

# Are You More Righteous Than A Pharisee

by Tim Conway

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*This sermon delves into the importance of true righteousness that exceeds the external religiosity of the scribes and Pharisees. It emphasizes the need for a heart transformation and genuine obedience to God's will, focusing on the internal motives and desires rather than mere outward actions. The sermon explores the contrast between hypocritical external religion and a genuine, heart-felt relationship with God, calling for a deep examination of one's faith and a pursuit of righteousness that reflects a true hunger for God.*

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**Scripture:** Matthew 5:20, Matthew 23:27, Luke 12:1, Luke 18:9, Isaiah 29:13, James 1:22

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## Description

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## Transcript

Matthew chapter 5 verse 20, now what you have to recognize is Matthew 5.20 is connected to 17, 18 and 19. Let's read these four. Do not think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets.

I did not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Now what you need to recognize is he's talking about until heaven and earth pass away, which means all the way to the end of time.

The law and the prophets are going to stand and whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, clearly that comes from the law and the prophets, teacheth men so shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever does and teaches them these commandments that come from the law and the prophets, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

What you really need to recognize is this, the law and the prophets keeping and teaching the commandments that come from the law and the prophets, that is exactly the righteousness that he is

talking about in verse 20 that we need to have and it better exceed that of the scribes and the pharisees. This is all one thought here and it's all together. And listen, verse 20 is really a summary statement of pretty much everything we're going to get in the Sermon on the Mount from now on.

You recognize this, as we go through the Sermon on the Mount what he's repeatedly going to do is tell us what the scribes and the pharisees are like and how our righteousness needs to differ from theirs. Basically the Sermon on the Mount is an enlargement of 520, 520 is a summary statement. So, look at it, unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

So let me create a scenario for you. Let's say it's Saturday morning like it was yesterday and you decide you're going to go down and you're going to participate in the evangelism. So you're going to head down to the city center and you're going to show up there and you arrive and you grab your handful of tracts and you take up your position.

Just then imagine this, somebody comes up to you and they ask you this question. They say to you, what must be true of me for me to get to heaven? They ask you that question. How many of you would even think in terms of answering like this? How many of you would go there? How many of you would even answer in terms having to do with a righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of somebody else? I mean, here's the reality.

We might very well say, well let me tell you about imputed righteousness. Unless your righteousness is perfect like Christ, see often we go there. You've got to be perfect to enter heaven.

But that's not what Christ is talking about here. He is not talking about imputed righteousness. He is talking about the law and the prophets keeping, and you'll see this as he goes on.

He'll say, look, you know maybe the scribes and the Pharisees, they've got perhaps adultery nailed down to the seventh commandment even then they thought they could put their wives away for any reason under the sun. So really they just had an out for the adultery thing. Well, we don't need to commit adultery.

If I'm sick of my wife, for any reason I can just basically put, that's why they were asking Christ what they were asking. Doesn't Moses say we can put away our wives for anything? And he's saying, well hold on boys. See that was what he was always doing with the scribes and Pharisees.

Certainly they had it down to the letter of the law. But what we're going to find here is this all together has to do with practical righteousness. And how many of us would even talk this way? Jesus is speaking about practical righteousness.

This would be like us being down there and saying, you know, well, see that religious guy over there? I mean, your commandment keeping righteousness better be better than his. That's basically what he's doing. How many of us would talk that way? How many of us would say to a young Muslim, I spoke to three young Muslim guys yesterday, two at one time with George and then there was another guy I came across.

How many of us would even say, well you see that Imam over there? You see that Mullah over there? Unless your righteousness exceeds his, you're not going to enter the kingdom of heaven. But that's how Jesus talked. That's exactly how he's talking right here.

I mean, and none of us would do this. We don't even need to think about debating it. And yet, our Lord, what I love is when I'm going through scripture and I start seeing things that Christ does or Christ says, and when I really get to thinking about it, I start thinking, how come none of us do that? You know the truth is, a lot of times we're afraid to sound like Jesus sounds.

Because think about this, if somebody came up to you and said, what must be true of me for me to get into heaven, for me to enter the kingdom? You know what you'd say? You know what you'd say? What would you say? Yes, you'd be talking about trust, you'd be talking about repentance. What would we say? You need to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, or you won't enter the kingdom of heaven. I mean, we would say that.

Sometimes Sonny uses the law, kind of the Ray Comfort deal, right? You want to tell them they're liars, they're full of lust, and anyway, he uses the law. A lot of times we would go there, we'd undoubtedly take them to the cross, we'd talk to them about repentance, the Bible says if you don't, unless you likewise repent, or unless you repent, you will likewise perish. I mean, you've got to repent, or you're not going to enter the kingdom.

That's a reality. We might talk to them about being born again, if you're not born again. There's many things that we might say, we might, typically we're going to speak about justification, and what that looks like, and how that works.

We might speak of death, I did a track on death, because I think that's a good lead-in sometimes. We talk about judgment, judgment's coming, how are people going to stand? And you know what? All of that would be true, and all of that would be biblical. But isn't it interesting how our Lord speaks here? I say to you, you see, Jesus says things we don't say.

He can float out into the crowd. I mean, you may remember one of the Tuesday studies. I basically read from a portion of Ezekiel, and I said, would this be a right way to preach the gospel today? And you remember, somebody said no, and I said, why? And they said, well, there's no cross in it, there's no grace in it.

Well, I took them to the New Testament, and I showed them right here in the Sermon on the Mount, how the Lord could often talk that way. Isn't it interesting? No mention of the cross, no mention of repentance, no mention of faith, no mention of forgiveness, no mention of imputed righteousness. I know in other places we can find these, but you know, it's very interesting.

It's very interesting to me how often Jesus does not talk the same way Paul talks. A lot of times we try to take Pauline doctrine, not that they were at odds with what Christ taught, but a lot of times we try to take the Pauline doctrine and read it in to what Christ said. Christ spoke in ways that sometimes we just have to come face to face with.

We have to come to grips with it. I mean, listen, I was basically a nominal Catholic before God saved me. If somebody would have said to me, unless your righteousness exceeds that of priests and nuns, you will in no way enter the kingdom.

See, that's what it would have been like for me. It would have been like, what? I thought you were supposed to believe. I mean, I read somewhere about God so loved the world, He gave His only begotten Son, anybody that believes.

I mean, I read that. I thought, what's this? And of course, I had no idea about anything. I had no idea about repentance.

But if somebody would have said that to me, what would... I mean, imagine this if you're an Anglican. And it's just like the arch... Your righteousness better exceed that of the Archbishop of Canterbury. Or you're one of these Muslim guys, and it's like, you see that Imam over there? Unless your righteousness exceeds him, you're not going to enter the kingdom.

Do you recognize just how radical this sounds? I mean, to me as a nominal Catholic, if you would have told me that, I'd have said, forget you. I'm out of here. I mean, if that's basically the way it is, what hope do I have? I mean, you have to recognize just how stunning, how shocking this is.

I mean, if somebody would have come along and said, unless your righteousness exceeds that of Mother Teresa, you will not inherit the kingdom. And by the way, before you think I'm making any kind of wrong judgment about Mother Teresa, John MacArthur went to Calcutta, and he visited her. He said, this was years ago when his children were smaller, but he took one summer and he went over there.

He met Mother Teresa before she died. He said that place was dark. He said it was full of idols.

He said it was a horrible place. Time Magazine ran a series on her when she died, and they printed some of her journals. And she said, if they make me a saint, I will be a saint of darkness.

She basically described in her life, she had no assurance, except for one little space of time back in the 1950s. This woman was in the dark. And if you would have come along and said that to me, I remember I was still very much lost right before God saved me.

I had a collision at second base. My knee was out. I'm limping.

I'm just feeling miserable. This was in the time right before God saved me. I walk into the break room, and one of the guys said, you're Catholic, aren't you? I said, yeah.

He said, you ever considered that the Pope might be the Antichrist? I said, just leave me alone. Let me get my candy out of this machine. But I mean, you know, the reality, if you start talking about the Pope, come on, you Polish guy, you come from, you know what it's like over there.

You start talking about Pope John Paul, I mean, this guy is sacred. You start talking about Mother Teresa, you start talking about the nuns and the priests. I mean, if anybody is going to get in, what you need to recognize is that's exactly what the Scribes and the Pharisees were like back in that day that Jesus lived.

We need to talk about these guys. Here's what Lloyd-Jones said about the Scribes and the Pharisees. He said, we must remember that the Scribes and Pharisees were in many senses the most outstanding people of the nation.

Now think about who these guys were. Scribes. Do you recognize before the printing press came in how important a scribe was? Everything got copied by hand.

And because they were copying the law of God, you see, these guys were experts. They not only copied it, they knew what was in there. Do you recognize when Herod, you remember the wise men, the Magi came to town? And Herod wanted to know where Christ was supposed to be born.

Who did he gather together? He went to the Scribes. He said, hey guys, where's the Christ supposed to be born? Why would they know? Well, they did know. You see, these are the guys that were copying scripture.

These guys were teaching. Often these guys were lawyers. Being a lawyer and being a scribe, they often went because you're dealing with law.

You see, in the Jewish culture, law came out of the scriptures. And so to be a lawyer, these things went together. And then to be a Pharisee, you know what the word Pharisee means? It means to be a separatist.

It means to be set apart. These guys were like the separated ones. They set themselves apart.

They had drawn up a most stringent set of rules and a moral code. The Pharisees went beyond the scripture. And you remember the Pharisee, the tax collector, there in Luke 18.

The Pharisee said, I fast twice a week. The Old Testament never called for that. But he fasted twice a week.

You know what else they found? They took issue with Jesus' disciples because they didn't wash their hands. There's nothing in the Old Testament scripture that said you had to wash your hands before you could eat. See, these guys, they made more rules.

They went, these guys, they formed just an excessive, stringent code. They were the strictest sect among the Jews for outward religion, for outward righteousness. And you know what everybody looked at the scribes and the Pharisees? As the paragons of virtue.

In that day, if you would have said to the common man, you see, the common man was awed by these guys. To the average man said to himself, hey, there's little hope that I can ever be as good as these guys. Because they'd see these guys.

They'd see how they prayed. They'd see how they gave. They'd see these guys.

They stood apart. They were outstanding. So it would have been the same way as you coming to me as a nominal Catholic and telling me that unless my righteousness exceeds.

You know what I thought? I had a cross. This isn't, I take it this was for when I died. So I'd always have it when I rode my motorcycle.

It was like my protective charm that said, I'm a Catholic. Please call a priest. Well, you know what a priest was like? It's like, these guys exude holiness, right? I mean, think about it.

They wear that thing on their neck and they, what'd they do? They don't get married. I mean, they like gave their life for the church and for God. These guys are set apart.

I mean, you just, you look at these guys like, if anybody's getting into heaven, the priest and the nun is. I mean, the idea that your righteousness would have to somehow exceed them, the Pope. I mean, come on.

This, brethren, I'm telling you this. You know what? To the average guy, you look at these people and it's like, if these guys can't enter the kingdom, if my righteousness has to exceed, if even the least Christian, their righteousness, the righteousness of the least Christian has to surpass the righteousness of the greatest of these scribes and Pharisees, what hope do I have? Who can be saved? I say to you that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. I'll tell you, this then is one of the most vital things that we could ever consider.

I mean, brethren, what is our conception of true holiness? What is our conception of true salvation? What's our idea of being Christian? I mean, this challenges it all. What is it to be genuinely in the Lord? I mean, our Lord sets it right down here in this verse, that the righteousness of a Christian, it's, how is it greater? I mean, we need to look at that. This being the case, we need to examine our own profession of our Christian faith in the light of this analysis of the Lord.

I mean, the Lord knows what He's talking about. And this is serious stuff. Have you ever noticed how often Jesus deals with the scribes and the Pharisees? I mean, if you just take the four Gospels and you think to yourself, how often do you see the scribes and the Pharisees coming up? How predominant were they? Because you have to recognize this.

This is what God knew that His church would need preserved for the whole of this age, until heaven and earth pass away. Do you recognize that not everything that Jesus did is recorded? John tells us that. The world wouldn't even be... Do you recognize that we only have a very limited amount of information that's recorded for us? But think about this.

How often did God think it necessary to tell us about the scribes and the Pharisees? I would say actually quite a bit. And I'll tell you what. If we have eyes to see, there's a reason.

Do you recognize that every form of false religion on the face of the earth is like the scribes and the Pharisees? All of it, without exception. It doesn't matter if you go look at it in Hinduism, or if it's Catholicism or if it's Jehovah's Witnesses. It doesn't matter if it's Mormonism.

It doesn't matter. It is the same. And you know what? It's the same in nominal Christianity too.

Which comes really close to home. Everywhere. This being the case, we need to look at this.

One of the things that the Lord was concerned about was the hollowness of these men's religion. Like the very heart and soul of what true Christianity was lacking. Look all through history, every nation, every culture, we've got, no matter when we live, our righteousness has to exceed theirs.

And so you know what? We better look at what their righteousness looks like. Because you won't enter the kingdom unless your righteousness exceeds that. And so what we want to do is survey the religion of the scribes and the Pharisees just for a moment.

In order that we can see the defects. In order that we might recognize what's meant by a righteousness that exceeds theirs. How does mine need to be a step above? What does that even look like? I mean I want that righteousness that exceeds theirs.

I want to enter the kingdom. I trust you do too. So, we must realize this is one of the most serious important matters we can ever consider together.

Because there is, look, it's got to do with entering the kingdom. And there is a very real and terrible possibility of our being deluded and deceived. And you just have to think, the sermon on the mount ends with a wise man and a foolish man.

The sermon on the mount ends with many being deceived. The sermon on the mount ends with the narrow way that only few find. There's a broad way that many are on.

And that's these people. It's people with a righteousness like theirs. And so we want to sit up and take notice.

Because brethren, one of the terrible realities about these Pharisees and scribes is they're being denounced by our Lord as being hypocrites. But do you know this? They were unconscious hypocrites. Do you ever recognize that when you get to the end of the sermon on the mount, these people that actually are lawless, they were very religious.

And they had this external religion and they're surprised. You see, that's what makes this so dangerous. Is that we might just say, well we should all know.

We should all be able to see it. No, isn't it amazing, at the end they didn't see it. Lord, Lord, we did this in your name.

I never knew you. They really believed they were spiritually well off. They even believed that they were superior.

Listen to this. The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself this way. God, I thank you that I'm not like other men.

This is what they really thought. They thought that they were superior to others. Do you remember how they talked to the blind man in John 9? You were altogether born in your sin.

Do you teach us? What are they implying there? They're implying somehow they weren't. You teach us? I mean, you're born in your... Do you remember when the officers came back and they didn't take Jesus? And they're asking why you didn't take him? And they said, because nobody ever talks like this. They said, do any of the Pharisees believe in him? But you people who know not the law are cursed.

Isn't that interesting? They thought they were better. They thought they were higher. They thought they were superior.

They really thought all was well. The terrible danger the Lord is bringing us face to face with is there's a possibility that we can be relying on the wrong thing. I mean, we can... You know what happens? You can start resting on the things that have to do with worship rather than actually being a true worshiper.

And that's huge. Because you know what? A man can pray and he can rest on his praying. I prayed.

I fasted. I gave the money. And you know what? That's a lot different from coming to the prayer meeting because you desperately need the Lord.

And you're looking to Him and you want to find Him and you want to cling to Him and you want God to be good to His promises and you need His help and you're desperate and you're fasting, not so that people can see it, but you're fasting because you really want to lay hold on the Lord. You want Him to come near.

You want the riches, the reward of the Father that He gives.

You give because you care. You give because you feel for the need of the widow, for the need of the orphan. You feel for the need of the pastor or the missionary.

So, here's the thing. They had a form of righteousness. You know when He talks like that? Your righteousness needs to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.

See, He's not saying they didn't have any righteousness. It's that their righteousness was defective. And so that's... Even if you can equal the best of them, it's defective.

It's not enough. It's got to exceed. So, let's follow our Lord's own analysis of the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees.

Turn to Luke 12. This is key. In Luke 12, our Lord really sums it up.

Luke 12, 1. When an innumerable multitude of people had gathered together, so that they trampled one another, He began to say to His disciples, first of all, Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. You want to get that. Because, here's the thing.

Jesus spoke this to real people. Just like I'm speaking this to real people. Jesus is speaking to people truth that has to do with the well-being of their soul.

Hypocrisy. Beware of hypocrisy. And He says this.

One of the reasons you want to beware of it is because you can't hide forever. He says there's nothing covered that will not be revealed. Now, you go away to a secluded place this evening.

You just sit by yourself. And you think deeply about that reality. Nothing that happens in the recesses of your mind.

Nothing that has happened in the secret place that won't be revealed. Nor hidden that will not be known. Therefore, whatever you have spoken in the dark will be heard in the light.

What you have spoken in the ear, in inner rooms, will be proclaimed on the housetops. Now, Jesus is saying this. It's all going to be brought out.

Now, I know this. For the Christian, there's no condemnation. How much of it's going to be brought up that we're actually forgiven for? I don't know.

I haven't endured judgment day. Neither have you. We don't exactly know what it's going to be like.

But right here, Jesus says, nothing's going to be hidden. I know this for the Christian. All the sin's going to be under the blood.

Some people think that there will actually be tears that will have to be wiped away, even from God's people on that day. I don't know. I don't know.

But hypocrisy, do you know what it is? It's like a stage player. An actor. It's a movie actor.

Do you know what's happening in the movies? You watch a movie. You see the actor playing the part. They pretty much sold you that they are that person that they're playing.

But you know what's going on in their minds, right, as they're playing that part? They're not really that person. They're trying to think of their lines. They actually are another person than the one they're portraying.

They're doing this for money. They're doing this for fame. They're doing this for fortune.

That's what they're doing. They're not that person that they're portraying. We all know that.

That's what hypocrisy is. It's creating a public impression that's at odds with my real purpose and my real motivation. It's an outward show.

It's to be pretentious. It's pretentious, pretentious, and pretend are related. It's basically pretending on the outside to be something that I'm actually not.

There's no factual basis for it. Jesus said this, Therefore when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do. That comes from the Sermon on the Mount.

You see, he's going to unpack the reality of the hypocrisy of the scribes and the Pharisees right here in this sermon before he gets done. Matthew 6.5, when you pray, you should not be like the hypocrites. Matthew 6.16, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites.

In Mark 7.5, the Pharisees and scribes asked him, Why do you disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands? He answered and said to them, Well, did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites? And of course, Matthew 23. Matthew 23.13, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Verse 14, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.

Verse 15, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. Verse 23, verse 25, verse 27, verse 29, Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. In Matthew chapter 23, he calls them hypocrites.

I mean, you can just imagine him talking to these guys in this fashion. But you know what's amazing? For one, it's amazing he talked to them like that. For two, it's amazing that God thought that needed to be preserved for all of us to see.

The most basic, elemental, fundamental reality about man-made and devil-made religion, even nominal Christianity, is this. The inside and the outside are at odds. They're not in harmony.

They're not in rhythm with each other. Listen to this. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

This inside-outside, the fact that they're not in harmony, this is where the danger is. You see, the hypocrite, the scribe and the Pharisee, their righteousness, it was external and it didn't line up with what was true internal. The true Christian, even with our imperfections, the fact is that what we are on the outside and what we are on the inside is the same.

That doesn't mean we may not struggle with certain aspects of hypocrisy, but by and large, when you sum up the person's life, what they are on the inside is what they are on the outside. That is the difference in this righteousness and it's a life and death issue. Listen to this.

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. You're like whitewashed tombs, which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside, you see the comparison, outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones, all uncleanness. Even so, you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside, you're full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Now you want to get that. On the inside, lawlessness. That's key, because when we get to the end of the Sermon on the Mount, it says, not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven.

He who does the will of my Father. You see, he's talking about practical righteousness. He's talking about actually doing the will of God.

He's talking about the law and the prophets. He's talking about what God has expressed in his will. Those are the people that enter the kingdom.

And when he tells these other people they're not going to enter, they're saying, externally, we prophesied. Externally, we cast out demons. We did many mighty works.

And you know what, when he says, I never knew you, he says, you workers of lawlessness. You see, that's the issue. They did many things on the outside, but inside, lawlessness.

This is the same thing he just said, if you had ears to hear this. Inside, you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness. You see, the inside and the outside.

There's a contradiction. This is what we have to get. When Jesus says that our righteousness has to exceed, exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus isn't just saying we have to do better.

Basically, we need a righteousness that's like theirs, we just need to do better than they do. That's not what he's saying. He's not saying a higher degree of the same kind of righteousness.

He's saying you need another kind of righteousness altogether. You need a different kind. Their kind of righteousness was wrong.

Theirs was all about show. It was all external. And so you would think it's as simple as this.

Can all of us be honest? I'll tell you this, if you're not honest with yourself, dishonesty is a path to destruction. People have to be honest with themselves. And so, you know, my question is this, how can we try to wake people up to this reality? Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy about you saying, these people draw near to me with their mouth, honor me with their lips, but their heart, you see that's the inside, their heart is far from me.

Do you realize this? There's two kinds of Christianity. One kind of Christianity is that kind where the heart is close to God, and one kind the heart is far from God. Those are the two different kinds.

And so, you know what? Both groups, they carry a Bible. Both groups, they may come to the church service. Both groups have outward activities, but you see the place where you can tell out the true from the false.

The place where we've got to exceed, remember this comes right out of the Beatitudes, they're pouring Spirit in the heart. These guys in the heart, God I thank you, I'm not like that guy. That's how he's praying in Luke 18.

No, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the pure in heart. You see it's a heart matter. Blessed are the merciful.

Again, it's a heart matter. Two kinds. Listen, even here this can be hard to find out.

Why? Here's the problem. When our hearts are far from God, the hypocrite imagines that his heart is close to God because he's actually created a God that he's close to, but he's not the God of Scripture. Listen to this, they said to Jesus, we're not born of fornication, we have one Father, God.

Jesus said to them, if God were your Father, you would love me, for I precede you. You see what was happening? Here's Jesus dealing with these scribes and Pharisees and yet they believe that they're close to God. And he says, no you're not.

If you were, the way you'd deal with me would be different. See, most people with a righteousness like the scribes and the Pharisees, they think they're okay. And they're going to keep on thinking they're okay until it's too late.

How can I try to wake up somebody who has a righteousness exactly like the scribes and the Pharisees, who are not going to enter the kingdom, if they continue on the path that they're on. How can I do that? Well, I can just try to do what the Lord does. I can try to do what scripture says.

But we've got to be honest. And this takes more than just right now. When you're sitting alone, and you're really thinking, what's going on inside? What's going on at the heart level? I mean listen, you know that it's been said before, but it's so true.

What you think about the most is what you love the most. Is Christ in your thoughts? Is the Trinity in your thoughts? Do you think about the Father? Do you think of the Son? Do you think of the Spirit? How much are you really motivated by a desire to please this God? How much are you in scripture to really, I mean how much do you hunger and thirst after an intimacy with this God? And hunger and thirst after righteousness? Or how much of your religion is basically, it chafes at your flesh, you really wish it wasn't this way, but you're trying desperately to escape hell? See, we've got to be honest. Jesus said to certain individuals, because I tell you the truth, you do not believe me.

You remember that? He said to these guys, because I tell you the truth, you don't believe me. Do you hear what that's saying? It's like you're such lovers of lies and of darkness, that when I come along with the truth, you can't even hear me. So the question to be honest about is clearly this.

Is my Christianity a matter of the heart? Is my righteousness a matter of the heart? And how can we know? Well, our Lord recognizes that genuine Christian is genuine in secret. Right here in the Sermon on the Mount, you know what He says? He goes to our giving, He goes to our praying, and He goes to our fasting. And He says, in the secret place, repeatedly, do your charitable deed in secret.

When you pray, go into your room. When you've shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place. Someone has said this, Religion is that which a man does with his own solitude.

In other words, if you want to know what you really are, you can find out the answer to that question when you're all alone, with your own thoughts, with your own desires, and your own imaginations. In the secret place. You see, up here is a secret place.

You can be sitting here, and I have no idea what you're thinking about. When you're alone, what happens there? I recognize. This has been said before.

We are aware when we're in the presence of others. Do we change our conduct, somewhat, when we get around others? Yes. Is there a degree of, I don't know, I wouldn't call it hypocrisy, I would just call it social etiquette, probably, right? You don't do certain things that you might do in private, in front of other people, because you want to be proper.

But listen, that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about when you're all alone. What do you desire? What are you after? What do you hope for? What do you long for? That's the real issue.

What you are when you're all alone. You see, we're careful in what we say to others. We're careful in how we present ourselves to others.

But the question is this, what do you say to yourself? I mean, what do you really want? What is your heart after? What goes on inside? I mean, is basically this whole thing, listen, hunger and thirst after righteousness. Are the scriptures drudgery to you? Do you find that you kind of have to force yourself? Now look, I know that there can be a place for having to develop good habits. But I would ask you this, it's kind of like prayer meeting, it's kind of like evangelism.

Are there some times when my flesh says, like yesterday morning when the rain's coming down, it's like, do I really want to go out there and stand in the rain? It's so nice just to sit here and stay here in my nice dry office and work on my sermon for tomorrow. And you're going to go out there. But once I was there, was I thankful to the Lord? Absolutely.

It's kind of like a prayer meeting. Your flesh can feel like, oh, you know, just getting rest tonight. But then you go and you pray and you come home and it's like the Lord.

I mean, do you recognize those realities where there's this reality that God is helping you and you go and you're among God's people and you recognize certain things. You want to be here. It's not just drudgery.

We can all understand what it's like when you have a child who is forced to go to the prayer meeting, forced to go to the Sunday service when they don't want to. Their parents are Christians. They don't want to go.

Maybe they want to go because they want to play with the other kids. But it's just kind of drudgery to them. Do you know that false religion is basically like that? I've got to do this because if I don't do this, I'm going to end up in hell.

I'm going to end up perishing. You see, people are afraid of it. People have a sense of death.

They have a sense of having to answer for their sins and it drives men to want to worship something. It drives men to religion. But I would ask this.

How satisfied are we? Do you recognize this? When the Pharisee prayed, he said, God, I thank you that I'm not like other men. I'm not an extortioner. I'm not this, that and the other.

I'm not like this tax collector over here. Did you get that? They're satisfied. You know what? The tax collector is pretty satisfied when he's tied his anise and his mint and his cumin.

He's satisfied. Because he's externalized it all. Do you recognize these guys? They're wanting to crucify Christ, but they won't go into the Praetorian, lest they be unclean for the Passover.

They're killing the Messiah. Oh, but we don't want to go in there because we'll be unclean. And then they get the money that Judas sold out Christ for.

It's not lawful for us to put it in the offering box. So they went out and bought us a graveyard, basically. I mean, these guys were meticulous when it came to these things.

They just externalized all the righteousness. They performed their task. They're basically content.

Here's what Jesus said. Won't you, you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law, justice and mercy and faith. This is what external religion always does.

It basically, go to church, check. Went to the prayer meeting, check. Read a chapter of Scripture, check.

That's how it is. That's how these guys lived. More interested in the actions of religion than the motives behind the actions.

You see, they would become consumed with the details. And they would miss the larger principles of love, of mercy, of compassion. They were more interested in their doing, what they did, their list of things than actually of what they were, what becoming something.

And when the scribes and the Pharisees, listen to these guys, when they saw them eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to his disciples, how is it that he eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners? You see, often times you get Christians supposing. And you know what? We go to church and we put our money in the offering box. And we're happy to have money go to some orphan over in Myanmar.

But you know what? You remember the Pharisee? Jesus, they invited him over to eat. And a woman of the city, a sinner, she comes in and she begins to wash his feet with her hair. And that Pharisee is over there thinking, if he knew what kind of woman that was.

You see how these guys were? Do you remember what it was? It was a Sabbath day. And they're watching him to see if he would heal. Now think with me.

You've got a man with a withered hand. If a man with a withered hand came in here, and you saw him and he's suffering, and he hasn't been able to use that hand, and you recognize what these guys are doing. They're down meticulously.

They've got their laws for the Sabbath. You can do this, you can do this. You can't do that, you can't do that.

Everything is by the book. That's how external religion is. And yet, Jesus heals him.

And they go out and plot how to destroy him. Seriously? If you had a guy with a withered hand, would you not be thankful? God sent his Son into this place to heal this man, and deliver him from that. The Scribes and the Pharisees were constantly, you know what? Down to the letter of the law.

On the Sabbath, your disciples are doing that which is unlawful to be done. And Jesus is saying, guys they're hungry. Have you ever read what happened when David and his guys were hungry? You see the difference? You get where it's all the rules.

But it's a matter of the heart. Blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are those that hunger and thirst after righteousness.

Blessed are the merciful. When you're merciful, you see that's the thing. Oh, they're very careful.

Counting out their seeds of their anise, their mint and their cumin. Boy, down to the exact. Oh, am I not great? Look what I did.

I do all this. And I'm superior to other people. And he says, you absolutely are neglecting the weightier parts of what Christianity is all about.

What God is all about. They're primarily concerned about themselves and their own righteousness. When it came to the glory of God, when it came to the needs of others, they just went on with their religious duties.

So, the reality is this. What's true? What's true in here? I mean, look, one of the things is we're not perfect. I recognize that.

Do we have our flaws? Do we have our blemishes? Do we have our fights with the passions of the flesh? Do we have our fights with worldliness? Are we resisting the devil? I mean, there are these battles. But in the end, I mean, look, in the end, you can recognize certain things in your own heart. Do you just fear hell? Or is there a real desire to be with Christ? Is there a real desire to draw near to God? Is there a desire? Brethren, I can tell you this.

When I think about coming here, like right now, two o'clock service, what motivates me? I mean, there's numerous things that motivate me. Can I, honestly, can I say, oh, the only reason that I come here is I don't want to go to hell. Quite honestly, I don't even think that way.

Is it just because I want to do my duty and be able to say that, did my church thing check? No, that doesn't even enter. Why? I mean, if I'm honest, why? I can tell you, I so desire to have God meet with us. To experience the power of God.

And my trust is when two or three meet together in His name, things are going to happen and we're going to experience things. I do want to help God's people. I desire that.

I greatly desire that we're going to use our gifts mutually to encourage one another's strength and encourage one another's faith. I greatly desire that. Brethren, what we have to recognize is this, when we boil our religion down, is that, you know how the Pharisees were.

They basically could be contented in the fact that they didn't commit adultery. But Jesus comes along and He says, but look at the heart issues. This isn't just an action.

Do you hunger and thirst for righteousness? You see, that's a healthy dissatisfaction that the Pharisee doesn't have. The Pharisee goes through his checklist and he's very self-content. He's very content and happy when he's done his deeds.

But you know one thing I find about the Christian, is they're never content. Because they won't be content until they're like Christ. Because we groan.

Blessed are those who mourn. Because we see our failures. We take them to the Lord.

We confess these things. That Pharisee in Luke 18, he was very self-contented. I thank you I'm not like others.

Brethren, I may recognize this. I may recognize that I'm not like a lot of people in the world. But I guess I've grown enough inside that I don't walk around feeling superior to the people out here who are lost.

Because when I look at people like that young Muslim guy yesterday, and look at him, I recognize that's me. He's Muslim. He's nominal Muslim.

I was nominal Catholic. But that's me. I recognize this, aside from the grace of God, there go I. And there I would be still.

And you can all look in your own... Do you feel gratitude? And I know it has an ebb and flow to it. But do you feel gratitude for your salvation? Does the cross... Not just that you get stirred up by the songs, but I mean when you sang some of these songs today, I mean there were several stanzas on before the throne. Do you feel it? I mean everything in you wants to jump, because you're worshiping inside.

It's not a matter of, oh it's a catchy tune. No, it's not that. You feel it.

You well up. There's appreciation. There's joy.

There's truth. You're affected by truth. You're not just going through the motions.

I mean what's true in here? This is where our righteousness has to exceed theirs. And what we're going to be doing is we're going to look at this. Because this is where Jesus goes.

It's really an interesting sermon. If you're not careful, it can have a legal feel to it. But you don't want to go there.

Because the reality is that this is what Christ makes of people that He saves. And what He's going to do is He's going to show us the difference between this. Because He wants us to see.

He doesn't want us to be put off by this kind of external religion. He wants us to go, He wants us to see the heart of the matter. And remember this has to do with law keeping.

This has to do with, it has to do with the law and the prophets. It has to do with taking what God has said and doing the will of God. And God wants our hearts.

You heard it, you hypocrites. Isaiah said it. That we can speak the right things but their hearts are far.

God wants our heart near. And when our heart's near, we're going to obey Him. We're going to do what He says.

The wise man hears and does. The foolish man hears and does not do. This is exactly what the Sermon on the Mount is talking about.

It is that kind of obedience that comes forth from faith. This is the kind of thing where right from the beginning we read, Blessed are the poor in spirit. We are a people who are bankrupt without Him.

So you recognize that everything He's calling us to do here, it's by the grace of God, that we're going to look any different from the rest of the world. The grace of God. We're poor in spirit.

So we need, we need His help. We need His power. We need His grace.

And as we look through this, when it comes to purity, when it comes to anger, when it comes to prayer, when it comes to giving, when it comes to fasting, when it comes to not having anxiety, not judging, when it comes to all these different things, Jesus is actually calling us to live on a whole other plane in these areas than the external religionist. Because the external religionist has things to say about prayer, and you can see what they do. They have things to say about murder, and you can see what they do.

They have some things to say about adultery, and you can see what they do. But He's looking for something, He's going to differentiate here between us and the hypocrites, us and the scribes and the Pharisees, us and the mere religionist. And what it is is a great time to look in the mirror, and it's going to be a learning time, it's also a time to hear how Christ teaches, and to do exactly what it says at that allegory at the end, that analogy at the end.

We want to be the wise man who builds his house on a rock, and we want to hear what Christ teaches us here, and we want to press on with these things. And by the grace of God, see the religionists, they walk in their own strength, and so they can say, I thank you God, this is an insult to God, I thank you, I am, it says he prayed to himself, not even praying to God, even though it says, I thank you God that I'm not like other men. But basically it was because of their own efforts, it was basically what they did, they were very satisfied in their own efforts.

So here we are, I mean we're right, it might seem like we've done this for lots of weeks already, but now we're coming in to dive into the depths, of the heart and soul of the Sermon on the Mount. You'll see it, first thing is anger, then lust, then divorce, then ulce, then retaliation, loving your enemies, giving to the needy, praying, fasting, treasure in heaven, anxiety, I mean these things are so massively practical, I mean Jesus is just going to the heart of where we live. Father I pray that in these coming weeks and months, Lord I pray that through this truth, my great desire is that there's not a single person sitting in this room, who lacks that righteousness that exceeds the scribes and the Pharisees.

I pray that every professing Christian in this place is real, and the reality of this life that you call for in the Sermon on the Mount, it would be displayed by us. Lord I pray that this would, in all the purity, and poverty of spirit, and all the mercy, Lord in that hunger that fills the true child of God, Lord I pray that all of it would so characterize us, Lord I pray that we would be a people given to the word of God, and to the will of God, to be a people that are wise, that hear and do, Lord I pray that no one here would be forgetful, that as we walk forward from this place, we suddenly forget, like the man James speaks about, and hear the truth and then we just, we're forgetful, it's gone. Lord please, give us a healthy dose of trembling at your word, of hearing what Christ says, and being gripped by it, rocked by it, moved by it, help us Lord I pray in Christ's name, Amen.

You are dismissed.

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Video: [https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/DQ\\_qPyJtxdM.mp4](https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/DQ_qPyJtxdM.mp4)

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