

Trinity VI

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[0 : 00] Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. We're from this morning's holy gospel in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

It would be wise for us to not dismiss the statement of our Lord's. It is directed to his disciples. It is directed to you and to me.

Jesus says that our righteousness must surpass that of the religious leaders of his day. If it does not, we will not be given entry into his kingdom.

How can we know if our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees? What measure is Jesus using? The 23rd chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel gives us a good indication.

Seven times in that chapter, Jesus calls out the scribes and Pharisees for being hypocrites. Seven times, he calls them out for acting one way in public and another way in private, Jesus says they were hypocrites for acting religious and praying their prayers in public, but only to show off how holy they were.

[1 : 34] They were hypocrites for observing every jot and tittle of their religion, but then showed no mercy towards the failures of others. Jesus says their hypocrisy made them blind guides, leading others away from God instead of to him.

Jesus puts this standard before us, his disciples, and says our righteousness must exceed theirs. If not, we will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

You and I cannot be hypocritical with our faith or with our Christian lives. The word hypocrite in this text is hypocrites.

These were masks worn by actors in a play used to portray characters. Of course, the actors didn't actually become the character they were portraying.

They only acted like that character. Once the play was over, they took off their masks and went back to being their true selves. Jesus says we cannot be that way in our Christian lives.

[2 : 46] We cannot put on a mask and merely act like Christians. Say here at church or when we are around Christian friends, but then take it off when we leave.

We cannot put on a mask when we are with family and then take it off when we step off that stage and go into our so-called private lives. We cannot separate the sacred from the secular.

For disciples of Jesus, all of life is sacred and every place is holy ground. Our lives must declare the same truth, whether in church, with family, at work, at the grocery store, hanging out with the guys or the girls, or in private.

How we are known by God is how we must be known by men. Anything less than this makes us spiritual hypocrites.

If we act all pious here at church, but then rarely, if ever, pray when we are at home. If we give great attention to the scriptures in mass, but never open them when we are by ourselves.

[3 : 59] If we tithe, but never give of our time to serve. If we rail against all the ungodliness in society, but then drink in what is being spewed out by Hollywood, the networks, sports leagues, and various streaming services.

If we are more worried about our financial investments, than investment we make into our own souls. If we speak pointedly about the moral decay of society, but never weep for those who are caught up in it.

If we rail against the sodomy of those people, but are silent about the heterosexual sins of our own people, the people that we know. If evangelism means converting people to our political opinions, and now bringing people to Christ by the gospel and the Catholic faith.

I can go on, but I think the point has been made. Being a disciple of Jesus Christ means we do not divide life into sacred and secular, public and private.

It means even our downtime honors God and is used to restore us so we can serve him by serving his people. It means not being timid about declaring the teachings of Jesus Christ in his church, no matter the circumstance or place.

[5 : 26] Ephesians 5.11 states, have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. Yet as we do this, we have to use a deaf touch.

We have to recognize who we're talking to. We don't want to destroy the person by trying to extract the sinfulness. It means always being ready to give answers to those who ask about the hope in Christ we have within us.

Now no doubt this is challenging. Even innocuous activities today are peppered with the lies of hell. There is hardly a place we can go or a thing we can watch where the agendas of cultural Marxism and progressivism aren't thrown into our face. We need to remain engaged in the world without succumbing to it.

We need to be in the public square living for Christ and speaking the truth in love without watering it down or compromising with the spirit of the age.

[6 : 30] We must be true about our faith and not be hypocritical. So how are we to do what our Lord is calling us to do?

How do we not become hypocrites? First, we must embrace and live the truth that we do not possess any righteousness of our own. The righteousness we have is not inherent in our nature nor something we create with our own good works.

Our righteousness is the righteousness of Christ imparted to us in holy baptism. Today's epistle, Romans 6, 3 and 4 states, Do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death?

That just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. In baptism, we are buried and resurrected with Christ.

We are identified now with him. We are not our own. We are bought with a price. We are to honor him with all of our lives. And in that gracious act, the righteousness of Christ is infused into our soul.

[7 : 51] 1 Corinthians chapter 1, 30 and 31 declares, But of God you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.

That as it is written, he who glories, let him glory in the Lord. And knowing the truth that Christ himself is our righteousness, we find there is no room for his pharisaical pride or hypocrisy in our lives.

We know our calling is to take hold of what we have been given in Christ and live it out by faith. In knowing this, we will humbly strive to live the teachings of Jesus, all of Scripture, admonishing the sinful, yes, but only after and always amending our own lives first, and then speaking that truth in love and with compassion for the souls tangled up and bound in all that's going on, provoked by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

Living this truth frees us to live a life of faithfulness, honesty, and transparency, knowing we too are sinners whose source of righteousness is not the self-righteousness of the cancel culture or religious self-righteousness, but the Lord our righteousness as Jeremiah 23, 6 declares.

So my brothers and sisters, we must not dismiss our Lord's statement in this morning's gospel as not being for us. It is directed to all his disciples that is directed to you and to me.

[9 : 40] Jesus says, if our righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees because we are self-righteous or we are hypocritical, then we will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

And I'm going to follow it. I'm the Son of the Holy Ghost. Amen.