

Jesus Christ: The Christian's Great Fulfillment & Hope

Sermon Text

Matthew 5:17-20

The Position of the Text

The Bridge

Our text is positioned between the Beatitudes, which deal with Christian character, and the primary body of the sermon (chapters 5-7), which deals with Christian conduct.

This is important!

In our text this morning, we will see that Jesus warns us, challenges us, and gives us great hope. These warnings, challenges, and promises apply to character transformation thru the Beatitudes as well as our faithfulness to conduct ourselves in a manner that exalts Christ.

It is also important to note whom Jesus is dealing with and responding to. Everything Jesus is about to say in verses 17-20 is in direct response to the scribes and Pharisees of his day.

Scribes & Pharisees

They Didn't Get It!

The **scribes** were a group of men devoted to the study, interpretation, and teaching of the Old Testament scripture. These men gave their whole life to the study and illustration of Scripture. As a result, the scribes were *the* great authorities on the law of God. These men knew the Old Testament like no other.

Whereas the scribes prided themselves in their knowledge of the law, the **Pharisees** prided themselves in the practice of the law. The word Pharisee means 'separatist.' Thus, the Pharisees took great pride in separating from the world and practicing a superior form of righteous and holy living.

Yet, the sad irony with both the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day was simply this – "*They didn't get it.*" These men who took great pride in their knowledge of Scripture and their practice of righteousness completely missed the mark.

Making the CONNECTION

Have you ever looked at someone, or for that matter, walked away from someone, and thought to yourself – *“They just don’t get it?”*

Parents, how many times have we watched our children make poor choices or do things that left us thinking to ourselves – *“They just don’t get it?”*

If you’ve ever coached Little League sports, you know what I’m talking about. Inevitably, on every team, there’s at least one kid who, no matter how much time you spend coaching him, he or she just doesn’t get it.

I have friends who enjoy watching the *The Office*. I’ve tried to watch this show two or three times. Yet, each time, I find myself saying out loud – *“I just don’t get it.”* For the life of me, I can’t figure out why people enjoy this program.

This week, Wake Forest hired Jeff Bzdelik as their new basketball coach. In three seasons at the University of Colorado, Bzdelik posted an unimpressive record of 36-58. So, let me get this straight. Wake Forest just fired a coach that averaged 20 wins a season for the last three years and hired a coach that averaged 20 losses a season for the last three years. Huh? As a diehard Wake Forest fan, this left me thinking – *“Wake Forest just doesn’t get it?”*

The same could be said for the scribes and Pharisees. When it came to Jesus Christ, the holy Scripture, and righteous living – these men just didn’t get it.

Jesus didn’t want his disciples to miss the mark. He wanted his disciples to “get it.” In the same vain, Jesus wants us to get it too. We are Jesus’ disciples, saved by grace thru faith in Him and His bloody sacrifice and death on the cross. To much is at stake for us to *“not get it.”*

Exegeting the Text

In this text, Jesus exposes four fatal mistakes the scribes and Pharisees made.

Seeing Christ in Scripture

FAILURE: The scribes and Pharisees failed to see Christ in the Scripture. *Do you approach and read God's Word with a man-centered, therapeutic perspective that fails to see the glory and beauty of Christ?*

CHALLENGE: We must read the Scriptures thru the lens of Christ and His work on the cross. The entirety of Scripture points to Christ and his fulfillment of it. The Pharisees had a man-centered, works-based approach to the Scripture. We must resist approaching God's Word with such a therapeutic mentality. Rather, we must approach the Holy Word of God with eyes longing to see the beauty and glory of Christ and who we are as a direct result of His Cross and Resurrection.

HOPE: **Thru our faith in Jesus Christ, we have become the righteousness of God.** (2 Cor. 5:21) Our hope is that Jesus fulfilled the Law; a righteous and holy standard that sin never would allow us to fulfill. Jesus became our curse so that we could become His righteousness.

Honoring the Authority of Scripture

FAILURE: The scribes and Pharisees failed to honor the authority and integrity of Scripture. *Are you honoring the authority and integrity of God's holy Word?*

CHALLENGE: We must submit our lives to the authority of Scripture. We must resist and reject those who compromise the authority and integrity of God's Word by loosening its demands on our lives as Christians. (Deut. 4:2 7 Rev. 22:18-19)

HOPE: The Scriptures are dependable, trustworthy, and will endure until God's sovereign plan of redemption is completed. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Accurately Teaching the Scripture

FAILURE: The scribes and Pharisees failed to accurately teach the Scripture. In verse 19, “relax” means to untie, loosen, or unbind. Ironically, the Pharisees “relaxed” the Scripture by adding to its demands. *Have you “loosened” God’s Word to accommodate your personal preferences and sins?*

CHALLENGE: We must take great care in faithfully and accurately teaching God’s Word. Our position of responsibility and reward in heaven will be determined in part by whether we faithfully and accurately divide and teach the Word of God.

HOPE: God’s Word does not return void and promises to transform lives for the glory of God. (Isa. 55:10-11 & Rom. 1:16)

Living the Truth of Scripture

FAILURE: The scribes and Pharisees failed to live the truth of God’s Word. *Are you living out your holy calling according to the commandments and precepts of God’s Word?*

The “righteousness” of the Pharisees, which was actually nothing more than self-righteousness, emphasized...

- (i) External appearance vs. Internal transformation (Matthew 23:25-28)
- (ii) Ceremony vs. Holiness & Purity
- (iii) Manmade Tradition vs. God-centered Truth (Matthew 15:1-7)

CHALLENGE: We must exalt Christ by fulfilling our calling to be holy according to God’s Word, not external appearance or man-centered traditions.

HOPE: Thru Jesus Christ, we are viewed by God the Father as holy saints and heirs of His glorious Kingdom – not enemies of wrath doomed for destruction.