

Today Jesus demonstrates His point by contrasting the written law of the Torah with His new attitude of the Kingdom. For example Jesus says, "You have heard it said that murder is wrong, but harboring hatred is also wrong even if you don't physically kill someone. Why? Because murder is conceived by hatred. The person who hates but does not murder is still not a good person; he is just a person who has followed the social norms, perhaps to avoid punishment. It is the same with all the laws and rules of the New Kingdom. The fullness of the life of the Lord must motivate us rather than the minimal performing the law.

One of the ways we can do this is by asking ourselves why we do the things that we do. For example, why do we share our possessions with others? We do this because people are infinitely more important than stuff. Or why are we here in Church? We are here because we as individuals and as a community belong to God and He to us. We need to have this intimate union with Him as a community and as individuals in Scripture and the Eucharist.

It is not in the action itself but it is in the motivation behind the action where the Christian's true identity is found and formed. And that identity is the identity of Jesus Christ. We are called to take upon ourselves the very identity of Jesus Christ. We are called to be selfless givers. We are called to be eternal lovers of the Father. We are called to rejoice in His presence in our families. We are not called to be minimalists in the faith. We are called to develop the ability of finding meaning in the laws that God gave us so that our external actions might truly be a reflection of our internal attitudes.

So, is it easier to be a modern Christian than an ancient Jew? Absolutely not. Christianity is extremely demanding upon us all because it calls us to be 100% committed to living in the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we make efforts to be wholesome, sincere, and holy, then we can surpass the acts of the scribes and Pharisees.

Tall order. Absolutely. And that is why we are here today. We are here to ask God to give us the grace to follow His Son.

Fr. Tom Kennedy