

## **Weekly Study of Sunday's Message.**

**Sunday March 27, 2022. "How can our righteousness surpass the Pharisees?"**

### **I Intro.**

Welcome to the weekly devotional that gives you some specific things to work through from the message Sunday. Whether you were able to participate in this service or not, this devotion is free-standing and you can still use it to help you dig deeper into your own spiritual walk. We're now well in 2022 and we've got some big things planned. A great group of familiar and new faces join us each Sunday. Our children's area is expanding and we are retooling our student ministry. We also have many ways you can plug into life at NCC. You can check all that out through our social media sites. We're so encouraged by your love and presence when you gather with us. If you're still joining us online, we love and so appreciate your presence also. We are 100% committed to our virtual attenders. We are your church family, and if there is ANYTHING you need, prayer, ideas or suggestions, please pass them our way. We know the future is still uncertain, but we are committed to making our virtual congregation as central to NCC as our in person group.

### **II Recap.**

We're in our final Sunday of our "***Bible says WHAT?!***" series looking at some of the hard sayings of Jesus. There were a lot of teachings of Jesus that can just be head scratchers. They're vague, confusing, can be interpreted in so many different ways, and at times just plain contradictory. So, we began this study with just some basic, fundamental understandings of how to interpret scripture before we could dive into some of these harder teachings.

**First**, the primary foundation for this series is to create a safe place for us to admit sometimes it's VERY difficult to make sense of what scripture is saying. And how we're supposed to apply it to our everyday life. Scholars and experts over the years have vehemently disagreed about what certain passages and teachings mean just proves this point. Which gives us permission to struggle also.

**Second**, our understanding of scripture is as much rooted in how we were raised, our spiritual background, as it is having a correct understanding. The more honest we are about that, the more honestly we can approach scripture to let it speak to us. That also includes people who didn't grow up in any faith system, and their hesitancy or discomfort with scripture.

**Third**, our conversation around each of these passages will NOT be answers. We want to know the things we're supposed to know or do in order to live how God has called us to. Our understanding of God, scripture, and how to live will always be more a process of continual understanding and growth than just acquiring answers. This is because we have to leave room for the mystery of God. We will never have answers, but we can always be working towards a growing understanding and a relationship. And that's the goal of this series. We need to wrestle with these thoughts about reading scripture before we talk about our righteousness surpassing the Pharisee's.

### **III Sunday.**

Sunday was our final in this "***Bible says WHAT?!***" series. We land on; "*righteousness being better than the Pharisees*" in order to enter the kingdom. This is a hard saying because the little bit we know about the Pharisees, they excelled at excelling. So, a little conversation about being good to be good.

**How was living like a Christian defined when you were young?**

**What were the bad things you were told not to do?**

**What was your understanding of grace and how it fit into your understanding of behavior?**

The scripture for Sunday was short, but loaded with some interesting phrases and truths about Jesus' purpose and relationship to The Law. read **Matthew 5:17-20** and we'll unpack it.

**What jumped out to you from this passage?**

**How do you understand Jesus coming to fulfill The Law?**

**What does having a righteousness that surpasses the Pharisees mean to you?**

Now we're going to have to do a brief explanation of The Law, and then we'll hit Jesus' relationship to it. The term 'The Law' has meant several different things over the years. The Ten Commandments. The entire Torah, (first five books of the O.T.) The 613 other laws that are called Scribal Law. And even the thousands of other laws that came out of those. So, we have to first admit there is no one understanding or definition of The Law. History is rarely as precise and neat as we want it to be. The reason this happened was that the original Ten Commandments were much less specific and detailed as the Israelites needed them to be. And so there were attempts to 'explain' specifically what they were saying. If you want to test this, turn to Exodus 20, and read them for yourself. We want to think we know what they mean, and that they're pretty clear, but when you push to describe exactly what they looked like lived out in your daily life, they fell far short in giving a detailed understanding of what it meant to obey The Law. So, Jewish scholars and religious leaders over the centuries began to define in detail what it meant to; not have any gods before the God, to not make any graven images, what working would look like on the Sabbath and more.

Because of this detailed spelling out of what being righteous looked like, there grew this giant set of rules and laws that became a huge burden to follow. Try the Ten Commandment test for yourselves.

**What does not having any gods before God mean?**

**What does keeping the Sabbath holy look like?**

**What does it mean to honor your parents...specifically?**

My guess is you could come up with a few specifics. But if you compared your list with others they would look differently. Then what? How would you work through those differences? This work did become continual and endless. And so when Jesus came he said two significant things. **One**, he came to fulfill The Law. **Two**, OUR righteousness would have to surpass the Pharisees, whose sole work was to obey at the minimum the 613 laws that the Scribes came up with trying to explain the Ten Commandments. Which Paul addresses in so many of his letters as impossible to do.

We'll address each of these briefly. When Jesus said he came to 'fulfill' The Law, he did not mean to do all of them perfectly. The Greek word for fulfill actually means to return to their original purpose.

The Law wasn't given as a list of specific do's and don'ts. They were given as overarching principles and values the Israelites were supposed to use to build their understanding of living for God.

Second, that means our righteousness surpassing or being better than the Pharisees wasn't doing all of these, but rather living a life designing what living by these principles would look like for us personally. We were to work out our relationship with God, with others, but using these principles.

#### **IV Challenge.**

So, the final challenge is to make the same move Jesus is talking about, and that's from a strict adherence to rules and laws and living under grace to a scriptural set of values and principles that lead us to living fully for God.

**So, as always, what would it look like for you to be guided by spiritual principles rather than obeying a specific list of do's and don'ts?**