

# Sermon on the Mount - Part 6

by David Servant

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*David Servant emphasizes the importance of practical righteousness and the transformative power of grace in the Sermon on the Mount.*

**Duration:** 28:30

**Scripture:** Matthew 5:20-22

**Topics:** "Christian Community", "Heart Purity"

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## 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, not just in actions but also in the purity of the heart. Jesus highlights the seriousness of anger towards others, equating it with murder in God's eyes, and emphasizes the need for reconciliation and love within the Christian community.

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## Transcript

Well, it's another beautiful morning here in Galilee. I'm sitting on Mount Arbel, right off the shores of the Sea of Galilee, on a very high cliff that overlooks the entire sea. It's absolutely gorgeous.

The traditional site of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is up the coast here, a little ways, and there is a Catholic church built there on what is called the Mount of the Beatitudes. Pilgrims, particularly Orthodox and Catholic Christians, flock there from around the world to remember Jesus' most famous sermon. But I was speaking with a very knowledgeable local guide yesterday, and he said that many Protestant pilgrims, Baptists and Lutherans and so forth, don't visit that place as the site of the Sermon on the Mount.

They actually go to a mountain that's a little bit behind me to my right. In fact, it's been in view in some of our programs that we've made so far, and little did I know that I was actually very likely closer to where Jesus gave the Sermon on the Mount than I originally thought. And so that makes this all that much more special.

Of course, the place of the Sermon on the Mount is not near as important as it is to obey and follow Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. And so that's what we're focusing on more than the actual location of it. And we've made our way through the first part of the fifth chapter.

We've come through the Beatitudes. We're now just finishing up what we consider the introduction of the Sermon. And we left off in our last program in chapter 5 and verse number 20.

And so if you have your Bible, could you open it to Matthew chapter 5 and verse 20 and read along with me? Actually, I think I'm going to back up just a little bit here briefly and start in verse number 17, just for a little bit of a review. Jesus said to the crowd that day, do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill.

For truly I say to you, unless heaven and earth, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and so teaches others shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

And then finally, verse number 20, for I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven. And so we see that Jesus makes four very important statements. Number one, he tells his audience, don't think I came to abolish the law and the prophets.

No, no, no. I'm going to fill it to the full. The scribes and Pharisees and the rulers of the synagogues have been pouring out and abolishing in a sense what God has said.

I'm going to fill it back up to the full. In fact, I'm going to fill it beyond what they had before. I'm going to go beyond the old covenant.

I'm going to take you into the new covenant. Then he says, the old covenant, the old testament, the law and the prophets, they're going to be relevant until heaven and earth pass away. Well, that hasn't happened yet, and so it's still relevant.

That's why Christians don't just carry around a new testament, they carry around an old and new testament. And then thirdly, he says that our spiritual status is determined by how well, excuse me, our spiritual status in heaven is determined by how well we keep and we teach the commandments of Christ. And we talked about that extensively in our last broadcast.

And then fourthly, now here's the bomb that he dropped. He said, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Now, that's not so shocking to us, but let me tell you, when they heard that, it was like dropping a bomb for this simple reason.

What if I came to your town or your city and I made the declaration, all of the spiritual leaders, all of the pastors, you know, and teachers and evangelists here in your city or your town, none of them are going to make it to heaven. They're all going to hell. Well, if I said that, I mean, that would be a shocking statement.

In fact, you'd want me to produce the evidence to prove that. But this is coming right from the lips of Jesus. This is coming from the judge himself.

This is the person who determines if you go to heaven or if you go to hell. And so he says, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you are not going to enter the kingdom of heaven. Did you hear what he's saying, not so subtly there? He's saying, all the scribes and Pharisees are going to hell.

And these are the people, you know, who are teaching in the synagogues. These are the ones who are so respected. These are the spiritual leaders.

Everyone thinks that they're setting the best example of what it is to follow God and to obey his commandments. And Christ says, your righteousness has got to be better than theirs or you're not even going to make it into heaven. So that means they're all going to hell.

Well, that's dropping a bomb. And if he didn't have their attention before then, oh man, he had their attention at that point in time because he's just, with one sentence, condemned all of their spiritual leaders. All right.

Now, a lot of times evangelicals just kind of slough that statement off. And here's how they do it. They say, well, our righteousness does automatically exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees because, you know, we prayed to receive Jesus and accept him as our Savior.

And so therefore the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us. We're covered by his blood and so forth. And so, of course, yeah, we meet that qualification.

Our righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees. But I want you to stop and think for a moment how that can't be what Christ was talking about. He was not talking there about imputed legal righteousness.

Just think about it for a moment. The entire Sermon on the Mount, he never mentions imputed legal righteousness one single time. No, he's always talking about practical righteousness, things that you must do, things that gain God's approval that by doing them, you know, he says, yes, that's the right thing.

And by not doing them, he says, that's the wrong thing. That's what the whole sermon is about. Never mentions anything about imputed legal righteousness at all.

And secondly, think about this. You know, if you can get into heaven simply by praying a prayer, no matter how you live your life, you can live like hell and still go to heaven because you somehow applied the blood of Christ. And yet all the scribes and Pharisees guaranteed to go to hell because they didn't keep a moral standard of righteousness, a practical standard of righteousness.

But you just get in, you know, living no better than the scribes and Pharisees, but because you prayed a prayer and somehow got Christ's imputed righteousness on your behalf and that gets you into heaven. Is that fair? You know, so Jesus is going to say to all the scribes and Pharisees when they stand before him, you did not live in such a way that was pleasing to me. You broke my commandments.

You were not righteous enough to get into heaven. So depart from me into the everlasting fire. And then as they stand there lingering a moment longer, you walk up or I walk up and Jesus says, well, you know, you didn't live any better than the scribes and Pharisees.

You were just every bit as unrighteous as they were, but because you once prayed a little prayer, you know, and I imputed my righteousness to you and so you go ahead and come on into heaven. What are those scribes and Pharisees who were just condemned forever to hell going to think about that kind of judgment? They're going to say, that's entirely unfair. And so keeping that in mind and as well as keeping in mind the fact that Jesus never once mentions imputed legal righteousness, never even implies that anywhere in this sermon.

All he talks about is practical righteousness. There's no other way to rightfully interpret his words other than this. Jesus saying, you have to be holier than the scribes and Pharisees.

You have to do better in keeping the commandments, all right? And so you say, that sounds to me like salvation by works. Well, again, I'm reiterating this on every single program. It is always salvation by grace.

It has to be salvation by grace because we're sinners who need a savior, but the grace that God is showing us is not a grace that says, keep on sinning. In the end, I'll let you into heaven. The grace that God is offering us as a grace that says, I'm giving you an opportunity to repent and I'm calling you to repent.

And if you will repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, I'll regenerate you. I'll put my Holy Spirit in you. You'll be born again and I'll empower you to live righteously.

I'll break the chains of sin over your life so that you can exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees practically, morally, every day of your life. All right? See, that's the salvation that God is offering all of humanity. And unfortunately, salvation has been reduced in many evangelical circles to nothing more than just a stamp of forgiveness that God puts on your forehead and nothing else.

No, no, no, no, no. God changes us, transforms us. That's why part of the package is he puts the Holy Spirit into us.

If all he wanted to do was just give us a stamp of forgiveness and give us nothing more than imputed legal righteousness, well, there'd be no reason for him to put his Holy Spirit in us. But because he put his Holy Spirit in us, that gives us a major clue that he's got a higher purpose in this salvation. And because the person he put in us is the Holy Spirit, and again, the Holy Spirit is much more than just holy, but that's what he's referred to, he's called over and over again the Holy Spirit.

And so if there's anything the Spirit is, he is holy and he is God. And so if you get the Holy God to come and live inside of you and regenerate you, what do you think the effect is going to be upon you? You're going to be holy, and that's part of the salvation. So this is such a pivotal, pivotal verse in this sermon.

He's telling his disciples, you have got to act more righteous. You've got to be more holy, more obedient, more pleasing to God the Father, or you will not get into heaven. And that is reiterated over and over again.

As we continue through this Sermon on the Mount, we will see that theme repeatedly emphasized. In fact, it could be said that the majority of the rest of this sermon is nothing more than an elaboration on what we just read in Matthew 520. Because naturally the question that everyone would have then is, oh my goodness, you just told me that I've got to be more righteous than my spiritual leaders to get into heaven.

Well, I would like for you to be more specific. What are they doing that is falling so far short so that I can know, so that I can make sure that I do better than them? And as we study the scribes and Pharisees, of course, we already probably know a little bit more than what they know because they were all deceived, at least prior to this. They all probably thought the scribes and Pharisees were righteous and the great standards of righteousness.

We know, from knowing a little bit more about how Jesus felt about the scribes and Pharisees, that he didn't see them as righteous at all. They were snakes, he called them, a brood of vipers, whitewashed tombs. And so, to be honest with you, what Christ said, to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, it really isn't, it's not as much of a bomb to us as it was to them.

Okay? Okay. So, now stick with us, because as we progress through chapter five, we'll be looking specifically at commandments that the scribes and Pharisees were twisting, altering, breaking, and so forth, and then Jesus raising the bar back to where it should have been all along, saying, here's how I want my disciples to live, okay? Be right back after this very short side trip. I'm standing here in the second century ruins of a synagogue in Capernaum.

This is the town where Jesus based his ministry in Galilee, and where he worked so many miracles. One of them is found in Luke chapter seven, and we read in verse number one, when he had completed all his discourse in the hearing of the people, he went to Capernaum. Well, that's where we're at right now.

A certain centurion slave who was highly regarded by him was sick and about to die. When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to entreat, asking him to come and save the life of his slave. And when they had come to Jesus, they earnestly entreated him, saying, he's worthy for you to grant this to him, for he loves our nation, and it was he who built us our synagogue.

And so, it was from the generosity of a Roman centurion that the synagogue was built at Capernaum. Unfortunately, not this one, but the ruins of the one that are directly underneath this one. All right, welcome back.

Let's continue now in Matthew chapter five, as Jesus begins to elaborate to his disciples, which includes me, and includes you, I also trust, to see exactly how the scribes and Pharisees were falling short, and how, you know, I should say rather, in what ways God expects for his disciples to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, really the unrighteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. So verse number 21, read along with me, Matthew five. You have heard that the ancients were told, you shall not commit murder, and whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.

That's very interesting. Of course, no one in Jesus' audience had ever probably read the Bible themselves. The reason is because, you know, copies were not so abundant, they had to be copied by hand, and so the copies of the scrolls of the Old Testament were kept in very safe places where they could be accessed by special people, that would be the rulers of the synagogues in the synagogues.

Nobody would have had a personal copy. And so when Jesus said, you have heard that the ancients were told, he's referring to the fact that, you know, in the synagogues, when you've heard the scriptures read, you have heard the Ten Commandments, and you've heard that it was said, you shall not commit murder. Well, that's, you know, quite basic and fundamental and important.

And then he also says, you have heard it was said, quote, whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court. Now, in my Bible, the first quotation, you shall not commit murder, is all capitalized, indicating to me that it's a verbatim quote from the Old Testament. But the second quote, whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court, is not capitalized because you can't find that anywhere in the Old Testament.

So that gives us a little clue as to what's going on here. The scribes and Pharisees, sure, they would read from the scrolls of the Old Testament, and then, of course, like in a church today, they would give a sermon, give a commentary on what was just read. And so you can just imagine a ruler of the synagogue, or a scribe, or a Pharisee, you know, standing in front of the people in the synagogue, reading from the scrolls, saying, you shall not commit murder, and then he adds his own little commentary, maybe quoting some famous former rabbi or something, who knows.

But he says, and whoever commits murder shall be liable for the court. Well, that's kind of a threat. You might have to go to court if you commit murder.

I don't know, but to me, that sounds kind of like a lame threat. I mean, God said in the very first pages of the Bible, whoever sheds man's blood by man, his blood shall be shed. And so God instituted capital punishment for the transgression, the sin of murder.

The Pharisees apparently have lowered the bar, and it seems like they're watering it down to a great degree. You better not commit murder, or you might have to stand before the judge. You might have to go to court for that.

Oh my. Well, that doesn't scare me very much at all. And so, as in everything, the Pharisees have lowered the bar, way below what God intended.

And so what Jesus is about to do now, he's about ready to raise the bar to where it ought to be, so people have a better conception of what God expects of them in relationship to the sin of murder. And so look what he says in verse 22. But I say to you, and now who's speaking? The Son of God, the one who originally gave the Ten Commandments.

So he ought to know pretty well what he's talking about here. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court. Now, you can see he's raising the bar quite high, and he's in essence saying this.

God is not just opposed to the act of murder. God is opposed to allowing your heart to become murderous. And that all begins with anger.

You see, when somebody murders another person, it's a crime of passion. There's a reason that they do it, and it usually begins with anger, which leads to hatred and so forth, and then there's the final act. It doesn't happen ... You don't just walk up to somebody and murder them.

There's a motive behind them, or there's a reason that you did it. And anger is a very common starting place. And so Jesus raises the bar significantly, and he says, no, no, God wants you to be pure in your heart, and so get rid of everything that would even have the semblance of what could lead to murder.

And he says ... Notice how he said it. He says, I'll tell you, talking about going to court, if you're angry with your brother, you'll be guilty before the court. Well, the court of which he's speaking is obviously not a human court, but he's talking about God's court, God the great judge.

God takes notice of our hearts. When there's anger in our hearts, God is watching, and in fact, there's already some degree of guilt in God's eyes. May I also point out that he said here, who's ever angry with his brother? And Jesus was not talking here about brother to brother, Jew to Jew.

Oh, no, no, no, no. That's not what he's speaking. He's talking about your spiritual brothers, whom we would refer to, who have a further knowledge of what was revealed in the New Testament.

Brother in Christ to brother in Christ, or sister in Christ, doesn't make any difference. Spiritual relationship, those who have been born again. Jesus places a very, very high priority on our relationships within our spiritual family.

Those relationships are sacred, and we really have no good reason to become angry in our hearts, for the most part, against true brothers and sisters in Christ. Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes. I'm not making a general, all-encompassing rule that is binding in every situation, because yes, the scripture says, be angry and sin not, and so forth, and that Jesus got angry with his disciples, who obviously were true brothers in Christ at times.

But Jesus is talking about that type of anger that is an unrighteous anger. James said, and James was often a commentator on the Sermon on the Mount, in his epistle, he says, let every man be slow to anger, slow to anger. And so, the kind of person who's hot-tempered, and always ready to pick a fight, and always angry with his brother, that's a very sad state to be in, and that's a sad commentary in that person's spiritual life.

So anyways, when we find ourselves angry at our brothers, we should begin to stop and think, whoa, whoa, whoa, is this justified or not? Because, Jesus raises the bar some more, and he says, whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, which according to my margins says, means empty head, airhead, we might say, shall be guilty before the supreme court. Again, obviously he's not talking about man's court. He's talking about the court of heaven, God's court.

And, you know, that just means he's raising the bar a little bit higher, just saying, you know, when that anger comes out of your mouth, because out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth will speak, you better beware, you better watch out. When you start speaking to your brother, again, notice it's your brother, this is very, very important, your spiritual brother and sister in Christ, when you're verbalizing things to them that would be demeaning to someone, a fellow child of God, oh my goodness, the supreme court of heaven is now in session, and you're guilty, and you need to confess that, you need to stop that, okay? Because even if you are angry, you shouldn't be using a demeaning derogatory term, okay? And I think the word Raca in the Aramaic or Hebrew was a pretty derogatory thing to say to someone. And whoever shall say, you fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the hell of fire.

Now, that is very scary, and we're not gonna be able to cover everything in this program that I'd like to say about that, but again, you can see it's a progressive thing. Obviously, to say, you fool, was more derogatory, more venomous than to say, Raca, whatever all the meanings, the subtle meanings of those words were in that day and that we've lost down through the years. The point is, when your heart is at that point where you are spewing that kind of venom, saying to a brother in Christ, one for whom Christ has died, one who has been redeemed, you know, a fellow sheep, okay, not one of those ghosts, one of those sheep who's on the way to heaven, a person with whom you have a sacred relationship, and you spit out those words, you fool, well, you're guilty enough.

Now, God didn't guarantee. He didn't say, oh, I guarantee you, if you died right then, you'd go to heaven, but he's saying, you have incurred God's displeasure to the degree that you're guilty enough. That's grievous enough in God's eyes that he can justifiably send you to hell for that.

Now, again, I'm not God, and so I'm not gonna try to be the great judge, but if Jesus, the Son of God, says, by doing that, you can be guilty enough to go into the hell of fire, and he's talking to his disciples, he's talking about, you know, the body of Christ, that's something we should take notice of. I mean, that's very, very serious. Obviously, it's so grievous in the eyes of God, or else Jesus would have never made such a statement.

And so you can see, our relationships are so important with one another in the eyes of God. That's preeminent. That's paramount.

In fact, that's, there's no doubt in my mind, that's why Jesus began with this as the very first thing. I mean, we already know this from reading the Gospels and the Old Testament, that the most important commandment is to love God with all your heart, and so forth. The second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor as yourself.

And that has actually been somewhat superseded by Christ's new commandment. How many things can you think that Jesus said, now I'm going to give you a new commandment? Only one that I can think of. And he said, here it is, that you love one another even as I have loved you.

And so you see, that's a major, major thing. That's very, very, very important to God. And that's why it's such a tragedy that the church of, supposedly of Jesus Christ is so fragmented and split up, and the legacy that we've left behind is just one of strife and faction and division, and usually over minor points of doctrine.

And Christ all along is telling us the second most important thing is to love your neighbor as yourself. And when you're dividing and splitting up, and when you're spewing venomous words of hatred towards a brother, that incurs the anger of God. That is so serious.

You need to repent because you are guilty enough then to go into the hell of fire. And as we continue reading this in our next program, you're going to see. I mean, it's going to become even more serious in our minds because Christ didn't stop there.

He kept on elaborating on this subject. If there's a broken relationship, Christ wants us to reconcile our relationship. He'll go on to say here, if you're at the altar bringing your offering, and you remember your brother has something against you, it's not important to bring that sacrifice.

That's of minor importance. Go first be reconciled to your brother because that's the most important thing. So I want you to think about that until the next broadcast, and we'll start right here.

Hey, thank you so much for joining us right here from the Sea of Galilee. And until next time, keep on following Jesus with all your heart. God bless you.

Hey, there's a whole lot more happening to 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

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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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