Isaac. And God spoke to Israel in visions of the night, and said, Jacob, Jacob.

And he said, Here I am. Then he said, I am God, the God of your father. Do not be afraid

to go down to Egypt, for there I will make you into a great nation.

I myself will go down with you to Egypt, and I will also bring you up again. And Joseph's hand shall close your eyes. Then Jacob set out from Beersheba.

The sons of Israel carried Jacob their father, their little ones, and their wives, in the wagons that Pharaoh had sent to carry him. They also took their livestock and their goods, which they had gained in the land of Canaan, and came into Egypt, Jacob and all his offspring with him, his sons and his sons' sons with him, his daughters and his sons' daughters, all his offspring he brought with him into Egypt. Now these are the names of the descendants of Israel who came into Egypt, Jacob and his sons.

Reuben, Jacob's firstborn, and the sons of Reuben, Hanok, Pallu, Hezron, and Carmi, the sons of Simeon, Jemuel, Jamin, Ohad, Jachan, Zohar, and Sheol, the son of a Canaanite woman, the sons of Levi, Gershon, Kohath, and Merari, the sons of Judah, Ur, Onan, Shelah, Perez, and Zerah, but Ur and Onan died in the land of Canaan. And the sons of Perez were Hezron and Hamel, the sons of Issachar, Tola, Puvah, Job, and Shimron, the sons of Zebulun, Sered, Elon, and Jalil. These are the sons of Leah, whom she brought to Jacob in Paddan Aram, together with his daughter Dinah.

Altogether his sons and his daughters numbered thirty-three. The sons of Gad, Ziphion, Haggai, Shunni, Esbon, Eri, Erodai, and Erelai, the sons of Asher, Imnah, Ishva, Ishvi, Beriah, with Sarah their sister, and the sons of Beriah, Heber, and Malkiel. These are the sons of Zilpah, whom Laban gave to Leah his daughter, and these she brought to Jacob, sixteen persons.

The sons of Rachel, Jacob's wife, Joseph, and Benjamin. And to Joseph in the land of Egypt were born Manasseh and Ephraim, whom Asenath, the daughter of Potiphar, the priest of Onn, brought to him. And the sons of Benjamin, Bela, Beca, Ashbel, Gerah, Neman, Ehi, Rosh, Mupim, Hupim, and Ard.

These are the sons of Rachel, who were born to Jacob, fourteen persons in all. The son of Dan, Hushim, the sons of Naphtali, Jaziel, Guni, Jizur, and Shilam. These are the sons of Bilhah, whom Laban gave to Rachel his daughter, and these she brought to Jacob, seven persons in all.

All the persons belonging to Jacob who came into Egypt, who were his own descendants, not including Jacob's sons' wives, were sixty-six persons in all. And the sons of Joseph who were born to him in Egypt were two. All the persons of the house of Jacob who came into Egypt were seventy.

He had sent Judah ahead of him to Joseph to show the way before him in Goshen, and they came into the land of Goshen. Then Joseph prepared his chariot and went out to meet Israel his father in Goshen. He presented himself to him and fell on his neck, and

wept on his neck a good while.

Israel said to Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive. Joseph said to his brothers and to his father's household, I will go up and tell Pharaoh and will say to him, My brothers and my father's household, who were in the land of Canaan, have come to me. And the men are shepherds, for they have been keepers of livestock, and they have brought their flocks and their herds and all that they have.

When Pharaoh calls you and says, What is your occupation? You shall say, Your servants have been keepers of livestock from my youth even until now, both we and our fathers, in order that you may dwell in the land of Goshen. For every shepherd is an abomination to the Egyptians. In Genesis chapter 46, Jacob goes down to Egypt.

On the way down to Egypt he stops at Beersheba, which is just on the borders of the land, and God appears to him at Beersheba as he appeared to Isaac at Beersheba in chapter 26. He identifies as the God of Jacob's father, much as he identified himself as the God of Abraham to Isaac. There is a chain of divine grace following all the way through this story.

By identifying himself as the God of the person's father, God shows that he is the one who has been faithful through generations. He is the one who has led Abraham. He's the one who's led Isaac.

And now he is the one who's going to lead Jacob. He calls to Jacob, Jacob, Jacob, and the response is, Here I am. I will bring you down, and then I will bring you up again.

Use singular. He will be made into a great nation within this space. Jacob is the individual, but he's also Israel, the nation.

And the way that he's addressed here is similar to the address that God gives to Abraham in chapter 22 before the binding of Isaac. Jacob is going to have to descend with his family into a realm that is not their own, a realm that is one in which they may feel very vulnerable. He's going to have to enter into something akin to a state of death and then trust God to raise him up again.

That instruction, Fear Not, is an instruction that's given both on this occasion and also when God speaks to his father Isaac at Beersheba. The promise is that God will bring them out and that the journey won't be completed until after the exodus. This theme will become more prominent as we go on, particularly as we read about the burials of Jacob and of Joseph.

He has also promised that Joseph will close his eyes and that is a great assurance to him, a promise that he will be finally able to rest, that he will have physical contact with his son once more. At the end of chapter 37 he spoke of descending in mourning to Sheol

and then when he hears the news that Joseph is alive his spirit revives. Now he has promised that he will truly be able to rest, that Joseph will close his eyes for him, that he will be able to rest in peace having fulfilled his full journey of his life.

Now at this point we have something that may be a little surprising. We have a list of the names of the descendants of Israel. Just at this great moment of charged emotion we have a genealogy.

It all seems very anticlimactic. Why on earth would that be put here? Let's think about it a bit more. One interesting thing we may have noticed earlier is that there is no genealogy in Genesis 37.

We read the genealogy of Esau in chapter 36 and then in chapter 37 these are the generations of Jacob and then Joseph being 17 years old. It just goes straight into the story. It seems strange.

There seems to be something like a missing stair perhaps. Maybe we can see this as if there has been a blockage in the pipe. The family of Jacob can only truly appear on the other side of salvation once they have been delivered.

The genealogy is split between Egypt and Canaan. Some of these children were born in Egypt, Manasseh and Ephraim and others were in Canaan. They have to be united.

It is a saved family seemingly lost and all this story has to take place before we can actually read about the descendants of Jacob because it is only as God has worked to redeem this family that they can be a family in the true sense. This is a family that has not just arisen from the flesh. This is a family of promise.

A family that has been received as if from the dead. So the fact that we have to wait to this point to read about the descendants of Jacob I think makes sense for that reason. The genealogies and lists of names that we find in scripture also usually serve a narrative purpose and as we look at them more closely we will often see numbers, structures, literary patterns or details that stand out to us.

This particular genealogy is structured around the number 7. It is given in the place of Beersheba which is connected with the number 7 as we have seen earlier on in the book of Genesis. There are 7 named women within it. There are 70 individuals and there are different groups of the family.

Jacob served for 7 years for both groups. Leah has 7 7's associated with her. Leah 33 children and Zilpah 16 children to make 49 altogether.

Rachel has 3 7's associated with her, 21. 14 of her own children and 7 children by Bilhah. There are 70 here but then there are also 70 nations in Genesis chapter 10.

In scripture we see these numbers 12 and 70 both having importance. There are 12 tribes and then there are also 70 nations, 70 leaders of the people. In Exodus chapter 15 at Elim there are 12 springs and 70 palm trees.

These numbers 12 and 70 are important. Likewise in the New Testament Jesus calls 12 disciples to be apostles and sends out 70 individuals. Why might we see a connection with this and the story of Noah? Israel is entering into a new arc.

Jacob is like a new Noah. He is bringing his family and his livestock into a realm of safety and he is descending into this realm awaiting a deliverance that God is about to effect. So Egypt is like an arc and Israel will carry forth the mandate of Noah to be fruitful and multiply, to fill the earth, to bring God's salvation to the world.

There are some interesting patterns within this genealogy which James Bajon in particular has drawn my attention to. Gad for instance is the 7th son. He has 7 sons.

His name has a gematrial value of 7 and there are other things associated with Gad and the 7. These sorts of patterns are a means by which the text would be preserved because when you have these numerical patterns you know when a name gets lost. You can remember things a bit better. There is an order to things.

There is also a proof of preservation. When you have these numerical details in place it helps to demonstrate that nothing has gone missing. That all the details are here.

So it is one way in which these genealogies with many different names could be better remembered and better preserved. This genealogy restores the wives and their children in their proper order. In some ways it may be seen pushing back against the favouritism that has characterised the family to this point.

We might also notice that the wives have twice as many children as the handmaids. Leah has 33 children. Zilpah has 16.

Rachel has 14 children. Bilhah has 7. And so there seems to be some implicit comment being made here. When they go down into Egypt they are to introduce themselves as shepherds.

As shepherds they are to be separated from the Egyptians and this is important to protect the people from just assimilating into Egypt and becoming Egyptians themselves. There will be a time for them to come back up again and by being identified as shepherds they will be kept apart from Egypt. They will be kept as distinct people and in time they will be able to come up again.

This is so important for this story that they are descending into Egypt in order that they might one day come up again. As shepherds we might also think of the association that they have with Abel as a keeper of sheep. That Abel-Cain opposition in Genesis chapter 4

seems to play out in other parts of scripture and maybe it's playing out here.

Cain is associated with the workers of the land. Egypt becomes associated with the brick kiln and Cain is the one whose family is associated with metal work, with working upon the land, with these great buildings of empires, all these sorts of things. So maybe what we see with Israel and Egypt is a proper relationship between the keepers of sheep and the workers of the land.

The people who are more settled upon the land, who are people of agriculture, who are people of city building, brick making, metal work, etc. There's also a restoration of the theme of keeping sheep. The story of Joseph began with him keeping sheep with the sons of the handmaids and now they've returned to keeping sheep together again.

The response of Jacob to meeting Joseph is a powerful one. There's a sort of nunctimitous here. Now let me die since I have seen your face and know that you are still alive.

Lord now let your servant depart in peace for my eyes have seen your salvation. Joseph is the one who will round off the story of Jacob. The eyes of Israel will be closed.

They will enter into the deep sleep of death and the deep sleep of Egypt. Egypt is the grave. Egypt is the womb.

Egypt is this deep realm of sleep from which they'll be woken when they're ready and come out of Egypt to go into the promised land. A question to consider. Judah is sent ahead of Jacob to meet with Joseph and then Joseph readies his chariot and comes to meet his father.

What significance might we see in Judah's part within this movement? Matthew chapter 5 verses 21 to 48. You have heard that it was said to those of old, you shall not murder and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council and whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you're offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.

Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you're going with him to court lest your accuser hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard and you be put in prison. Truly I say to 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 lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out

and throw it away for it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away for it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body 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 everyone who divorces his wife except on the grounds of sexual immorality makes her commit adultery and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. Again you have heard that it was said to those of old you shall not swear falsely but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.

But I say to you do not take an oath 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 take an oath by your head for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let what you say be simply yes or no.

Anything more than this comes from evil. You have heard that it was said an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But 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. And if anyone will sue you and take your tunic let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile go with him two miles.

Give to the one who begs from you and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. You have heard that it was said you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven.

For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You therefore must be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. In the second half of Matthew chapter 5 Jesus continues the teaching that he has begun in his statement that he has come to fulfill the law and the prophets.

And this part particularly concerns the fulfillment of the law. Jesus goes through the second table of the ten words, the ten commandments, going through murder, lust which is connected with the seventh commandment concerning adultery, divorce which in the unpacking of the ten commandments in Deuteronomy in chapter 24 is connected with the eighth commandment, oaths which are connected with false witness, vengeance connected with the ninth commandment and then finally focusing upon the summary statement of the whole second table of the commandments concerning loving your neighbour as yourself. How are we to understand Jesus' teaching concerning the

law? It's often treated as a set of antitheses with Jesus contrasting his more radical teaching with that of Moses.

Moses is supposedly concerned with external action but Jesus highlights the internal reality of the law. And many Protestants have suggested that Jesus is radicalising the law in order to drive us to despair of our good works and to turn to Christ for the gift of righteousness. But I don't think that's what's going on here.

Against the suggestion that there is an internal external opposition Jesus typically focuses upon action, not merely upon an inner state. Jesus is calling for integrity, the marriage of internal and external. But he focuses upon particular proactive practices of righteousness by which we can pursue these things.

To understand what is going on I think it's important to see the logic of Jesus' argument. It's generally read as antitheses. Jesus says that the law teaches X but I say Y. Y is some more radicalised teaching of the law that internalises it or puts it beyond our reach.

But that doesn't seem to be what Jesus is doing here in Matthew. Indeed if we read it this way it can often make some interpretations very clumsy. Jesus does not give a prohibition much of the time but states a fact.

So there's another way to read it. The other way to read it is to think that Jesus is presenting the traditional teaching, he is then highlighting a vicious cycle associated with that teaching and then finally presenting his transformative initiative. And so what Jesus is presenting here is filling out what he means by a righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees.

So it addresses the internal state but it does so in a proactive external manner not just ordered around avoidance. Another thing to notice here is the authority with which Jesus is speaking. I say unto you he's speaking with authority not just as one who's making a theological argument but one who's speaking and addressing people with authority making a claim upon their practice.

So the first teaching concerns murder. The traditional teaching is you shall not murder but there's a vicious cycle here and the vicious cycle is being angry with and insulting your brother. Now when that is at root within your heart it would be very hard to avoid that coming out in various ways that actually take the form of violence.

And so what Jesus teaches is a response to the vicious cycle that fulfills the traditional teaching and that response is a transforming initiative and it's found in being a reconciler and making peace. And this is where the imperatives are found not in addressing it to the heart in a way that radicalises it but in addressing positive action to the problem. Jesus identifies the problem of unaddressed sin in the heart.

This is a seed that can grow into the sin of murder. Now think about the story of Cain.



Before Cain actually kills his brother something else happens.

He's angry with his brother and it's that anger that leads him to act and God stops him. He stops him and he addresses his anger says you need to deal with this there's a beast crouching at the door and if you do not deal with it it will seek to control you. And so he has to deal with that anger first.

Now how would Cain have dealt with that? By making peace with his brother straight away by being a reconciler by taking positive action in that way because as long as he did not do that the sin within his heart would fester. So what is Jesus alternative to the problem of this vicious cycle of anger within the heart? To Cain leave your gift at the altar be reconciled with Abel and as you are reconciled you'll find that that anger problem is dealt with. The response is proactive reconciliation and peacemaking.

And this again note is acting redemptively. This is not just a righteousness for our own sake a righteousness to get us merit before God or for God to look on us and approve of us. This is about acting within the world in God's name to bring peace to bring reconciliation to bring love where hatred and animosity used to exist.

To overcome hostility with forgiveness and reconciliation. Jesus then moves into teaching concerning lust. The traditional teaching is you shall not commit adultery.

But there's a vicious cycle here because if you look at a woman with lustful intent you've already harboured that sin of adultery in your heart and it's already at work it's already germinating it's already moving towards the surface to be expressed in dangerous ways. And so what is the alternative? The alternative is a transforming initiative of taking radical action to address the cause of the temptation in yourself. Now sexual immorality Jesus highlights is a sin of great seriousness it puts your entire body in jeopardy of hell and the alternative is to sacrifice members of your body so that the whole will not be lost.

And this is a focus upon the man's duty in this case it's not denying that women should not purposefully excite men's lust but Jesus is focusing upon the agency of the man here. It's very easy to blame other people for our sins to say the woman that you gave me or something like that. But the point that Jesus wants us to grasp is that we have within the realm of our own responsibility causes of sin that are far more immediate to us.

So Jesus uses hyperbole here that focuses upon changing practice. Cut out whatever it is that is causing you to engage in that sort of sin. Cut out certain contexts from your life.

Avoid certain persons. Sacrifice certain things and pleasures and activities that you may find yourself led into temptation in. Jesus' focus is upon intimate obstacles your own eye or your own hand.

It highlights just how unsparing we should be in rooting out the sin. But Jesus' emphasis

on causes of sin is no less important. Some people like to believe that sin is merely a matter of a lack of virtue.

But Jesus teaches here that we need to recognise our own weakness and remove things that tempt us to get rid of the obstacles that might stand in our way. So when you see yourself falling into the trap of the sin of adultery and lust what do you do? You deal with those things that are nearest to you. You recognise your own limitations and you take radical action.

Now Jesus is teaching here in part that we need to use wisdom in our struggle with sin. We need to recognise those things that give sin some sort of purchase upon us in our lives, some sort of power over us and deal with those little footholds that sin has in our lives radically and decisively. Jesus goes on to teach about divorce.

He presents the traditional teaching in the vicious cycle but not the transforming initiative here. What is the transforming initiative? Well I think we find it in 1 Corinthians 7 verses 10-11 where Paul presents a transforming initiative as the charge of Christ himself. He writes, To the married I give this charge, not I, but the Lord.

The wife should not separate from her husband, but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband, and the husband should not divorce his wife. What's the point of all of this? Well the point is not so much a sort of halachic teaching concerning divorce, what cases is it legitimate in, what cases is it not legitimate in. The point is not legalistic prohibition but rather a presentation of the way of the kingdom which restores and upholds the good intent of the original creation.

So the contrast is between legal permission and positive action. So you may have permission to divorce in this particular instance but as those committed to the way of the kingdom your duty is to seek reconciliation where at all possible, to heal wounds, not to allow these things to be undermined. God created marriage to be good and to be lasting and so the way of the kingdom is to pursue that and even when it's difficult to seek reconciliation above all else.

Jesus moves on to oaths. The traditional teaching is do not swear falsely but perform your oaths. Now there's a vicious cycle here.

Oath making, particularly in a context of deceit and manipulation, simply multiplies and becomes a means of falsehood. You can see this in Matthew chapter 23, the different escape routes that you could have for oaths. What oaths count and what oaths do not count? All of this is a way of avoiding truthful speech.

But the transforming initiative is to avoid oaths altogether and to engage in truthful and transparent speech. Is this ruling out oaths under any particular situation? No it's not. There are plenty of oaths seen in the New Testament.

Paul makes a number of oaths. Rather the point is to address the root problem which is a falsehood. When people who have been so used to speaking falsehood use oaths to bolster speech to give it some sort of credibility when it really has none.

And I presume many of you have met people who are like this, who just compulsively speak falsehood. And then because everyone knows them to be liars they will bring forward all these oaths to bolster words that are fundamentally empty. They will swear upon their children's lives, they will swear upon their parents' graves, they will swear by God, they will swear against hell, they will swear against all these different things.

And then you find that their words have no substance to them and the oaths are provoked simply in order to bolster something that has no substance. And Jesus is speaking a transforming initiative into this situation. That we should be people of truthful, forthright and transparent speech so we do not need oaths at all.

And so that when we do use an oath it's used in its proper way. Not to veil falsehood or to bolster words that are fundamentally empty but to accentuate truth. And this is something that we see it used to do in the New Testament.

From oaths Jesus moves on to the subject of retaliation. And the traditional teaching is the law of retribution, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But the problem is there's a vicious cycle here and that's resisting by evil means.

Now this is translated as do not resist the one who is evil in most translations but I think that's not capturing the true sense of what's being said here. The point is rather that we should not resist in an evil way. What is the transforming initiative? The law of retribution was designed to limit vengeance.

To prevent people from taking two eyes when they lost one. Jesus advocates resisting vengeance but accepting rather than giving the second slap. Arresting the process of vengeance before it ever gets started.

When people use the process of vengeance often what happens is it just spirals out of all control. And the point of the traditional teaching was to arrest the process of vengeance not to give warrant to it. And so Jesus teaches that we should arrest it before it ever begins.

Think of the teaching in John chapter 8 where Jesus draws attention to the person who cast the first stone. Once the first stone has been cast every successive stone is so much easier to cast. And a similar pattern can be seen in the case of vengeance.

Once one person has avenged themselves upon someone else that other person will seek vengeance in return and as a result you have these cycles of vengeance that just cannot be broken. And just as Jesus teaches that we are to be people who make peace and reconcile with others. That we are to be people who remove any obstacle to

faithfulness.

That we are to be people who speak truthfully and reconcile when there is division in our relationships. Jesus teaches here that we should prevent the development of a cycle of vengeance. The final teaching that Jesus gives in this chapter concerns loving your enemy.

Now the traditional teaching is love your neighbour. This is the teaching that sums up the entire second table of the law. Love your neighbour as yourself.

But attached to this in many people's mind is the teaching love your neighbour but hate your enemy. Or the question who is my neighbour? This person isn't my neighbour is he? And Jesus challenges that. The transforming initiative is to love your enemies and pray for them so that you may be like God in heaven.

That you may be sons of your father in heaven. Jesus has earlier declared blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God. And here he is stressing that teaching again.

Once again there is a vicious cycle. There is no reward for those who merely love those who love them. That's not true love.

True love must take the initiative. And once again we are seeing the characteristic of this true righteousness is a righteousness that takes the initiative that goes out that brings peace that restores things that are broken. That brings reconciliation that seeks to be reconciled with people we are divided from.

That seeks to root out any obstacle anything that might cause bitterness. That seeks to deal with sin in a radical way. It's that pursuit of righteousness that distinguishes the true people of God from the scribes and the Pharisees and their hypocrisy.

And this is the righteousness that will fulfill the law. This is the way in which we truly love our neighbor. This is the way in which we rise to perfection.

Now the use of the language of perfection here is referring to maturity. We fulfill the intent of the law not merely the external form. Now the external form of the law can be fulfilled in a legalistic way.

But the intent of the law had always been to bring new life. To bring delight to the heart in the law of God. To bring people to meditate and rejoice at God's judgments.

To bring them to express those judgments in healing practice. In ways that restore relationships that make things whole again. And ways that bring peace where there's conflict.

Now that is what it means to fulfill the law and this is the sort of practice that Jesus calls

his disciples to. This is how they will be perfect. This is how they'll be like their father who's in heaven.

This is the way of the kingdom. Jesus began by saying that he came to fulfill the law. As we go throughout the Old Testament the law is always straining towards a fuller expression of itself.

An expression that is truly from the heart. That is characterized by positive practice not just negative prohibitions. We see this in the Psalms.

The Psalms bring the law into song. So we delight in the law of God. We sing about it.

It's seen in the book of Deuteronomy when the laws are unpacked and we see wisdom within them. And we see the way in which they're leading us towards positive practices. So we love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

That's what the law was always pointing towards. Not just prohibitions. Likewise we fulfill things like not coveting by practicing thanksgiving.

Practicing contentment and generosity. And so when Jesus speaks about fulfilling the law he's not speaking about some cold legalism but the fresh clear air of a new liberated life. A life that's free to express the law of God from the heart by the spirit.

And this is what he's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. This is what God's righteousness looks like when it comes. It brings forgiveness and it brings restoration.

And it makes us part of that process of bringing forgiveness and restoration. We are part of the means by which God's righteousness is being expressed in the world. And the fact that this chapter ends on the note of being perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect and being sons of our Father is no accident.

That language is not common in the Old Testament at all. We see it from time to time but it is uncommon. Here we find it coming to the forefront and it's because God is acting through Christ in the world at this time in a way that forms people in his likeness.

That makes them participants in bringing a new order of peace in such a profound way that in those acts they are seen to be his children. A question to consider. As we read the description of what it looks like to fulfill the law our minds may be drawn to Jesus Christ himself and his practice.

What are some of the ways in which we see Jesus as the exemplar of what it looks like to live out the law and fulfill righteousness in this manner?