

Deeper Righteousness (Matthew 5:17-48)

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Preacher: William HC

[0 : 00] Cool. So just before we get into sermon, I will just read part of the passage that we're talking about today. So the passage I think Pastor William is going to talk about today is Matthew 5, 17-48, but I'll just read that first part.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the law until everything is accomplished.

Therefore, anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven. But whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. Cool. So with that, I invite Pastor William to share his word.

Thank you. Good afternoon, everyone.

[1 : 26] Forgive me, my voice is wonderfully shot from singing together with church morning and night. So praise God. Yeah. So I'm going to pray and then we're going to get into what God's word has to say to us.

Let's pray. Father, your word is good. And so we want to come thirsty and hungry, ready to learn from you. These are challenging words from the Lord Jesus.

And so, Father, would you help us to listen and to pursue deeper righteousness that fulfills your law. Help us to learn how we can live as whole children of our Heavenly Father.

Father, be with us as we look through your word, as we glean from it. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen. This is an Edmunds cookbook.

Who's got one at home? Anyone? Yeah, a few. Okay. Another test of how Kiwi you are, I guess, if you have this at home. This is a Kiwi staple, first published in 1908 by Thomas Edmunds, still New Zealand's most popular book.

[2 : 35] Edmunds used to send them out for free, okay, if you were a housewife or if you were getting engaged. You would get one of these books, right, because you need to know how to make meatloaf and Anzac biscuits and leek and potato soup.

All kinds of recipes in here, right? Over 250 pages full of everyday recipes, right? And step-by-step instructions, tips on how to make them, right?

So recipe book, Edmunds, right? Quality stuff. I'll put it down here, otherwise Dominique will sing for him afterwards. By mistake. And now, this is a TV show.

It's called Iron Chef. Who's watched Iron Chef before? Yeah, okay. All right. Hey, Ray. Good to see you. Iron Chef was a show that first came out in Japan in 1993.

It's actually the grandfather of every good cooking show you've ever seen on TV, okay? In this show, there's a wacky billionaire, reclusive Japanese dude called Chairman Kaga, and he invites top chefs from all around the world to compete in his kitchen stadium against one of his Iron Chefs, okay?

[3 : 40] And each episode, chefs are given 60 minutes, and they're meant to cook a multi-course meal around a theme ingredient that's only revealed at the start of the show. Look, the point of the show, right, is not you watch that and then you learn how to make, you know, lobster entree, lobster main, lobster dessert.

But the point of the show is meant to inspire you and to challenge you to see ingredients like a lobster or sometimes the theme ingredient was truffle, I think there was one episode, corn or even

asparagus in a new light, to inspire and challenge you.

And I say all this because in our passage today, Matthew 5, 17 to the end of chapter 5, Jesus, as he preaches from the mountain, he is not just reading out an Edmund's cookbook recipe, okay?

We're going to hear from him more like six Iron Chef shows to inspire us, to inspire us and challenge us to deeper righteousness, right?

Deeper righteousness. Did you hear what he said, right? Unless your righteousness surpasses the Pharisees and the teachers, you won't be in the kingdom of heaven. So what is this deeper righteousness? That's what we're wanting to look into today.

[4 : 49] And the moment I say the word righteous, some of you might be like, oh, I'm not sure exactly what you mean, right? It's not a word that we use, okay, outside of church. That's okay. But maybe if I ask you this question, what does a real Christian look like on the inside?

How do they live out a life that is following Jesus? What is a righteous Christian? Not righteous in the same sense that you're allowed and embarrassing to everyone around you.

What does a real Jesus follower look like? How does that person live? Maybe you're not a Christian here. Maybe you've watched other Christians. What does righteousness look like?

Perhaps you are following Jesus today and you're just wondering, what does it look like? What does it mean to follow Jesus day by day? What is deeper righteousness? And as he preaches on the Sermon on the Mount, he does not just give you an old rule to follow.

He doesn't list you rule after rule that you must follow. He actually says here, look, I'm going to whip up a feast, a feast of teaching to whet our appetites, to make us hunger and long for deeper righteousness.

[5 : 59] Last week we heard in the Sermon on the Mount, right? Jesus wants his disciples to pursue true blessing, true flourishing. And this happens when you have upside down character, character that's opposite to the world.

And it happens as we are clearly present in our society as citizens of heaven's kingdom, salt and light amidst a world that may not like you, may despise you, may ignore you.

And I know today's section is a bit longer. It's 31 verses. But I want to tell you it all hangs together.

Let me tell you how. Because from verses 17 to 48, we really just hear Jesus do three things.

He does the first thing. He introduces what deeper righteousness is. Okay? Righteousness that fulfills the law and the prophets from verses 17 to 20. And then through the bulk of the rest of the chapter, he gives six real life recipes, right, that will inspire deeper righteousness in you and in me. And then finally, he ends the chapter with a verse that just challenges with a call to be whole, like our heavenly Father is whole. So please have your Bibles open and we'll follow along.

[7 : 10] Imagine if you could that, we're talking about food, right? Imagine that Matthew 5, 17 to 48, it's like an epic burger. I don't know if you've tried to down one of those before. Okay? Sometimes they get really thick.

Okay? The six real life examples, they're kind of like the filling. Okay? And then it's just kind of hanging together, right, with the first point, what is deeper righteousness? And our last point, our challenge to be whole.

That's how our chapter hangs together. So hang in there with me. Okay, we're going to dive right in. Let's have a look. There's first, Jesus talks about deeper righteousness. Deeper righteousness that fulfills the law.

I wonder if you've worked in a company where you join, you sign the dotted line, and then as you started your first week of work, you started to learn all these house rules. Anyone have that experience?

Unspoken rules or practices. They're not really on your employee contract, but you learn them as time goes on. Yep, you've got to speak to so-and-so. She handles HR. Or, yep, on Fridays we dress more casual, that sort of thing.

[8 : 09] I remember when I went to school in McLean's. It wasn't in the school rules, but there was this one-meter rule that everyone talked about, and I couldn't find it. So, unspoken rules that develop over time.

And in a similar way, after hundreds of years, the family business of Judaism and sons, the Jewish religion, had taken God's instructions, found in the law and the prophets, that's what Jesus says here, what we now call the Old Testament.

They'd taken all these rules, and they started to add more around it, throwing in all kinds of new do's and don'ts, extra fencing, extra unspoken rules, and red tape.

I think their intentions were good. They were meant to kind of protect God's people from breaking the rules that were actually in the Bible. But after a while, these rules started to take a life of their own.

And so when Jesus comes in and starts bringing in his new kingdom, people want to know, Jesus, are you going to be a good Jew? What are you going to do with all these words of Moses and all these other rules that we follow daily in our lives?

[9 : 14] And what does Jesus say? Have a look again, verse 17. Don't think I've come to abolish the law or the prophets. I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

And I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen will by any means disappear from the law until everything is fulfilled. He's clear, right?

He's not here to break all the rules. He's here not to abolish the law, but to fulfill the law. Now, can anyone remember, where have we heard the word fulfill before Matthew's gospel?

Anyone? It just popped up over and over again, didn't it, in the early chapters, right? This happened to fulfill what was spoken to the prophets.

This happened in Jesus' life to fulfill what was spoken to the prophets. So what was fulfilled here was said through the prophets. You remember all that in chapter 2? And remember how, as we talked about it, fulfill can sometimes mean, like, it happened exactly as predicted.

[10 : 16] But sometimes, this word originally in Greek also means to bring an idea or hope to completion. And so to follow King Jesus, we need to read our Bibles like He does.

So what He's saying here is that we don't just pluck Bible verses from the Old Testament and then wave them around without asking how it's fulfilled through Jesus. That was what the Pharisees were doing, as we'll see soon.

Okay? Every part of God's Word, the law and the prophets, whether it's from Leviticus or Lamentations, it needs to be seen through the lens of Jesus like glasses you put on so you can see straight.

King Jesus keeps the law, fulfills the law, until everything is accomplished in Him. And in verse 19, He reminds us, to be great in the kingdom of heaven, He invites us to learn His way of living.

He's more interested, I think, in teaching about righteousness that's greater in quality and not just quantity. Okay? Have a look at verse 20 again. For I tell you, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

[11 : 29] And what's going on is this. While many of the Pharisees, they were good at keeping rules on the outside, they did it without true repentance and change on the inside.

And the Lord Jesus says, I've come to call my followers to righteousness that goes deep. I don't want just good behavior. That's not what I'm here for. I want good hearts, new hearts.

Some of us, friends, live our lives as if we're half a McChicken and half a Big Mac. Our outside's one thing, our inside's something else. That's shallow righteousness. Jesus says, if you want to be truly whole, truly righteous, your behavior and your heart needs to match up in line with our Father in heaven.

That's the meaning of deeper righteousness. And then so the rest of the chapter, he actually really just expands on this theme of what does deeper righteousness look like?

And to flesh out this principle, the Lord Jesus, as a good preacher, he gives six real-life examples, practical real-life issues that people in his audience, first-century Jewish people, would have been facing back in the day.

[12 : 40] And again, think of these not as rules that we must follow letter by letter, okay, so that we can be right with God. That's the wrong way to read them. These are recipes to inspire in us deeper righteousness for today.

And there's a common pattern as he teaches, and this will help us to kind of see all six as a whole, okay? See if you can spot it. Let me read the first one, and then I'll show you.

Again, anyone who says to his brother, Raka, is answerable to the Sanhedrin, but anyone who says, You fool, will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Therefore, if you're offering your gift at the altar, and there you remember your brother has something against you, leave your gift. Go to your brother. First go and be reconciled, then come

and offer your gift.

And settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you're still with him on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

[13:49] I tell you the truth, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny. And so what's happening here? What's happening here is this. He has this pattern that he repeats six times almost.

First he quotes the existing Jewish law, okay? The rule or the fencing, okay, that people are thinking about. Then he explains the deeper meaning behind it.

And then he gives some application, okay? Think of it like a traffic light drink, okay? It's three colors, okay? And so there's like the original rule, okay, or law that he's talking about. And then Jesus says, look, I'm going to tell you what this really means, deeper, okay?

Not just on the surface. And then finally he gives some applications, okay? This is how you can live this deeper righteousness out. And he does it for anger, and we're going to see him do it for five other topics, okay?

So what does deeper righteousness look like with the rule, do not murder? Well, firstly, we need to say this. When Jesus says, but instead, in verse 22, he's not saying it's now okay to murder, right?

[14:57] Obviously. So don't read the but that way, okay? It's perhaps better to read it like this.

You've heard it said, don't murder. And then Jesus is saying, yep, but I'm also saying to you, okay?

Does that make sense? Jesus is in full agreement with the Old Testament law. He's not replacing it. He wants us to go deeper. Because you and I may have never grabbed a knife and stabbed someone until they died.

But if you are angry with someone, if you call them a moron or an egg, if you swear at them on the inside, if you say they're an idiot, or if you talk about them behind their back, whatever your form of anger, you are suffering from the same heart problem as someone who has murdered someone.

Does that make sense? It's not just axe murderers who are unrighteous. If in your heart, you wish someone didn't exist, if you gossip behind their back, if you just vent at them or about them, that is wrong.

And Jesus says, worthy of eternal judgment in hell. And so can you see that the righteousness that Jesus demands goes deeper? To fulfill all righteousness, Jesus says we have to confront the anger in our hearts, not just in our fists.

[16:10] And this could play out in so many ways, right? Jesus gives some application for his listeners back in the day. But what about us? Maybe you've come to church for years and you still don't really want to talk to that person.

He really made you really upset one time. And you've just left it there and you don't want to talk to him again. Verse 24, what would you do instead? Instead of coming here and worshipping week after week, pretending there's nothing wrong, leave your gift at the altar and go.

First be reconciled to your brother. Then come and worship. I'm sure a church family this size, three congregations, different age groups, we are bound to have disagreements and conflicts over time. May we never be like the Pharisees, satisfied that we haven't killed each other here at PCBC.

That's not deeper righteousness, friends. Our Lord wants our insides to match our outside behaviour, to forgive one another quickly, to reconcile with a sister or brother who has hurt you, so that we can worship God wholeheartedly before it brings more sorrow.

So yes, you shall not murder. And yet, we need to live lives that are not just avoiding murder, but avoiding any sense in our hearts that we hate someone.

[17:29] To be pure in action, but pure in heart too. Does that make sense? Deeper righteousness. That's what we're being called to. That's what Jesus wants from us. Let's have a look at recipe two.

Verse 27, you have heard it was said, Do not commit adultery. But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out. Throw it away. It's better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off.

Throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell. And you may not struggle with anger issues, but I'm sure lust is something that all of us have

struggled with at some stage.

And I know it's not just guys. It's girls too. And so while Jesus begins, again, he quotes a commandment, right? The seventh commandment, you shall not commit adultery.

[18:40] He then draws a deeper point. He says this, God sees and he cares not just about who you sleep with in real life, but also who you desire in your heart.

A human tendency when it comes to lust and sexuality is to push back and say, it's just too high a bar, right? How can we live like that? Maybe you might protest and you might say, does that mean if I've looked at someone longingly, have I already committed adultery?

No, Jesus, again, remember, he's not saying that the two are exactly the same, but he's saying both matter. Or maybe you might argue back and say, no, no, that time when we were together, we were thinking pure happy thoughts.

What we were doing is okay. Look, we don't need to play these games because Jesus' teaching is so much simpler than that. Whether your struggle is with pornography or sexting, flirting or friends or benefits, Jesus' point is the same.

Deeper righteousness is a matter of your hearts, not just your actions. The correct question, therefore, if we want to apply this to our lives, is not how far is too far.

[19:53] The correct question really is this. Can I pursue this from a pure, whole heart? Honestly, can I? If what's in my heart came up as the next slide on screen, would it look like a flourishing, whole person or someone leading a shameful double life?

And I know it gets personal. We are all sexual sinners. But please know, Jesus wants your good. He wants you to flourish.

We've already talked about this, haven't we? He wants your heart, therefore, to be clean. One author puts it this way in terms of lust, right? Here, Jesus is not saying the fruit of adultery.

Sorry. One author says it this way. It's not the fruit of adultery that he wants us to cast out. He wants us to cast out even the seed itself. And amidst a world of sexual temptation, how does Jesus suggest we pursue deeper righteousness?

I mean, verse 29 and 30, he's speaking to his audience and they sound pretty extreme, right? You know, cut off your hand. Then you won't sin. I think the point behind that is that Jesus wants us to take sexual sin seriously.

[21:06] To take radical steps if you need to. The apostle Paul puts it this way in Colossians 3, verse 5. Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature, sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

I can't prescribe for you what it looks like to apply deeper righteousness in this area. But I can give some examples. I have friends who, I know a friend who's signed off social media because for him, it was too easy to be tempted by the wrong news feeds, the wrong thoughts there.

Another friend of mine calls a mate each month and they just have an honest, trusting relationship. How are you doing in this area? How can I pray for you? The most helpful advice I got and I still lean on is to keep retraining my heart, not just my eyes.

Easy to turn away, but keep thinking, right? Retrain my heart. To do what? To see Jesus as more satisfying, more pleasurable than any fantasy or relationship.

Whatever radical steps you take to guard your hearts, Jesus says it's far better. It is far better than losing your whole body into eternal fire. So before you take that second look, before you linger on something, look to Jesus.

[22:28] See how much he loves you in a way that no one else can or will. And see how much he wants you to be righteous. Not in a shallow sense, but in a deep, whole sense.

Anger, lust. What's next? Jesus carries on, doesn't he? Verse 31, follow with me. It has been said, anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.

But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress. And anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.

Remember Joseph? Joseph, Mary's husband, Jesus' adopted father. Remember when we looked at his story all the way back in Matthew chapter 1?

Yeah? A couple of years, as we discuss in groups, you mentioned how awesome he was. Wow, what a cool dude. What a cool dude, right? He gets this rude shock of his life, okay? He's engaged to be married to Mary, and then he finds out she's pregnant, right?

[23 : 32] But then it describes him as a righteous man who was unwilling to kind of cast her off. He was going to do it, you know, separate quietly. Okay, that's the first time where the word righteous appears.

So it's important for us as we think, what does deeper righteousness look like with this particular issue? It's interesting, isn't it? The humble carpenter is righteous. The super holy Pharisee people are not.

Because you see, Joseph, he could have divorced Mary, right? For being pregnant before marriage, but he's called righteous because even before the angel appeared to clear up the story, Joseph had already decided not to pursue this certificate of divorce that Jesus talks about here. He instead said, I'm going to break it off quietly. He could have sought justice, but he chose to show mercy. And that's worth remembering because just like Jesus' original audience, I think today when we think of divorce, today we're actually too quick to choose that route when marriages get tough, when they hit the rocks.

The reason Moses originally allowed divorce in Deuteronomy 24, which is what Jesus is quoting, was actually more about limiting the terrible social impacts of divorce.

[24 : 49] He was limiting it by prohibiting remarriage. That's why he says, okay, make a certificate of divorce, otherwise you're going to make things worse and worse and worse. Because the first sentence in that case law, it starts like this, if a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing and he divorces her.

So it's case law. It's not saying you should do this all the time. Because I know some of you here have experienced the hurt that divorce brings. Split families and loyalties.

You have to do visits and you've got to take turns. There's brokenness in your family that is never completely fixed. Please know that here in Matthew 5.32, Jesus isn't actually criticizing directly divorce itself.

He'll talk more about marriage in Matthew 19, but here, at least, he's just warning against its consequences, how horrible it will be. And Jesus is actually taking aim at a specific group of people. Israelite men who had taken this concession from Moses in the Old Testament law and turned it into a free-for-all because by this time people were like, oh, if she's ugly, I'll divorce her. Oh, if she doesn't cook right, I'll divorce her.

[25 : 58] It's crazy. It's crazy. They may have kept the letter of the Jewish law, right? Okay, I follow Moses' law, but they missed the point. They went for justice, not for mercy.

So you see, underlying this recipe, recipe three, is the same issue as the first two. What is in your heart? Is your reason to break off a marriage for divorcing, is it really because of a serious sexual sin that breaks your relationship, that can't be fixed?

If it's not, if you're chasing divorce for a frivolous reason, you're actually condemning your spouse to a future life of loneliness, or if they get remarried, you're condemning them to a marriage that's tainted by adultery.

And so Jesus is saying, take divorce seriously. Just because the law allows for it for any reason today doesn't mean it's not going to tear apart families.

Hebrews 13 says, let marriage be held in honor among all. Keep your wedding vows. Those of you thinking about marriage or those who are married, keep them, for better or worse. Don't give up.

[27 : 03] When you're on the verge of walking out the door, remember, remember Jesus stayed. He stayed. He kept His vow. He kept His promise to save His people and chase after that kind of promise-keeping in your marriage.

Matthew 33, verse 33. Again, you've heard it was said to the people long ago, don't break your oath, but keep the oaths you made to the Lord. But I tell you, do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is God's throne, or by the earth, for it is His footstool.

Or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great king. And don't swear by your head, you can't even make one hair white or black. Simply let your yes be yes and your no be no. Anything beyond this comes from the evil one.

And again, we want to understand the context here, right? So the same pattern, He quotes something that people believed, the law said, and then He gives a deeper meaning, and then He gives an application.

And in this fourth example, Jesus is not just having a go at all kinds of oaths and vows. You might have met some people that say, I won't take vows, and they don't join the military, or they live a

certain kind of life.

[28 : 14] That's not what He's trying to do here. The kind of vow or promise making that Jesus is challenging or criticizing, we see an example in Matthew 23. This is where He really lets rip at the Pharisees.

He says this, Woe to you, blind guides. You say, if anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing. But if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he's bound by His oath. Okay?

They're using kind of this legal kind of wrangling, okay? Just twisting their words a little bit just to get out of doing what they promised they would do. And in this, we can learn a really basic principle.

Your words matter. Your words matter. My kids hold me to it. If I say I'll read a book with them and then I forget or I get tired or I don't do it.

Daddy, you promised. You promised you'd read this book at this page. Now. Promises have power, don't they? They do. And sadly, in Jesus' day, this oath making had become this really complex way of kind of wriggling your way out of promises, right?

[29 : 18] You'd hedge your bets. You'd say, yeah, I'll do that. I promise I will pray for you only if I have the time of the day and only if I'm not too tired. Oh. Okay. Saying one thing to do another, again, that's not deeper righteousness.

That's, that's, that's, that's not deeper righteousness. It's like saying this, oh, I technically didn't sign up for this, so therefore I don't have to do it properly. Or again, yeah, I'll pray for you.

I'll pray for you and then you don't actually ever intend to do it. Don't say it at all. Or saying, I promise that, you know, once I'm free, yeah, I'll do that for you. Again, Jesus says, no, don't make empty promises.

Let your yes be yes and your no be no. That is how we can live truly and sincerely. That is deeper righteousness. Okay, now, if this passage really was an epic burger, okay, these last two examples of righteousness, I think, would be kind of the beetroot and the gherkin, okay, recipes five and six. Either you, you love these, these words or you hate them, okay, but they're hard to miss, okay, they're actually some of the most famous ones, aren't they? So let me read one of them for you, verse 38 to 42.

[30 : 32] You've heard it was said, eye for an eye and tooth for tooth, but I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him on the other side also and if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.

If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asked you and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. Imagine, friends, that you're in this game, let's say, this game.

It's a multiplayer game. You're thrown into a desert island. The only source of water, for example, is coconuts. Just imagine it's coconuts. Okay. And in this game, you can do three things.

You can build, you can run, or you can fight. Okay. And for some people, they want coconuts. They want to live longer than like the first 20 minutes. Okay. So, okay, person A has a bunch of coconuts, all right, kind of start storing them up and then person B steals one.

And then person A goes, I need to get it back. Okay, so I'll steal one. Hang on, I'll steal three coconuts and brings it back. Oh, person B. Okay. Goes back to person A. I'm going to steal six coconuts and brings it back.

[31 : 43] And it just escalates more and more. And before you know it, the whole island runs out of coconuts and then they both die. All right. The whole island runs out. People die. GG. Right.

Okay. This was the kind of anarchy. Okay. This is the kind of craziness that the eye for an eye instructions in the Old Testament was trying to limit and prevent. Okay. The reason Moses said you should do eye for eyes because back then people were like going, oh, you took my eye up?

I'll take your eye and your foot and your legs and then I'll stab you too. Okay. It was meant to prevent kind of justice from being, yeah, going too far. Retribution from going way over the top.

So instead of people taking revenge all they know, you go to a judge and they give you a measured and fair punishment and make someone like Ian's job much easier. And yet by the time of Jesus, okay, the Pharisees had taken this principle, eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth.

It was meant for the law courts to sort out and now they extend it to any personal relationships.

Okay. They do it all the time, anywhere, everywhere. Okay. And Jesus would say, look, that's the law but I tell you, don't resist an evil person.

[32 : 56] He would say, you don't have to settle the score. You can give up that mindset that you want to pay someone back. When you are hurt by someone, don't go hurt them back.

Don't retaliate. And all his one-liners from verses 39 to 42, they're all trying to say the same thing. They're saying, look, if someone hurts you, someone slaps you, if someone argues with you, forces you to carry their stuff, begs money from you, look, don't try and get them back.

That's not the Jesus way. Don't go revenge hunting. Don't be a vigilante. This is how the Apostle Peter put it. Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in his steps. When he was reviled, he did not revile in return. When he suffered, he did not threaten, but he entrusted himself to one who judges justly. That's 1 Peter 2, 21 to 23.

That's the kind of deeper righteousness that Jesus lives out and wants his followers to chase after. And finally, these last few verses, I've wrestled with them all week.

[34 : 08] They're so challenging. You've heard it was said, love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.

He causes a son to rise on the evil and the good, sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Not even the tax collectors doing that. And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than the others? Don't even pagans do that? I find it interesting that while this Old Testament law, the first half that he quotes is actually in the Old Testament, you shall love your neighbor.

We're trying to remember it this month. Nowhere does it actually say you shall hate your enemy. I reckon that's one that, that's an extra that the Pharisees just added in. Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

That's kind of what they were trying to do. And in one sense, you could sympathize with them, right? This is Jewish people living under an oppressive government and then so, let's just hate them.

[35 : 12] Let's just hate them. That's how we can live. It can feel biblical, friends, to hate, to hate a classmate, hate a system of government, hate a school system, whatever.

But Jesus says, ultimately, that kind of attitude is not going to leave you full. It will leave you hollow. It does not mesh with the virtues of his kingdom people. No.

He says, love your enemies. Pray for those who persecute you. That's what the Father's children do. Love should drive us. Jesus says this, right?

They will know we are Christians by how we hate. No. They will know we are Christians, John 13, 35, by how we love one another. Costly love is the final and best example, right?

He saves the best for last, of greater righteousness that fulfills the law and the prophets. Selfless love. Selfless love. That is the melody that is weaving through Jesus' speech and everything else we read in this book, right?

[36 : 14] Selfless love is precisely how he will one day fully fulfill the law and the prophets when he selflessly lays down his life on the cross for you and for me.

Maybe you've never realized this before. Maybe you've thought that following Jesus is all about all these rules to follow, okay? Let me tell you this. That's not the gospel. The gospel is this. Christ died for your sins.

He was selfless and he loved you. And if you've never realized this and accepted that as a gift, please do that today. I plead with you, turn from your sin, from your thinking that my living right will save me and trust that in Jesus you have the power, you have the pattern to practice true righteousness, deeper righteousness because you accept him and you are in him.

Friends, Jesus, he not only introduces deeper righteousness, he not only inspires us with recipes of better living. Finally, verse 48, he challenges us with a call to be whole like our Father.

I know our translations, I'm reading the NIV right now, says be perfect therefore as your heavenly Father is perfect. And two Mormon missionaries once told me, this is what it says, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect, therefore we are saved by our works.

[37 : 39] So this is a hard one, isn't it? What are we going to do with this? I think what's happening here is that perfect in the King James English 500 years ago, it kind of changes meaning today.

Today perfect means you got A+++ in your uni final exam. A flawless diamond is perfect. But here in the original language, the word here in Greek is called teleos and the meaning is more whole or complete.

If you have your Chinese Bibles, actually if you can read Chinese, actually the Chinese Bible actually gets it right. It says, I'll say it in Mandarin, one quen, not one mei. So one means perfect, flawless, okay, you got 100%.

One means complete. And what's happening here is that God is saying, be complete therefore as your heavenly Father is complete. So I think that's what's happening here.

And this sentence, I think, holds our epic burger together as a word. This sums up who greater righteousness comes from, doesn't it? If you want greater righteousness, deeper righteousness, it is something only our perfect and complete Father can give to you, can inspire in you.

[38 : 53] So friends, don't go out here and think, I'm going to keep more rules. I'm going to live exactly how this Jesus guy inspires me to live by my own strength.

That kind of righteousness is skin deep and it won't last. Rather, Jesus wants you to trust him, to follow him, to live lives of wholeness that he gives you through his spirit.

It's a life that Jesus will keep modeling for us as we keep going through Matthew's gospel, as we hear him teach us to pray next time, as we watch him mocked later in his life yet refuse to hit back. Think about the cross, think about the soldiers mocking him, as we see him teach and honor marriage, extend mercy, keep his word, love his enemies. You see, deeper righteousness was Jesus' blueprint for his own life to the end.

And so friends, no one lived a more wholesome life than Jesus. righteousness. And in his name, with his spirit, we can pursue deeper righteousness that can make us whole again.

[39 : 57] So shall we pray and ask that he would do that for us? Father, these are challenging words from your gospel and from your son Jesus.

When we hear him teach, we are repelled yet drawn in. forgive us, Lord, for thinking that we could keep your law, your rules for our life by our own strength.

Help us remember that it is all because of you. You are the one that makes us whole by your perfect obedience. You lived and died an innocent man.

On the cross, you suffered so that we can follow you. May these recipes for deeper righteousness challenge us and inspire us to follow you and to live such amazing lives that are different to the world around us that will draw more to worship the Son, Jesus.

We pray these things in his name. Amen.