

Righteousness - the Real and the False

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[0:00] Matthew chapter 5, we're going to read verse 20 and then we're going to Matthew 23. I want to talk about the subject of righteousness and especially about a false kind of righteousness.

! There's real and there's false. True righteousness and false righteousness. And you could say really that false righteousness is hypocrisy. Here's a picture of Ananias and Sapphira. They pretended to be giving to God but they lied to the Holy Spirit.

And they suffered the result of God's punishment, God's judgment upon them because they were really phonies. They were fake. They were lying.

And we know that as a Christian we must tell the truth and we mustn't pretend. That's the real thing. The real deal. And that's what we're talking about. It's about real righteousness. True righteousness.

In Matthew 5 and verse 20 the Lord Jesus is speaking. Matthew 5 verse 20 he says, For I say unto you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

[1:20] Now that's a bit puzzling in a way isn't it? Because the Pharisees, they were very righteous. They had everything just so. They went by the book. They did everything that the Jewish teachers taught them to do in addition to what the Bible said.

And listen now. They made a pretense that they were following God's word by doing things that people could see. But the Lord Jesus could see with his x-ray vision.

The Lord Jesus could see into their heart and see where they were really at on the inside. So we're going to talk about exceeding righteousness. And we see what the Lord Jesus challenged the Pharisees about.

And in contrast to that what he encourages us to seek and to be. And the first one we see, as I say, the Pharisees. The Pharisees were the people that the Lord Jesus addressed in Matthew 23.

The whole chapter really. But we're going to look at just some segments of it in Matthew 23. And what the Lord Jesus challenged them about. And from verse 8.

[2:32] The Lord Jesus says to the Pharisees. He says, In the Christian church, in God's family.

The believers, the born again Christians who are God's people. We're all brothers and sisters. I've got some people that are a lot older than me who are my brothers in Christ.

Amen. And sisters too. And that's a wonderful thing. We're God's family. We're brothers and sisters together. That's what the Lord Jesus says here. In verse 8 he says, You are all brethren.

Isn't that wonderful? We're all on a level pegging. There's no one who's above another. We're all family. We're brothers and sisters in Christ. And we don't go, like in some churches, they call certain people father.

The Bible specifically says not to call anyone father. So really we're brothers and sisters. It's brother Ian. It's brother Andrew. Sister Gwenda. You know, we're God's people.

[3:33] We're brothers and sisters together. No one is above another. And yet with the Pharisees, they used to walk around and they used to like people saying, Rabbi, Rabbi, teacher, teacher.

And it says in verse 9, The Lord Jesus says no. He says, Call no man your father upon the earth. For one is your father, which is in heaven.

Our heavenly father. And neither be ye called masters, for one is your master, even Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.

And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased. And he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. The Lord Jesus says the greatest one is what? The one who is your servant.

The one who is your servant. And he says that the one who is going to exalt himself and make a big shot of himself. That one who is going to exalt himself. The Lord Jesus says he's going to be abased. He's going to be humbled.

[4:30] But he says that the one who humbles himself. The one who humbles himself is going to be lifted up and exalted. So Christ is against legalism. He's against that kind of false kind of righteousness.

And he gives us some things in these scriptures that we are to guard ourselves against. To watch out that we don't have these things. And one of them is pride. And you could think of pride as being like this bird.

The peacock. They strut around like a peacock. That reminds us of pride. And the Lord Jesus says to us, Don't walk around with your nose up in the air. And think that you're above other people. You know, holier than thou. That kind of pride thing. That is thinking that you're above other people. Because really we're all brothers and sisters. The Lord Jesus says not to have pride.

We're not to walk around like a peacock. We're meant to be humble. Here they were parading. Strutting around. You know they used to dress up in special robes. And have little tassels.

[5:32] And phylacteries like Bible verses on them. And they used to parade around in a prideful way. But the Lord Jesus says instead to what?

To be a servant. To be one who's a servant. And being his servant. Being a servant of the Lord. Means serving others. Are we willing to be a servant?

People used to work as servants in people's houses. And they still do in many countries. In many places of the world today. And a servant. Means someone who's willing to do the lowly work.

The lowly task. You know what could it be? Could be you know cleaning. Could be tidying up.

Looking after things. Or running errands. For the master of the house.

But really it's God using you. As his vessel. To work through you. To help others through you. To do his own work through you. And having the mindset of a servant.

[6:32] Means being willing. Like this example of servants of old time. Of being willing to run his errands. To run the errands of our Lord. To serve him. And when the servants.

Of the household. Would hear a certain noise. They used to live in the sound of the bell. And when the master shook the bell.

Rang the bell. That was the sign for the servants to come. And to serve. To come and to obey. And to find what the new task. Of the master of the house was going to be.

And likewise too. We should be constantly. At the master's beck and call. If you're a Christian. A servant of the Lord.

A minister. A servant. That's what every Christian should be. Every born again believer. Should be a servant. Of the Lord. We are constantly at his service.

[7:30] We don't clock off. We're constantly on call. 24 hours a day. Seven days a week. We don't clock off. It's a bit like. I know in the army. They're like that. Aren't they?

They don't have. An eight hour day in the army. They could be called up at any time. By the commanding officer. To report for duty. And they don't get paid overtime for it. Do they lan?

No. No. They just have to be there. A soldier doesn't work a seven and a half. Or eight hour day.

They are full time. On full time service. And it's like that too. Kids.

People tonight. Church tonight. As a Christian soldier. As a Christian soldier. As a Christian servant. As a born again believer in Christ. You've got a full time job.

You're in full time ministry. You're in full time service of the Lord. And we should always live with the master. Like the servants did. They lived in the same house.

[8:25] In the same quarters. And we need to be at his beck and call. Listening for that call. Listening for that bell. Bell. Listening for that call to work. To serve. And be ready to do the menial tasks.

The things that others may not want to do. Being his servant means serving others. And in Luke 17 verse 10. The Lord Jesus told a story of some servants.

And I'll just flick there. In Luke 17. So likewise ye. When ye shall have done all those things which I commanded you. Say we are unprofitable servants.

We have done that which was our duty to do. As a born again believer who is a servant of the Lord. We have got a duty to do. We've got a job to do. We've got a task to do.

In the Bible it tells you. That you are to go and tell others about the Saviour. To be his witness. The Bible says that you are to serve him. To love him. To follow him. The Lord Jesus gave a picture there.

[9:25] Of some servants who were faithful. And they just said. We are just unprofitable servants. We are just ordinary servants. We are just unworthy. We are just servants. That's how God wants us to be.

Not thinking that because we have got a job to do for the Lord. Whatever it might be. That we are somehow special. Or that we somehow should be patted on the back for it. Because we are just servants.

We are just his ordinary servants. So as much as it is nice to have a little bit of praise from others down here below. The Bible says that our praise is not from people on earth.

Our praise is yet to come. And so you might do things for the Lord. That you might not get any recognition for. You know. It might be things that. Well you are working really hard. And you are doing it from your heart to the Lord.

And maybe nobody says. Well thanks for doing that. Or you know. I really appreciate you taking the time to do that. Or well you do such a good job of this or that. Really we are not to look for that.

[10:24] We are not to look for man's praise. The praise that we want is when we meet our Saviour isn't it? When we see his face. And that is the wonderful truth of being a servant. We are just servants. To serve the Lord is a great privilege.

Whether it is just simple things. Just maybe everyday simple things around the place. At church. That you know. If it doesn't get done. People will really miss it.

You know. Maybe putting the heaters on. You know. You know. That is just simple things. Like giving a hymn book out. Like the Pope did tonight. That is being God's servant. Well done.

You know. It is a good thing to do. God sees that. And God honours that. Now the Lord Jesus himself was the great picture of a wonderful servant. In John 13. It says there as the disciples were gathered.

That the Lord Jesus took a bowl. And he girded himself. He clothed himself with a towel. And he washed the disciples feet. Now. At that time. The custom was for the servant of the house.

[11:24] To wash the feet of the guests. Of the house. As they came in. They had open sandals. And the floors were dirt. And their feet used to get very dirty. And this was a very menial.

A very lowly. A dirty job. A job that. You know. Nobody would be rushing to do that. Washing people's feet. That could have been smelly or dirty. Would have been something unpleasant. Maybe uncomfortable. To do that. To wash someone's feet. And yet. The Lord Jesus set the example for us. By doing that. Which nobody else bothered to do.

That which nobody else was humble enough to do. The Lord Jesus humbled himself like that. You know. The Bible says. The Lord Jesus. And took upon him. The form of a servant. And he was made in the likeness.

Of human flesh. For you and for me. That's why he cares so much. And what a great servant. What a great picture. And here we see picture. How he washed the disciples feet.

[12:21] And as a Christian. The Christian. The born again believer. You have changed your master. In Romans 6 verse 17. We've changed masters. It says there.

But God be thanked that you were. The servants of sin. Okay. Once we were. A servant of sin. Sin was our slave master.

But. You have obeyed from the heart. The form of doctrine. The teaching. Which was delivered you. And being then made free from sin. You became the servants of righteousness.

God broke the chains of sin. At Calvary's cross. The Lord Jesus. When he died on the cross. He took our sin. He paid for it there. And he broke it. The Lord Jesus took our sin.

And paid for it. And we're no longer held and chained by it. We're no longer the servants of sin. But we're the servants of righteousness. And it's not that we're a servant of righteousness. In a slavish.

[13:18] Uncomfortable. Unpleasant thing. But we want to serve God in righteousness. We want to serve the Lord. Because out of love. And joy. Think about this Bible servant.

A little boy. Came to the Lord Jesus. And he had his lunch. It was just five loaves. And two fishes. And yet the Lord Jesus fed a multitude. Of people with that little boy's lunch. Now that little boy. Could have been selfish with his lunch. Here he was in a big crowd. And lots of hungry people about. On this mountainside. As the Lord Jesus had just delivered. The Sermon on the Mount. He just preached to the multitudes. This little boy could have kept that little lunch. In his little coat. And not shared it with others. But instead he gave it to the Lord Jesus. He shared his lunch. That little bit that he had. And the Lord Jesus used that little bit. That the boy had. To spread and share. And multiply supernaturally. So that everybody had a good feed.

[14:17] And there's leftovers too. And there's a poem about this. It says. God uses what you have. To fill a need. Which you never could have filled. God uses you.

Where you are. To take you. Where you never could have gone. God uses what you can do. To accomplish what. You never could have done. And God uses you.

Who you are. To let you become. Who you never could have been. The Lord Jesus can use you. If you just put your life in his hands. Just like the little boy. Put the five loaves and two fishes.

In the Lord Jesus' hands. And that's about being a servant. Being a servant. The Lord Jesus went on in this passage. In Matthew 23. And verse 14. And he talks about.

How the Pharisees. Not only did they walk around in pride. And arrogance. And arrogance. They also. Made a big show. About showy kinds of prayers. In public.

[15:15] Throwing around their money. In a showy way. In public. In various things that they did. We see this here in verse 14. The Lord Jesus says.

Woe again. Woe unto you. Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites. For you devour widows houses. And for a pretense. Make long prayer. Therefore you shall receive. The greater damnation.

The Lord Jesus says. That these people. These hypocrites. They are talking about. Praying about things. And praying for people maybe. But they are uncaring about the needs. So that they are. Making this long prayer. But the widows were not. Being looked after. Instead. The Lord Jesus talks about. These three things. He talks about money.

The Lord Jesus. Says to them. Woe unto you. Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites. Verse 15. For you come for sea and land. To make one proselyte. And when he is made.

[16:11] You make him twofold more. The child of hell. Than yourselves. Verse 23. It says. Woe unto you. Scribes and Pharisees. Hypocrites. For you pay tithe. Of mint and anise. And cummin.

And have omitted the weight. In matters of the Lord. Judgment. Mercy and faith. These you ought to have done. And not to leave the other undone. The Lord Jesus talks about. How they have been very showy.

With their giving. Giving. Also in their praying. In Matthew 6. It talks about their giving. From verse 1. Matthew 6 verse 5. It talks about their praying. Matthew 6 verse 17.

It talks about their fasting. And the Lord Jesus. Actually condemned them. For these things. Because they were doing it. To be seen of men. They were doing it. All for show. What are we doing things for? When we do things for the Lord.

When we do things for the Lord. Listen. When we do things for the Lord Jesus. It's not to impress other people. Or to make us look good. It's not for men's applause and glory. It's to please the Lord.

[17:09] Isn't it? It's to bless him. And to honour him. Now some people. They are what you would call. Super spiritual. Super spiritual. They are all bragging on. About all the things that they are doing for God.

Now some people. They blab blab blab. They use all the Christianese. The Christian speak. Bragging and boastful. Seeking praise from other people. But how do they live.

When no one's watching. How do they live. When nobody's looking. What do they get up to? Our personal walk with the Lord. Is what really matters. And what we are really like.

What is our character really like. Is in the secret place. In the home. In the workplace. In the community. In our recreation. And we will show it. By what we choose to read.

What we choose to watch. In how we use our time. Treasure. And talents. The in secret. Kind of giving. And praying. And faithfulness. That God will reward.

[18:07] And just. Lastly. The last section. Is about the inside of you. God's interested on the inside. He goes on. Woe unto you. Scribes. The Pharisees.

For you might clean the outside. Of the cup. And of the platter. The plate. But within. They are full. Of extortion. And excess. God's interested on the inside.

Imagine it. Whoever does the washing up in your place. Probably the mum. Whoever does the washing up in your place. Just clean on the outside. Of all the cups. And left all the. All the dregs. And. And the. And the. And cup. And bowl. Wouldn't that be awful. You wouldn't want to eat out of that. Would you. And the Lord Jesus compares that. To the Pharisees. They are all clean on the outside of them.

They all look good on the outside. On the exterior. On the face that they projected to everybody else. But the Lord Jesus he says. Clean the inside. Of the cup. He talks about them as being like. Whited sepulchers. Like tombs. Here's a picture of.

[19:03] What many people. Believe. Was the. The garden tomb. The. The empty tomb. Of our saviour. We don't know for sure. Because it's not. Definitely. Being pinpointed.

To the garden tomb. The garden tomb. The. The empty tomb. Of our saviour. We don't know for sure. Because it's not. Definitely. Being pinpointed.

Being pinpointed. But we know that. For sure. The Lord Jesus's tomb. The place where they buried him. Where they put his body. Is empty now. Because he's risen from the dead. He's alive.

He rose from the dead. Three days later. And here's a picture of a tomb. A sepulchre. The places where they put the bodies. Was all white. On the outside. So it's nice and brilliant. And dazzling.

And look beautiful. But inside. Within. It was full. Of dead men's bones. And the Lord Jesus. Compares the Pharisees. To that. To being like a tomb. That's full of dead men's bones.

[19:59] Looked like. A nice. White place on the outside. But it was full of dead men's bones. Now. I'm going to tell you a story. About a man. He made free use of Christian vocabulary.

He talked about the blessing of the almighty. And the Christian confessions. Which would become the pillars of the new government. He assumed the earnestness of a man weighed down. By historic responsibility. He handed out pious stories.

To the press. Especially the church papers. You know. He was talking about God. He was talking about faith. Religion. That he had. He showed his tattered bible. Wow.

It looked like he read his bible. It had an old bible there. And he declared that he drew strength. For his great work. From it. As scores of pious people. Scores of religious people. Welcomed him.

As a man. Sent from God. Indeed. Adolf Hitler. Was a master. Of outward religiosity. With no inward reality. Here he is. With some bishop. He was a Catholic.

[20:55] He was a very good Catholic. He was a very faithful Catholic. But he wasn't a Christian. He certainly wasn't a believer. We would know. A born again Christian. A born again believer. And the Lord Jesus. Condemned. He was a very faithful Catholic.

But he wasn't a Christian. He certainly wasn't a believer. We would know. A born again Christian. A born again believer. And the Lord Jesus. Condemns people. To put on a show. Of religiosity.

When it's just a front. It's a veneer. It's not real. It's not heart deep. Home deep. And it says that. There's blindness and death. There's uncleanness. There's sin there. What is the Lord Jesus

interested in?

He's interested in the heart. The Lord Jesus is interested in your heart. In the very real you. And he searches the heart. The Bible says. How is your heart's condition?

What is it like? On the inside. We know that surgeons today. Can take a camera. And put it inside your body. And look around inside your body. And find faults.

[21:51] And fix things. And the Lord Jesus. In a sense can look inside. Your spiritual heart. That you are. And he can tell whether you're a Christian or not. Sometimes.

People tonight. You might trick me. You know. There's probably. I'm sure there's some that have tricked me in the past. That said there were Christians. That were not really true Christians. And only God knows. And you know. If you've trusted him. That you belong to him. And that you have eternal life. By putting your trust in him.

Don't be a pretend Christian. Be a real one. Does he dwell in your heart by faith? What makes you tick? What are you hiding in your heart? Do you just want it to appear spiritual?

Just want it to appear like you're a Christian? Put on the show. Try to impress. Go through the motions. Put on the appearances. Or is it real? Are you really a Christian?

[22:46] It's just a matter of surrendering your life to him. And asking him to take over. And to come and take up residence in your heart. Instead of just being about pretending that you're a Christian.

And doing all the right things. And saying all the right things. And still not being right with God in your heart. Is there an idol in your heart that you haven't surrendered?

What's motivating you? We can all ask that question personally. Think as I've pictured it before. There's like a throne in your heart. That sometimes before you're a Christian.

Self lives there. As the king. As the master of your life. And when you become a Christian. You abdicate. You leave the throne. And Christ comes and resides.

As the king. As your king. As your saviour. And becomes the one who takes that throne of your heart. The Bible talks about the hidden man of the heart. God knows what you're hiding in your heart.

[23:42] Whether Christ is alive in you. Whether you're saved. Whether you're a believer tonight. Or whether you're not yet. You haven't made that step personally yet.

So friends tonight. I want to urge everyone. Have you truly bowed the knee? Have you truly surrendered all? And consider the throne of your heart. Who sits there tonight?

The Bible says Luke 17 verse 21. The kingdom of God is within you. Christ's very kingdom. The king of the universe. The king of glory. Can reside within your life.

And give you such victory. And assurance of eternal life. If you'll just trust him. Just to summarise just quickly now. The things that I've been talking about.

Now. We've been talking about. What. The Lord Jesus says. To not be. He says. Our righteousness should exceed.

[24:38] It should go above and beyond. The righteousness of the Pharisees. Now they had the outward. To pretend. But the Lord Jesus says. We can have the inward. The real. Three things.

To look out. And avoid. Not to put yourself above other people. The Pharisees did that. Not to have pride. Like the Pharisees did. Putting other people down.

And not to have. Putting on a show. You know some. They go through the motions. Pretend to be a Christian. It's all show. And when you see them. In their real life.

It's not real. It's not genuine. But instead of all those things. There's three things. We can look for. Instead of having that position. To take the position. That the Lord Jesus would take.

To take that humble place. The place of a servant. As the Lord Jesus did. When he washed. The disciples feet. To humble ourselves. And to take. That place of service.

[25:36] Secondly. The Lord Jesus commends. What you do in secret. He says. In contrast to the Pharisees. That did everything in public. Everything to be like a peacock.

Parading around. But God looks at the secret life of you. Whether it's secret prayer. Secret fasting. Secret giving. The secret faithfulness. That you may not get any praise for.

From other people around about you. God's interested in who you are. In secret. When no one's watching. The Bible commends. For example. To pray. When you go into your closet.

To pray. When no one's looking. To pray in secret. To your father. Who will see you in secret. And he will reward you openly. So. I know that I need to pray a lot more privately.

But we all can be encouraged to pray more privately. To study the Bible more privately. To spend time with the Lord more privately. To spend time with the Lord more privately. And in our giving. In our fasting.

[26:33] And whatever it might be. But in all of these areas of our life. We might consider who we are in the secret place. And lastly. Especially. On the inside of us. God's interested on the inside of us.

The Pharisees had everything right on the outside. Everything that people could see. But the Lord Jesus. And I say. With his x-ray vision. He can see where you are at tonight. Whether you are his or not.

Whether you are saved. Or whether you are not saved. And that's the most important of all. Whether you know the Lord Jesus on the inside. The Lord Jesus on the inside.