

# Kingdom Righteousness

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[ 0 : 00 ] All right, thank you, Alex. Yeah, wow, yeah. It's a rowdy crowd today. I don't know what we're in for, but we're in for something. All right. If you got a Bible, go ahead and turn to Luke chapter 18.

That's where we're gonna be reading from the next parable. If you don't have a Bible, don't worry, they'll be up on the screens as well. And just kind of before we get into reading this parable, just wanna ask us this question.

And this question about ourselves. Because I think it's something that is true for all of us. Do you want to be right? And do you want to know that what you are doing is right?

Well, of course. We all have that sense, right? We all wanna be right. We all wanna know that what we are doing is right. And rightness, we want that, because rightness brings with it a sense of justness.

It brings not only a sense of justice, but if we're honest, it kind of brings us a sense of superiority, right? We feel like, okay, we're good to go. We got it right. Others don't.

[ 0 : 58 ] We're better than. And we love that, because we wanna feel that we are on the right side of things. And doing that, it really justifies many of the actions that we engage in in our lives.

You know, in the name of being right, if you look over history, and even the recent history, in the name of being right, wars are waged. Blood is shed. People have been enslaved, and imprisoned, and mistreated, and abused in so many different ways, both in great and small ways.

Great contexts, such as nations going to war, and small contexts of the family unit, and friendships, and marriages.

All those things are happening, even in our nation's history, in the not too distant past, the Civil War was waged by both sides, believing they were in the right, and that God was on their side.

Everyone has a standard for righteousness, but so does God, and so does his kingdom, which he disclosed to us in his law, and through his laws, and again, Jesus disclosed through his teachings, what the kingdom standard of righteousness was, and these divine statutes, these things that we have received from him, which were given by God through Moses, and reiterated by Jesus, and reiterated and expounded upon, by the prophets, and the apostles, we get to know by these things, what God's righteousness is.

[ 2 : 20 ] In today's parable, what it gets to, is the heart of this matter, this matter of righteousness, by addressing the question, what is righteousness, righteousness, and also how does one become righteous?

Luke chapter 18, verses 9 to 14, it says this, he, Jesus, also told this parable to some, who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt.

Two men went up, into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus, God, I thank you, that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.

I fast twice a week, I give tithes, of all that I get, but the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, God, be merciful to me, a sinner.

I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other, for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself, will be exalted.

[ 3 : 45 ] This is God's word to us. So what is righteousness? I think it would be good to start defining that term, before we begin the rest of our time together, and righteousness is, it is possessing a moral correctness, that makes one just, and this justification comes, from our right beliefs, right thoughts, right desires, and right actions, and we, like I said, are all pursuing this kind of justification, in our own way, whether we realize it or not, we, we have seen, and maybe you have, and haven't seen those lawn signs, maybe we know about those lawn signs, in this house, we believe, dot, dot, dot, we believe, science is science, love is love, no human is illegal, the counter signs from that, which is, in this house, we believe, that police protect us, and God is real, and unborn lives matter, and those are more than just opinions, they are statements, of what we believe is right, and by believing in them, and upholding them, as our virtues, we are saying, those are the things, that make us just, those are the things, that make us righteous, whether you are a Christian, or not, we're all after the same thing, everyone is searching, for righteousness, because we are desperate, to be justified, and there's a lot of commentary, about what ails America today, many feel that, we're flailing, because we've lost, any substantive sense, of common meaning, and purpose, and maybe there's some truth to that, and so we're searching, to find this common denominator, that can unite, our fractured society, but I would argue, and I think that the gospel, would argue, there's a much deeper thing, that ails us, that is not unique, to our time, and place, in history, we are doing, just what everyone else, has ever done, and ever will do, we are searching, for a righteousness, by which we can, justify ourselves, humanity, can never be content, with living, a morally neutral life, nor will we be content, by jettisoning, morals altogether, and living by base instinct, to survive like animals do, it just won't work, work, there is something, innate in our being, that desires, to be righteous, that desires, to be justified, and I would say, and argue, that that is actually, a good desire, the Bible would say, that it isn't just, a good desire, it is proof, that you men, and women, are created, in God's image, what does that mean, why do we create images, and statues, of people, because they show us, what someone is like, a couple of years ago,

I had the privilege, of going to London, and touring around London, there's a lot of cool places, a lot of cool statues, but one that really, stood out in my mind, that I still remember, is the statue, of Winston Churchill, it was large, and impressive, and looming, and this statue of him, he was standing straight, and tall, with his classic cane, right next to him, and a foot forward, and a heavy coat on, very much the man, of his time, and very Londonish, very English, and his face, and his stance, communicated the essence, of a leader, who possessed, resolve, and fortitude, you didn't have to say, any of those things, you didn't have to read it, on a plaque, that's what you looked, at the statue, and that's what it was, communicating to you, that's what you were meant, to take away from it, and a similar way, we are like living statues, image bearers, who are communicating, what God is like, he is righteousness, and so we all desire to be, the problem is, that sin has corrupted that, and has confused that desire, so that it's disordered, we misunderstand, what makes us righteous, and how we go about, to get it, and where it comes from, and that leads us, to be like the Pharisee, in Jesus's parable, who prays,

God I thank you, that I'm not like, other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, even like this tax collector, over here, you can hear the disdain, as he says, those words, on his lips, I fast twice a week, I give, of all, I give tithes, of all, that I get, are you spotting, that his error, being righteous, doesn't mean, being more right, than someone else, politics, politics, cannot make you righteous, and if you think it does, you've already become, a Pharisee, social activism, cannot make you righteous, if you are pursuing it, to be morally, superior to others, then you've, already become, a Pharisee, one of the great dangers, the American churches, face today, one of, not the only one, isn't losing, necessarily, our religious freedoms, our religious liberties, it's, self-righteous, ideologies, now there's a few, out there, but I want to speak, to one, that probably, we're more susceptible, to in our context, there's the ideology, of Christian nationalism, it's just, another iteration, of a false gospel, has new clothes on, same fundamental ideals, behind it, and what it does, it elevates certain, political views, as effective, to making one right, or making one righteous, and it treats those, who don't hold those views, despite one's faith in Jesus, as making them unrighteous, morally compromised, and probably, unfit for God's kingdom, and that is, dangerous, that is, an adjusted gospel, and there is no, adjusted gospel, there is the gospel, it doesn't share space, with anything else, our faith, should inform, our political engagement, not the other way around, which means, as Christians, we will live, with a measure, of disappointment, and dissatisfaction, with whatever political party, we kind of lean towards, and you're probably thinking, man Jess, you pick on politics, quite a bit, why, why yet again, because,

I've been watching, and listening, and seeing things, and man, it is fast becoming, the new religion of America, and this new religion, is finding its way, into the church as well, in different ways, and when we succumb, to a politically based, righteousness, it will lead, to hold our opponents, with contempt, it will, let's not forget, why Jesus told this parable, he also told this parable, verse nine, to some, who trusted in themselves, that they were righteous, and treated others, with contempt, contempt, now let's move beyond politics, because it's just not politics, that's the problem, there's other things, that can make us, hold people in contempt, we can do that, with just about anything, I've seen that with parenting, you have one side, that's like, we're all about spanking, and they hold the people, in contempt, that don't spank, and the vice versa, we schedule feed, we don't schedule feed,

I'm right, you're wrong, contempt for all others, right, I remember sitting, years ago, sitting in a orientation, we were homeschooling our kids, we were getting to this, no co-op that we were joining, and you had to go to this, very long, boring thing, about this is what we're about, and this is what you got to do, and all that stuff, and like two hours in, I was just like, tingling with like, grossness, with the self adulation, and the self righteousness, of the people that we're getting, and just patting themselves, on the back, like we are doing it so right, and everybody else is, getting this so wrong, and I began to judge them, with contempt, because I was more right, and being less judgmental, they were, see how easy it is, to fall, you know, it's like, man, when we justify ourselves, by being more right, than someone else, we will always end up, holding others in contempt, and therein lies the problem, that Jesus is exposing, why is your righteousness, more righteous, than someone else's, and so we can easily, and the response to that, it's like, oh I guess, let's just drift, into relativism then, right, pretend that works, and we know that really doesn't,

[ 12 : 36 ] America's been trying that, for the last few decades, there's a lot of hypocrisy, involved in that, that we can all point out, and we all end up, back at the same place, of comparing ourselves, to be better than others, so then, what's the solution, perhaps the solution, is found in the problem, in that we all have lowered, our standard to ourselves, and to the experts, that tickle our fancies, righteousness, but what if God alone, was our standard, of righteousness, well then, if God is our standard, for righteousness, then we all, should be held in contempt, and that, is the beginning, of understanding, kingdom righteousness, righteousness, it isn't a righteous standard, that we set for ourselves, it is one, that transcends all of us, and in this way, we are all, in the same boat, of being unrighteous, and unjust, now you might argue, that surely Jesse, but like out of all of that, surely there is better ways, of thinking, there is better ways, of behaving, than others, well of course, like not enslaving people, hey that is better, believing that the unborn, in the womb, should be protected, hey that is a better standard, treating foreigners, and immigrants, and people that are unlike us, with dignity, and with, and in a humane way, because they are also, image bearers, created by God, that is a better standard, of living, and behaving, loving your spouse, and your kids, by being meaningfully engaged, in their lives, is a better standard, of living, putting money aside, in case of a rainy day, rather than just, always spending it all, on anything you want, in the moment, that is a wise, better standard, of living, what I'm saying, there, and the point I'm trying to make, there may be better standards, there may be, wiser ways to live, and to conduct ourselves, that we should reckon with, and be like, hey that's cool, but here's the thing, none of those things, none of those beliefs, and none of those activities, make you righteous, like God is righteous, and when you forget that, when I forget that, what happens is, we start to believe otherwise, that, and when we do that, we start to move toward, our own standard, of righteousness, listen carefully, at what is at the heart, of kingdom righteousness, what is at the heart, of the gospel, for you and me, you could, live this life, and have a voting record, and a political position, that heaven would applaud, you could parent, with perfect wisdom, and with holy habits, you could read your Bible, every year, pray through every year, pray every day, go to church every Sunday, and lead a small group, and in the end, none of those things, make you righteous, like God is righteous, because, one little thought of contempt, against your fellow man, and, she gone,

I hope you're, I hope you're, feeling right now, in your heart, is some despair, thinking, man, then what, is the hope, for me to be righteous then, that's where we all, kind of need to be, there's no hope, for you and me, to live in a way, that will make us, righteous, like God is righteous, and don't despair of that, embrace it, and rejoice in it, because that truth, is the beginning of you, and I, walking in humility, and unconditional love, toward one another, rather than treating each other, with contempt, now, all of that to say, we should do that, while also not letting go, of the fact that our righteousness, is of supreme importance, to God, so then, how can we become righteous, well the gospel, tells us a few things, about that, first of all, the righteousness, we need, belongs to God alone, that's not a fringe doctrine, that's been, the historic doctrine, of the Christian faith,

Jesus taught it, his apostles taught it, and the church, that has been faithful to it, has taught it ever since, Isaiah 53, six says this, the Bible, it says that, we are like sheep, we've all gone astray, not some of us, all of us, Paul the apostle, wrote in Romans 3, 10, that there is none righteous, no not one, and later on, a few verses down, he says in verse 23, all have sinned, and fall short, of the glory of God, we've all gone astray, none of us are righteous, not one of us, we've all sinned, we've all fallen short, of the glory of God, that's a bit sobering, and humbling, and that's what we need, we need that sober humility, because what lies behind, anytime you and I, have contempt for somebody, what lies behind that, is a sense of pride, that comes from the lie, that we can be righteous, in and of ourselves, and what self-righteousness does, is take for oneself, that glory that belongs to God alone, that is at the root of that, think about this, what manifests in us, as contempt for others, that little moment, that we have, it comes from the same belief, that Satan has, that I too, can be as glorious as God, apart from him, of course, we really, we don't really, think about those things, and connect those dots, it makes us a little bit, uncomfortable right, we don't want to, be on par with Satan ever, but it's true, nevertheless, and, that self-righteousness, it doesn't fix anything, it actually leaves us, with a gaping hole, because we cannot, become righteous, like God, no matter how hard, you try, and to try to be righteous, in any way, is to commit the original sin, of Satan, and Adam, and Eve, and so, you might say, okay Jesse, then what, what are we to do, just not care about righteousness, well, we can't do that, because God, is going to punish, the unrighteous, and yet, at the same time, the Bible is telling us, that nothing we do, will ever make us, righteous enough, and to even try that, is to sin, okay, we feel like dogs, chasing our tails, right, how are we going to do this, seems like, impossible circumstance, where only hope, is found in the gospel, once again, we cannot be righteous, apart from being united, to Jesus, and to his righteousness, now here's the thing, and we do have to go, a little bit technical here, faith in Jesus, does not mean, that we, suddenly have a righteousness, of our own, apart from him,

God's righteousness, as far as you, and I are concerned, rises and falls, upon our union, with Christ, and so we learn, something important, about our salvation, and life in the kingdom, it is much more, than just avoiding hell, and gaining eternal life, in heaven, it is union, with our Lord, and Savior, Jesus Christ, that is very much, necessary, for our salvation, salvation, there isn't, a more important truth, that we can, hold on to, than that, salvation, is in Christ alone, and it is through, Christ alone, and it continues, to be so for us, and this union, cannot be earned, by our good works, and it is not held, by our good works, nor is it perfected, by our good works, it is dependent, upon our faith, in Jesus, to be, who he said he is, the son of God, who lived a morally, perfect life, in untarnished obedience, to the father, keeping the law perfectly, thereby, he is the only man, born of a woman, to be justified, by keeping the law of God, the only one, so then, no glory is ours, every good work, you can do, every righteous deed, you can do, you get no glory, from that, all the glory, is his, remember, even our union, with Jesus, in our union, with Jesus, that we do not, have a righteousness, of our own, that righteousness, is his righteousness, and it only comes, from being united, with him,

John 15, Jesus tells it like this, to his disciples, that they are like, branches, in the vine, he is the vine, they are the branches, and you cannot, bear fruit, apart from being, united to that vine, he even goes on, to say, apart from me, you can do nothing, the apostle Paul, says yes and amen, in Galatians 2, 20 to 21, he says, I have been crucified, I have been crucified, with Christ, it is no longer, I who live, but Christ who lives, in me, and the life I now live, in the flesh, I live by faith, in the son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me, I do not nullify, the grace of God, for if righteousness, were through the law, if righteousness, were through what I can do, and keeping a good standard, then Christ died, for no purpose, period, period, the Bible, is clear, the gospel, is clear, kingdom righteousness, is clear, that apart from Jesus, we got nothing, in living in, remaining in him, abiding in him, him,

[ 22 : 28 ] Jesus, the branch in a vine, means that his glory, manifests through us, and just because it manifests, through us, doesn't mean we get to look at him, and say, look at me, and look at my glory, and take glory for himself, he celebrates those things, and even when we get to heaven, he's going to crown those good works, but as one theologian said, all God is doing, is crowning his own good works, that was worked out through us, through his power, and through his spirit, and you know what we do, with those crowns, throwing them at his feet, all glory to him, there is no glory, no righteousness, no fruit, apart from Jesus, so then, the righteous, do indeed, live by faith, in the son of God, and living by faith, means we give up, seeking the glory, of our own righteousness, and depend upon, Jesus's righteousness, righteousness, this is kingdom righteousness, humble dependence, upon Jesus, and upon his righteousness, for us, which means that we should consider, what that union with him means, we must be those, who do the work, of abiding in him, and that's not the same, as works righteousness, it's not doing good works, to get glory, but it's doing those works, because, we are already righteousness, and we ain't got to earn it, and we love him, we want to honor our father, who is in heaven, and do those things, to glorify him, not ourselves, abiding in Jesus, his ongoing dependence, upon him, that involves, taking our eyes, off of ourselves, beholding him, and his glory, and that's what this Pharisee, failed to do, in this parable, he looked at himself, he was so impressed, with his resume, his righteousness, and you know why, because his eyes, hadn't beheld, anything better, you know, my wife, has a diamond ring, and, she might have thought, that was impressive, until we saw the hope diamond, we have to keep our eyes, on Jesus, because he is the hope diamond, of righteousness, our sinful nature, will pull us, in the direction, of being pressed, with our little righteous diamond, that we got, we'll start thinking, about all our good works, we'll start looking at others, with contempt, and we have to reckon, with the fact, that we seek glory, and recognition, for ourselves, that is only suitable, to God, and we run, in many different directions, to do that, like we've been talking about, and so, we must live, and so, we must live by faith, faith, in Jesus, as our only righteousness, faith, understanding, that a war, is being waged, in our hearts, over this, the wrestle, is not, against flesh, and blood, the alluring deception, of self-righteousness, is always lurking, and waiting, for an opportunity, when our guard is down, it slowly, it wants to slowly, infect our hearts, infuse with our faith, so that, we live, unaware, that it has even, taken hold of us, and corrupted our thoughts, in any way, and it can feel so right, because it pairs so well, with some of our gospel ideals, but what exposes, self-righteousness, that falls in the end, and these things, is false in the end, is that we, begin to exalt ourselves, we exalt our beliefs, our behaviors, our truths, we start to look on others, with disdain, at the same time,

we've found the way, we're doing the right things, everyone else is wrong, I can be right, I can be justified, and Jesus said, after preaching this parable, everyone who exalts himself, will be humbled, the righteous, shall live by faith, not faith in our good works, the faith that calls us, to give up, seeking the glory, of our own righteousness, and realize, that the righteousness, we have, belongs to God alone, to finish that statement, that Jesus made, everyone who exalts himself, will be humbled, but, the one who, humbles himself, will be exalted, we draw near to God, in humility, seeking mercy, and we can do that, with humble confidence, if we know that, we are justified, because God, has chosen, to be merciful, to sinners, sinners, the tax collector, didn't even try, to defend, or promote himself, he didn't come, with any airs, or any pretense, he beat his breast, he wouldn't even, look up to heaven, he was too humbled, he was like, it reminds me, of Isaiah, the prophet, in Isaiah 6, when he gets a vision, of the glory of God, and the holiness of God, and he is laid low, he isn't like, well I'm a prophet, so yeah God, let's me and you talk, he sees the holiness, of God, and he says, woe is me,

I am cursed, I am a man, of unclean lips, amongst the people, of unclean lips, this tax collector, he beheld, the hope diamond, and he, was laid low, he knew exactly, who he was, and he beat his breast, saying God, be merciful, to me, a sinner, he had no illusions, in the presence, of God's holiness, he cried out for mercy, and he went home justified, today, this parable, to fit our context, would have been like, saying the prostitute, went home justified, but the preacher didn't, the righteousness of God, dismantles, any man-made, moral structure, and value system, it doesn't excuse sin, but it doesn't abide, self-righteousness either,

Jesus came to die, for both the Pharisee, and the tax collector, the self-righteous, and the sinner, for there is no, righteousness that matters, but the righteousness, that comes, from Jesus, the righteousness of God, you know what he does, by faith, it says he robes us, in his righteousness, united to him, hidden in him, the band comes up, and we respond, in a moment, we're going to take communion, and I want to say to you, if you are not yet, a follower of Jesus, first, you must be joined, to this savior, that we believe in, his name is Jesus Christ, and he died on a cross, for your sins, because you cannot, earn your salvation, you cannot be justified, you cannot be righteous, in any other way, except by that, faith in him, there's going to be, a prayer on the screen, for you to pray, if that's you, pray that prayer,

Jesus says, you ain't got to jump, through a ton of hoops, you just got to believe, you got to confess, you got to come, and say, Lord have mercy, on me, a sinner, that is it, if, for all of us, who are followers, of Jesus already, we're going to come, to take communion right now, and this, is the sign, and symbol, of our union, with our savior, Jesus Christ, we get to be joined, to him, he says, come and eat, and drink of me, participate, in me, participate, in my, sacrifice, for you, my body, broken, my blood shed, and as we partake, we're reminded, that we get to be, one with him, and we continue, to be one with him, we're justified, because Jesus, took our sin, on the cross, buried it in the grave, and now, we are robed, in his righteousness, let me pray, for this moment, as we come to God, and when I'm done praying, you can go to the table, nearest you, take the cup, and the bread, back to your seat, and you can, take communion, when you're ready,

[ 31 : 33 ] Jesus, we thank you, we thank you, for your righteousness, we thank you, for the grace, by which, you call us, to be united to you, in your righteousness, forgive us Lord, where we, have sought, a righteousness, of ourselves, there's so many ways, we can go about, doing that Lord, forgive us, of our arrogance, and our pride, forgive us, of our contempt, for others, wash us clean, we thank you, that your grace, does that Lord, and as we come, to your table, help us to rejoice, rejoice, in our union, with you, that we get, to be robed, in your righteousness, amen, amen,