

KINGDOM BEHAVIOR

Matthew 5:19-20

This lesson concludes our three-week series considering Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, a series encouraging us to look back to Jesus' teaching to help us move forward into the new year. Our first lesson explored the reality and nature of the kingdom Jesus talked about in the Sermon on the Mount while the second lesson considered the rule Jesus assumed over that kingdom. We continue our focus on Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in this lesson by considering the behavior his rule expected from those in his kingdom, which reveals an important focus – *kingdom behavior focuses on the proper treatment of others.*

“Practicing your righteousness”¹

- Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, connected “righteousness” to citizenship in the “kingdom of heaven” (*Matthew 5:6, 10*).
- The righteousness Jesus said one needs to enter the kingdom of heaven tethers to their obedience to God's commandments (*Matthew 5:19-20*).
- Jesus illustrated the obedience he desires by telling his audience that entrance into the kingdom tied to a “righteousness that exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees” (*Matthew 5:20*).
 - Matthew bookends the beginning and end of Jesus' ministry with teachings about the scribes and Pharisees, religious leaders who modeled religious behavior that did not meet God's expectations (*Matthew 5:20-48; 23:1-36*).
 - Jesus' teachings about the scribes and Pharisees reveal that obedience to God's laws centers on one's relationships with God and others rather than merely one's relationship to the law (*cf. Matthew 23:1-4, 13-15, 23*).
- Consider, therefore, some of the things Jesus' Sermon on the Mount reveals about righteousness:

The righteousness required to enter the kingdom of heaven focuses on obedience *and* motivations, on action *and* heart
Matthew 5:17-48, esp. vv.27-28

¹ Matthew 6:1. All quotes from the Bible come from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version* (ESV Permanent Text Edition, Crossway, 2016) unless otherwise noted.



Righteousness seeks to honor God through obedient behavior
that focuses attention on Him

Matthew 5:14-16; 6:1-21, 33

The righteousness that comes from obeying God's
commandments focuses on how one treats other people

Matthew 7:12

- Jesus' Sermon on the Mount reveals that the **righteousness** required for citizenship in the kingdom of heaven focuses on **the proper treatment of others motivated by one's obedience to God.**

Applications

- Few people live up to the standard of righteous behavior required for entrance into the kingdom of heaven (*Matthew 7:12-14; Romans 3:9-18*).
- Righteousness displays itself through behavior (*Matthew 7:15-20*). We can therefore assess our claim to Jesus kingdom based on the way we treat everyone around us.
- We are to be "perfect, as [our] Heavenly Father is perfect" by applying Jesus' righteous standard to everyone regardless of cultural, political, ethnic, national, ideological, or adversarial differences (*Matthew 5:43-48*).
- We cannot be citizens of the kingdom of heaven nor can we be submissive to Jesus' rule if we mistreat people. We must be clear – regardless of what motivates abusiveness, mistreatment, violence, or prejudice, such practices reveal one's citizenship in the kingdom of the world rather than in the kingdom of heaven.

The kingdom over which God has given Jesus rule exists as both a present reality and a future hope that offers blessings to all its citizens. While Jesus offers citizenship to all people, he only grants it to those who model kingdom behavior, to those who, because of their trusting submission to God's will, cultivate proper relationships with all people. We should therefore ask ourselves what our relationships with the people around us reveal about our claim of citizenship in Jesus' kingdom.

