He was such a good man. I am sure you have heard it or maybe you even said it yourself. You often hear that at a funeral. Someone has died and they say: he was such a good man, father, husband, friend. In a certain sense that is what you want to hear about yourself and say about other believers. I would hope that any unbeliever who looks at me or you would say that. If we are living our lives as lights shining for Jesus, being the salt of the earth, then we will be good neighbors who help and are kind and take care of our own and our neighbors' property. We will be obedient and respectful citizens. We will have clean mouths and be loving to our family members and friends. So anyone looking at us should be able to say from their earthly outward morality based viewpoint: He/she was such a good man/woman.

Is that what you say when you look at yourself? Now, how you answer that question is going to reveal how well you understand God's commands and what you think of Jesus. Let me explain, rather let Jesus explain. He is preaching his famous Sermon on the Mount. Imagine you are there with your family. You have grown up being taught the 10 Commandments. You have been taught by Pharisees and experts of Law that you must keep them to enter heaven. But Jesus says: Indeed I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and experts in the law, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. This is odd! We thought the Pharisees and teachers of the law had it right. We do not see them committing murder or adultery! How can this be?

Jesus sets the record straight. Four times Jesus says You have heard that it was said. He is pointing out the way the people have been taught. Four times Jesus goes on to say: But I tell you. This is the Son of God speaking. People need to listen. We need to listen as Jesus sets the record straight when it comes to God's commands.

He starts with murder. You have heard that it was said to people long ago, You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that everyone who is angry with his brother without a cause will be subject to judgment, and whoever says to his brother, Raca, will have to answer to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, You fool! will be in danger of hell fire. So if you are about to offer your gift at the altar, and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother. Then come and offer your gift. If someone accuses you, reach an agreement with him quickly, while you are with him on the way. Otherwise your accuser may bring you to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. Amen I tell you: you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

Jesus sets the record straight. God's command to not murder includes thoughts like sinful anger and hatred, words said in disdain and mockery. It includes selfishly expecting forgiveness and welcome from God when refusing to settle matters with people, blowing off their concerns. All of these sins bring God's judgment of guilty of murder.

Next Jesus goes to adultery. You have heard that it was said, You shall not commit adultery, but I tell you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to fall into sin, pluck it out and throw it away from you. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand causes you to fall into...
sin, cut it off and throw it away from you. It would better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Jesus sets the record straight with adultery. Lust. Looking. These sins offend God and make us worthy of hell. What would Jesus say today with all the sexting and pornography? **Cut if off,** he would say. He is not encouraging us to main ourselves. But if your computer or your cell phone, your TV or your movie pass are causing you to sin, throw them away. Remember, the evil one is at work among us. Set the record straight on God’s true commands as Jesus did.

Teach it in your marriage. **It was also said,** Whoever divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce. But I tell you that whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, causes her to be regarded as an adulteress. And whoever marries the divorced woman is regarded as an adulterer. Even back then they had no fault divorce. But really, there is no such thing as no fault divorce. Sin is always involved in divorce, by one or both of parties. God’s will is for husband and wife to love each other for life. But what do we see today? We do not see husbands cherishing their wives and wives are not respecting their husbands. Is marriage being honored by all or made a sham? Jesus sets the record straight. He sums up all marriage breaking and harming by calling it adultery.

He sets the record straight on lying. **Again you have heard that it was said to people long ago,** Do not break your oaths, but fulfill your vows to the Lord. But I tell you, do not swear at all: not by heaven, because it is God’s throne; and not by earth, because it is his footstool; and not by Jerusalem, because it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your own head, since you cannot make one hair white or black. Instead, let your statement be, Yes, yes, or No, no. whatever goes beyond these is from the evil one. Apparently the Pharisees and teachers of the law gave themselves a little wiggle room. It was the Old Testament equivalent of crossing your fingers. If you swore by the Lord, you had to keep it; anything else, not so much. Jesus sets the record straight. God expects people to be truth tellers always. Oaths only happen when they are required, not to cover for the fact that we cannot be trustworthy. And remember not lying is not the same as telling the truth as God expects. Jesus sets the record straight.

So what must we conclude? I am not a good person. Neither are you. You are murderers, adulterers and liars. So am I. Remember how Jesus started this? **Indeed I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and experts in the law, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.** Our righteousness does not surpass that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. We cannot enter heaven.

Except Jesus set our record straight. That is why he came. In regard to God’s law, Jesus said: **Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets. I did not come to destroy them but to fulfill them.** He came to fulfill them for us. Jesus never hated or murdered anyone with unkind words and cruel teasing. He never harbored ill feelings about his fellow congregation members or spoke mockingly or disdainfully about them. He never lusted or lied. He always put God first, used God’s name rightly. He always worshiped in spirit and in truth and loved to hear and learn God’s Word. He respected and obeyed every authority over him, even when they were in the wrong. Jesus’ righteousness does surpass that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. He is perfect. And you know what? He gives that perfection to you and to me through faith. And all that murder and adultery and lying we have done? That he takes away. Praise be to Jesus. We are going to a lot better place than Disneyland. We are going to heaven.

When I look at myself honestly, I am not a good person. Neither are you. But Jesus is. He has set the record straight on what God’s commands really are. He has set our records
straight in our not keeping them. Now what do we do? Let’s strive to keep the true meaning of God’s commands in every area, not just outwardly but in our hearts too. We do not keep the commandments to get to heaven but to thank Jesus for giving us heaven. Then when we are letting our lights shine and people we know look at us and say: **He/she is such a good man/woman.** We can hear that gladly and give all the glory to where it belongs - to Jesus.

Amen.

Pastor Keith Bilitz  
St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, Alma City  
Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, Smiths Mill  
St. John Ev. Lutheran Church, St. Clair