

**We are called to please God not perform religious gymnastics.
(Be Different in your Motives)**

Introduction:

“You can’t be a great leader unless you learn to be a great follower.”

“The road of closeness is often paved with conflict.”

“Don’t quote the policy. Serve the customer.”

“Suppose you spend your whole life making God apple pies and when you get to heaven you find out He likes cherry.”

This last one causes some anxiety in me. What if I found out that my entire life was simply a **religious performance**? That I really didn’t **please God**. That all my energy was merely a form of religious gymnastic and in the end, it wasn’t what God wanted.

This morning we come to one of the most critical passages in the Sermon. Structurally, a case could be made that the entire Sermon is a foil or contrast to what comes after these words. Potentially, I believe the words here could start off modern day Reformation for the ailing church if they really applied.

Thus far, we have talked about **OUR NATURE** in the Beatitudes. That has led us to **OUR CALLING** or our influence in the world as **Salt and Light**.

We now begin a discussion that will take us into the next several weeks about **HOW TO PLEASE God**. The **FOCUS** of pleasing God for the rest of chapter five will be **ON LOVING OTHERS**. The **MEANS** of loving them: **TRUE ADHERENCE TO THE LAW**.

Open your Bibles to Matthew 5 and let’s see how Jesus lays out this road for us to become people **WHO TRULY PLEASE GOD, NOT RELIGIOUS PERFORMERS**.

According to the Sermon, what is RIGHTEOUSNESS?

One is our text before us...

Matt. 5:20 *For (ground statement) I tell you that unless your RIGHTEOUSNESS surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

The word is “righteousness” is critical to anyone who chooses to follow Jesus down word the road less traveled. He uses it **five times** in Sermon of the Mount. Two of them we have already encountered.

Matt. 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for RIGHTEOUSNESS, for they will be filled.

Matt. 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of RIGHTEOUSNESS, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And two more are to come...

Matt. 6:1 “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of RIGHTEOUSNESS’ before men, to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matt. 6:33 But seek first his kingdom and his RIGHTEOUSNESS, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Whenever a speaker **repeats** a word or phrase, you can be sure that behind this word or phrase, is the main point or big idea of his or her message. **I believe RIGHTEOUSNESS is at the heart of Jesus’ Sermon of the Mount.”** Any possible **RELATIONSHIP** we may think we have with God hinges on this word. Ultimate freedom from a **DRY, FORMAL LIFE OF RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY** and lofty spiritual rhetoric lies within this word. **ETERNITY** itself rests at the heart of this word.

It is for this reason and more that we address this word this morning and that word is **RIGHTEOUSNESS**. Normally, righteousness typically focuses on our stance before God. This is **positional** and the central theme of justification in Romans by Paul. Jesus, though, builds on this and emphasizes “**ACTIVE RIGHTEOUSNESS.**”

Simply stated: **Righteousness is right standing before God (addressed in the Beatitudes) that translates into right living before our neighbor. (OTHER FOCUSED)**

According to the Sermon, **RIGHTEOUSNESS**, is discovering both the **MANNER** and **MOTIVES** of pleasing God (not just tedious religious routines and rituals) based upon God's prescription for pleasing Him as stated in the Law. (2x). (THE LAW)

Righteousness in this text is like a muscle that can **GROW**. It can **gain strength and grow strong** or it can **get flabby**.

Righteousness here something that must be **EVALUATED**. This makes some of us nervous. Jesus is evaluating righteousness. Comparing...contrasting...rebuking when needed...condemning.

In order to evaluate **RIGHTEOUSNESS** Jesus picks the most unlikely of groups - **the Pharisees and teachers of the Law**. We typically cast them as the characters in black hats who are the arch-nemesis of Jesus. In all likelihood, there were the poster child of **intelligence, authority, compassion and spirituality**. The **spiritual superstars** whom people took their cues from to find favor with God. None were more respected than they. They were the **Michael Jordan's of faith** and everyone **admired** their devotion before God and **coveted** their **favor**, their **status**, their **righteousness**, with Him. If you lived in the first century and had a daughter you would pray that God would bring a Pharisee or teacher of the Law your way. Ironically, it is with these guys, Jesus makes this contrast of what NOT to do. We need to look at their righteousness in order on how to evaluate yours and mine.

And so this morning we are going to use Jesus' words to evaluate **your righteousness** and mine to see if we are **PERFORMING** or **PLEASING**.

RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE: Rewrite the rules

My daughter, Erin, loves to make up games and play them. She has her own version of tag that limits. This tree is free space. Have to say, "Simon says..." The only problem is that when I play, she keeps changing the rules to benefit her.

In a similar way, the Pharisees and scribes created a **PERFORMANCE** based righteousness was based upon **A WRONG INTERPRETATION OF GOD'S WORD**. In essence, **they rewrote the rules to their own benefit**. In fact the next six sections of the sermon, which take us through chapter 5 in Matthew, deal with such religious activities or **distortions of the law** introduced by the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. Though all six sections echo the Law in some form, there is **significant twisting of the Law** that is **NOT** found in the Bible at all. You can tell when this happens when you see the formula: **"YOU HAVE HEARD THAT IT WAS SAID..." "BUT I TELL YOU..."**

As a result, when the people heard the word of God from the Pharisees and teachers of the law, **they heard a distorted view**. Their "traditions", superseded God's original intent and thus became the standard by which men and women would attain righteousness or a meaning relationship with God. Listen to Jesus' harsh words concerning them:

"You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions! Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition that you have handed down. And you do many things like that." (Mk 7:9,13)

I call this the **Jesus plus** folks. Meaning those people who want to weigh down the **simplicity** and **beauty** of the Gospel with a lot of "necessary" extras. Those who want to burden our life with God with tons of religious activities.

RELATIONSHIP THAT PLEASES: Use the rules as a map to please God.

Jesus and the Law:

Matt. 5:17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish **THE LAW OR THE PROPHETS** (the entire OT with the covenant enforcers); I have not come to abolish them but to **FULFILL** them.

1. Jesus affirms the entire OT.

Everything that Jesus teaches is in harmony with the entire OT Scriptures. There is nothing in his teaching that contradicts them. He believed it all. He quoted it regularly and from every genre - Law, Poetical books, Prophets, Historical. For Jesus, the OT was the word of God, it was Scripture and thus authoritative. Nothing else can ever possess what it contains. If you question the authority of the OT, you begin to question the authority of Jesus.

2. Jesus’ teachings don’t supersede the OT. They FULFILL them.

“FULFILL” does NOT mean “to complete”, “to finish” or “to add something that already has begun.” The real meaning is: “to carry out” or “TO FULFILL IN THE SENSE OF GIVING FULL OBEDIENCE TO IT,” literally carrying out everything that has been said or stated in the Law and the prophets.”

The Law was given in three parts: Civil, Ceremonial and Moral

Civil: Legislative law given to the nation of Israel for a particular period of time

Ceremonial: Burnt Offerings and sacrifices in connection with worship at the Temple and elsewhere

Moral: Ten Commandments and the great moral principles that are enduring. What we will find in that from verse 21 forward, Jesus is talking about **the moral law.**

Some see a total separation from the teachings of Jesus and the Law. They quote: “**The Law was given by Moses and grace and truth by came by Jesus Christ.**” The Christian then has nothing to do with the Law. The Bible mentions we are under grace and we must not mention the law.

Now the Law NEVER had the power to save. The law simply exposes the “**exceeding sinfulness of sin.**” It points our need for a Savior. **Grace comes in and does not excuse us from the law. It gives us the ability to fulfill the law. What is grace? It is that marvelous gift from God which, having delivered us from the curse of the law, now enables us to fulfill it. Grace allows us to be righteous as Christ was righteous, for He kept the law perfectly.**

The Law then is a roadmap on how to PLEASE God.

RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE: Whatever you do, make sure other people notice.

Research psychologists have found there are at least three situations when we are not ourselves. First, the average person puts on airs when he VISITS THE LOBBY OF A FANCY HOTEL. Next, the typical Jane Doe will try to hide her emotions and bamboozle the salesman when she enters THE NEW-CAR SHOWROOM. And finally, as we take our seat IN CHURCH, we try to fake out the Almighty that we've really been good all week.

Later on in the sermon, we Jesus stating **specific examples** where the Pharisees and scribes were **PERFORMING** the right religious actions but for the **wrong reasons. Their motive was to please man, not God.**

Matt. 6:1 “Be careful not to do your ‘acts of righteousness’ **before men, to be seen by them.** If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven.

Matt. 6:2 “So when you give to the needy, **do not announce it with trumpets,** as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Matt. 6:5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, **for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men.** I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full.

Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Jesus says this about these men:

*“These people honor me with their lips, **but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.**’ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men.”*

The Pharisees and teachers of the law took their cue from their setting. **And the scary thing is this...people were fully convinced that they were on the right path.**

RELATIONSHIP THAT PLEASES: Live for an audience of one.

When I went to Fremont Christian School, I lived a life of duplicity. Around the teachers I respected and pastors I knew, I walked the walk and talked the talk of faith. You have heard the phrase, when in Rome do as the Romans do, while when at Fremont Christian do as you are expected. In their eyes, I was on track because I worked hard to make sure that they saw a genuine Christian. Yet, when the scenery change, outside of youth group, away from school and the church, separate from the influence of teachers and pastors, my life took on actions which were not vile in the world's eyes, but would disappoint my teachers and pastors. The scenery literally dictated my actions.

Why then do people act this way? . Why do we put on the mask? Why do we **outwardly** put on an act that will **appear** religious, perhaps even righteous to God and others. Because our focus, our target, our goal is incorrect. Instead of doing these acts unto God, **we do it to satisfy those around who we believe are looking. We take our cues from our setting. For me, I was bound by INSECURITY and FEAR.**

Three words changed me: "I don't care." Not in the negative sense that I am not caring. I began to push back these debilitating voices and speaking back. I don't care how bad I look, I am going to try a back flip. I don't care what people say, I am going to pray with this person. I don't care what my feelings are telling me, I am going to talk to this person. I don't care...God you alone are my audience.

RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE: Earn your way there.

According to the Barna Research group, 53% contend that if a person is good enough, or does enough good things for other people, they will earn their way into Heaven. One-third of all born again Christians (34%) accept this notion.

In the same vein, the Pharisees and scribes were remarkably pious people. Even in our Sermon of the Mount, we see them offering gifts at the altar, giving to the needy, prayer faithfully and even fasting. They saw these works as a badge of spirituality that gave them access and favor with God. They thought that through good works, God could be appeased. That right relationship with God was somehow attained by busy religious action. That security in heaven was purchased by good works on earth. And if you think about it, a lot of people today think the same thing.

The Jews had a saying, “If only two people go to heaven, one will be a scribe and the other a Pharisee.” Those men were completely convinced that God was obligated to honor their devoted and demanding works. In comparing themselves with the standards they had established—and especially in comparing themselves with the average Jew, not to mention Gentile—they could not imagine God was not favorably impressed with their goodness.

In the end it was all RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE.

RELATIONSHIP THAT PLEASES: Let your works show your gratitude.

Once of the biggest confusions for the church has always been the place of works. The world knows we are a charitable. They know we are supposed to do good things for people. They know we help out those in disaster, try to care for those who are sick, feed those who are hungry and visit those who are lonely or in prison. This is what the church does and the world knows it well.

Good works in the Sermon are a necessary result of a genuine encounter with Jesus. If we have met Jesus, been examined by the Beatitudes and humbly accept our condition. Realize the Jesus does not bring us to the brink to destroy us, but so he can use as Salt and Light to Decaying and Dark world. Now he says, I want you to show me that you love me by loving others as the Law say we should. Not outward compliance, not to be noticed, not because its what religious people do. I don't want a performance. I want you to please my by loving others as the Law says.

The “Right” Righteousness:

What then is the righteousness that God desires? What is the “right” righteousness? Now this is a crucial question, because our text say this morning that entrance into God’s kingdom hinges on it. And the answer is this. **Christian righteousness far surpasses pharisaic righteousness in KIND rather than degree. (2x).** It is not to say that Christians succeed in keeping 240 commandments while the Pharisees only keep 230. No. Christian righteousness is greater than pharasiac righteousness because it is **DEEPER, BEING A RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE HEART.**

1. The “Right” Righteousness is one of RIGHT FOCUS - others not ourselves.

The rest of chapter five will focus on our RELATIONSHIP with others. We will learn that you cannot have a relationship with God w/o one loving others as Jesus defines love.

2. The “Right” Righteousness is one of RIGHT MEANS - honoring both the letter and Spirit of the Law.

The Law is a road map on how to please God. God doesn’t want us to create our own way to honor Him.

3. The “Right” Righteousness is one with RIGHT MOTIVES.

Now remember, the Pharisees were concerned with external and formal obedience, a rigid conformity to the letter of the law. Pharisees and scribes thought external conformity to the Law would be enough. Pharisees and scribes were confident in their form of expression. And so we are left with Right Action, but Wrong Motives and in the end we miss God entirely.

Jesus teaches us that God demands are far more radical than this. He is not satisfied with this religious performance. In fact, He is down right resentful of their

actions. The righteousness that is pleasing to him is an inward righteousness of mind and motive.

The example of Paul:

“If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish (excrement), that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. 1) I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and 2) the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, 3) to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

Ph 3:4-11

Conclusion:

Francis Chan in his book called Crazy Love, Overwhelmed by a Relentless God, defines lukewarm people (see handout).

Lukewarm people are PERFORMERS not PLEASERS. They have a form of faith, but their content is hollow and shallow. They PERFORM religious rituals, but don't really PLEASE God.

CHOOSE

the road less traveled
studies in the sermon on the mount



essential nature
(beatitudes)



calling or influence
(light and salt)



how to please God
(active righteousness)



FOR I TELL YOU...

that unless your

RIGHTEDOUSNESS

surpasses that of the Pharisees

and the teachers of the law, you

will certainly not enter the

kingdom of heaven.

RIGHT CHOICES...

is "right standing" before
God that **TRANSLATES**
to "right living" before
our neighbor.



RICHTEOUSNESSES...

according to the Sermon, is discovering both the manner and motives of pleasing God (not just tedious religious routines and rituals) based upon God's prescription for pleasing Him as stated in the Law.

FOR I TELL YOU...

that unless your righteousness

SURPASSES

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FOR I TELL YOU...

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**THE PHARISEES AND
THE TEACHERS OF THE LAW,**

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enter the kingdom of heaven.

RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE

Rewrite the rules.



“YOU HAVE HEARD IT SAID.”

“FEEL YOU...”



“Do not think
that I have come
to abolish the Law
or the Prophets;

**I HAVE NOT COME
TO ABOLISH THEM
BUT TO FULFILL THEM.”**

Q.T. LAW

• CIVIL

• CONSTITUTIONAL

• MORAL



GRACE

is that marvelous gift from God
which, having delivered us from
the curse of the Law,
now enables us to fulfill it.

RELATIONSHIP THAT PLEASES

Use the rules as a map to please God.



RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE

Whatever you do,
make sure others notice.

Religious

RELATIONSHIP THAT PLEASES

Live for an audience of One.

It's

RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE

Earn your way there.

FOR

RELATIONSHIP THAT PLEASES

Let your works show your gratitude.

13

CHOCOLATE THE SCIENCE OF SWEETNESS

CHOCOLATE THE

SHEDS
—
MILLS

CHOCOLATE THE

WALKS - THE
WALKS

CHOCOLATE THE
WOMEN - PLEASE GOD

↕↕
crazy love

OVERWHELMED
BY A RELENTLESS
GOD

FRANCIS CHAN
with danae yankoski
Foreword by Chris Tomlin

CHOOSE

the road less traveled
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