**The Bar Set Too Low**

So Jesus set the bar back up high, morally high. If we set the moral bar too low, we will not make it into heaven, says Jesus - “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:20). So Jesus resets the bar back up morally higher where it glorifies God. “You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘ YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER’…“ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court.…” (Mat. 5:21-22).

The civil standard was not to “commit murder”, but the moral standard is to be “slow to anger”. For God himself is slow to anger. Therefore being like him, we glorify him. The civil standard was “you shall not commit adultery”, but the moral standard is not to look at a woman with “lust” (Mat. 5:27-30). The high bar is set at “not lusting” the low bar is simply “not committing adultery”. The low bar is sending her away with a certificate of divorce, the high bar is commitment to marriage and forgiveness (Mat. 5:31-32). The low bar is fulfilling your vows to the Lord, the high bar is keeping your yes or no (i.e. keeping your every word - no vows needed vv. 33-37). The low bar is “eye for an eye”, the high bar is “turn the other cheek” vv. 38-42. The low bar is hating your enemy, the high bar is loving your enemy vv. 43-48.

Jesus says jumping over the low bar is not good enough. “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt. 5:20).

What could make people live by a higher moral standard? Would hearing Jesus raise the bar be enough to motivate us? Would seeing Jesus live by his own rules be enough to convict us in our hearts? Would seeing Jesus die upon a cross, paying the penalty for our moral failures/sins, cause us to make a heart felt change to our lives?

Jesus lived a higher standard. He calls us to a higher standard. To study his life is not only to study one who glorified God, but to motivate us to follow him.

Tired of your own moral failures? Are you wanting to become a different person? Jesus is here to help. Adopt a new identity. “I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” (Gal. 2:20). Be immersed in Christ. Be immersed in water and spirit, be born again. Be baptized into Christ, immersed into a new life (Rom. 6:1-4). Dan Peters