

*Ordinary Time 6A 2017*  
*The Deepest Meaning of God's Law*

For the past few weeks we have been listening to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Two weeks ago, we heard him proclaim the beatitudes, the blessings of the kingdom. Then last week, we listened as he told us we are the salt of the earth and the light of world. Jesus says that by the way we live and what we do we are to lead others to praise and glorify God.

In today's gospel, Jesus teaches us how to live as the salt of the earth and the light of the world so that others will glorify his heavenly Father. He says that we are to be people of surpassing goodness or "righteousness." We are to live in such a way that when others see our conduct they will know we are his disciples. But how can we live in this way? How can we live as people whose lives are not only good, but extraordinarily good?

Jesus provides us with the answer to this question by showing us the deepest and fullest meaning of God's law. For example, the fifth commandment says: "you shall not kill." All of us agree with that commandment, and none of us would ever think of violating it. But Jesus goes further. He tells us to avoid the angry word, the degrading comment, the slanderous remark, all of which—if they go unchecked—will lead to something more serious.

Jesus then turns to the sixth commandment: "You shall not commit adultery." And again, we all agree with this commandment because we recognize

how sacred and beautiful marriage is. But adultery, Jesus say, begins with the adulterous thought. And so he warns us to avoid all of those occasions of sin that can lead us to violate the commandment.

Finally, Jesus instructs us to be so honest in our speech that there is no need for us to take an oath in order to assure others we are speaking the truth. If we mean yes, let it be yes. If we mean no, let it be no. For in all things, at every moment, we are to be perfectly honest.

In every instance Jesus goes to the heart and spirit of the law, and he teaches us to do the same. The letter of the commandment says, “do not kill.” Jesus says that the deeper meaning of the commandment is control your anger, avoid the degrading remark. The letter of the commandment says “do not commit adultery.” Jesus says that the deeper meaning of the commandment is to avoid the adulterous thought that leads to action. The letter of the commandment says don’t lie when you take an oath, Jesus says the deeper meaning of the commandment is that we should be so honest that there is no need to take an oath.

This is how we become the salt of the earth of the light of the world. This is how we grow in surpassing goodness and righteousness. This is what leads people to praise God when they see our good works. When they see that we live as Jesus lived, when they see that we fulfill the deepest meaning of God’s law, then they will see in us the light of the world, and they will praise our heavenly Father.