



## **WEIRDLY NORMAL - Weirdly Right - Matthew 5:17-20 - February 13-19**

**Main Idea:** Righteousness does not come from right doing, but right faith

### **Look Back (Remind yourselves of the challenge from last week)**

Last week we discussed the way that salt fails because it is either diluted or removed, and that this is a metaphor for the ways we fall short of our call to be the salt of the earth. In thinking about these two challenges and recognizing which one is a bigger problem for you, how did this change the way you acted this week? What will it change going forward?

### **Look Up (Wrestle with the passage itself)**

*Read Matthew 5:17-20 together.*

On the surface, these seem like some pretty weird statements for Jesus to make. Not only does this seem to contradict Jesus' own teachings on the law, especially in regards to the Sabbath, but goes against most of the New Testament teachings on the role of the law in the Christian life (see Galatians 3; 5:1-6; Romans 7:1-6; 10:4; Philippians 3:8-9).

So what is going on here? There's likely a couple of issues at play. One is that Jesus had developed a reputation for being soft on the law, likely in the way that he had become a "friend of sinners" (see Luke 7:34), and so he is feeling the need to correct that misunderstanding and show the value of the law in preparing God's people for the Messiah. His use of "do not think..." is a linguistic tip that he is taking on these rumors.

Secondly, Jesus states that he is going to “fulfill” the law, a term meaning to bring to completeness or fulfillment. Jesus is going to take the foundation of the law and bring it to the place that God had always intended.

**Discussion Question:** What do you think it means for Jesus to “fulfill the law”? What role does the law play in the Christian life? What are its purposes?

Jesus makes the drastic claim that those in his kingdom must have a righteousness that exceeds even that of the scribes and Pharisees. Such a high bar was unthinkable in the 1st century. The scribes were the great biblical scholars of the day, and the Pharisees were zealous for keeping the law and all of its rules. To know more and to do more than them would have been impossible.

**Discussion Question:** So then what is Jesus talking about? How can we have a righteousness greater than this?

### **Look Forward (Challenge to do something with it)**

The righteousness that we receive from Jesus is a fulfilled righteousness (Matthew 5:17), and it comes by grace (Ephesians 2:8-10) through faith (Romans 3:21-22), saturated in his overwhelming love (1 John 3:1). It isn't like the law, which seeks to form us from the outside-in. We don't do the right things to fix a wrong heart.

Instead, we have righteousness that works from the inside-out. We are changed in our spirit as we are empowered by His Spirit, and it is to the testimony of his work in us that formation can happen.

**Discussion Question:** What do you think it means to be changed from the inside out? What role do we have in this transformation?

**Challenge:** Either in the group or when you get home, find a small piece of paper and write the word “loved” on it, and place it somewhere you will see every day. Let this truth come to mind again and again. Then notice how this changes the way you act, both toward yourself and toward others.

**Prayer challenge:** Pray together that you would be able to know and receive God's love for each one of you.