

Matthew 5:17-48

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[0 : 0 0] with me to the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 5. We're going to be in the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 5. Matthew chapter 5, picking it up around verse 17 and going to the end of the chapter, which gets us to verse 48. Doing things a little bit different, which kind of makes me out of my comfort zone this time of year. This time of the year, I typically stop wherever I am at, and sometime following Thanksgiving, I enter into a Christmas series of messages, and we tend to make that way through the month of December, and recount and retell that very, very familiar section of Scripture, which we've read so often, we've heard it so often, we've heard it read to us in Christmas plays and through cantatas, and we're just so familiar with it, but it's always good to stop and to be reminded of that, and I'm used to doing that. Probably the portion of Scripture that I've preached out of more than any other portion of Scripture is the Christmas account, all right? So that's probably one. After 16 years in ministry, I've hit that one just about every year but this year.

So things are a little bit different. The Lord had led us to the Gospel of Matthew, and I was really just convicted of the fact that we just needed to stay the course, and I'm thankful for that. I rejoice in that because I know that He has things He wants to say to us, because the thing that we understand is the Christmas story isn't confined to just a few chapters in Scripture, right? All of the Bible is the Christmas story. The fact that Jesus Christ came to dwell among men and to live the perfect life and to die the perfect death and to pay our price on the Calvary and to be raised again from the dead, that is the story, and the Bible tells but one story, and it is the same thing that is not repeated, really. It's just layers peeled off of, and it's just opened up more and more and more, and we see it in great clarity. But I think that we have those portions of the story, just like any other story that we are drawn to. We like the baby in a manger. We like the shepherds in the field.

We like, at least we would like to think that we like the wise men coming from the east until we really do a lot of detailed studies of who those Magi were. We like these pictures, and we kind of cut off, you know, we cut off the rest of the story of when the Magi came from the east, you know, the part after they leave. We cut off what Herod did after that because it's kind of ugly and hideous, and we cut off the fact that after this babe was laid in a manger, they also had to flee and go into Egypt, and we tend to trim and portion the story we like. But when we read all of Scripture, we begin to see the weight of it because the baby who came in a manger is the same one who's coming wearing white, riding the horse victoriously in the book of Revelation. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords. And Matthew shows us, here's your King, right? The way He came humbles us when we realize who it is that came. The fact that He was born and laid in a manger, the fact that the shepherds were the first to hear, the fact that it was the prophetess Anna in the temple who proclaimed who He was, the fact that all these things resonate in the story are just magnified with the reality that this is the King of kings and Lord of lords who has come. This is not just some other child. That this is Emmanuel. This is God with us. And that is why I'm thankful that God has allowed us to stay physically able and desire to do so. Would you join with me as we stand together and we read the Word of God found in Matthew chapter 5, picking up verse 17. We're going to go to the end of the fifth chapter and we're going to go down to verse 48. Now you understand that we are in the very beginning of the Sermon on the Mount.

We have gotten through the first portions of Matthew chapter 5, which includes the Beatitudes and then you are the salt and you are the light, those emphatic commands. And now we're going to pick it up here in the 17th verse and read the remainder of the chapter. This is Jesus speaking, by the way, as the bulk of the Beatitudes are until we get to the very end. This is Christ, the King Himself, telling us these things.

[4 : 1 6] Do not think that I came to abolish the law of the prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law until all is accomplished. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever keeps and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that the ancients were told you should not commit murder, and whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court. But I say to you, that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court. And whoever says to his brother, you good for nothing, shall be guilty before the supreme court. And whoever says, you fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. Therefore, if you are presenting your offering at the altar and there, remember that your brother has something against you. Leave your offering there before the altar and go.

First be reconciled to your brother and then come and present your offering. Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer and you be thrown into prison. Truly, I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent. You have heard that it was said you should not commit adultery. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to stumble, tear it out and throw it from you. For it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you. For it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. It was said, whoever sends his wife away, let him give her a certificate of divorce. But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife except for the reason of unchastity makes her commit adultery. And whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Again, you have heard that the ancients were told you should not make false vows. You shall fulfill your vows to the Lord. But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is a throne of God, or by the earth, for it is a footstool of his feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your statement be yes, yes, or no, no, anything beyond this or these is of the evil. You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. But I say to you, do not resist an evil person. Whoever slaps you in the right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him too. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you. You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he causes his son to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

Verse 48, therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. And God, we praise you for the opportunity to gather together to hear your word. We thank you for the great privilege which it is. And we'll pray that you would speak to us now. God, may it be your voice and not the voice of man that is heard. May it be by the power and presence of your spirit that we come to a greater understanding of who you are.

And Lord Jesus, we just ask that you would have your perfect way, and we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen. As I said in the introduction, it is probably one of the most unlikely of Christmas stories that you would hear this time of the year, because it's really not a Christmas story, but it is a story about Christ. It is really the teachings of Christ, and it is the thing which we read so often. And it has been said that if man could ever attain to the standards set forth in this one message, the Sermon on the Mount, then society would be perfect and man would have no problems.

[8 : 23] The reality, we need to go ahead and make this declaration before we even begin. We, on our own strength, can never, ever, ever live up to the high standards set forth from us by the Sermon on the Mount. Much like we are confronted with that reality in the Decalogue or the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament, we find a standard much too high in which man can live in his own strength. But the difference between Moses' delivery of the standard in the Old Testament and the delivery of the king in the New Testament, who is Jesus, is that Jesus is going to die so that man may be enabled and empowered to live by that standard. And he is not only highlighting a deficiency, but he is highlighting a need. So when we come to these passages, we stand in great

need of the Savior who is declaring them to us. But I want you to see this morning the high standard of the king. Matthew is the bold declarer of the king is here. The king is present. He is writing to his audience, his intended audience, and we say this quite often so that we may be able to take it in its proper context, because we don't want to take something out of context. We don't want to make an assumption about something and make it say something that it doesn't say. But Matthew is writing to a primarily Jewish audience. He is writing to an audience who is looking for a coming monarch. He is writing to an audience who was anticipating and praying and hoping and longing for this coming king. He was looking for a people who needed a king. And he is declaring to them, the king has come. And here he is, and he is raising him up. Think of the irony of this. Matthew himself is writing this, right? He is writing these teachings. He is the man that God is empowered by the presence of his spirit. So the men of God were moved by the spirit of God to write the word of God. And Matthew here, in order, now I'm just completely sidetracking here for a moment, but you will bear with me, right? Matthew is writing, if someone's actions are just like everybody else, he is doing just what the tax collectors do. He is acting just like a tax collector. He is belittling tax collectors. That should seem a little ironic to us, because Matthew by trade was what? A tax collector.

Right? He's like, that's just what I did as a tax collector, right? So he's not belittling people. He's putting himself in that same grouping, and he's putting himself there. But what he is showing us throughout the gospel is the king is here. The king is present. You remember when John the Baptist came, and he came declaring, the kingdom of heaven is near. The kingdom of heaven is near. The kingdom of heaven is near. Jesus shows up, and Jesus' declaration is not, the kingdom of heaven is near. Jesus declares the kingdom of heaven is here. Because wherever the king is, so too is the kingdom. Now, each king that ascends to authority, each king that ascends to reign, comes with his own expectations or his own standards of how things will take place within the realm of his kingdom. He alone gets to dictate. We need to understand that it is not a democratic society. The kingdom of heaven, or the kingdom of God, is not a democracy, which means we don't get a vote. So we just need to go ahead and put that out there from the very beginning. Because much of what God declares about his kingdom, man would vote out. Let's just be honest about it, right? We don't get to cast a vote. We get to be loyal subjects to that which has already been declared. So it is not a democracy. It is not even a monarchy. It is a theocracy. That is, it is God who sits on the throne. And he comes, this king comes with this standard of expectation. And he is beginning to lay it out for us here. He has given us the beatitudes, or as we have seen, the actions and the attitudes which should be in the heart of every individual. And as we read that list of beatitudes, we are reminded, I am not always meek.

I am not always calm, right? I am not always merciful. I am not always gracious and kind. I am not always humble. I do not always hunger and thirst for righteousness. Each one of those beatitudes, if we are to be honest, there is some point in life where we say, this is not being displayed right now in my life. But it should be our goal and our aim to reflect each of these beatitudes through our life. And now he moves from who we are internally to what we look like externally. Because the internal will always affect the external. Okay? You can be a certain way on the outside for a while, but eventually what is on the inside will come out. And the internal always affects the external. So to put it another way, who we are matters a whole lot more than what we do. Okay? Because the king is more concerned about who we are internally than what it is we are doing externally. Who we are to the very core of our being is always more important than what we are doing for others to see. And we see this even in the high standard that he sets. Three truths that

I want you to see from this standard. Number one, we see there is the endorsement of the law. There is the endorsement of the law. Now we would assume, or man at least assumes, that when the king comes, the king is going to change everything. The king is going to do some things he may hold on to, some things he's going to completely do away with. But everything is going to change under this new rule or reigning of the king. He says in verse 17, just very emphatically and very clearly, do not think that I came to abolish the law. Do not think that I came to abolish the law or the prophets. I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. Now, first of all, we need to just pump the brakes right there and pay close attention to this. Okay? Now, stay with me. Those of you that are with me on Sunday nights and Wednesday nights, understand this is a pretty big deal with me.

[14:15] You understand that I think this is a major issue. Those of you that have heard me on Sunday mornings for any amount of time know that this is a big deal with me. We do not have two

different portions of Bibles. We do not have a New Testament and we do not have an Old Testament. We have the Bible that has been divided up for us so that we can read it and understand it, right? And now, I don't want to say we don't have it. We do have a New Testament and an Old Testament, but what I'm trying to say is we don't have a God of the Old Testament and a God of the New Testament. We don't have two stories.

We have one grand story told in a number of ways, right? We have one grand story told over and over again. Sometimes it is told in historical writings because some of us like history. Sometimes it is told in literature because some of us like little nuggets of wisdom. Sometimes it's told to us in poetic form because the Lord bless you and he has equipped you with some poetry or some musical connotations which completely are not mine and you can understand the poetry and you can understand the rhythm and the poetic form of that. Some of you can really understand Song of Solomon's a lot better than the rest of us. Some of us, when we read Song of Solomon's, we're like, boy, I better not read this when the kids are in the room, right? Because I don't really know what's going on here, but it seems a little risqué for me. But we understand he's telling this one great love story, right? Over and over and over again.

Sometimes he tells it to us in little nuggets of the Old Testament prophets. Sometimes he tells us great extensive nuggets of Old Testament prophets. We have the difference between Obadiah and Isaiah.

We have the difference in all these books. Some of them we don't understand. Sometimes he tells us this great story in vengeance where people are saying, you know, they're going to die. They're going to be cut off. They're going to the cows of Bashan. And we're like, man, God can even talk like that.

And but we just, we're like, what in the world's going on? But it's this great story that's being told over. And over again. All I'm trying to tell you is be sure you don't throw away half of your Bibles when you come to this king. Because Jesus himself said, did not think that I came to discount or to remove or to discard the law and the prophets. You know, when he made that declaration, Matthew is writing to the Jewish people and the Jewish people would have completely been aware of the reality of what he is saying. As soon as he said the law and the prophets, he would have said the entirety from Genesis to Malachi. That would have encompassed all of the Old Testament.

[16:40] Because the law included in their writings, now it wasn't just the law of the Ten Commandments. The law was all the writings of Moses and the prophets were all the writings of the prophets, which would also include the historical books that we have in there, like 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and Nehemiah and Ezra and all these.

Those were kind of wrapped up in there. Jesus said, I didn't come to do away with all of that. I came to fulfill it. This is why, friend, just listen to me.

We need to know who he is. And while the New Testament does a wonderful job of introducing us to this king, it is only when we dive into the Old Testament that we see just how great a king he is. And we begin to get the depth of that. And we begin to get the... I mean, the book of Leviticus is a great book. But when you open up the book of Leviticus, and we've said it before, most of us wouldn't make it through the first two chapters without being stoned.

Because we find ourselves guilty. We're guilty of all. We're guilty of the standard. We're guilty. And that is exactly the point. We need someone greater than us. We need someone more than us.

[17:55] But one thing we find about this king is this king comes with a raging endorsement of all. He said, does that not come to do away with? You say, well, wait a minute. We're no longer legalistic.

We're no longer... We don't, you know, conform. We read the book of Hebrews, and we have another high priest. We have a greater high priest. We no longer have to do temple worship and all this sacrificial stuff.

And we don't have to bring our offerings to the altar, right? Because Jesus didn't abolish it. He fulfilled it. Some portions of the Old Testament we no longer... We no longer... We don't... I don't say we don't profess.

We no longer practice. Some portions of the Old Testament we no longer practice because they have been fulfilled. Every sacrifice finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. Every form of temple worship finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

Every imagery in the Old Testament finds its fulfillment in Jesus Christ. The menorah that was built that went into... Remember the golden lampstand and the candle that was inside the temple?

Remember that? And it was to be lit each day, and it was to stay lit continually, and it was to always be there.

[18 : 57] And there was to be this great light that was inside the tabernacle, and then later on inside the temple. Do you remember that when Jesus went to the Festival of Lights, which was a celebration of Hanukkah about this time of year, and their whole reason for joining together and celebrating that Festival of Lights was the celebration of the intertestament time of the Maccabean Revolt, where they lit the candle, or that golden lampstand, or that menorah that was in Old Testament imagery, and Jesus went to the Festival of Lights, and it is recorded in the Gospel of John.

We read it this morning in one of the ornaments that we have on our tree, where Jesus says, I am the light of the world. Do you know when he said that? He said that when he went to the Festival of Lights among the Jewish people, where they were celebrating the lighting of the menorah, and he stood up and said, I am the light.

The whole reason there's even a candle in the Old Testament is because it is pointing to the reality of the illumination found in Jesus Christ. He is that, the water. He says, I am the living water. I am the bread of life. I am the lamb that is slain. I am the ashes of the red heifer who can cleanse it. I am those things. He fulfilled it.

He didn't discard it. These are great truths which we need to be reminded of. These are things that ought to captivate our attention. There's a lot more to the Christmas story than just a child coming and being laid in a manger, right?

[20 : 17] There's all these things that we see. There is this endorsement of the law. He says, I didn't come to discard it. I didn't come to abolish it. Because he says in verse 18, For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke.

That's, by the way, the smallest character in the Hebrew language, which is kind of like a hyphen in our language. He said, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Be careful. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same 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.

So what is that saying? Friends, listen to me. Let's bring some application now. When you open up the Old Testament and you are discussing the Old Testament with another individual, maybe an unbeliever or a non-believer or a new believer, we need to be careful here.

Do not tell someone in the Old Testament, oh, that no longer matters to us. But rather say this, my Savior has already accomplished that. Big difference. Because the moment we begin to say that something doesn't matter, we are discounting it.

[21 : 23] Rather, it is more accurate to say that's already been fulfilled. Every law, every commandment, every standard ever declared by a holy God matters.

The reality is much of it's been fulfilled. Only then do we get to see the king as he really is. It matters.

It still matters. Each and every thing God has declared. Each and every truth. Each and every thing. Which means this. If you don't live life under the king, then you're living life under that expectation. Because only by submitting to the king do you have the fulfillment of that law. Either you're seeking to fulfill the Old Testament by yourself, or you're rejoicing in the reality that your Messiah and your Savior Jesus has fulfilled it for you.

That is the only two camps you can live in. He did not do away with it. He came to fulfill it. And we get to rejoice in the fulfillment of it. So you have the endorsement of the law.

[22 : 25] Number two, you have the elevated standard. The elevated standard. Look at what he says. And it should catch us by surprise. Just as much as it probably caught the people who heard it for the first time by surprise.

And the people who would have written the writing of Matthew for the first time by surprise. Because he says this in verse 20. For I say to you, for I say to you, unless your righteousness. Now righteousness means being right standing with God, right? That's what righteousness is. One who is in right standing with God. Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now we're on this side of the cross. We're on this side of the Pharisees handing Jesus over to Herod. We're on this side of the Pharisees leading the crowd or inciting the crowd to claim, crucify him, crucify him.

We're on this side of Calvary where the Pharisees are placing a guard at the tomb. We're on this side of the cross. But understand this. In the time of Jesus, when he made this declaration, and even when Matthew wrote this, the scribes and the Pharisees were the pinnacle of obedience.

[23 : 38] And we should rejoice in the scribes and the scribal tradition. Because without the work of the scribes and the Pharisees, which are normally connected together, we would not have our scriptures. Because it is the hand copying of the scribes that preserved the accuracy of the word of God.

These were the individuals who would say that they were probably giving it their best effort to do all that God had commanded them to do. These were individuals who took the commandments found in the Old Testament and really just broke it down into such a minute detail.

They could tell you how far you could walk, how much you could carry, and maybe you could do this, but you couldn't do that. It's something that some of it was so ridiculous. One of the Mishnah was the oral law, and it was eventually wrote down into the Talmud, which is the recording law. And it said this, like, okay, you could keep a cover over the udder of your goat if you didn't, was trying to keep it dry, like if you had a milk goat. On the Sabbath day, you could keep a cover around the udder to keep the udder dry, but if you collected milk and kept that milk that fell in that udder, then you were working.

They were really splitting frog hairs. I mean, I don't know a better way of saying it, but I mean, that's what they were doing, right? I mean, their details, like, you could do this, and that was fine, but if you did this, then all of a sudden it becomes work.

[24 : 58] And so you can't work on the Sabbath, where most people are like, well, what difference does it matter? It mattered to them. They wanted to be pleasing to God. They longed to have a righteousness that was right, so let's be careful how quick we discount them.

In today's terminology, it'd be like, well, if I give to the church, and I read my daily Bible reading program, and I'm sure that I pray enough, and I'm sure that I'm faithful, and I'm there every time the church doors are open, and I make sure that all this is going, then I can put all my check marks down, and everything's going fine.

I'm going to make sure I conform it to all the images and all the expectations, and now all of a sudden it becomes a legalistic conformity rather than an overflow of heart desire. This is where we begin to see the elevated standard, because what Jesus is saying here is, it's not so much about you doing the right thing.

It's about us being the right people. Right? It's not so much about legalistic, accurate obedience as it is about a broken and conformed heart of desire.

It's not so much about what we do on the outside, but it's about who we are on the inside. And he takes it from an outward display to an inward reality.

[26 : 17] Because man's pretty good about putting on a show. Right? We're pretty good about putting on a show. I remember the first times I, well, I think it was actually the first time here, when they came here as pastor, the church at Normandy paid on a weekly basis, which was good and bad.

If the treasurer remembered to give the pastor a check, then you got a check. If the treasurer forgot because it's busy, then you didn't get a check, and you just kind of prayed, because it was never my habit of asking. I just really just kind of left it, well, maybe it'll come.

But when I came here, we're trying to do things a little bit different. I pay on a monthly basis, right? So on outward, it looks just a little bit different. But thankful things are real planned here, and you get it a certain day every month.

You got it. You got it. The first time I was paid here on a monthly basis, of course, you got to keep in mind, this church doesn't operate. We're not one of these mega churches, right? So we're not printing our churches. I would just like a regular check, just like you would have in your checkbook. For those of you who don't know what a checkbook is, find someone over 40, and we'll tell you what a checkbook is. And you would write a check, and you have to sign it at the bottom, right? You didn't Venmo it. You didn't do any of that stuff.

[27 : 30] You didn't just drop me something on my phone. Yeah, give me a piece of paper. And so we would write it out. You know, the church writes it out, and it's signed, and it's given, and it just

has World Trace Baptist Church.

And I remember the first time I had that, Carrie and I happened to meet at Murfreesboro. I said, well, okay, well, I'm going to go deposit the money in the bank. So I walked into the bank, and I'm not going to tell you where I bank yet, because that's where our problem is.

But anyway, so I walked into one of the local branches of the bank, and I gave it, and you had to send it through the tube there. You couldn't even talk to tellers, which, again, for those of us who was 40, I'm one of those old people now. I want to see somebody face to face, right?

Anyway, so I send it through the little tube, and I'm sitting there, and the teller comes back, and she's like, sir, I can't deposit this check. I said, what do you mean? And she was just looking at me. She's like, I don't know.

I said, listen, just because I have a T-shirt on and blue jeans, and I'm probably wearing a chainsaw hat right now, does not mean I'm not a pastor. Right? She was just convinced that I was writing checks from the church's checkbook.

[28 : 32] Somebody had dropped a checkbook, and I had wrote myself a check, and I was about to lose it. I was like, ma'am, I'm not trying to be rude or anything here, and I'm really trying to keep my ministry. But if we don't deposit that check, I'm going to be in trouble for a month.

You understand what I'm saying? I mean, at the last church, we could talk about it, but here we're going to be in a mess. And finally, I convinced her that I was something different internally than I was externally.

Because pastors don't always wear suits and ties. We would die if we did. It doesn't work that way. This one doesn't anyway, right? I mean, I can't look like this all the time. I'm sweating profusely right now. I wouldn't make it.

But it is who we are internally that matters so much more than what we look like externally.

Because man is pretty good about putting on a show when we want to.

And man is pretty good about looking like we want to look at times. And I'm sure if I had went into that bank dressed like this, there would probably not have been much of a question about it.

[29 : 38] But it's because we look at the external. But Jesus here is elevating the standard because he says, you have to do more than look right. You have to do more than put on the good show.

You have to do more than dress it up. The Pharisees literally had the boxes on their foreheads, the philanthropy on their, the hem of their garment. They had the bells and the tassels and the prayer shawls.

I mean, they looked the parts. Jesus says it's not about looking the part, right? It's not about the show. It's not about that. It's about who we are.

And he drives the point home with his interpretation of a number of law. This is the meat of it. All that to say that. He says, oh, do not murder.

That means you don't kill anybody, right? No, that's not what that means. It means you don't harbor hatred. You don't say you're good for nothing. You're a raka. You're a fool. It's who you are in the heart.

[30 : 40] It matters so much more than what you do externally. Do not commit adultery. That means, well, I'm not committing adultery. Oh, now wait a minute. Internally, what are you doing on the inside? Are you plotting and scheming and trying? And whoever looks with less than their eyes is already committing adultery.

Don't do that. He says it's not what you're doing outside. You can't push the limits. It's who you are internally, right? And he's every one of them, every one of them.

Whoever asked to go one mile, go with him too. One mile was the legal expectation that a Roman soldier could require of you. And a Roman soldier could also require of you to give him your tunic. And Jesus says, go above and beyond that. Don't just fulfill the letter of the law. Move to the intent of the law. See, there's so many people that open up the Bible and say, okay, what does God expect of me?

Okay, I'm going to try to do that today. And if I do that today, everything will be okay. That's fulfilling the letter. That's not what Jesus is saying. Jesus is saying, don't do what God expects of you. Be who God has called you to be.

[31 : 40] Be so much different on the inside that you cannot help but look different on the outside. And that's an elevated standard.

Because no longer are we talking about a list of do's and don'ts and stays and stops and all this other stuff, right? We're not talking about put a check mark here, put a check mark now. Because to be the person we ought to be on the inside requires a humble submission to the king himself.

And to meet the standard? I mean, the standard that says that someone who laps you on the right cheek turned to him on the left also? The standard who says, don't just pray for those who love you, pray for those who hate you?

You know, the standard that says this, you know the one against me, and it's got me a couple of times throughout my Christian walk. The standard that says that if you're bringing your sacrifice to the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, lay your sacrifice down and first go be reconciled to your brother.

You know what that doesn't say? It doesn't say if you remember you have something against your brother. It says if you remember that your brother has something against you. You know why that's always got me?

[32 : 51] Because it's no longer, I mean, I could be at peace with everybody, but someone may be at this peace with me. So then all of a sudden, the responsibility doesn't wait on me. I'm going to wait at the altar until he comes and reconciles. No, it says I must take the initiative to go be reconciled.

Those are hard things. I've had to do them a couple of times. I mean, I've lived that out. Lived it out in, you know, personally. Those are hard things. It's this standard that it's an inward battle.

Because to be honest with you, it is real easy to go, well, I haven't done anything. I don't want to do anything. I'd rather not. And the Spirit says, but it's not really about the doings and what you have done and what you haven't done.

It's not about your actions, right? It's about what's going on inside of here. Remember how I told you to begin with that none of us could live up to this standard? Welcome to that world where none of us can live up to that standard.

This is the king we serve, right? So we see the elevated standard. Let's close with this and I'll be done. The expected behavior. I know I've went a little bit long, but we have this expected behavior and it's one simple phrase.

[33 : 59] It's there at the end in verse 48. This is all that's expected of the king. Therefore, because of all these things, therefore, you are to be perfect as your heavenly father is perfect.

Now, what that means, what that means, perfect does not mean sinlessness. It does not mean sin free. It does not mean that there shouldn't be anything wrong with you, that you shouldn't stumble, that you shouldn't fall occasionally.

That does not mean perfect as regards to sin because none of us would be that, right? The word perfect there means complete. Be whole. Be complete.

To be full. To be filled up. We ought to find, and I'll end with this, the people of the kingdom find their completion in the king himself.

Not in what they do and don't do. Not in their own actions. Not in their own attitudes. We find our completion in the king.

[35 : 05] We find our completion in Christ. And we ought to be complete, full, perfect, acceptable as our heavenly father in heaven is perfect.

Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we give you all the praise, all the glory, and all the honor. Lord, we realize even in this message, Lord, that there's a standard set that we cannot adhere to or live up to on our own.

So, Lord, may we find our completion, our perfection in you. May we come with an attitude of surrender, of humility, of desiring to live obediently for your glory, not our recognition.

Lord, may it all be for your praise. We ask it all in Christ's name. Amen. Amen.

Thank you.

[37 : 14] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.