

- Live a True Righteousness**
- I. **Righteousness demanded (vs18-20)**
 - II. **Righteousness fulfilled (vs17)**
 - III. **Righteousness to share (vs13-16)**

In the name of him who made us to be the salt and light of the earth, my dear friends.

So you've probably already guessed it. Another sermon on outreach... after all, we heard the Gospel, we are to be salt and light. That means the pastor is going to want me to go talk and someone about Jesus. He will want me to go door-to-door and talk to total strangers about the Bible. But this is more than that! This is more than a sermon on outreach. Did you catch what Jesus said? He did not say, "What if you are salt," or "Let's just suppose you were light," he says, "You are." This is required of you, to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world because this is what God made you. This morning in Matthew's gospel Jesus tells you and me this morning to "Live a true righteousness." First of all, "Righteousness that is demanded."

I. Righteousness demanded (vs18-20)

One day as Jesus was walking from town to town, a rich young prince approached him and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" Notice that Jesus very rarely comes right out and says, "You can't earn heaven!" He leads the individual to see the answer. Jesus said to the young prince, "Obey the commandments." The prince replied, "Which ones?" So Jesus listed off, "Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not bear false testimony. Honor your father and mother. Love your neighbor as yourself." The rich young ruler had the gall to say, "I have kept all these since I was a child." Jesus seals the deal, "If you want to be perfect, go and sell your possessions, give to the poor, follow me and you will have treasure in heaven." The young man forgot about the first commandment. He had made his wealth his god. There were some commandments he decided not to obey.

Do we treat the commandments like an all-you-can-eat buffet? Pick what you like, the steak and potatoes, and "no thanks" to the asparagus and sushi. Which commandments are your favorites to obey? Are there ones you ignore? Maybe you make up your own. Many people of the world live that way.

Do we follow the ways of the rich young ruler and feed our lust for material goods and the pleasures of the flesh and ignore God's will to have pure desires? Do we refuse to forgive because they were the ones who wronged me and ignore God's will to freely forgive and forget? Do we choose to ignore the study of God's Word, and I'm not talking about missing a Sunday here or there, but a despising of the Means of Grace, a persistent refusal of God's gracious will for me, to be in his Word and be fed by his Word? This is righteousness that God demands. Our righteous living needs to be exceedingly good. In fact, Jesus told his disciples, "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees, you will not inherit the kingdom of heaven." Yes, Jesus knew that inwardly they were full of hypocrisy. But outwardly they were the best models of external righteousness! Who could live a holier life than they? It would be like saying, "Your righteousness must surpass that of saintly Grandma so-and-so, or Martin Luther, or the Apostle Paul."

Isn't that what the Apostle Paul tried to do? During his lifetime he was a brilliant young Jewish lawyer, struggling valiantly to keep the law to perfection, "...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; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the

church; as for legalistic righteousness, faultless.” (Phil. 3:5-6), but he was completely frustrated and unable to obtain the righteous life Christ demands.

He admitted, “I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.”¹⁶ And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good.¹⁷ As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me.¹⁸ I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature.^[c] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.¹⁹ For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.” (Romans 7:15-19) What hope is there for us, if the Apostle Paul couldn’t live this righteous life God demands?

II. Righteousness fulfilled (vs17)

We have hope in one Word Christ spoke from the cross, “*Tetelestai*.” Translated into English, “It is finished.” All of the righteous requirements of the law, all of God’s commandments, which he demanded from us, were obeyed by Christ, and he declared their completion from the cross. He did not hand pick the commandments like the Pharisees or like we so often do. He absolutely obeyed them all, without fail, and we have a record of them in His Word.

Like a wonderful joyous refrain, the Gospel writers penned these words, “To fulfill what was said through the prophets, Jesus did this...” Even though Jesus lived in the same world as the rich young ruler, Jesus made God and his Word his one true treasure and his highest priority. Even though Jesus had every reason to withhold forgiveness, he said to those executing him, “Father, forgive them.” Jesus did all of that for you, even the parts about respecting and obeying the government, which is especially appropriate since you’re probably working on your taxes.

What would happen if this April you submitted your 1099s and W2s but said, “I’m going to pay this tax but my money is not going to these taxes this year.” The IRS would come knocking on your door. You are required by law to pay all the taxes your government asks of you. You are required by law, God’s law, to pay for all your sins as well. Jesus did just that. He nailed the payment to the cross; his own body and blood. He did not miss one of your sins. It is finished!

The righteousness demanded, is the righteousness fulfilled, by his life and death. But, we again hear that wonderful refrain, “To fulfill what was said through the prophets...” Jesus rose from death! He’s alive! The IRS will hand you a stamped receipt to show that your taxes are paid in full, “You owe no more... for this year...” Christ’s resurrection was God’s stamp of approval, proving that he accepted his Son’s payment of death, that he accepted his Son’s life of righteousness in your place. All has been paid in full. All of God’s demands have been met. You owe your Father nothing for salvation in heaven. And God hands you the payment through faith.

The Same apostle Paul who lamented that he could not get right with God by his works confessed in Romans 1:17 “For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.” Christ’s righteousness is yours, received through faith. Your faith now clings to that promise of righteousness.

The radio and television have been advertising a new Kentucky lottery game, “Decades of Dollars.” The winner will receive \$250,000 a year for 30 years. Might a offer a better scenario? What if someone offered to pay your taxes from today until the day you died? You would want to share that news with everyone! How much more so the righteousness that is yours? The eternal riches of heaven, the pardon of all sins, the complete payment!

III. Righteousness to share (vs13-16)

Because you are righteous in God's sight through Christ, you will share this righteousness by being salt and light. Jesus said, "You are salt. You are light." That is what you are and what you will be. As the salt of the earth Paul instructs us, "May your conversation be full of grace, and always seasoned with salt." (Col 4.6) People will notice the way we speak to each other, how we interact. We are the salt of the earth and that is what we will be in our words and actions. We will season other people with the gospel message.

Jesus said, "You are light." And one of the ways he described you as light is a city on a hill. Tonight thousands of folks will be flying over the country in airplanes, and some will pass over Louisville, others over St. Louis and some over Chicago. It won't be hard for them to spot these cities with the millions of kilowatts that illuminate the sky, saying, "Here we are!" You are light. And you will reflect the light of Christ to people who are living the darkness of unbelief. Jesus also described you as light that is placed on a table in a home so people won't smack their knees on the end table. As light you will show the way for others. You will point them to Christ came to fulfill as righteousness for the world.

You're right... this was a sermon about outreach, but so much more than that! This is about who you are in Christ. The righteousness God demanded... is the righteousness Christ fulfilled... and this righteousness is ours to share. Amen.