

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT
THE RIGHTEOUSNESS THAT EXCEEDS: MATT. 5:20

INTRO.:

1. During the last couple of months we have been studying one of the greatest chapters in the entire Bible – Matthew 5.
 - a. In this chapter Matthew records the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b. As Jesus began this sermon He told His listeners exactly what He expected His followers to be like.
 - c. As we have seen, Jesus called for all of those who would come to Him and receive the merits of His sacrificial death, to live a radically different life than the rest of the world, and even those who called themselves righteous.

2. This being the case let me ask you, if you were asked to name someone you know whom you think is truly righteous, who would it be?
 - a. What would you use as the basis for your decision?
 - b. How would you classify one person as righteous and another as not?

3. In Jesus' time the people would have immediately pointed to the scribes and Pharisees when asked, "Who is righteous?"
 - a. They regarded them as the paradigms of virtue.
 - b. Most people thought that if anyone was going to make it into the kingdom of heaven, it would surely be the scribes and Pharisees.
 - c. After all, they were the ones who studied the law and taught it.

4. So you can imagine their surprise when Jesus said: Matt. 5:20: (Read).
 - a. Jesus shocked His listeners by saying that the very ones they thought were pinnacles of righteousness would be excluded from the kingdom.
 - b. Why? Because their righteousness was phony.

5. As we put today's religious world against this background, we can see a startling similarity between the respected religious people of Christ's day, and the well-educated, respected religious people of today.
 - a. Far too often many people are more concerned over keeping the letter of the law, or at least what they consider to be the law, than they are in keeping the spirit of it – Even in the church.
 - b. To the Pharisee's ones thoughts, motives, and desires were relatively unimportant; the real thing was one's outward actions.
 - c. Thus with this attitude one could:
 - 1) Make sure that they were in church every Sunday to partake of the L.S.; but have their heart or mind 1000 miles away.
 - 2) Make sure that they read the Bible, pray, etc.; but never apply what they have read to their life or make the necessary changes God's word calls for in their life.

6. So as we come to Matt. 5:20 Jesus presents the real key to not only the Sermon on the Mount, but also to our entire lives as Christians.
 - a. Here Christ is calling for a righteousness that exceeds that of the self-righteous Pharisees.
 - b. And from this point on, the rest of the sermon will be a discourse on how the righteousness that exceeds is demonstrated in one's life.

7. Seeing the importance Christ placed upon our having a righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes & Pharisees, I want us to spend our time this AM looking at what Jesus called, "*The righteousness that exceeds.*"

LESSON:

- I. To help us better understand the type of righteousness we are supposed to have, let us first notice the type of righteousness the Scribes and Pharisees had which Jesus condemned.
- A. 1st: Their righteousness was a superficial or external one.
1. Their righteousness consisted of what could be done with their hands, and not their heart.
 - a. They did things to receive the praise of men: Matt. 23:3-5: (Read).
 - 1) They enjoyed wearing religious garments that separated them from others, and delighted in receiving the places and titles of honor.
 - 2) Does that sound like some religious leaders today?
 - 3) Does this sound like those who enjoy wearing clothing that sets them apart, or being called Rev. or Dr.?
 - b. The religious leaders of Jesus' day took great care to look good on the outside, but neglected the inside: Matt. 25:25, 27: (Read).
 - c. Simply, on the outside they appeared very religious to those who saw them, but on the inside they were full of hypocrisy and wickedness.
 - d. Simply, theirs was a check-list religion.
 2. As we apply what Jesus said to today, what about our lives?
 - a. Is our religion merely one of an outward show?
 - b. Do we spend more time before the mirror than we do before God?
 - c. On the outside do we look good, but on the inside we are really full of hypocrisy?
 - d. Is our righteousness one that is based on a check-list, and one where we feel that as long as we have done certain things, we are pretty righteous?
 - 1) I attend services 3 times a week.
 - 2) I read my Bible and pray nearly every day.
 - 3) I give something to the Lord every week.
 - 4) And I even do a few good deeds every now and then.
 3. Jesus said unless our righteousness goes beyond the external we cannot get into heaven.
- B. 2nd: Their righteousness was false, or hypocritical.
1. While the scribes and Pharisees were the religious leaders of Christ's day, they were not good or righteous men.
 - a. While they were good at talking to others about the need to walk on the straight and narrow, they did not do it themselves.
 - b. Thus on numerous occasions Jesus called them "*Hypocrites*" (Matt. 23).
 - c. They majored on the things that were minor, and minored on the things that are major.
 2. Simply, Christ will not tolerate the mockery of those who profess one thing and do something else.
 - a. Those who profess their loyalty to Him and say He is first in their life, and then show otherwise by their actions - Jesus calls, "*hypocrites*."
 - b. Jesus condemns those who profess that He is Lord of their life and then allow other things of this world to come first, as having a righteousness that is no better than that of the Scribes & Pharisees.
 - c. Jesus expects nothing less than genuine righteousness from His followers.
- C. 3rd: Their righteousness was a self-imposed, self-made one.
1. The decision of who was righteous and who was not came from their own standards, and not God's.
 - a. In Lk. 18:11-12 we find an excellent example of this self-imposed standard of righteousness: (Read).
 - 1) This Pharisee gloried in the fact that he fasted twice a week.
 - a) The law only required one fast a year.
 - b) So here was a man who fasted 104 times a year.

- 2) He also mentioned he gave a tithe of all that he got.
 - a) Some commentaries say this is a misleading statement, and the Pharisees rarely ever gave any money, as we will notice in a moment.
 - b) Rather, they would make a meticulous show of sorting out all their herb seeds and giving a tenth to God to show how devoted they were.
 - b. Notice the numerous times the Pharisee used the word “I” to describe how righteous he was.
 2. Again, the warning to us is what is the motive behind what we do for God?
 - a. Is our righteousness based upon what “I” feel is pleasing to God?
 - b. Is it based upon the standards that “I” have set?
 - c. And is it done so that deep down “I” get the glory for being such a righteous person?
- D. 4th: Their righteousness allowed them to put other things before their commitment to God.
1. The Pharisees were lovers of money, or covetous: Luke 16:13-15: (Read).
 - a. In Col. 3:5 Paul called this attitude “idolatry.”
 - b. Simply they had made “mammon” their god.
 - c. And though they would try to deny it and even sought to justify themselves before men, as we saw in Luke 18, they were liars.
 - d. God knew their heart and that while they mouthed obedience to him with their lips, their hearts served another god.
 2. The same thing can happen to us today, as well.
 - a. While we can do and say all the right things, if our heart is not totally dedicated to God, we are unrighteous.
 - b. God will not tolerate those who have a divided loyalty.
 - c. The righteousness that exceeds is one where God is truly first in “EVERY” part of our life.
- E. 5th: Their righteousness was based on a series of “Do’s” and “Don’ts.”
1. Their righteousness was based on how well one could keep a series of rules.
 - a. The Pharisees taught that if you kept all the outward details of the law (scribal law), then you were a very righteous person.
 - b. Their righteousness was based on outward actions and not the heart.
 - c. One of the reasons Jesus got in trouble with the Scribes & Pharisees is that He did not follow their prescribed set of “Do’s” & “Don’ts.”
 - d. Jesus had the audacity to heal on the Sabbath, eat with unwashed hands, etc.
 2. Jesus said true righteousness comes from the heart and not from following a series of things one must do or not do.
 - a. A remarkable characteristic of Jesus’ teachings is that He never offered a series of outward behaviors one must exhibit.
 - 1) You cannot find a list of “Do’s” & Don’ts” in Jesus teaching.
 - 2) Rather in His teaching He dealt with the heart.
 - 3) He knew that if you can change a person’s heart, you will change their life and actions.
 - b. Where we have failed too often is that we think that if we can change a person’s actions, then their heart will change.
 - 1) How many times have we given our teenagers a list of “Do’s” & “Don’ts” only to see them leave the Lord when they leave home.
 - 2) Just giving lists of appropriate and inappropriate actions will fail nearly every time.
 - 3) For change to take place the heart first must be changed.
 - c. Thus true righteousness begins with a changed heart and not conforming to a set of rules.

II. With this definition in mind, let us now come back to the Sermon on the Mount and notice how Jesus described this “righteousness that exceeds.”

--Let us notice briefly how this principle is found in every part of the Sermon:

- A. The righteousness that exceeds is at the very heart of the Beatitudes.
1. Matt. 5:3 – This righteousness sees one as he really is.
 2. Matt. 5:4 – This righteousness grieves over sin.
 3. Matt. 5:5 - This righteousness sees oneself in relationship to others.
 4. Matt. 5:6 - This righteousness sees the true values found in being righteous.
 5. Matt. 5:7 - This righteousness is sympathetic.
 6. Matt. 5:8 - This righteousness begins at the very center of our life – the heart.
 7. Matt. 5:9 - This righteousness is not self-centered.
 8. Matt. 5:10-12 - This righteousness is costly.
- B. In the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gave a number of practical illustrations of what the righteousness that exceeds is like:
1. Matt. 5:13-16: It deals with my life and influence.
 - a. True righteousness cannot be hid.
 - b. It practices what it preaches.
 - c. It does not just talk the talk; but also walks the walk.
 2. Matt. 5:21-26: It deals with our relationship with others.
 - a. It does not retaliate or seek revenge.
 - b. It seeks to mend broken relationships, realizing that our relationships with others effects our relationship with God.
 3. Matt. 5:27-28, 31-32: It deals with our marriages.
 - a. It guards the sacredness of marriage.
 - b. It guards against adultery by protecting the heart, which is where adultery begins.
 - c. It seeks to avoid all those things which cause lustful thinking.
 4. Matt. 5:29-30: It deals with our sins.
 - a. It takes sin seriously.
 - b. It does not see sin as a laughing matter.
 5. Matt. 5:33-37: It deals with our speech.
 - a. Its word is dependable.
 - b. The righteous person’s word becomes their bond, and they are known for their truthfulness.
 6. Matt. 5:38-42: Is deals with helping others.
 - a. It is benevolent.
 - b. It seeks to do good and render help whenever the need arises.
 7. Matt. 6:1-4: It deals with our motives.
 - a. It seeks God’s approval, rather than man’s.
 - b. It does not put religion on display for all men to see and praise.
 - c. It does not worship God to gain the praise of men; but rather as an expression of a heart that cares and loves God.
 8. Matt. 6:5-15; 7:7-11: It deals with our prayer life.
 - a. It enjoys communing with God in prayer.
 - b. It realizes it’s need for God and longs for those times it can be in fellowship with Him.
 9. Matt. 6:19-34: It deals with our attitude toward our material possessions.
 - a. It is more interested in heavenly treasures, than earthly possessions.
 - b. It does not try to hold onto God and the world at the same time.
 - c. It places God and His kingdom before everything else in this world, and faithfully serves Him.
 10. Matt. 7:1-5: It deals with our view of others.
 - a. It is not judgmental, or prejudice.
 - b. It does not view people by human standards.
 11. Matt. 7:6: It deals with deciding between what is good and what is evil.
 - a. It appreciates the riches that are found in God’s word and seeks to follow them.
 12. Matt. 7:12: It deals with our treatment of others.
 - a. It sets self aside and considers others first.
 - b. It adopts the selfless attitude of Christ.

CONC.:

1. The Sermon on the Mount is an expression of the righteousness that exceeds.
2. Throughout the Book of Matthew we will continually see Christ contrasting the false righteousness of the Pharisees with the true righteousness, which God demands of His followers.
3. Without question, our righteousness as citizens in the kingdom of heaven must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.
4. What type of righteousness do you have?
 - a. An outward one like the scribes and Pharisees?
 - b. Or one that has reached into and changed your heart?