

Lessons From the Pharisees

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[0 : 00] Great message. Too disappointed.

If you are, you can see Randy, he'll give you a refund after the service. He kept saying mystery speaker, and I thought he should announce special guest speaker. Not special like exceptional, but educational.

But I'm glad to be here. I am glad to be here. I'm glad that you guys are here. I want to just get through the preaching and then fellowship, honestly. I never thought I'd preach again, honestly. I'm just super glad to be here. That being said, did everyone pray for the service tonight? Is this on? If you did pray for the service, we'll enjoy ourselves.

If you didn't... You've got to pray for the service. You know, we don't get enough Christianity in our lives, especially how much of the world we get with media and cell phones and technology and all of that.

[1 : 11] We can stay out of touch with reality. And we don't get a lot of God and church in our lives. Not like we should, I don't think. So the little that we get, we want to make the most of it. And praying for the service helps.

It does help. I remember Pastor Dave was here. We had Brother Mark coming in. And it seemed like two, three months before the service, he was saying, pray for revival. Pray for revival.

And usually when he'll say something like that or anyone asks for prayer, I just pray in my pew to make sure that I do it in case I forget later. But I remember that year specifically, he was saying it a lot.

Pray for revival. Pray for revival. And it stuck. And I was praying for revival frequently. And I'm sure most people were because I'm not unique in any way. And when Mark got here, Brother Mark got here, he preached that message.

What was it? Carrying the mantle or passing the mantle. And I'd never seen God move like that on a service ever before that or ever since then. And we're a pretty, you know, quiet church.

[2 : 11] You know, we're not running the aisles and hooping and hollering like the Pentecostals. But that night, I mean, it was thick in here. And everybody was crying. You couldn't stay in your pew. Remember, we were grabbing shoes and laying them on the ground here and praying over them.

I'd never seen anything like it. Prayer helps. Prayer does help. Got to pray for the services. Before you read your Bible, pray.

Pray that the Lord has something for you. You know, it changes it. I know usually when I pray for something that's in line with the Lord's will, I get an answer to it. If I pray for something out of my Bible before I read it, I usually get something.

If I pray for an opportunity to witness to somebody, I get it. So I hope you prayed for the services tonight. The Bible says, let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering. And let us consider one another to provoke unto good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.

Amen. We don't want to forsake the assembling of ourselves together. So let's pray. Dear Lord, I thank you for the opportunity to be here. I just can't thank you enough, Lord.

[3 : 20] And Lord, I pray that you'd forgive me for my sins and for my shortcomings. And that you would set me aside and that you'd still be able to work through me tonight. Dear Lord, it's not for my glory in any way, but for your people.

They came here tonight. They're hoping to hear something from you. And I pray that they do. Bless the service, Lord. In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. All right. All right. So if you would, we'll go to our opening text.

It's Matthew 5, verse 20. The pastor's been going through Matthew, so a lot of my message is out of Matthew because it's been on my mind. And he just went through Matthew 23.

And I've got almost everything out of Matthew 23, but I swear I got it before he got there. It's not plagiarism. But maybe there's something in that.

You're hearing it twice in a row. Maybe the Lord wants you to get something out of it. I don't know. But Matthew 5, verse 20. When I get nervous, I can't find anything in my Bible.

[4 : 19] For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, I want to clear the air that this isn't a doctrinal statement about your salvation in any way.

Right? We know that we're saved by grace through faith, that not of yourselves, that a gift from God, lest any man should boast. Right? It's not of works, lest any man should boast. So this isn't, this isn't, I'm not, this verse that I'm pulling out isn't doctrinally about your salvation.

Just want to clear the air on that one. Right? Amen. But, Jesus said, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes of the Pharisees, you shall in no case enter the kingdom of heaven.

That being said, that there are some righteousness that we should be able to get from the Pharisees that we should look to exceed. There should be something there. So that's kind of what I want to look at.

And it's very basic. There's nothing deep. It's very practical. You know, I hope you didn't come here looking for something deep tonight. Nothing, I can't. Tonight, I can't explain how Bill Gates is creating the mark of the beast and how they're using those head thermometers to implant thoughts into your mind.

[5 : 33] That's for another night. Right? It's very simple, very basic. You know, maybe when I get some preaching under my belt, we'll go there. You know, but everyone seems to be looking for that nowadays.

But that's just not the type of Christianity you're going to survive on. Right? The Bible says, man shall not live by bread alone, but every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God. Amen. It's like food.

You know, I go out to eat with my wife every once in a while. When I do, I want to go to a steakhouse almost every single time. Amen. And when I get there, I go straight for the most expensive steak on the menu. I want the biggest, best steak they have.

But I can't eat that every night because I can't afford it. It costs too much. Right? So most of the time, it's just home cooking. And that's good.

And that's what Christianity is. It's just regular home cooking. The same meals your kids complain about, complaints included. Amen. Anyways, what is it?

[6 : 32] Jesus said, except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. What is this righteousness? All right, let's go to the, my first point is in Matthew 23, 14. Let's turn there.

I've practiced this a few times and it usually goes about a half hour. And I'm already two-thirds of the way done. So I think I just got to pause for effect a bunch of times.

Right? Do one of those. You wouldn't get it anyways. All right. Matthew 23, verse 14.

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. For ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer, and therefore you shall receive the greater damnation. Now, this verse is obviously covered in condemnation, as usual when Jesus is talking to the Pharisees.

But what we can see in the verse is that they were men of prayer. Now, the context isn't all that great, but that's to our benefit, right? We're looking to exceed their righteousness. And one of the things that they did is they prayed.

[7 : 39] Amen. I don't believe the average Christian has a deep, meaningful prayer life. Right? And I say the average Christian. If you do, thank God you're above average. Right?

But if you don't, there's something to be said there. Amen. And I understand it. I understand why. We live in America. Right? We live in a great country. Even if you're in the minority, it's still a great country.

We don't have any threat of enemy invasion on our soil. Right? We don't have any fear of missile strikes, striking our homes, our children's schools. The government hasn't sent the Gestapo to our doors yet.

I mean, unless you're unvaccinated, they might come. But in all reality, you know, it's not like European countries where we're close-bordered. We have this whole continent to ourselves. And with that, there's a lot of comforts that we can neglect.

Amen. And I say that because hard times can invoke meaningful prayer. Right? If you feel like you're going to die tonight, you're going to pray. Like, it's your last day on earth. Amen.

[8 : 41] Amen. Without any of those added stresses in our lives, you know, we can lose perspective on how dependent on God we should be.

How fragile our lives really are. You know? When it's a threat of something from the outside that's real, you take notice to it. But in reality, your life's fragile as it is.

Right? You can get in a car accident on the 405 at any time and die. You hear about it all the time. I have an app on my phone that dings every time something happens in the neighborhood.

Right? Citizen app. And almost every morning I wake up, two dead, car accident. You know? So it's constant. People are dying all around. Living in America.

And I say America because that's where I live. But I understand that this isn't the only first world country on the globe. I mean, maybe France and Germany and Norway are the same way. But living in a first world country in general, you have a lot of comforts.

[9 : 40] And in those comforts, you can lose perspective and get to a point where you're rich and you're increased with goods and you don't need anything. Amen? And you forget to pray. You forget to pray.

And that's one of the things that the Lord says we're in danger of, doesn't he? Yes, sir. Right? Turn, if you would, to Revelation 3. We'll take a look. Revelation 3, verse 14.

He says, Under the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, These things saith the Amen, the faithful, the true witness, the beginning of the creation of God. I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot.

I would thou work cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods and have needed nothing.

Right? That's where you get when you live in comforts. You don't pray to ask for anything because you don't feel you need anything. At least not from God. Amen? But when the Lord looks at us, he says, And knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked.

[10 : 53] And as a nation, we are wretched. Amen? It's amazing. And it's not just here in L.A. L.A. is the forefront of it. I think that we spearhead wretchedness and immorality.

But it's not just here. It's coming out of the Bible Belt. It's coming out of the South. You hear it in Atlanta. You hear it in Michigan. You hear it. It's Georgia. It's coming out of everywhere. It's a wicked nation.

Amen? It says miserable. Miserable. I think depression is one of the leading health concerns in the nation today, especially with kids. So many kids so depressed.

They're not praying, that's for sure. And they have no hope. They have no hope. It's sad. And poor. Spiritually poor.

Right? We may have all the money in the world, but spiritually we're bankrupt. And I say we in jest. I'm not saying you specifically. But if the shoe fits, many men wear it.

[12 : 02] They say you throw a rock down a dark alley and the dog that barks is the one that gets hit. So if you're already offended, I apologize. And blind, yeah, we can't see what our need is.

We don't want to. It's more than blind. We got rose-colored glasses on. We're not even looking for truth anymore. It's almost like people nowadays are purposely looking for something that is not true. I was talking with Gary before the service. You try to show someone something in real life like this just happened. Can you understand what I'm saying? And they won't even see it. They're completely unreasonable.

You can't reason with them. And naked. Naked. We are more than willing to expose our sin to the world and glad to do it.

Completely exposed. Amen. Kind of rabbit trailing. But the point of the thing is we need prayer.

Amen. We need prayer.

[13 : 05] And I don't necessarily mean that on your way to work, dear Lord, pray I have a good day today. Pray everything goes my way. Pray I hit the lottery prayer. Because I'm sure that as Christians we all do that all the time.

That's not exactly what I'm talking about. I'm talking about being on your knees and longing to make contact with the God of all creation. Amen. And trying to get contact with the Lord.

And just like anyone in the Bible you read that's come into contact with God, the first thing they do is they get on their face and say, woe is me for I am undone.

Amen. I think if you have a deep, meaningful prayer life, it just goes by default that you're going to be very repentant. I don't think you're going to get contact without it. I don't think you're going to come to God with all your sins and all your filth.

Prayer is one of the greatest exercises of your faith. If you believe it, truly believe it, you'll do it.

[14:08] And if you do it, truly believing in it, you'll get great results. Matthew 21, 22 says, All things whatsoever you ask in prayer, believing you shall receive.

James 5, 16 says, The effectual, fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. Amen. Do you believe that? Amen. Amen. Amen. Let's pray.

If you don't believe it, then that's a lack of faith on your part. All right. We'll move on. Point number two. Matthew 23, 15.

We move from Revelation. You can keep your place in Matthew because all the points are there. I actually have a page marker in there myself. Matthew 23, verse 15.

It says, Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte. And when he is made, you make him twofold, more the child of hell than yourselves.

[15:05] Again, covered in condemnation. Or should I say draped in deplorability? I like that. But what we see is that they were willing to compass land and sea to make one proselyte.

They were evangelical. Amen. They were willing to go out of their way to witness to just one person. Living in Los Angeles, all we really need to do is be willing to leave our comfort zone.

And I say that the average Christian isn't willing to even do that. Living in Los Angeles, nope, already said that. We have missionaries who compass land and sea to lead souls to Christ.

We've had a couple come in recently. They're willing to do it. They go over to other nations and witness and try to lead people to Christ. But currently in Los Angeles, there are 4 million people, roughly.

Probably more than that. 4 million registered people in Los Angeles. Probably 12 million unregistered. Right? That's half the population of Papua New Guinea.

[16:07] Los Angeles is home to Chinatown, Koreatown, Thai town, Filipino town, Little Tokyo, Little Armenia, shout out. Little Ethiopia, and even Little Bangladesh.

Right? It's the second, Los Angeles holds the second largest Jewish community in the United States. And South America is all around you.

There's no need to compass land and sea where we're at. You live on a mission field. Amen? I read that 95% of the citizens of Papua New Guinea identify themselves as Christian.

And I'm sure that's Christian, loosely speaking, Catholic, Mormon. They probably include all that under the Christian umbrella like most people try to. But 95%. I wonder what 95% of Angelenos identify as today.

They make up new identities every day. You can't even assume one without getting into trouble. Amen? I bet you could witness to one new person every single day for the rest of your life without ever having to leave Sylmar.

[17:10] With that being the situation that it is, why aren't we more evangelical? And I know the average Christian isn't. Unless we're all just too humble and we don't want to brag.

Amen? But rarely does a hand go up for pray for so-and-so who I witnessed to. Or pray for such-and-such got saved. You don't hear about it that much. Amen?

Amen? The church is half empty now. We do know that it is our job. Do we? It's definitely our job. It's God's will for your life. The Great Commission. You've heard that before. Mark 16, 15 says, Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. Amen?

Turn, if you would, to 2 Corinthians 5. We'll look at another one. Try to clear the air. In case you have any questions. 2 Corinthians 5.

[18:12] We'll pick it up in verse 18. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.

He's given it to us. To wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. And again he says, And hath committed unto us the world of reconciliation.

The word of reconciliation. Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ. Amen? That is your ministry. It's not just the ministry of those who are in the ministry. That's your ministry. If you're a saved human being, it is your duty to win the loss to Christ. Imagine you being witnessed to and being shown that you have a home in heaven through the blood of Jesus Christ. That you can become born again and have all your sins forgiven. And living under that comfort and living with that joy. And not feeling like you need to tell anyone else about it. That's again a lack of faith.

[19 : 15] Witnessing again is an exercise of your faith. I wonder how many Christians, followers of Christ, will get to heaven without ever reading their Bible all the way through or ever leading one soul to Christ.

That'd be crying shame. If you don't have time for it, then you're just far too entangled with the affairs of this world. Amen?

2 Timothy 2.4 says, No man that wareth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who has chosen him to be a good soldier. You can also flip that and say that no man, that any man who's entangled with the affairs of this life ain't warring.

Amen? Make no mistake about it. It is a war. The world and the devil, they want your mind and they want your soul. And they're doing a lot better job at it than we are.

The church today copies the world as if that's going to get you any further away from it by doing exactly what it does. You do what the world does, you attract the world.

[20 : 23] And that's what you're stuck with. Amen? We're supposed to be separate. You see the stickers, not of this world. All right? Let's move on.

Point number three. Back in Matthew. Matthew 23, verse 23. Matthew 23, verse 23.

Yep, I saved the best for last.

Tithing. Yes, sir. Now, I know what you're thinking. He just went from preaching to meddling. I'll keep it short. To tithe is just to give back one-tenth.

That's all it is. Right? It's primarily an Old Testament principle. And I think we follow that principle mainly for our sakes. Because the New Testament, Jesus was telling people, if that would be perfect, go and sell that thou hath and give it to the poor.

[21 : 37] And thou shalt have treasure in heaven. It says, and come and follow me. If you start reading in the book of Acts, they were selling everything and giving it to the church. Amen? I think we should be grateful that we're only asked for 10%.

Honestly, I have my own opinions about it. I will go through some of that right now. But tithing, again, is one of the same things as prayer and witnessing.

It's an exercise of your faith. If you have faith, you will do it. And you'll do it for your own sake. Not for anyone else's. Right? Proverbs 3, 9 says, Honor the Lord with thy substance and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.

So shall thy barns be filled with plenty and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. And we read two verses now on tithing, Matthew 23 and Proverbs 3. And you know what neither one of them mentioned?

Money. Neither one of them mentioned money. I know that's the first thing we think of when we hear about it is money. Shows where our mind is. But the fact is, you ought to be giving a whole lot more back to God than your filthy lucre.

[22 : 45] Amen. Pastor touched on it last week. He says, It's easier to write a check than it is to give of yourself. That's unfortunate. We're trying to write God off like a bill.

Jesus says in, Let's go real quick. Let's turn to 2 Corinthians 8, 5. He's talking about giving here. In verse 1, he says, More of our brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia, how that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded under the riches of their liberality.

For their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power, they were willing of themselves, praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

And in verse 5, it says, And this they did, not as we had hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord and to us by the will of God. Right? I think the Lord can do more with you giving yourself to him than you giving your money to him.

[23 : 59] Amen. I think you owe it to him, honestly. And I think he's good for it. Yeah. Come on. Luke 6, 33 says, Give and it shall be given unto you.

Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure ye meet, with all it shall be measured to you again. Do you believe any of that?

Do you believe the Lord's ability to provide and his ability to provide? Do you believe he's worth it? Amen. Amen. Tithing is an exercise of your faith. It shows where you're at.

Sometimes I wonder if we're only Christians because it feels good. It does feel good. It feels good to believe in the fact that you're serving the living God. It feels good to be clean and in church and pure and holy.

Trust me, I know. I lived on the other side where I was in the street and I was filthy dirty and I had no hope. And it was miserable. Miserable.

[25 : 01] Couldn't shake the miserableness. Being a Christian feels good, but sometimes I think that's the only reason. I wonder if that's the only reason why we are Christian. The average Christian isn't concerned with the biblical definition of what a Christian is or should be.

What if no church had something for your kids to do? What if no church had a cry room or a nursery or a teen group?

What if every single church was an hour away from your house? I bet it wouldn't be long before it wasn't even worth our time. Amen.

We need to keep it in perspective. It's about him. It's about his interests. It's about his will. And we're here for his pleasure. Everything we do should be done with him in mind.

Proverbs 3, verses 5 and 6 says, Trust in the Lord with all thine heart. We know this one. And lean not unto thine own understanding and all thy ways acknowledge him and he shall direct thy paths. All thy ways. Amen.

[26 : 12] And again, I can't say it enough. He's good for it and he's worth it. Let's go to Luke 12. Luke 12. Luke 12. This is a verse that the Lord used to confirm some questions that I had.

You know, you pray and you want an answer from God directly. I seriously wanted a verbal answer from God. I mean, I really did and you know, you're not going to get that.

We live by faith and all of that. But the Lord gave me this. Amen. And it more than answered any questions I had. Luke 12. We'll pick it up in 22.

And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, neither for the body, what you shall put on. For the life is more than meat and the body is more than raiment.

Consider the ravens for they neither sow nor reap, which neither have storehouse nor barn. And God feedeth them, how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you, with taking thought, can add to his stature one cubit?

[27 : 26] If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies, how they grow. They toil not, they spin not. And yet I say unto you that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

If then God so clothed the grass, which is today in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind.

For all these things do the nations of the world seek after. And your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God, and all of these things shall be added unto you.

Do you believe that? Do you believe that? Amen? Understand this, God will not be in debt to any of you. No matter how much of yourselves you give, no matter how much money you give, when you get to heaven, you can trust that it will be worth it all.

Let's go to Malachi. We're almost done. A couple pages back. Malachi 3, verse 8.

[28 : 46] It says, Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse.

Oh no, it says, Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house.

And prove me now, herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, If I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

