

5th S. after Epiphany 2/9/14
Matthew 5:13-20 C

UNLESS YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESS EXCEEDS THAT OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, YOU WILL NEVER ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

So, how many of you want to enter the kingdom of heaven? I'm going to go out on a limb here and be bold and say that, based on the very fact that you are here this morning, you would like to enter the kingdom of heaven. You want to enter the kingdom of heaven because that is where Jesus is and you want to be with Jesus and rub elbows with the angels and archangels and all the company of heaven. And you really want to enter the kingdom of heaven so that you do not burn in hell, "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched (Mk 9)."

Jesus says to us, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." So, in order to enter the kingdom of heaven, you have to be better than the scribes and the Pharisees.

That could be interesting. The scribes had all the Old Testament memorized. They read it. They copied it. They taught it. In fact, they were so diligently in the copying of it, they believed that if they changed so much as one iota, a small punctuation mark, it would mean that God would destroy the world.

Do you know your Bible as well as a scribe? They had only the Old Testament, but if your righteousness was to exceed that of a scribe, it means you have all 66 books of the Old and New Testament memorized, right? In the original Hebrew and Greek, no less. So, how you are doing with that?

Or if I ask you to turn to Obadiah, do you say, “Oba – what” and immediately have to turn to the index to find out if Obadiah is in the Old or New Testament?

Maybe its best we just ignore the scribes and go onto the Pharisees. The Pharisees did not have great educations like the scribes, they were laymen who had jobs. But, being laymen didn’t stop them from pursuing righteousness. They separated themselves from the unclean people; they would not hang out with undesirables, lest they themselves somehow become unclean. They fasted twice a week. They were very particular in their prayer life, knowing exactly how, and when, and where to pray. They were diligent in their ritual washings. They would carefully wash when they came home from the marketplace. They would scrub their pots and pans before they cooked and ate. They would even wash their furniture. No, this was not done in the interest of being sanitary, so they didn’t get the flu. This was because they feared that some how, they may have merely brushed up against an unclean thing and they did not want to be unclean. Pharisees would always honor their parents, never commit adultery, steal, cheat, lie, or gossip. Oh, no.

So, how are you doing with that? Surely your righteousness exceeds that, right? You wouldn’t dream of hanging out with undesirable people, would you? You would never have sexual relations outside of marriage, steal, cheat, lie, or gossip, would you?

And, you are very particular about how you pray and when you pray, and especially where you pray. You fast often, at least two days per week, and, when you do, you make a big deal out of it so that everyone knows you are fasting. Most certainly, you would never, ever, miss a Sunday morning worship service, even when it was so cold that the dogs could not

pull the sled, you would still find a way to make it to church. No matter how sick you were, even if you had to drag yourself off your death bed, you would never miss church.

You would do all that because you want to inherit the kingdom of heaven and to do that, your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Which means, you're toast. In fact, we're all toast. And the reason why is that even if you read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Scriptures in Hebrew and Greek; if you teach and explain them, that's not going to make you more righteous than a scribe.

And, even if you're very, very careful about your prayer life, about fasting, never miss church, not laugh at someone's mocking joke against marriage, never cheat, lie, gossip, or covet, its not going to make you more righteous than a Pharisee.

What to know the reason why? What you do, what a scribe does, what a Pharisee does, does not make you a righteous person. The Bible says it this way, "For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin (Ro 3:20)."

Jesus makes you a righteous person and here's how He does it. Jesus does all that you cannot do and will not do. He know only knows the Scriptures perfectly, He keeps them perfectly. He fears, loves, and trusts in God alone. He loves His neighbor and He does it perfectly. He calls upon God in every trouble, even as He is dying on the cross. He never doubts any of God's Word. He does not dishonor marriage in any way. He does not cheat, steal, lie, gossip, or covet. Jesus does all these things and He does them perfectly and He gives you His perfection to be your very own, as a free gift.

And if that were not enough, Jesus paid the penalty for all the time when you were not righteous. That penalty was being nailed to a cross, and giving up His spirit in death. Because Jesus took the penalty you deserved and endured it for you, in your place, God looks at you and says, "I see no guilt in you. You are completely righteous in my sight. Because you wear the righteousness of My Son, I am well pleased with you." Jesus righteousness is your righteousness. He has given His own righteousness to you to be your very own.

Jesus gives us His righteousness in our baptism. "For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ," is how St. Paul says it (Ga 3). This morning, we have just seen Jesus clothe Aackley with His righteousness. And, we have seen Jesus make Aackley a new creation, as Jesus did to you in your baptism, so that your deeds, your thoughts and your words, are righteous, as well.

When you open your Bible, and you do not even know if Obadiah is in the Old or New Testament, it is a righteous deed in Jesus.

When you shut your eyes in prayer, and you close them really tight to pray really hard ... do you ever notice that when you close your eyes tight, those little stars fly around ... hey, hey, hey, we're praying. Yes, even when you go to pray and are distracted, it is a righteous deed in Jesus.

When you walk in the room and the wall is covered with crayon graffiti or, when you come home from a long day at work, and the grass is a foot high and there's junior laying on the couch, drinking Mountain Dew, playing Xbox, no matter what your thoughts or words are at that exact moment in time, your love for your child is righteous in Jesus.

When you are at work, and to your joy and delight, you get to work with that co-worker who has all the answers – even before he/she knows the question -- your love for him/her is a righteous deed in Jesus.

This is because your thoughts, your words, your deeds, are not about your good intentions or how committed you are to doing them, or how well you do them, its about Jesus. Even our weak, feeble attempts are all righteous because they are all covered in the blood of Jesus.

Your righteousness is Jesus' righteousness, and guess what? That means it does exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. When you are baptized into Jesus' death and resurrection, when you are absolved of all your sins, when you commune with Him here at His table, you receive from Jesus His own righteousness. So, what else is there to say, but "Welcome to the kingdom of heaven."

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Concordia Lutheran Church

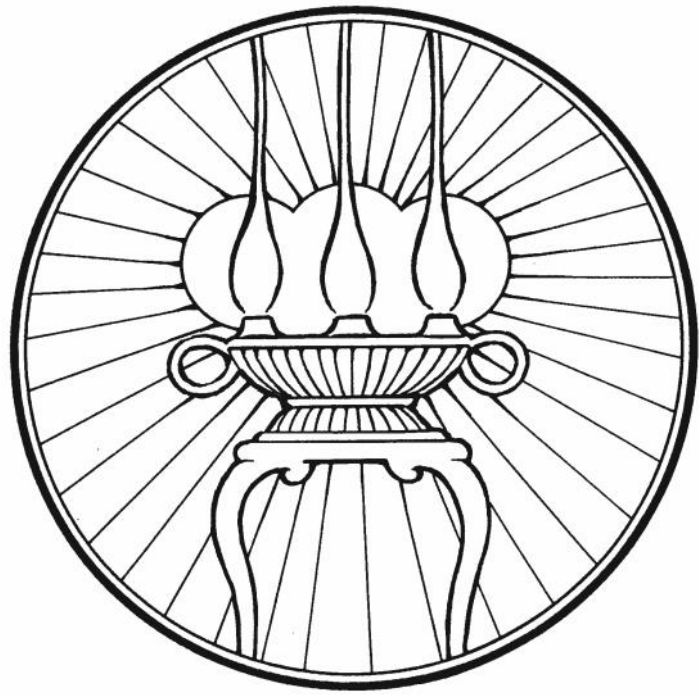
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

801 Beacon Lane

Beulah, North Dakota

Rev. Toby H. Heller, Pastor

February 9, 2014



*Let your light shine before others,
so that they may see your good works and give glory
to your Father who is in heaven.*

Matthew 5:16b

Divine Service Setting One

Entrance Hymn # 605

Holy Baptism p. 268

Introit

Blessed are you, O Lord;

teach me your statutes!

How can a young man keep his way pure?

By guarding it according to your word.

With my whole heart I seek you;

let me not wander from your commandments!

I have stored up your word in my heart,

that I might not sin against you.

Blessed are you, O Lord;

teach me your statutes!

With my lips I declare

all the just decrees of your mouth.

In the way of your testimonies I delight

as much as in all riches.

I will meditate on your precepts

and fix my eyes on your ways.

I will delight in your statutes;

I will not forget your word.

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy

Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.

Blessed are you, O Lord;

teach me your statutes!

Kyrie p. 152

Gloria in Excelsis p. 154

Salutation & Collect p. 156

O Lord, keep Your family the Church continually in the true faith that, relying on the hope of Your heavenly grace, we may ever be defended by Your mighty power; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 58:3-9a (ESV)

'Why have we fasted, and you see it not? Why have we humbled ourselves, and you take no knowledge of it?'

Behold, in the day of your fast you seek your own pleasure, and oppress all your workers.

Behold, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to hit with a wicked fist. Fasting like yours this day will not make your voice to be heard on high.

Is such the fast that I choose, a day for a person to humble himself? Is it to bow down his head like a reed, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Will you call this a fast, and a day acceptable to the Lord?

"Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke?"

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and he will say, 'Here I am.'

Gradual

Praise the Lord, all nations!

Extol him, all peoples!

For great is his steadfast love toward us,

and the faithfulness of the Lord endures forever.

Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name;

bring an offering, and come into his courts!

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-12 (ESV)

And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech

and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

"Alleluia"

p. 156

Holy Gospel: St. Matthew 5:13-20 (ESV)

"You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

"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 say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the

least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Hymn of the Day # 578 (st. 1-4)

Sermon: Righteousness Exceeding the Scribes & Pharisees

Prayer of the Church

Offering

The Handchime Choir will ring “Children of the Heavenly Father” during the gathering of our morning offerings.

“What Shall I Render” p. 159

Service of the Sacrament p. 160

Distribution Hymns # 560, 580

“Thank the Lord” p. 164

Post-Communion Collect p. 166

Benediction p. 166

Closing Hymn # 698

Today we celebrate the Sacrament of Holy Communion in which we joyfully receive Christ's Body and Blood, under bread and wine, for the forgiveness of our sins. As we celebrate the Sacrament, we also give public witness that we are in complete agreement with the denomination's doctrinal teachings at whose altar we commune. Therefore, we ask that only communicant members of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod commune with us. All guests are asked to talk to Rev. Heller before coming to the altar to receive the Sacrament.

In our thoughts and prayers,

† Carmen Dschaak, Kyle Miller (Nona Blaisdell's brother), and Agnes Wiedrich;

† Aackley, baptized today;

† Our nursing home residents, that God would keep them under His gracious care.

Welcome to worship as Jesus reveals Himself to us as the Son of God in this season of Epiphany. In this season, when we see and hear Jesus, we see and hear God. Visitors, please sign our guest book and worship with us again soon.

This morning, we rejoice that Aackley Wayne Backus, the son of Jamey & Tracy Backus, is born again for all eternity



in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. In obedience to Christ's most gracious promise, Aackley is baptized so that, by the power of the Holy Spirit in the water and the Word, his sins are forgiven, he is delivered from death and the devil, and given the gift of eternal life. "[God] saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5)."

1 Peter: Please join us as we continue our study of 1 Peter this morning.

Our Annual Meeting will be Sunday February 23rd, following worship. Following the Voters Meeting, we will have a potluck brunch. Everyone is invited to join us!

Baby Shower: A joint baby shower for Kollen Korbyn and Aackley Backus is this afternoon at 2:00 p.m. Everyone is invited to attend and welcome the new babies into the family of Concordia.



Council Members, please remember our meeting this Wednesday, February 12th, 7:00 pm.

The February Human Care Project is collecting tuna for Women's Action & Resource Center. Please put your donations in the shelf unit in the entryway. Thank you.



Weather cancellation: In the event that worship services or other activities need to be canceled, especially because of weather, please check the church's website, www.concordiabeulah.org. We will also send out an email notification when worship is cancelled for those members who have provided the church office with an email address. You should also be able to call the church, 873-4388, for information on cancellations.

The February calendar, birthday and anniversary sheet, Pray for Us Calendar, December council minutes, unapproved minutes from the November 17, 2013 Voters Meeting, and *Happy Times* for the children are in the black stacking trays in the social hall.



Stewardship of Offerings & Attendance

Attendance: 139 Offerings: \$3,695.00

Thrivent Choice

Concordia has received Thrivent Choice Dollars in the amounts of:

\$3,814.00 in 2012

\$4,023.00 in 2013

Thank you to all who have designated Concordia as recipient of their Choice Dollars.

† This Week at Concordia †

Sunday	8:30 am	Divine Service
	9:30 am	Sunday School/Bible Class
	11:00 am	<i>Worship @ Glen Ullin</i>
	2:00 pm	Korbyn & Backus Baby Shower
Tuesday	10:15 am	Holy Communion @ KRCC
	1:30 pm	Naomi Guild
Wednesday	3:30 pm	1 st -year Catechism
	4:30 pm	2 nd -year Catechism
	7:00 pm	Council Meeting
	7:00 pm	Chime Practice
	7:30 pm	Bell Practice
Sunday	8:30 am	Divine Service
	9:30 am	Sunday School/Mission Update/Bible Class
	11:00 am	<i>Worship @ Glen Ullin</i>
	2:30 pm	Pastor @ KRCC

Church Office Hours

Monday – Friday 8:30 AM – 12:30 PM
Church: 873-4388 Parsonage: 873-4223
revheller@westriv.com
concordiasecretary@westriv.com
Website: www.concordiabeulah.org

*Please use a pew card to record your worship and/or
Communion attendance this morning*