

**Deep, Substantive Righteousness***Matthew 5:17-20*

**Introduction:** It is a rare person who wants to grow up to be shallow and superficial. Normally, whether it comes to work or hobbies, most people want to excel. Given that fact, shouldn't we seek to cultivate depth and substance in our experience with God as well? In the passage that we are looking at today, Jesus says that those who are apprenticed to Him WILL have depth and substance when it comes to righteousness. May this study give you vision for how radically Jesus can transform your life when you are apprenticed to Him.

**Opening Discussion:** What hobby do you have that you would say that your involvement is "anything but shallow and superficial"?

**Read Matthew 5:17-20**

1. What were some people apparently accusing Jesus of seeking to do (v. 17)?
2. What did Jesus say he came to do (v. 17)?

Steve said:

Sometimes when we think of Jesus "fulfilling" the OT, we think only of specific predictions that have come to pass. But Jesus had a much more comprehensive type of fulfillment in mind. Jesus fulfilled the Hebrew Scriptures in the sense that He was **the deepest expression** of the Law and the Prophets. He **brought to fruition** everything that God promised in the Law and the Prophets. He was **the goal and culmination** of the entire Hebrew Bible.

3. In light of this broader meaning of fulfilling the Law and the Prophets what are ways that Jesus did this?
4. According to Jesus, who is considered least and who is considered great in the kingdom of God (v. 19)?
5. Why did Jesus talk about the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees in this context (v. 20)?

Steve said:

In our day, being a Pharisee is analogous to being a hypocrite – outwardly righteous but inwardly full of vices. But in Jesus' day, the Pharisees were the religious gold standard. The Pharisees calculated that there were 248 commandments and 365 prohibitions in the Law (one for each day). They had a rigorous type of lifestyle that was unattainable for the normal person. They fasted two days a week; they tithed from the smallest amounts of produce and income; they prayed out loud on the street corners; they had all sorts of religious gear that set them apart – robes with tassels, etc. And the scribes were scholars of the Hebrew Scriptures; they actually had the Hebrew Bible memorized. And everybody knows that whoever can quote the most Scripture is the most righteous, right?

6. When you think about the "righteousness" of the scribes and Pharisees how is it that the righteousness of Jesus' disciples will surpass that?

**Read Jeremiah 31:33 & Ezekiel 36:25-27**

7. What do these verse say about the work of God in producing within us a deep, substantive righteousness?
8. What hope/vision do these verses give you as you seek to grow in righteousness?
9. What is God's part and what is our part in growing in righteousness?
10. How does living as an apprentice of Jesus produce righteousness in our lives?
11. Practically, what will it look like to be apprenticed to Jesus this week?