

## True Righteousness

### *Jesus Defines What It Means to Live in His Kingdom*

**Matthew 5:13–20; 43–48**

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#### **Understanding the Context of Matthew 5**

Matthew 5 is part of what's known as the **Sermon on the Mount**, Jesus' most famous teaching. In this sermon, Jesus isn't just telling people how to behave; He's redefining what it means to belong to the **Kingdom of God**.

Jesus is speaking primarily to His disciples, with a crowd listening in. Many of them had grown up believing righteousness meant **following rules, keeping traditions, and looking religious on the outside**. The religious leaders (Pharisees and scribes) were experts at rule-keeping, but their hearts were often far from God.

Jesus flips that thinking upside down. He teaches that true righteousness isn't about performance, it's about **transformation**. It's not just about what you *do*, but who you *are* and what's happening in your *heart*. Jesus calls His followers to live differently in the world, not to earn God's love, but because they already belong to Him.

## Exploring the Text: Key Words Jesus Uses

- **Salt (v.13):** Salt preserves and adds flavor. Jesus is saying His followers should prevent moral decay and bring God's goodness into the world.
- **Light (v.14):** Light reveals what's true and pushes back darkness. Followers of Jesus are meant to point others toward God.
- **Righteousness (v.20):** Not just rule-keeping, but living in right relationship with God that changes how you live.
- **Fulfill (v.17):** Jesus didn't cancel the law, He completed it perfectly and showed its true purpose.
- **Love your enemies (v.44):** A radical kind of love that reflects God's grace, not human instinct.
- **Perfect (v.48):** This doesn't mean flawless; it means *complete, mature, and whole*, living fully set apart for God.

## **Day 1 – Salt That Still Matters**

**Read: Matthew 5:13**

### **Devotional:**

Jesus calls His followers “the salt of the earth.” Salt isn’t flashy, but it’s powerful. A little salt can completely change a meal, and without it, food is bland and forgettable. Jesus is saying your life matters more than you think. Your words, choices, and attitude can either bring God’s flavor into the world or blend in so much that no one notices a difference.

When salt loses its taste, it’s useless. In the same way, when followers of Jesus start living like everyone else, chasing approval, cutting corners, staying silent about their faith, they lose their influence. Jesus isn’t calling you to be famous; He’s calling you to be faithful where you are.

### **Application:**

Where do you feel pressure to blend in instead of live out your faith, school, sports, social media, friendships?

### **Challenge:**

Today, do one intentional thing that reflects Jesus, encourage someone, stand up for what’s right, or refuse to join in gossip.

**Supporting Scripture:** Colossians 4:6

## **Day 2 – Shining Without Hiding**

**Read: Matthew 5:14–16**

### **Devotional:**

Jesus says you are the light of the world, not *might be*, but *are*. Light doesn't exist for itself; it exists to help others see. When you follow Jesus, your life becomes a reflection of Him. The goal isn't attention, it's direction. People aren't supposed to look at you and think, "Wow, you're amazing," but instead say, "There's something different about you."

Jesus warns against hiding your light. Fear, insecurity, or wanting to fit in can cause you to dim what God placed inside you. But when you live out your faith honestly and boldly, your life can point others to God in ways you may never realize.

### **Application:**

Are you hiding your faith in certain areas of your life? Why?

### **Challenge:**

Post, say, or do something today that openly reflects your faith.

**Supporting Scripture:** Philippians 2:15

## **Day 3 – More Than Rules**

**Read: Matthew 5:17–20**

### **Devotional:**

Jesus makes it clear, He didn't come to cancel God's law but to fulfill it. The religious leaders followed rules perfectly on the outside, but their hearts were cold on the inside. Jesus says real righteousness goes deeper than behavior; it starts in the heart.

This kind of righteousness isn't about trying harder, it's about trusting Jesus and allowing Him to change you from the inside out. Following Jesus isn't about looking religious; it's about becoming more like Him. When your heart changes, your actions follow.

### **Application:**

Do you focus more on looking like a "good Christian" or actually becoming one?

### **Challenge:**

Spend time today asking God to shape your heart, not just your habits.

**Supporting Scripture:** Romans 10:3–4

## **Day 4 – Loving the Unlovable**

**Read: Matthew 5:43–45**

### **Devotional:**

Jesus says something shocking: love your enemies. That's not natural, it's supernatural. Anyone can love people who love them back. But loving someone who hurts you, excludes you, or talks about you? That takes God's kind of love.

Jesus reminds us that God shows kindness to everyone, even those who reject Him. When we love like that, we reflect our Heavenly Father. This doesn't mean pretending hurt doesn't matter; it means choosing grace over revenge and prayer over bitterness.

### **Application:**

Who is hard for you to love right now?

### **Challenge:**

Pray for someone who has hurt you, and mean it.

**Supporting Scripture:** Romans 5:8

## **Day 5 – Growing Toward Maturity**

**Read: Matthew 5:46–48**

### **Devotional:**

When Jesus says, “Be perfect,” He isn’t demanding perfection, He’s calling you toward maturity. The word “perfect” here means complete or fully developed. Jesus is inviting you to grow up in your faith, not stay stuck.

Following Jesus means continually becoming more like Him, loving deeply, forgiving freely, and living differently. This is a lifelong journey, not a one-time decision. God isn’t looking for flawless people; He’s shaping faithful ones.

### **Application:**

Where do you see growth in your faith? Where do you still need God’s help?

### **Challenge:**

Set one intentional spiritual habit this week, daily prayer, Bible reading, or accountability.

**Supporting Scripture:** Ephesians 4:13