

Sermon on the Mount - Part 11

by David Servant

Jesus teaches that true righteousness comes from faith, and that we should love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, just as God is merciful and loving towards all people.

Duration: 28:30

Scripture: Matthew 5:44

Topics: "Christian Living", "Godly Love"

Description

This sermon focuses on Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing the importance of surpassing the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees through faith and works. Jesus challenges his followers to love their enemies, be merciful, and imitate God's perfect love and mercy. The sermon also addresses the need for believers to strive for perfection in obedience to Christ's commandments.

Transcript

Well, welcome to our program. Thank you so much for joining me. We're sitting here on Mount Arbel once again, very close to the Sea of Galilee.

You can't see it in your field of view, but I can certainly see it in my field of view. It's a beautiful morning here in Galilee. We're sitting not very far away from the place where Jesus gave the original Sermon on the Mount.

In fact, he may have given it right on this mountain. I'd like to think that, but nobody knows for sure. In any case, the most important thing, as I often say, is that we follow what Jesus said.

Jesus wasn't all that concerned about the location. He did not leave a plaque or a monument there to say, here's where I gave the Sermon on the Mount, so people can come here and venerate this holy ground for the next 2,000 years. But he left us with the words.

He made sure that the words were preserved that he spoke that day, and so we're blessed to be able to study them together. Now we're going to pick up where we left off in our last program in Matthew chapter five. If you've got your Bible, please turn to Matthew chapter five and verse number 42.

A very quick review. Jesus is speaking to a group of disciples, people that have just been willing to climb a mountain. He's told them that unless their righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, they won't enter heaven.

He's dropped a bomb because he just said all the scribes and Pharisees are going to hell, which they were, because they weren't righteous. They were unrighteous. And to get to heaven, you have to be righteous.

Now people say, well, I thought to get to heaven you had to have faith. Yes, that's how you get righteous. This is righteousness by faith.

The righteousness that comes by faith is the only true righteousness that exists, because people who believe in Jesus repent of their sins because they know Jesus is Lord and he's holy. And so the only way to get the kind of righteousness that you need to get to heaven is by faith in the Lord Jesus, a living faith, not a dead faith, that results in your repentance and obedience. And so there is a connection between faith and works.

Faith without works is dead. And so therefore, if there's a connection between faith and works, there's a connection between works and salvation. And that's exactly what James said in the second chapter of his epistle, read it for yourself.

Okay? And so you can't divorce works from faith and you can't divorce works from salvation. Only the holy will see God. And Jesus has said that over and over again here in the Sermon on the Mount.

And he's going to say it over and over again as we continue reading through here. Truly, I say to you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter heaven. And so now he's elaborating on that.

And we looked at time and time again where he said, you have heard the Pharisees tell you, and I'm paraphrasing, but here's what I'm telling you. And he's correcting their false teaching. Now, we just finished that section where we realized that the scribes and Pharisees had a zero toleration policy for anyone that rubbed them the wrong way.

Jesus said, nah, I want my disciples to be long suffering, patient when wronged. Amen. I want them to be kind to their enemies.

Does that mean we should never go to court, never take anyone to court? Absolutely not. If a crime is committed against you, take that person to court according to what the laws of the land would say and get justice. Justice is good.

God is for justice. Now you say, wait, I thought we were supposed to be merciful. Oh, yes.

Be merciful as you possibly can. And particularly, we should always be merciful in these small things for which there are not laws. There's no law that I know of against someone slapping you.

I guess you could call it assault. But Jesus says, nah, in that case, turn the other cheek. He didn't say if he poked your eye out, give him the other eye to poke out.

No, that's major. Go to court for that. What about believers taking believers to court? Well, Paul addresses that and he says, in no case should believers be taking believers to court.

This is better just to be defrauded or wrong because then you testify of your lack of love before the world. And that is a horrible, horrible thing. But in that same context, when Paul talks about how believers shouldn't be taking believers to court, he warns again that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of

God.

And so if there's a believer who has swindled you out of money, guess what? No swindler will inherit the kingdom of God. And so you can take that person to court because that swindler is no Christian. He might think he's a sheep, but he's one of those sheep who thinks he's a sheep, but who's really a goat.

Again, there's so much to be said. I'm just afraid that what we've done mistakenly is we've taken things that Christ has said in this Sermon on the Mount and ignored the whole rest of the Bible as if Jesus didn't inspire anything else other than what's in the Sermon on the Mount. No, Jesus inspired everything in the Bible.

Okay, all right. So now we come to Matthew chapter five and verse number 42. Read this one with me if you would.

Jesus says, give to him who asks of you and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. And so as followers of Christ, we're supposed to be generous, sharing. That commandment right there affects what we do with our money.

Now, of course, of course, of course, most of us are being bombarded with opportunities to give our money and if we gave to everyone who asks of us, we wouldn't even have anything left to feed ourselves. So you can't, of course, give to everyone who's asking of you because nowadays with mail and TV and all these other means of communication, we are being bombarded with many good opportunities to give. But certainly what Jesus said in principle applies here.

We shouldn't be laying up treasures upon this earth as we will read later on in this Sermon on the Mount. We're not supposed to be living lavishly and in self-indulgence, just piling up stuff so we can enjoy our lives. We're supposed to be having compassion on the poor and lending to those who need some temporary help and giving to those who need that type of help.

And so we ought to be generous. If you think that you're going to go to heaven because you tithe, I'd like to point out to, according to Scripture, that the Pharisees, whom Jesus was condemning throughout this entire Sermon, scrupulously tithe. And according to Matthew 23, Jesus himself testified, you Pharisees, you tithe to the degree of tithing the herbs in your gardens, your mint and your dill and your cumin you tithe, but you neglect the more important, the weightier provisions of the law like justice and faithfulness and mercy and the love of God and so forth.

And so the Pharisees scrupulously tithe, but the Bible also says in the Gospel of Luke, I believe it's chapter 16, that the Pharisees were lovers of money. And of course, they were therefore not lovers of God because you can't serve God and mammon. And so they all went to hell and Christ already said they were all going to hell because he told his disciples, unless you do better than them, you're going to go to hell like them.

You won't enter the kingdom of God. And so I ought to give a sermon sometime with a title, how to tithe your way to hell because lots of tithers are in hell because you can tithe and still go to hell. The Pharisees proved that.

The tithe under the old covenant was pretty much a tax to pay for the Levites and so forth. There were other things to do with the tithe besides that, yes, I know. But you can still be laying up treasures upon the earth and be a tither.

You can be a tither and ignore what Christ said right here, give to him who asks of you, you know, share to him who wants to borrow from you, right? So we're supposed to be generous and that's not the only thing Christ says about stewardship. I mean to tell you, there's so much he said. I wrote a whole book on stewardship because I felt in my heart, I still feel it's being, what he said is largely being ignored by so many within the church.

So I wrote a book titled *Through the Needle's Eye* and I looked at everything Christ had to say about stewardship. And I want to tell you, he said an awful lot. That book will put a lot of fear into you if you'll take the time to read it.

Through the Needle's Eye. Take a look at that book, okay? Now, a new section, verse number 43. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

Oh, I'm so glad this one's here because it's a perfect example of what I've been saying is true in every case when Jesus says, you have heard it said, but I say to you. In this case, he said, you've heard it said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. In my Bible, the words, you shall love your neighbor are capitalized indicating that they were part of the original Old Testament quotation, verbatim quotation.

God did say, you shall love your neighbor, but he never said, you shall hate your enemy. In my Bible, that's not capitalized. And so that's the commentary by the rulers of the synagogue, the scribes and the Pharisees.

That's the perverted teaching that people were hearing back in Christ's day. That's what the audience to whom Christ was speaking, that's what they'd heard all their lives. They'd heard, here's what God wants you to do, love your neighbor, but hate your enemy.

Now, they had a question, how do you define who your neighbor is? Because that's the only people that we're obligated to love. So let's make sure we know who our neighbor is. Remember one time a guy came to Christ and asked him that question, who is my neighbor? And what was Christ's response? He told him the story of the good Samaritan, guy was attacked by robbers, laying there half dead along the road, a Levite and a priest see him walk right by, good tithers, walk right by, straight to hell.

And then a Samaritan comes by, a member of a hated race, as far as the Jews were concerned, half bred Jews, as it were, so they had nothing to do with them, Jews and Samaritans. Samaritan has compassion upon that man who was beaten on the road to Jericho, and he spends his time and his money to see that the man is taken care of and restored. And then Jesus asked the man who asked him the question, who is my neighbor? He asked him, who proved to be his neighbor? And he said, well, the guy who had mercy on him.

Jesus said, go and do likewise. So Christ defined a neighbor as somebody who we can help with the resources that God has given to us. All right? So your neighbor could be on the other side of the world, if you know about his need and you have the resources to help him.

Amen. Your neighbor could be someone who is a member of a hated race, as far as your race is concerned or your clan. Okay? And so Christ changed the definition of what a neighbor is.

The Pharisees obviously taught that your neighbor is someone who loves you. How convenient. And so what they were teaching is love those who love you, those who don't love you, that that's your enemies, hate them.

Christ blows that out of the water and he says, what good is that? Everybody does that. Everyone loves those who love them. Even the Gentiles do that.

Okay? I'm telling you, love your enemies. And we'll talk about that in this very next segment. Be right back.

The traditional site of Jesus' crucifixion is the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, where Orthodox Christians and Catholic Christians flock to see the spot where Jesus was crucified and also where he was buried. Now, there's a big problem, however, at that location. It's deep with inside the old city walls, currently is within the old city walls.

And of course, scripture says that Jesus was crucified outside the gate. Well, I'm standing here at what's called Gordon's Calvary. This is called Skull Hill.

It's an ancient quarry. This cliff was here in the time of Jesus. This is the actual level.

You can see in this area right here, kind of the outline of the face of a skull. And the Romans crucified people right along main highways so that people could see the punishment for transgressors. And so it's very likely that Jesus was actually crucified here on top of this hill right behind me, which is the actual lay of the land as it was back in Christ's day.

Alrighty, welcome back. And hope you're enjoying these little side trips we're taking all over Israel. Let's get back into the word of God, back to Matthew chapter five.

We're probably going to finish out Matthew chapter five and we'll be, in one sense, one third of the way done through our journey through the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says, beginning in verse number 43 of Matthew five, you have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. Remember, he's clearly now correcting the perversion of the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

God never said, hate your enemy. God said, under the old covenant, I'm quoting now from Proverbs, if your enemy is thirsty, give him a drink. If your enemy is hungry, feed him.

In so doing, you will heap burning coals upon his head. That's the old Testament. That's the old covenant law.

That's what Jesus said 1,300 years earlier than when he said this on the Sermon on the Mount. So he's not changing anything. He's simply reiterating what he said 1,300 years ago from the law of Moses, clarifying it, filling it up to the full as he told them he was about to do.

He said, but I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you in order that you may be sons of your father who is in heaven, for he causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. Okay? Well, God is perfect, and Christ is about to remind us of that. God is perfect, and so we should seek to imitate God in every sense of his moral law.

What a beautiful example. God causes the sun to rise on the righteous and the unrighteous. Well, we've been sitting here this morning taping these teaching sessions, and the sun has slowly been rising across the eastern side of the Sea of Galilee.

I'm hopefully among the righteous, and hopefully my film crew is among the righteous, but where we're in is an area where there's a lot of unrighteous people, and the same sun that feels so good on our faces is shining a lot of unrighteous people. Jesus says that's a blessing. How many of you got up this morning

and weren't even aware of the fact of that beautiful feeling of the sunshine on their face warming them and causing the breezes to blow here is an act of mercy from God upon them.

They don't even have a thought of God or thankfulness to him, and yet God still does it every day about the same time sun rises, warms up all these ungrateful, ungodly people. Many of them are going to go out today to just ignore him all day long, commit flagrant sins against him. God's causing the sun to shine this morning on the adulterers, on the perverts of every sort, thieves, you name it, the whole list, his sun is shining.

He also causes the rain to fall on the good and the evil. Now, many of us who are watching this from our perspective, rain's not a good thing. We speak of a rainy day as being a negative thing because we like the sunshine, but when Jesus spoke those words that day, not far from here on a mountainside, everybody knew what he meant.

He wasn't speaking of God sends positive things like the sun, and God also sends negative things like the rain. No, he saw them both as being very positive things. The one who sends the rain to water your crops that you're growing that supplies the food you need to eat, that's God, and he's sending the rain upon people who don't give him a second thought.

People when it rains, they don't thank him. People who harvest their crops, who eat their food and never thank God, don't ever give him another, don't even give him a fleeting thought, and yet God is trying to send them a message. I'm here, I'm good, I'm merciful, repent, listen to your conscience, listen to my law, believe in Jesus.

I'm sitting in a land that for the most part has completely rejected Jesus Christ as the Messiah, even though supposedly they're waiting for him, and yet here's someone who came and fulfilled all the prophecies about the Messiah right in this very land, and they killed him, and they're still ignoring him today. Yet the sun is rising here today, the rain is falling periodically and watering. Look at this, all this agricultural land behind me, all these olive groves behind me and so forth, they're growing oranges here, they're growing all kinds of things here, and yet ignoring the Son of God.

What a tragedy. But God wants us to be the same way, merciful, and again, you see he's correcting the intolerance of the Pharisees. The Pharisees were so intolerant, and that's how religious people get.

Religious people, oh my goodness, once they've set their little rules, they won't even sometimes associate with you unless you're keeping their rules perfectly. I preach a pretty strong gospel because I preach a holy gospel, I just try to stick with the word of God, and sometimes that attracts people who are very harsh and intolerant, and they think that I'm in their camp. I'm not in their camp at all, because they're so intolerant and they're so unmerciful, and they will have nothing to do with anybody who isn't exactly in 100% agreement with them.

And particularly when it becomes so obnoxious is when they set these picky unish rules of how you dress and so forth. Well, the Pharisees, they wouldn't even greet you if you weren't one of them. You're a non-person basically unless you're one of them.

They're so intolerant, and if you slap them on the cheek in holy obligation, they slap you back on the cheek. Christ is correcting that in his people who have had that horrible example set in front of them all their lives. Verse 46, for if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Now, that's what the

Pharisees and scribes were basically teaching.

Who's your neighbor? Your neighbor is the one who loves you. Love those neighbors, that's what God said. And Jesus is saying, that's ridiculous.

Everyone automatically does that already. So why would God ever command love your neighbor, meaning love those who love you and you can hate everybody else? That's absurd. What reward do you get for that? That's commonplace.

Do not even the tax gatherers do that. When Christ said the tax gatherers, he was speaking of the people who were the most notorious sinners that he could possibly have mentioned. One time he talked about the tax collectors and the prostitutes, put them all in the same bag.

Tax collectors were unscrupulous people who were traitors to their own country, who sided with the Romans against their own Jewish clan and collected taxes. And of course, the Romans would sell the right to be a tax collector to the highest bidder. And so this is a horrible way of raising taxes, but it's how the Romans found they could get the most amount, offered up for bid in an auction and the man who says, I'll bring you this amount, the highest bidder gets the job.

And so then all he has to do is extort at least that amount of money to pay to the Roman authorities and then whatever he gets in excess of that, whatever else he can extort from his fellow countrymen, he can keep it. And so tax collectors were very rich because they were rip off artists working for the occupying and hated foreign power, the Romans. And so Christ said, man, the dregs of society do what the Pharisees are teaching is the obligation that we have to love our neighbor.

So Christ says, I'm raising the bar, I'm filling it to the full, the law of God. Once again, the scribes and the Pharisees have taken the law of God, they've been pouring it out, diminishing what God originally intended and they've lowered the bar. I'm raising the bar, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

So just imitate God. Then he says in verse 47, if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Again, the Gentiles were those who were just the pagans, who had their pagan religions and their pagan rules and no concept really of the true God. You realize of course that any Gentile could convert to Judaism and begin to follow the God of Israel and find salvation through faith, because salvation has always been by faith and it was always available to everyone who would believe.

Now not believing in Jesus prior to the time of Jesus coming to this earth, but anyone could believe in the true God as he had revealed himself in the Old Testament and through creation and so forth and they could be saved. They could have their sins forgiven by repenting of their sins and being forgiven of their sins by faith in God and then walking righteously by his power, as a matter of fact. Anyone could do that.

So when Jesus condemns the Gentiles, he's not just saying, well, only the Jews are the chosen people and only they can be saved unless you're a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. No, no, no. He's speaking of those who have chosen to stay in the darkness of their idolatry, because when you form a statue out of a stone or a log and worship it, that's obviously stupid and people that do that aren't thinking very much.

They're inventing a God and worshiping a God of their own imagination. And so any Gentile could convert and become a follower of the God of Israel. And so Christ is saying, the Gentiles do that.

These are people who are essentially lawless. And so if the Pharisees have a standard that's no higher than the tax collectors or the pagan Gentiles who have rejected the truth, who are all going to hell and the Pharisees are going to hell likewise, Jesus says, I'm raising the bar much, much higher to where it obviously has been all along. Look at the example that God himself has been setting.

And so he closes this section by saying, verse 48, therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect. Now as we close this program, I want to say that, you know, this verse has been misinterpreted. We should be striving for perfection and obviously according to Christ, it's reachable.

Paul himself said, I'm not aware of there anything that God is holding against me. Now that doesn't equip me because I think that there's nothing God's holding against me, but he says, I can't think of anything because I'm 100% obeying what I know he wants me to do. So it's possible.

I mean, if it's possible to obey God for one hour and not sin for an hour, and I'm assuming that that's possible, don't you do that when you go to church, I hope, well then it's possible to not sin for two hours or three hours. Yes, we face other temptations. Yes, we all stumble in many ways.

All I'm saying is, these people who say to us, oh, we all sin hundreds of times a day in thought, word, and deed, we're all sinners, but thank God we've been saved by his grace and we're going to heaven. I don't agree with that at all. If you're sinning hundreds of times a day in thought, word, and deed, you're a sinner and therefore you're not saved, you're going to hell.

One of the tests that John gave us in his epistle to know whether or not we're saved is are we obeying Christ's commandments? He says quite clearly, if we're not obeying his commandments, we walk in darkness, the truth is not in us, we're not saved, we don't belong to Christ. The salvation that Christ offers us, it offers us not just forgiveness, but a cleansing of our sins. Jesus came to cleanse us, to save us from our sins.

There is the possibility, and every Christian should be walking righteously. Yes, we stumble, sometimes we confess our sin. Yes, we're growing in grace, that's the process of sanctification.

Yes, God is revealing to us areas we need to improve, but if you're sinning every day hundreds of times in thought, word, and deed, you need to readjust, you need to be saved, and repent, and receive true salvation through Jesus Christ. Hey, thanks so much for joining me. Until next time, keep following Jesus with all your heart.

God bless you. Hey, there's a whole lot more happening through the ministry of Heaven's Family than just this teaching broadcast. Heaven's Family consists of three divisions.

The first of which is Shepherd Serve, and through the ministry of Shepherd Serve, we are literally equipping thousands of hungry pastors around the world with vital biblical truth every single year. We do that in two ways. First of all, by pastor's conferences.

They're happening almost every single month somewhere in the world. And secondly, through the translation, and publication, and distribution of a 500-page equipping manual called The Disciple-Making Minister. Pastors are just loving this book because it's full of information that helps equip them to be more

fruitful for the Lord Jesus Christ.

That in a nutshell is the ministry of Shepherd Serve. The second division of Heaven's Family is known as Orphan's Tier, and through the ministry of Orphan's Tier, we are meeting the very pressing needs of over 1,000 Christian orphans in over six different developing nations through a sponsorship program that is absolutely wonderful. For just \$20 a month, you can provide food, clothing, shelter, school fees, and Christian nurture for a little follower price somewhere in the world.

Hey, why don't you check out orphanstier.org? There's probably someone waiting there just for you. The third and the final division of Heaven's Family is known as I Was Hungry, obviously taken from the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 25, where he warned about the future judgment of the sheep and of the goats. Through the ministry of I Was Hungry, we are meeting the very pressing needs of Christ followers around this world in very poor nations.

We're helping widows, orphans, lepers, refugees, victims of disasters. You can read all of our current projects at IWasHungry.org. You can make a real difference. If you'd like to get involved in all three of the divisions of Heaven's Family, you can invest in what is called the Heaven's Family Mutual Fund.

It's a great idea. You can read about it at all three of our websites. Thanks so much.

God bless you.

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