



# GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

## 79 – The Law

### Announcements:

6/7 @7:00 -

Prayer

6/8 @6:30 -

Grace Group

6/11 @8:30 -

Sunday School

6/12 @ 6:30-

Men's Discipleship

6/25 @5:00 -

Joint Service with

La Luz @ Grace

**ICE BREAKER:** In general, are you a rebel or a rule follower?

**READ:** Matthew 22:34-40

In recent weeks, we have prefaced each GracePoint with some thought similar to: Jesus is *not* trying to be exhaustive in his answer, rather he is responding to a specific question. Here, while the end is the same (that he is responding to a specific question) the beginning is a little different, because the question is asking Jesus to, in some sense, give an exhaustive answer on the law, its shape, weight and even in some sense its role. The answer he gives us is as simple as it is difficult: Love God and Love others! But even with this answer, and understanding who Jesus was, for those of us who live after Jesus we still may struggle with similar questions and problems as this lawyer did. For while Jesus summarized and give the foundation of the law, there are still a *whole lot* of particulars. So over the years (first really explicitly stated by John Calvin, though it existed in seed form long before him), to help us understand how to read and understand the law, there has been developed what is called “the threefold uses of the law”. Today we are going to be looking at those.

The first use of the Law is from my point of view the most important and is known as the “Pedagogical Use.” The law is to be a teacher. In particular we can look at two things that the law teaches us: how holy God is, and how sinful we are. When we read of the ornate and elaborate things that went into the cleansing of the priest who would offer sacrifices we can simultaneously understand these two things. One is that the God that is being approached is holy and set apart and must be treated with reverence. The second is to understand that these elaborate and particular things are required because man is really really sinful. More than that, it often teaches us how much, and the nature of how, we fail. Paul writes about this in Romans 7 when he notes that he would have not known how sinful he was until the law revealed his heart to him. The final thing I would like to note about this use of the law is that after it teaches us how holy God is, and how sinful we are, it teaches us to cry out to him for grace and mercy. As Augustine said: “The law orders that we, after attempting to do what is ordered, and so feeling our weakness under the law, may learn to implore the help of grace”.

**DISCUSS:** Can you think of particular examples of the law being a teacher? Why is it important to always fall back to grace?

The second use of the law is called the “Civil Use”. Here we see the law as a guide and helper in restraining the sinful hearts of all men as used in civil matters. In other words, it has a use as a guide for man's laws. Some of these are easy to see: It is good to have laws that say: do not murder people. And we can get that from the 10 commandments. Some are particularly suited for the ancient near east. In all these laws we see the goodness of God in protecting people from themselves and each other. In modern practice and our current context, this use has lost a lot of its weight against thoughts of “separation of church and state” but the reality is that the Law -- as God's fundamental dictating of what is good and right -- cannot ever be totally divorced from all civil matters.

**DISCUSS:** In what ways do we see the civil use of the law in effect today? How can we stand for this in a secular culture?

The final use of the law is what is called the “Normative use”. Here we see the law as it reveals what is pleasing to God, and therefore as a guide for life. A few notes here. This use of the law is NOT the use that tells us how to be saved, for the law could never save (see all of Romans!). It is not the use that tells us what it means to be a christian, for they will know that we are christians, not by our law keeping, but by our love (see 1 John). Rather it is the use of the law that tells us what is pleasing to the God that we love and endeavor to serve. This use of the law helps us understand what life looks like in following Jesus. For it is Jesus who said “If you love me, you will keep my commandments” (John 14:15). It is “normative” in that it shows us the rules and norms for a holy life. For the christian though this is done in service to Chrsit through the power of the Holy Spirit, the Law is just one of the means that God uses to ensure this!

**DISCUSS:** Why might we be afraid of this use of the law? What dangers are there in overstating it? What dangers are there in neglecting it?