

# Matthew 5:17-20

- The law of the Kingdom of God, a blessing for the community -

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## Introduction

- ❖ Jesus said: “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” (Mt 5:17).
- ❖ When we learn from him, how he practised and taught the commands given by the Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy) or the prophets as the Old Testament commentary on the Law, the church of today will discover WISDOM, the wisdom of Christ, the wisdom of God, wisdom taught by the Holy Spirit.
- ❖ This WISDOM will prove to be a blessing for the individual Christian, the Christian community and the society in general.
- ❖ The context, form, and structure as well as the theological, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline overlap somewhat with other sermon outlines taken from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7). This makes it possible to use this outline as a “stand-alone” or as part of a series.

## Context

- ❖ To understand the teachings of Jesus, a brief summary of the historical background is necessary.
- ❖ The baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:13-17):
  - Before Jesus was baptized by John, he said: “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this **to fulfill all righteousness.**”
  - And afterwards: “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw **the Spirit of God** descending like a dove and

lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.'

- The Sermon on the Mount teaches this **fulfilment of all righteousness**. <> "For I tell you that unless **your righteousness surpasses** that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law..." (Mt 5:20).

❖ The preaching of Jesus:

- Jesus had already been preaching in the synagogues in Galilee for some time before he delivered his sermon on the mount. Matthew summarized these sermons as follows:
  - "From that time on Jesus began to preach, '**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**'" (Mt 4:17).
- Jesus continued and took over the ministry of John the Baptist:
  - "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, '**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near**'" (Mt 3:1–2).
- And later on, when Jesus sent out his twelve disciples:
  - "As you go, preach this message: '**The kingdom of heaven is near**'" (Mt 10:7).
- These two themes, repentance and the kingdom, are prominent in the Sermon on the Mount.

❖ The life of Jesus Christ:

- Jesus taught the Law and the Prophets, and he lived according to the Law and the Prophets. The Sermon on the Mount reflects his life. He lived according to his own teachings and by doing so set an example for his followers, the disciples. A clear example is found in Matthew 5:39: "Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also." When Jesus was arrested, he didn't strike back.

❖ The future of the kingdom:

- After his resurrection, Jesus summoned his eleven disciples to go back to the mount: "**All authority in heaven and on earth** has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations (...) and **teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**" (Mt 28:18-20).
  - This authority is reflected in expressions like: "**But I tell you** that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment" (Mt 5:22).
  - And in: "Not everyone who says to me, '**Lord, Lord,**' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but..." (Mt 7:20).

## Form and structure

- ❖ The Sermon on the Mount consists of five main parts:
    - 1. General calling to repentance and the promise of the kingdom: Matthew 5:3-10, characterized by: “Blessed are...”
      - 2. Then Jesus turns to his disciples and all who want to learn from him: “Blessed are you...” The main theme is “**the prophets**” (Mt 5:11-16).
        - 3. The central part is an exposition of the Law and the Prophets (Mt 5:17-7:12):
          - “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” (Mt 5:17)...
            - The Lord’s Prayer is found at the very centre of the sermon!
          - “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the **Law and the Prophets**” (Mt 7:12).
        - 4. After his exposition of the Law and the Prophets, he returns to the theme of the Prophets and warns against “**the false prophets**” (Mt 7:13-23). This contrasts with the second part of the sermon.
      - 5. He concludes his sermon again with a general call to choose: “**Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine...**”(Mt 7:24-27).
- ❖ The structure of Matthew 5:17-20:

Jesus Christ, the teacher of the Law and the Prophets		
Refutation (verse 17)	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.
Affirmation (verse 18)	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.	
The disciples, trained to be teachers of the Law and the Prophets		
Refutation (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,	but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Affirmation (verse 20)	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.
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- The first refutation is clear. Jesus refutes accusations, made against him by the Pharisees. This refutation of the allegation is based on the first affirmation.
- The second refutation anticipates the future when the disciples are sent out into the world “and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”

### Technical and hermeneutical notes

- ❖ It is important to realize that Jesus preached this sermon around 30 AD in Galilee:
  - to Jews living in a country
    - which was part of the Roman Empire;
    - who had contact with the Hellenistic (Greek) and Roman culture; this culture was prominent in a city like Tiberias (Lake of Tiberias = Sea of Galilee) and the Decapolis, nowadays Jordan;
  - to Jews
    - who frequented the synagogues and were used to listening to the teaching of the Pharisees and scribes, their spiritual leaders at that time;
    - who were expecting the promised One (according to Dt 18:15-18; Mal 4:4-5; Mt 11:3);
    - who were longing for the restoration of the kingdom of God (Mt 11:12), which was the main theme of the teaching of Jesus.
    - who were familiar with the prophetic word of the Old Testament.
- ❖ This background is needed to understand some passages of the sermon, especially those that speak of persecution (Mt 5:10-12), pagans (Mt 6:7, 32) and of hypocrites.
  - The selection of topics found in the Sermon on the Mount reflects some debated issues among first-century Jews, such as divorce (Mt 5:31-32; Mt 19:3-9). Jesus didn't cover all aspects of the Law, for instance, the fourth commandment (Sabbath Day) is not found here, although it was hotly debated between the Pharisees and Jesus (Mt 12:1-8). Neither did he refer to the greatest commandment (Mt 22:37-40).
  - He especially confronted the teaching of the Pharisees and Scribes. Some of the topics found in the sermon are also found in Matthew 23, where he condemned them for their hypocritical stance.

- Jesus didn't give a new set of rules or applications but showed a different mindset. This mindset is governed by (see application):
  - the blessings of the kingdom (Mt 5:3-10);
  - the Lord's prayer (Mt 6:9-13), the central part of the sermon.
- ❖ The Old Testament background is especially important. Jesus taught the Law and the Prophets.
  - The blessings are found in the Book of Psalms. Especially Psalm 1 is important: "**Blessed** is the man .... his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night" (Ps 1:1,2; Ps 32:1-2; Ps 106:3; Ps 119:1-2).
  - The parallels between Isaiah 61:1-4 and the first blessings are striking:
    - "The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me (*The baptism of the Lord*)

to preach good news to the poor. (*Mt 5:3*)  
 He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, (*Mt 5:4*)  
 to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God,  
 to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion— to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. (*Mt 5:4*)

They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the LORD for the display of his splendor" (*Mt 5:6*).
- Jesus refers to the persecution of the prophets:
  - "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**" (Mt 5:11–12).

### Law and grace

- ❖ Law and Grace is one the main topics of Lutheran and Reformed theology.<sup>1</sup> The words of Jesus: "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," must primarily be understood as an answer to the criticism of others. Secondly, they are of help to study the relationship between the law of Moses, and the grace and truth brought by Jesus Christ (Jn 1:17).

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<sup>1</sup> Law and Gospel. (2018, February 13). Retrieved February 16, 2018, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law\\_and\\_Gospel](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Law_and_Gospel)

## Words

- ❖ Abolish = “καταλύω”: 3. to end the effect or validity of something, put an end to; a. to cause to be no longer in force abolish, annul, make invalid; **do away with, annul or repeal the law.**<sup>2</sup>
- ❖ Fulfill = “πληρώω”: “depending on how one prefers to interpret the context, πληρώω is understood here either as *fulfill=do*, carry out, or as *bring to full expression=show it forth in its true meaning*, or as *fill up=complete*.<sup>3</sup>
- ❖ Break = relax (ESV) “λύω”: “Of commandments, laws, statements *repeal, annul, abolish.*”<sup>4</sup>
- ❖ Righteousness = “δικαιοσύνη”: 3. the quality or characteristic of upright behavior, uprightness, righteousness.<sup>5</sup>

## Exposition

### Verse 17

- ❖ **“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets;”**
  - Jesus had been preaching in the synagogues for a while (Mt 4:12-17). He taught the Law and the Prophets differently compared to the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law (Mt 7:29).
  - Why would people think that Jesus had come to abolish the Law or the Prophets? Could he have given this impression while he was preaching in their synagogues? We only have a very short summary of the preaching of Jesus: **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near”** (Mt 4:17).
    - The answer can be found in Matthew 23, where Jesus severely criticizes the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law: **“But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men’s shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them.”**
      - “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. **But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former”** (Mt 23:13).

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<sup>2</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 522).

<sup>3</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 829).

<sup>4</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 607).

<sup>5</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 248).

- The Pharisees were criticizing Jesus: “They asked his disciples, ‘Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners?’” (Mt 9:11). And: “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath” (Mt 12:2).  
They “asked, ‘Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don’t wash their hands before they eat!’” (Mt 15:1, 2).
    - They were testing Jesus concerning the Law. “They asked, ‘Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?’” (Mt 19:3). “One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ (Mt 22:34-36).
  - The teachings of Jesus differed from the teachings of the Pharisees. When the listeners were convinced that the Pharisees taught the Law and the Prophets, - and they probably were -, then a departure from these teachings might sound as a novelty and an abolishment of the Law and the Prophets.
  - **“Do not.” I forbid you to think like this.**<sup>6</sup>
  - **“I have come.”** Jesus points to his mission, sent by his Father into this world.<sup>7</sup>
- ❖ **“I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”**
  - Jesus ascertains that he has not come to abolish the Law but to fulfill both the Law and the Prophets. He in person is the fulfilment of the Law and the Prophets.
  - The Prophets can also be understood as a commentary on the Law. The Law comprises the first five books of the Bible, Genesis – Deuteronomy, also designated as “Moses.” The Prophets comprise all other Books of the Old Testament.
    - The prophets include not only the prophetic books (Isaiah – Malachi) but also the historical books (Joshua – Nehemiah). The Law (Thora; Genesis – Deuteronomy) is in itself a mixture of historical accounts, commands and ordinances, songs and prophecies.

The Law and the Prophets. An Example (Matthew 12:1-8).	
At that time Jesus went through the grainfields on the Sabbath. His disciples were hungry and began to pick some heads of grain and eat them. (verse 1)	Situation
When the Pharisees saw this, they said to him, “Look! Your disciples are doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath.” (verse 2)	The Law: Ex 20:9–11; 23:12; 31:15–17; 35:2. Nu 15:32–36.
He answered, “Haven’t you read what	The use of the Law and the Prophets by

<sup>6</sup> Wallace, D. B. (1996, p. 469).

<sup>7</sup> Carson, D. A. (2010, Vol. 9, p. 172).

David did when he and his companions were hungry? He entered the house of God, and he and his companions ate the consecrated bread—which was not lawful for them to do, but only for the priests. Or haven't you read in the Law that on the Sabbath the priests in the temple desecrate the day and yet are innocent? I tell you that one greater than the temple is here. If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath."	Jesus: 1 Sam 21:3-6;  Lev 24:5-9;  Nu 28:9, 10;        Hos 6:6.
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- ❖ **"To fulfill them."** To fulfill can be explained by the image of the bud and the flower. The bud already contains everything. The flower shows everything in its full splendor.

The bud (Old Testament)	The flower (The Old Testament fulfilled)
"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows" (Isa 53:4).	"This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah: 'He took up our infirmities and carried our diseases'" (Mt 8:17).
"I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter hidden things, things from of old" (Ps 78:2).	"So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet: 'I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world'" (Mt 13:37)."
The Law and the Prophets.	The Gospel.
"The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom" (Mt 12:42; 1 Ki 10:1).	"and now one greater than Solomon is here (Mt 12:42)."

- The Law and the Prophets contain already the Gospel.
- The full splendor of the Law and the Prophets is LOVE & WISDOM, Christ in person!



- The apostle Paul wrote: “Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not covet,’ and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.” (Rm 13:8-10; Rm 8:4). Christ taught this love and showed this love.
- “We must bear in mind that ‘fulfil’ does not mean the same as ‘keep’; Jesus is speaking of more than obedience to regulations. Nor should we forget that the way in which Jesus fulfilled the law could not be fully appreciated until after his death and resurrection. Not till then could it be seen how he had ‘fulfilled all righteousness’ (Mt 3:15), nor how he would send the Holy Spirit to enable his followers to attain a higher standard of righteousness than they ever could in their own strength.”<sup>8</sup>
  - Jesus replied to John the Baptist: “Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness.” This included the baptism of Jesus. This was part of the reenactment of the history of Israel.
  - “A voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’” “Listen to him!” (Mt 3:17; 17:5; Dt 18:15-20).

#### Verse 18

- ❖ **“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.”**
  - **“I tell you the truth.”** Jesus speaks with authority (Mt 7:28, 29) comparable to Moses and at the same time, he is surpassing Moses, because he is the Lord (Mt 7:21-23).
  - The form and contents of the saying is striking:
    - **“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”**
    - Jesus makes use of repetition (**until; disappear**) and of **parallelism** to affirm the enduring authority of the Law.
  - **“Heaven and earth.”** Both belong to the created order (Gen 1:1, 2). The Law is given to the people of Israel to be for God a kingdom of priests and a holy nation:
    - “Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although **the whole earth is mine**, you will be for

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<sup>8</sup> Morris, L. (1992, p. 108).

me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:5, 6; also 1 Pet 2:9 and Rev 1:5, 6).

- **"Not the smallest letter... will by any means disappear from the Law."**
  - "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away" (Mt 24:35).
  - This doesn't mean that Jesus advocates a literal reading of the Law, but a spiritual reading guided by the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of knowledge and wisdom and fear of the Lord (Isa 11:2).
  - The law has been given for as long as the present order exists.
- **"Until everything is accomplished."** This is a reference to the Day of the Lord, the final realisation of the Kingdom of Heaven.
  - "And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age"

#### Verse 19

- ❖ **"Anyone who breaks (relaxes; ESV) 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."**
  - **"Anyone"** of the followers of Jesus.
  - **"One of the least of these commandments"** corresponds with **"the smallest letter"** and **"the least stroke of a pen."** Jesus doesn't specify these commands.
  - An example will make this clear. "Jesus replied, 'And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition'" (Mt 15:3, 4).
  - Other examples of relaxing the law are found in Matthew 5:21-48. It is the difference between discussing and eventually denying the validity of the commandments or searching for wisdom and their enduring validity.
  - Jesus is urging anyone who wants to follow him to practice and to teach the commandments.
    - "In the same way, **let your light shine** (teaching) **before men, that they may see your good deeds** and praise your Father in heaven" (Mt 5:16).
  - **"Will be called least / great."** Honoured by God and by the church of Christ. "It is true now and will apply also in the day of judgment and afterwards."<sup>9</sup> Compare Proverbs 3:3, 4.

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<sup>9</sup> Hendriksen, W. (1973, p. 293).

- **“Teach”**: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you**” (Mt 28:19).

Verse 20

❖ **“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.”**

- From Matthew 5:21 onwards, Jesus contrasts the righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven with the righteousness of the Pharisees and teachers of the law:

<b>The righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven</b>	
Matthew 5:21-48	Some of the hotly debated aspects of the Law and the Prophets.
Matthew 6:1-18	Aspects of the righteous life: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>❖ The giving of alms;</li> <li>❖ Prayer;</li> <li>❖ Fasting.</li> </ul>
Matthew 6:19-34	The search for wisdom: “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Mt 6:33).
Matthew 7:1-12	Don’t judge each other.  Summary: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”

- The pursuit of righteousness can be based on fear and reward or be based on faith and love!
  - Based on fear for the judgment.
  - Based on faith and love, because of the love of Christ. Compare Romans 4:9: “We have been saying that Abraham’s faith was credited to him as righteousness.”
- Matthew 23:13 is a very good illustration: **“But you (Pharisees) have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.”**
  - Surpassing the righteousness of the Pharisees means:
    - Be righteous.
    - Be merciful. (Compare Matthew 9:9-13 and 12:1-8!)

- Be faithful to God and to others.
  - Jesus doesn't mean perfection. No one except the Son is perfect, without sin.
    - He does mean: wholeheartedly following the Word of God. "Greatness in God's kingdom is measured by wholehearted obedience."<sup>10</sup>
- Matthew 12:1-8 is another example: "If you had known what these words mean, 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice,' you would not have condemned the innocent."
  - The righteousness of the Pharisees led to condemnation of the innocent.
  - Surpassing this righteousness leads to mercy (Hos 6:6).
- A third example is found in Matthew 5:47: "And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Perfect means wholeheartedly.
  - The prophets wrote about this wholeheartedly keeping the law: "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the Lord." (Jer 31:33, 34; Ezek 36:27).
- ❖ **"you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." IMPORTANT.**
  - This doesn't mean that a disciple of Christ must live a righteous life before he can enter the kingdom of heaven.
  - It does mean that a righteous life and the kingdom of heaven are synonymous. A righteous life is governed by the kingdom of heaven (Mt 6:33). It is by faith that one enters the kingdom of heaven and lives the righteous life. The Kingdom of heaven and the righteousness are the two sides of the same coin.

## Application

### Verse 17-18

- ❖ **Caution.**
  - It is not advisable to import the theological discussion about Law and Grace into these words of Jesus.

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<sup>10</sup> Green, M. (2001, p. 82).

- It is not advisable to import all aspects of Jesus fulfilling the Old Testament, i.e. the prophecies concerning the Messiah, the ceremonial laws, judicial laws and their meaning and significance for us today, into these words.
  - These can be discussed at the relevant passages.
- With these words, Jesus introduced a dispute about his teachings and the validity of his teachings in relation to the Law and the Prophets, more specifically the commands (Mt 5:19, 20) and good works (Mt 5:16).
- ❖ Christ came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets in all its aspects, like a bud (Old Testament) opening into a flower (The Gospel; the New Testament).
  - **Praise Christ for his knowledge, his wisdom, his teachings!**
- ❖ Christ came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets. He was led by the Holy Spirit (Mt 3:17):
  - “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord— and he will delight in the fear of the Lord” (Isa 11:2).
  - Jesus taught the wisdom of the Law and the Prophets.
- ❖ The fulfilment of the Law by Christ leaves no room for legalism (Pharisees) and antinomianism. “A liberal attitude towards the law is not in order; all antinomian tendencies are excluded.”<sup>11</sup>
  - **Legalism** (or nomism), “in Christian theology, is the act of putting the Law of Moses above the gospel by establishing requirements for salvation beyond faith (trust) in Jesus Christ and reducing the broad, inclusive, and general precepts of the Bible to narrow and rigid moral codes. It is an over-emphasis of discipline of conduct, or legal ideas, usually implying an allegation of misguided rigour, pride, superficiality, the neglect of mercy, and ignorance of the grace of God or emphasizing the letter of law at the expense of the spirit. Legalism is alleged against any view that obedience to law, not faith in God's grace, is the pre-eminent principle of redemption. On the viewpoint that redemption is not earned by works, but that obedient faith is required to enter and remain in the redeemed state.”<sup>12</sup>
    - Legalism can be a serious problem in Christian churches. We all tend to judge people when they do not behave like we expect them to do.
  - **Antinomianism.** “In Christianity, an antinomian is one who takes the principle of salvation by faith and divine grace to the point of asserting that the saved are not bound to follow the Law of Moses. The distinction between antinomian and other Christian

<sup>11</sup> Davies, W. D., & Allison, D. C., Jr. (2004, Vol. 1, p. 496).

<sup>12</sup> Legalism (theology). (2018, February 17). Retrieved February 24, 2018, from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legalism\\_\(theology\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Legalism_(theology)).

views on moral law is that antinomians believe that obedience to the law is motivated by an internal principle flowing from belief rather than from any external compulsion.”<sup>13</sup>

- ❖ The apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: “But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. **All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.**” (2 Tim 3:14-17).
- ❖ John Stott wrote: “We must not imagine (as some do today) that when we have the Spirit we can dispense with the law, for what the Spirit does in our hearts is, precisely, to write God’s law there. So ‘Spirit’, ‘law’, ‘righteousness’ and ‘heart’ all belong together.”<sup>14</sup>

#### Verse 19-20

- ❖ To be called “great” by God is very great honour.
- ❖ Teaching the Law, the Prophets, and the Gospel requires a mind, which is well-trained in expounding the Scriptures as a true disciple and follower of Christ. Wisdom is required.
  - It is important not only to quote from the Scriptures but also to live accordingly, and to study also the teaching methods of Christ.
- ❖ The righteousness surpassing that of the Pharisees stems from the faithful character of the disciple of Christ as described in the beatitudes:
  - “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.  
Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.  
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.  
Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.  
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.  
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.  
Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 5:3-10).
  - The righteous are poor in spirit, mourn, are meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, are merciful, pure in heart, are peacemakers, and they will be persecuted.
    - This righteousness is imbued with love for God and for people.

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<sup>13</sup> Antinomianism. (2018, February 23). Retrieved February 24, 2018, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Antinomianism>

<sup>14</sup> Stott, J. R. W (1992. p. 75).

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