

Pharisees Glory in External Righteousness

by Zac Poonen

Jesus teaches that true righteousness is not just about external obedience, but about inward purity and heart-cleansing.

Scripture: 1 Samuel 16:7, Matthew 5:20-29

Topics: "Inward Righteousness", "Heart Motives"

Description

Zac Poonen preaches on the deeper meaning behind Jesus' words in Matthew 5:20, emphasizing that it's not about doing more religious activities like fasting, praying, or tithing, but about the quality of our righteousness surpassing that of the Pharisees. Jesus highlighted the importance of inward righteousness, focusing on the heart and motives rather than just external actions, warning that sins like anger and lust can have serious consequences. Poonen reminds believers that God looks at the heart, not outward appearances, and urges them to examine their thoughts, motives, and attitudes to ensure true righteousness before God.

Transcript

Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20)

What did Jesus mean here? Do we have to fast, pray and tithe more than the Pharisees did?

Jesus was not talking about quantity at all - but quality. He was saying that the quality of our righteousness must be far superior to that of the Pharisees if we want to enter God's kingdom. And He went on to explain this in the remaining verses of the chapter. The righteousness of the Pharisees was only external. They gloried in their obedience to the laws of God on the outside. But Jesus said that it was inward righteousness that God looked for - not just avoiding external murder, but avoiding inward anger as well; not just avoiding external adultery, but avoiding inward lusting after women as well.

Jesus said that anger and sinful sexual lust were so serious that a person could go to hell for these sins (Matthew 5:22, 29, 30). Most Christians do not take these inward sins seriously - because they are Pharisees. They glory in their external testimony before men. There could be other areas too, where your righteousness is only on the outside. "Man looks on the outside, but God looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7). What other believers think of your spirituality has no value before God. He looks at your thoughts, motives and attitudes. Don't glory in your reputation before people, if your heart is unclean.

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/zac-poonen/pharisees-glory-in-external-righteousness/>

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