

Our Righteousness Is Not Good Enough

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Preacher: Rev. George Macaskill

[0 : 0 0] Let's turn in our Bibles now to the passage of Scripture we read in the Gospel of Matthew chapter 5 and as God would help me I'd like to concentrate on verse 20. Matthew chapter 5 at verse 20, for I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. There is no word in the Bible we should not pay close attention to. Every word is fully inspired by God but I suppose we can say if there's any part that's emphasized more than others surely it's when God's Son Himself is speaking and it's God's Son who's speaking in verse 20 and I suppose we can say if there is anything which Christ God's Son said that should be emphasized or taken careful notice of surely it's when that Son, when Christ is preaching in our text Christ is preaching. If there's anything we ought not to miss in the whole of the Bible surely it's when Christ is preaching. Now I'm sure most of you know that the sermon on the Mount is addressed to a mixed multitude. It was spoken to his disciples in the company of followers, most of whom soon left following him. But having specifically addressing his disciples every now and again as it were he seems to turn to the crowds and say you strive to enter the kingdom of heaven. We have another one here. I can't help but think he looked up on the multitudes that were on the periphery that were just kind of interested and seen in America or two. And here he is you can almost see weeping in his eyes. I tell you unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Now here's the thing. The righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees was very, very strict indeed. Very, very strict. They tell me they had 248 years plus 365 prohibitions in their system for getting to heaven. You remember Roman

location the savior of factus in this very book verse 20 chapter 23 he calls the scribes in the fight is to wall unto you hypocrites because you tithe mint. I couldn't. Now that's interesting. Did you have some loose lamb for Sunday lunch? Tell me how much mint did you put in the pot? The Pharisees tithed. 10% of the mint. They tithed. I tell you the system of getting to heaven by the scribes and Pharisees was very, very strict indeed.

I could never ever make it. I neither can you. Jesus is catagoric, specific, emphatic here. He's saying you righteousness is just not good enough to enter the kingdom of heaven.

My friends, if there is not another way of getting to heaven, we're all sunk. There must be. There has to be or we're all lost for eternity. If there's not another way of getting to heaven other than being good enough, our savior is telling us here your system with 248 regulations and 365 prohibitions is just not good enough. I suppose there's no one here. I suppose I presume I take it for granted every one of you would like to get to the kingdom of heaven. I'm taking that for granted. Will you note something about the kingdom of heaven? Note first of all, if we look carefully at what Jesus said about it, will you note carefully that the kingdom of heaven is something that must be entered. Nobody is born in it.

Nobody is born on a conveyor belt by default that goes to heaven. Nobody just lands some way or another in heaven. It must be consciously entered by all who go there.

[7 : 24] Do you hear something else quite saliently? It is possible it seems. According to what Jesus taught elsewhere, it's possible to be very near the kingdom of heaven and yet never enter. That's quite saliently. You can be very near it but never enter it. That's what Jesus was trying to say to a doctor of law by the way. Nicodemus was a doctor of law.

He said Nicodemus, unless you're born again, unless you're born from above, unless you transform from the inside, you can't enter the kingdom of heaven. In fact, he went on to say to Nicodemus, Nicodemus, unless you're born again, you cannot even see the kingdom of heaven. You're not qualified to speak about it. You don't know what you're talking about, unless you're born again. Now, I'd have to, well, the second thing I want to say about the kingdom of heaven is the king lays down the conditions of entry. I'd have to confess it's not all that long since I discovered the difference between a kingdom and a nation.

A kingdom has a king and guess who makes the rules? The king, the king. The kingdom of heaven has a king, king Jesus and he makes the rules. He sets the standard and he tells us the conditions of entry. What is the nature of the kingdom of heaven? Well, righteousness.

What describes and far as he's tried to work out? He tried to work out a system that was good enough to get into the kingdom of heaven, which is righteousness. Is it in Romans 14, 17? Romans 14, 17. The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness and peace. You're looking for peace. You're staying for the young people. You're peace.

Righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. That's the kingdom of heaven. In Hebrews chapter one, verse eight, we're told categorically there too. By the way, if you're ever confronted by Jehovah Witnesses and they tell you that Jesus is not God, all you need to do is remember one verse Hebrews chapter one, verse eight. It's actually a quotation from Psalm 45.

[11 : 00] Hebrews chapter one, verse eight says, back to the son, he says, you're thrown, oh God, is forever and ever. The sector of righteousness is the sector of your kingdom. The kingdom is a righteous kingdom full of nothing but righteousness up to God's standard. But to go back to the, if you're meeting one of these sex leaders of the sex, say to you, Jesus is not God. Well, remember Hebrews one, verse eight and say, remind them, of the son or to the son, he says, you're thrown, oh God. God, the father, says to the son, you're thrown, oh God. The father addresses the son as, oh God. But it's the point with regard to our text here is the kingdom of heaven is a kingdom of righteousness. One other thing about the kingdom of heaven, very salutary. I do not enjoy speaking about these things that are salutary, but it's part of the truth. It's part of the truth. Some people think that they are in the kingdom of heaven and they're not. Matthew chapter seven, verse 21. Well, the next page, the next page, chapter seven, verse 20, not everyone who says to me, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven. But the one who does the will of my father who is in heaven on that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name? Then will I, do you clear to them? I never knew you. Depart from me, you workers of iniquity or workers of lawlessness. Isn't it salutary? The delusion that you're in his kingdom, that you're not going to continue until the day of judgment. That's serious. Note also that these people got it wrong because they thought you go in by what you did because you did things that were good enough. Lord, did we not do this? Did we not do that? Did we not do the next thing? Will you grasp this? You cannot get into the kingdom of heaven by doing things good enough. And the last thing I'll say before we change the subject, salutary again. Note what Jesus calls these people. Does he say, oh, poor souls, they were mistaken. They made an error of judgment. Is that what he says about them? Will you note what he says about

them? Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. Please don't get it wrong about entering the kingdom of heaven. You cannot enter it by being good enough. You have to have a righteousness that exceeds the standards of the scribes and Pharisees, 248 regulations and 365 prohibitions.

So how do we get in? What kind of righteousness do we need to get into the kingdom of heaven?

Well if the scribes and the Pharisees had meticulous standards and they failed them, how possible for you and me? Well, there's only one answer. There's only one answer. We can get to heaven only by being in Christ Jesus. Having Christ Jesus' righteousness. You see, he came, verse 17, he came to keep the law on our behalf, verse 17, doesn't he say that? Do not think that I have come to abolish the law. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

Now listen, was Jesus not keeping the law when he was in heaven? Was Jesus not perfect? Had he not got perfect righteousness when he was in heaven? Of course he had. So why did he have to come down to earth and work righteousness? He had it in heaven. Could he not just have sent some down to a few of us? No, no, no. That righteousness, that absolutely perfect righteousness which Christ had in heaven, was non-transferable to humans. Non-transferable to humans. But the righteousness which he worked out on earth was worked out specifically for the purpose of transferring to human beings that just weren't good enough. Just aren't good enough. You see, if you compare our account with God like a balance sheet, if you young ones are doing business studies and going in for accountancy, if we compare our account with God, Christ's death on the cross paid God for our negative value. We have sinned, therefore we are in God's debt and someone's to pay for our sins and we can't pay for our own sins. Not if we're going to heaven. Oh, we won't. If we miss out on heaven, we'll pay for our own sins forever and ever. But Christ paid the sins of all who believe in

[19 : 09] Him. But His death only paid for the debt owed by sin. Christ's debt brought our account with God up to the all square level. But you see, that's not enough. It's to exceed being all square with God. We have to have righteousness that satisfies the standard, the absolute perfection, the standard of heaven. We can't do that because the Bible tells us elsewhere, our all righteousnesses are as filthy rags. What a mess we've made of ourselves. We human beings. What a mess we've made ourselves. We try to be good. We try to do works of righteousness and the Bible tells us, hey, wait a minute, you're increasing your debt because your righteousnesses are as filthy rags. And every time you try to be better, every time you try to be good, you're increasing your debt to God. So Christ

Jesus came into the world to save sinners by dying on the cross to pay for the debt their sins owed to God and for producing a righteousness which He can give to you quite quickly, immediately in fact, through faith and that righteousness which He has and can give to you is absolutely perfect. Absolutely perfect.

So here's the Gospel. Jesus in the Gospel comes to you and me and says, you give me your sins. You confess your sins to me and I in exchange will give you my absolutely perfect righteousness and it's yours for keeps, for free. How's that for an exchange?

How's that for a swap? You give Christ your sins and He will give you His perfect righteousness for nothing, for keeps. That's the Gospel. I can't make it any simpler. This righteousness of Christ's. It will never be abolished or broken down or lost. I say 51 verse 6, the proper prediction of Christ's righteousness. But the end of verse 6 and I say of 51, but my salvation will be forever and my righteousness will never be, it can be translated as me, it can be translated abolished, it can be translated broken, never be broken. The quality stands the stringent test of the Godhead. The one that said the 248 regulations and 365 Pro-Ebitions is just not good enough. Christ's is absolutely perfect and you can have it for nothing for keeps. That's the Gospel. It reaches Heaven's height. That's the height of it. It reaches the standard of Heaven. Height, breadth, depth, length, the breadth. You know there's a voice that has a verse that almost blighted me when

I was a child. It's in James. Whoever keeps the whole law of God and yet offend in one point. You can keep the whole law of God and offend in one point. The whole system of law keeping fields. That's why the scribes and Pharisees righteousness wasn't good enough.

[24 : 04] That's why my righteousness is not good enough. And may I say that's why your righteousness is just not good enough. Christ's righteousness, it reaches Heaven's height. It is as broad as every point of every law. It's not as if we break one commandment. It's as if we break one point, one aspect of one law. The whole system's lost. But Christ's righteousness, height, depth, breadth, length to all eternity, forever and ever. His righteousness can never be invoked. And remember, His righteousness is designed specifically for transferring to people that cannot keep the standard themselves. No angel who sins can get this righteousness.

It's specifically designed for human beings alone. But there are only two kinds of human beings that can get it. The first qualification is you must be a sinner. You must be incapable of producing righteousness after God's standard. So we're all qualified aren't we? We're all qualified. Second type of person it's produced for is that sinner who just cannot keep God's standards but trusts Christ for his. That person who believes Christ when he says, you confess your sins to me and I'll give you my righteousness for free, for keeps. Are you qualified? Are you prepared to do that? Are you prepared to take the chance? What's the chance? Come on. What an offer. What a gospel. Jesus says, look, just come to me. Just depend on me. Just depend on me. Do you know something else he says about this righteousness? It's wonderful. I say 46 verse 13. I bring my righteousness near. Very near. Very near. I bring my righteousness near. You know, Paul was preaching once on Mars Hill. The Areopagus preaching there to the Stoics and the philosophers of the day and he said to them verse 27. He said to them these idolaters, the world worshipping pig and gods and he said to them he is actually not far from each one of us. If he could say that to pagan philosophers in Christ's name

I can say to you tonight he's not far from you. I bring near my righteousness he says.

And so I want to close by asking the question, how near? How can I get hold of his righteousness?

Well you cannot get hold of his righteousness alone. You get his righteousness by getting him, by getting Christ, by getting Christ. Get hold of Christ. What's offered to us in the gospel is Christ. His righteousness is just one of the benefits. There are other benefits. His love, his power, his glory. They're all yours. But you've got to get his righteousness first and you can only get it by getting him. And he says come. Come near me. Come near me. You know I'm an identical twin. And I was seeking the Lord for many years and the devil makes an awful mess of you at times. And I remember hearing a sermon on Jacob and

[29 : 47] Esau, twins. And somebody or another the devil whispered to me, you know of course the Bible tells you that if you're a twin, only one of you can get a heaven. And I thought, I thought my brother was supposed to be a Christian then. He says you can't care. He both can't care. Just why? Why are you messing with me? Why are you fooling with me? And do you know why? Because I was in the car at the time. And in the back seat, this is almost unbelievable, I was a pair of twins. I thought you were both Christians. And yet the devil could blind me from that fact and give me a horrible journey back to Inverness. Saying there's only one of you can get in and I think your brother's got it. What a mess. What a fool he could make of us. And when I spoke to that person afterwards, I asked how he converted. And they told me.

And they said, you know, their father was a minister. He was a missionary and he was also a minister. And he said, he preached, I can't remember what the text was, but he said, you have no idea how near Christ is to you. He said, at one point he said, there is not even air between you and Christ. He's that close. He's that near. There's not even air between you and Christ. And that's the night they were converted through their father's hands. I just want to say that he is not far from you. He's not far from you. But they've got to embrace him. You've got to take him. You've got to love him. You've got to cling to him. There's a little poem I used to hear and it helped me greatly and made it help you. If you, the least desire now have to be redeemed by me, then it must be the Holy

One that gave that desire to thee. Do you desire Christ? Do you want him? Do you want his righteousness? If you, the least desire now have to be redeemed by me, then it must be the Holy One that gave that desire to thee. Embrace Christ. He's here. He's in the room. But you've got to put out your arms and you've got to love him and you've got to make God the Holy Spirit. Make his word, his truth, a fixture to every one of us. Let's bow our heads. Our Father in heaven, please take the things of Christ and make them ours here tonight. Lord, we pray for your Holy Spirit. May none resist him. May none quench him. May none breathe him. May we embrace your Son in the gospel. Hear us in mercy. Answer us in peace as we pray only in Jesus' name. Amen.