

21 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca,' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

23 "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

25 "Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. 26 Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

On a scale of one to ten

It was Super Bowl Sunday last week, so we had soup - beer cheese soup in memory of the Packers who did not make it. And as I sat down to watch the commercials (which weren't really aren't that good anymore) - I got to thinking about how sports are scored. Some are objective and score on a one to one ratio. One point per goal. Two points per basket, or Six points per touchdown. But some sports are more subjective and score on a scale of one to ten for example, gymnastics, diving, and ice skating.

But have you ever consider religion a sport? The "He who has the most points wins" mentality finds its way into religion but the scoring system is modified and so are the rules. Over the last two weeks Jesus has been telling us, "*You are blessed. You are holy. You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world.*" Jesus even told us why he had come, "*I have not come to abolish the law but to fulfill the law.*" Jesus fulfills all righteousness for us and now he begins to fill the law full of meaning. He informs us that unless our righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law we will not see heaven. The Pharisees, the elite, those who made it to the Super Bowl of religiosity rank 9.999 out of ten.

So on a scale of one to ten... how are you doing? If you've ever thought, "I'm ten for ten," then Jesus has some humbling words. If you've ever thought, "I must be nothing, a zero." Jesus has some good news because it doesn't matter where you are at on your subjective or objective scale. You have perfect 11 in Christ.

But to those who thought they had a perfect score, to those who refused to repent and see their sin - Jesus takes them back to the true intent of the Law. We are looking at the first of set of three. These cover murder, adultery, and divorce. Jesus is confronting the common teaching of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Earlier Jesus explained, *"Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law...you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."* After his teaching the people proclaim, *"he teaches as one who has authority and not as the scribes and Pharisees."*

In the middle Jesus takes on their teaching, *"It has been said."* The normal way Jesus quotes from scripture is, *"It has been written."* The Pharisees and Teachers of the Law *set aside the least of these commands and teach others to do the same.* These were the ones who changed the rules as well as the scoring system and thought, "We are awesome. Ten for ten." They were doing their victory dance in the endzone with a twenty five point lead in the third quarter on life, Jesus comes in with the most basic teaching of the law and undercuts each and every point they've earned for themselves. This is why they hated Jesus so much.

"You have heard that it was said . But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, 'Raca (Numbskull),' is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. Jesus explains that they haven't even kept the the fifth commandment. You will not murder. Which is considered by many the first commandment checked off on our score cards.

So on a scale of one to ten, how are you doing? I have not murdered anyone, but I have been angry with others. Have you ever held a grudge against anyone? Have you ever wished that you could be given the green light for protesters who stop traffic? Jesus has stopped preaching and has started meddling. Sometimes we just want a Jesus who pats us on the head and tells us you're number one or ten depending on your scale. But instead Jesus says, *You have heard but I say to you, "Whoever is angry will be liable to judgment."*

But, "That's just your own interpretation." The problem with every interpretation is that it assumes - there is no truth and you can't know the truth, and my truth is the only one I will worship. That "interpretation," is what Jesus speaks against when he says, *"It has been said but I say to you..."* that truth can be known. The only interpretation is God's. The law is not a scorecard we can check off as completed but the law always condemns, always accuses. (Lex Semper Accusat)

Some may argue that they keep at least two or three out of the ten commandments. I haven't murdered. I haven't committed adultery. I haven't divorced my wife. But that's not the purpose of the Law. The Law cuts even when we think we have a 25 point lead in the third quarter of life, when we think we can just sit back and play defense, the most basic teachings of the law are broken. So on a scale of one to ten, how are you doing? Rarely is there a congregation where people have nothing against each other. Most congregations have generations that go back to the founding of a church. People step on the toes of others and refuse to be reconciled. Some feud breaks out during a rousing game of Uno on game night and in the meantime many have no idea you have a grudge against them because they're clueless.

God says our relationships with one another are not independent of our relationship with God. That if you hate your brother and are not seeking to be reconciled with them, *"You are not of my kingdom."* And yet we get angry, we lust, and even lie. *James 2:10 - Whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at one point is guilty of breaking all of the law.* It doesn't matter how good you've been, if you've actually been able to keep a nine out of ten because it doesn't matter. Salvation is pass or fail. Ten for ten or nothing.

And sin is so serious that Jesus points out the dramatic lengths we should go to in order to avoid it. *"If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell."* Jesus isn't giving us ten more laws to help you avoid legalism. The root of the problem is much deeper than our eyes and our limbs. It's not our hand that causes us to sin but your heart your mind. And if we removed our head we would then be Raca - numbskull.

What we need is a new heart and a perfect score and that is what Jesus gives. Jesus is not describing how to attain righteousness or gain a place in the kingdom, but rather,

having been declared righteous through faith in Jesus, having been given a place in the kingdom of God by the grace, Jesus describes how the citizens of his kingdom will live.

Jesus has told us what he has done. He realizes that we need a perfect score ten out of ten and that is what he brings. He serves as our mediator. *He settled matters quickly with your adversary who was taking us to court. The law stood against us and demanded reconciliation.* Yet Jesus stood in the gap for us. He was handed over to the judge, the judge threw him into prison, and he was condemned to death for the debt we had accrued. And by his perfect life and death we are ten for ten. He then rose from the dead and still serves at the right hand of God interceding on our behalf.

Jesus is the only one with a perfect score of ten for ten. Jesus is the only one whose righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees. While Jesus wanted reconciliation with everyone, many conspired against him, mocked him, and put him to death. You may not be able to be reconciled with everyone. Sometimes the only thing you can do is pray for those who hate you. Our relationship with Jesus influences our relationship with others and we will certainly try because we are citizens of his kingdom and that is how we will live. It won't be easy and yet those who are his seek reconciliation, they live chaste and decent lives. They are faithful to their spouse and speak honestly.

On a scale of one to ten, how did the Falcons do? On a scale of one to ten, how are you doing? Doesn't really matter. You already know. You are made perfect. You're an eleven, number one, not because you've been so good but that is what God has made you. Go in peace in the peace of Christ you are ten for ten. Eleven for ten. Amen.