

How are we? Hey look at us growing. If you have your Bibles, turn to Matthew, chapter 5.

I don't know how you're wired or how your brain works. My earliest memory of church was in California. We lived in the Bay Area, a place called Alameda, and I went to a vacation Bible school. We started the day with a craft. There was a little white cardboard cross, and then they let us take matches and glue those matches all around the cross. Then we actually got to light the matches. Then they blew it out and we got to take home this kind of cool cross that had these burnt edges. That hung in my room for a long time. So my very first experience of church was very positive, because I'm a kid and they're letting me play with matches. "If this is what Jesus does, I'm in."

Then after that opening craft we went into worship. How many of you have a background in church? We sang songs and clapped and did movements with our bodies. I was like, "Okay, even this. This is pretty cool." Then in the middle of worship (I've told this story before) we began to sing a song about how God hates liars. It was upbeat. It wasn't a mellow song. It was a happy song about how God hates all of us. It was at that moment, very early in my life, that I initially felt the hostility between the Lord and me, because here's what I know: I'm a liar. Maybe you're not; I am. Back then I was *good* at it. When you're a kid you just brazenly lie. You don't even care. "It wasn't me."

"There's chocolate on your face."

"That's not my problem. Detective Mom, this is on you. Maybe it was one of my sisters. Maybe she put the chocolate on my face, huh?" You just don't care when you're a kid. You're just straight up, "It wasn't me."

"We have video."

"It doesn't matter. It was not me."

I knew. So here I am singing a song about how God hates me. Now think of the irony of that. It's a happy song about God's hate of me. So here's what I picked up on then, and for the next almost two decades would wrestle with: Every time I would come into a gathering like this, I would hear about things I should be doing or shouldn't be doing, and I don't know your experience, but I was always on the wrong side of what was being laid out. "God hates liars." *Oh*. It started when I was 5. My initial was, "Oh no."

Then from then on into when Christ saved me, every time I would come into an environment like this, I would hear that sex should be treated like *this*, that we don't go here, that we *do* do this, we *don't* do this, and every time I found myself on the wrong side of what God expected of me. So my play was to avoid him. I was just going to avoid him. "Let me just avoid him. It's evident that by his standard, he and I aren't going to get along. He has a problem with me, and therefore, I have a problem with him." So I just avoided him.

"I cannot live up to your standards, so forget you. I'll find my own way. If I have eternity in hell, then so be it. I'm going to wring the life out of this month. With the days I have here on earth, I'm going to wring it out." That was how I was living until, by the grace of God, he helped me understand the gospel is very different than all of those things, that little grid I was trying to live by. The ears by which I was hearing, "This is God's expectation of you," were really perverse. They weren't actual. Finally God opened up my heart to the gospel and it changed everything.

So I want to show you a very difficult, very spectacular text today. I want to just say out of the gate I'm going to have to say some hard things to you, okay? But when all is said and done, it's going to be really, really awesome. If you don't think that, then you can email me that you didn't think it was awesome and I'll have my admin just filter that so I never see it. All right? That's the deal we'll make with one another.

Let's go. Matthew, chapter 5. We're going to pick it up in verse 17. It's going to start heavy. **"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets..."** When the New Testament puts those two phrases together, "the Law or the Prophets," it's in reference to the entire Old Testament. "Don't think I've come to abolish the Old Testament." I don't want him to say that. I want him to abolish it. Don't you? So let me frame it for you.

In the Old Testament, there are 613 commands: 365 negative (by negative, I don't mean bad; I mean, "Don't do this") and then 248 positive (not as in good, but "Do this"). So you have 613 "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." Now think about that. As I was studying that, I sat down with my wife and we talked about rules in our house. We couldn't come up with more than 12. Twelve! I'm not talking about the "one off" rules. There are certain rules that don't drive the life of your house but you just have to remind... Like "Don't shove your sister down the stairs." That's not a standing rule in our house; it's just one we have to pull out every once in a while.

But standing rules, standing commands, before the Pharisees, Sadducees, or before anybody added to it, there are 613 "Don't do this; do this," and Jesus just said, "I haven't come to abolish that." I would have rather Jesus just said, "I've come to abolish that; don't worry about it," but Jesus says, "I *haven't* come to abolish it." Now for those of you who know your Bible well (maybe you're a bit of a skeptic so you've done

some research so you don't have to believe), your mind has to be going, "Well, what do you do with Levitical law then? If Jesus hasn't come to abolish the Old Testament, what do you do with Levitical law, because some of that seems like it shouldn't fit anymore?"

I would agree with you. Levitical law says if your kid misbehaves you stone him to death. Surely we're not saying that Jesus is like, "That's exactly what I mean. Take that fool outside." I don't have time in today's sermon. I'm not going to go long. Giggle if you want. I don't plan on going long. I want to create space for some other things. I'm not going to have time to get into Christian responsibility and the Mosaic law.

Some of you don't even know what I'm talking about right now, but what we *have* done is created a document that explains all of that. I already posted it on The City. If you're not on The City, which is our Internet connectivity at The Village, you can go to our website and just type in the search engine "Mosaic law," and it'll pull right up for you and you can read about where Christian responsibility and the Mosaic law sync up and where they don't.

Jesus shows up... Red letter. Jesus Christ. None of the little biblical arguments that are used about the Bible can really weigh into this text. Jesus says, "I haven't come to abolish the Law. It's not why I came." But he is going to tell us why he *did* come. Look at this. **"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."** So Jesus hasn't come to *abolish* the Law, but rather to *fulfill* it. Let's talk about what fulfilling the Law means.

To *fulfill* something means to make that thing visible and put it in its right place. Let me give you a good example. Maybe this will help you. The prophet Isaiah said the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. That's a prophetic word. "This is what's going to happen." Now Jesus is born in Bethlehem and doesn't *abolish* that prophecy but *fulfills* the prophecy, which means he's born in Bethlehem, the prophecy becomes true, and now we can look at the prophecy and marvel at its intended role, which is to point out that the Messiah is coming.

So now no longer does the weight and the attention go on the prophecy, but rather on the Man, Jesus Christ. In this instant, the fulfillment of the Law is in the coming of Jesus Christ. "I haven't come to do away with the Law; I've come to fulfill the Law. I've come to put it in its right place and to replace it as the center point of what God is doing." So no longer is the Law the center point, but the Law has been fulfilled in the coming of Jesus Christ, so now Jesus is what it's all about. Not the Law...Jesus. The Law has not been abolished; it has been fulfilled in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

Then look at where he goes next. **"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."** Again, God is serious about all of God's

commands. Are you with me? God does not make commands and then go, "You know what? If you like that one, obey it; if you don't, don't worry about it." Not one dot, not one iota. Those are punctuation marks. Not a comma, not an exclamation mark will be removed from the Law. He didn't even mess with words; he went with punctuation. "I'm not even going to argue, 'Does this word belong or this word belong?' No, no. Not a dot, not an iota will be removed until it has fulfilled its purposes."

Then look at verse 19: **"Therefore [since that's true] 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."** So Christ has not come to abolish the Law but rather to put the Law in its rightful place, yet the commands of God still carry an unbelievable weight on those of us who are God's children, and if anyone relaxes or loosens those commands, he'll be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

Now this "least in the kingdom of heaven" is not a reference to life after death. When he's talking about the kingdom of heaven, he doesn't mean if you relax or you loosen the commands of God in this life, in heaven you'll be B-team. You're going to have a different color robe and then in heaven we'll be like, "Oh, you were one of *those*." That's not what's happening in this text.

When Jesus speaks of the kingdom of God, when he speaks of the kingdom of heaven, Jesus said it was at hand *now*. He's saying that the more you relax yourself and loosen the commands of God, the more you will rob yourself of the joy Christ has come to bring you. You affect fullness of life, vitality of life, and depth of life when you loosen or steer away from the commands of God. Where you lack a seriousness about holiness, you rob yourself of life, energy, and vitality.

I want to point this out just so you can feel the full-on brunt of it. Don't think that when he's talking about teaching others to do the same that he's talking about teaching like I'm doing right now, in front of people with a music stand. Your life teaches, doesn't it? Again, maybe we're wired differently. I want to get my cards on the table. If I'm around people who take holiness seriously, I find in me a seriousness about holiness. I'm just confessing, all right? Just a safe place for me. If I get around some guys who don't, I can downshift into eighth-grade boy as fast as anyone else.

When I'm around people who take holiness seriously, I will take holiness more seriously. I will be stirred up to consider holiness more, and when I'm around people who don't, I have a tendency to not. We teach with our lives. So you are, by your life, by your actions, teaching others what you actually believe about God. What some of you reveal about your lackadaisical approach to holiness is that when all is said and done there are dots and there are iotas that don't matter, that if God knew what we knew, if God knew what we know now, he probably wouldn't have written some of the stuff he wrote.

If he could see what life was going to be like in 2012, and how enlightened we were going to be, and how much further along we were going to be, then he just definitely wouldn't have written what he wrote. We have a question about the nature and character of God, and we believe by our actions that God regrets some of the things he has commanded us to do, that God wants a mulligan, that he wants to hit that one again because now that he can check out 2012 and how awesome we are, he just... "I didn't see that one on marriage coming. I would have defined that differently. I just didn't see that coming in regard to sexuality."

This is a ridiculous position on God that would have God to be ever-changing and never certain. I would never worship a God ever-changing and never certain. He's not God; he's me, and I make a crummy god. I've tried. I make a really crummy god. Then a lot of times we're so calloused to the fact that we participate in and teach others a lack of holiness, that every once in a while we'll get a little wakeup that we are hardened to some of the stuff going on around us.

Maybe this will work; maybe it won't. It doesn't matter. I'm trying it. In 1986 on a Sunday afternoon my parents took me to see *Top Gun*. Life-changer. I sit out there and I watch Maverick and Goose buzz the tower, and I was in. I knew I had to be a Navy pilot. I was going to need to shoot down Russians. If you're a Russian in here that's not personal. It was the Cold War. I was young. So in the end, I watched *Top Gun*, and I'm in it. It was the first movie I ever just watched and didn't move.

My parents bought that for me when it came out on VHS. If you're under 20, just Google that. So I got the VHS tape and I watched that thing over and over and over again. I could quote the movie to you. Literally, beginning to end I could quote the movie. I would still turn it on and just quote with it. I loved the movie. So it only seemed good and right that when my son turned 5 he should come and participate in the glory that is *Top Gun*.

So we kicked the women out of the house. "This is man date night. You go do what you do." We fired up the grill and cooked meat. There weren't any vegetables that night. That's not happening. Reid and I ate. No women in the house. We got a copy of *Top Gun* and popped a bag of popcorn. Reid and I on the couch. We'd built up this man night. This is what men do, right?

We're sitting on the couch and I pressed play, and 15 minutes in I'm like, "I have to turn this off. Mav keeps dropping the f-bomb. They just gave the bird to some Russians, inverted. There are sex scenes. Kelly McGillis needs to put some drawers on." I have my 5-year-old here and he's kind of picking it up and I'm just like, "He's going to drop the f-bomb at preschool, and that's going to be on me."

So I turned it off and then we had to have a talk. I'm like, "Hey buddy, those were grown men acting like boys. Real men don't act like that. Real men act like this. What you saw was boys who can shave. God has called us to something much greater than that." So that's just one of those little weird ways where I just had no idea. Just no idea. But now all of a sudden there's innocence in the room. Now all of a sudden there's something that exposes some areas of my heart that are hard.

Now am I telling you *Top Gun* is evil? No. I'm just explaining the hardness of my own heart, that if I watch that by myself I don't even pick up on it, but you put holiness, you put innocence in the room, and now all of a sudden you're really aware of it. Has that happened to anybody else? You're like, "This is a great movie," and then you play it for somebody and you're like, "Ooh. I don't know why I didn't pick that up the first time. I don't know why I didn't pick that up the first seven times I watched this movie." Right? So that's one of those little areas where you just get some of your hardness revealed to you.

Your life teaches. You teach others. He just said here, if you relax, if you loosen, if you don't take seriously the commands of God, you will be called least in the kingdom of heaven (i.e., your experience of the fullness of life that Christ came to bring you will be affected by your lackadaisical approach to holiness). In the same way, the more serious you are about holiness, the more that joy will increase, the more that joy *will* grow, and you'll be called greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Now this next line for me is the power of God unto salvation. Verse 20: **"For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."** That's a terrifying statement. Can I explain why? The Pharisees and scribes are so externally upright, that if we combined all of our seriousness about external holiness they would smoke us. Are you with me? Jesus is going to tell us in Matthew 23 that they tithed on their spices. They went to their cupboard, looked into the cupboard, and said, "Ten percent of that needs to go to the synagogue. The synagogue can figure it out."

I mean, very strict, very externally on it, and Jesus says, "You'd better be more righteous than these guys." Here's what I want to tell you: It's going to be impossible for you and me to get past their external legal pursuit of outside transformation. What's happening in this text (and we find this out in the rest of the Gospels) is that Jesus has changed what the meaning of righteousness is. They have a certain definition for righteousness. Jesus turns that definition of righteousness on its head and changes the touchdown. Do you know what I mean by that? He changes how you keep score.

For the Pharisees and the scribes, the scorecard was external behavioral transformation. That was the scorecard. So 613 commands, and they would score themselves by how well they kept those commands. In fact, it went beyond that. They would categorize them and go like, "This law is worth three points. This

law is only worth one point." They would categorize them into heavy and light commands, and then they'd come up with their scorecard, "This is how well I scored this week. How well did you score? I smoked you," and they would feel better about themselves based on how they were able to obey these commands versus your *inability* to obey the commands at the level they were.

Jesus says, "That's no longer the scorecard." In fact, Jesus commands a much more difficult yet much more delightful kind of righteousness. The whole rest of the Sermon on the Mount is him banging the drum away from the old definition of righteousness into the new definition of righteousness. Jesus is going to change the touchdown from external conformity to internal transformation. Did you hear me? He's going to change the scorecard from external conformity..."Let me get my life into shape"...to internal transformation..."Let my heart be changed."

Let me just show you some of this without giving away too much of what's coming in the weeks to come. In the text we'll be in next week, Matthew 5:21-26, Jesus changes it from murder to anger. "You have heard it said, 'Do not commit murder.'" Now murder is external, correct? If you kill someone that's outside of you. "You've heard it said, 'Don't murder,' but I say if you have anger in your heart, you're still not free. You're still guilty." Do you see what Jesus just did? He scored the touchdown. "You've heard it said, 'Don't commit murder,' but let's put that aside. That matters, don't kill people, but I say if you have anger in your heart..."

Do you see that God (this is so beautiful to me) is not after you with all of your will and might trying to make yourself prettier? He's not after that. That's not freedom. He's not after you being enslaved, trying to modify your behavior. He's after your heart being transformed so your behavior takes care of itself. "You've heard it said, 'Don't murder.' I say anger is the issue, because anger leads to murder. Let's work on the inside and the outside will take care of itself."

Then the next text is verses 27-30, and he moves from adultery to lust. Adultery is external, lust is internal, and lust leads to adultery. Jesus goes, "We don't want to just fix the adultery problem; we want to fix the lust problem, and the lust is inside of you." He's moving us away from externals and into internals. He's changing the touchdown. The win is to have a heart that's not consumed with lust. The win is to have a heart that isn't filled with anger.

Then he moves on, and the next week we'll be in verses 31-32. He moves us from divorce, which is external, to faithfulness, which is internal. Internal faithfulness is far more than, "I'm not going to touch someone who's not my own." It's far more than that. Faithfulness is our minds. Faithfulness is our imaginations. Faithfulness is every part of us that focuses in on, "You're mine." I don't know how much of the cultural bowl you're drinking, but you have to know that love cannot be for anyone's sake emotive alone. Are you with me? Love had better not be emotive alone. If it is, we're all in a lot of trouble.

On Friday night, Lauren and I went out with good friends and we ate good food and we laughed a lot. It was the kind of night that the next day I was a little bit sore, and I thought, "Did I do that working out? Oh, I don't work out, so no. I wonder how this happened." My face hurt. My ribs hurt. It was a blast. We had a good night with great, great friends.

Then when we woke up on Saturday morning, I could tell something was off with Lauren. That's a scary moment for any husband, because maybe I did that and didn't know about it. "Is this me? Did I do something?" You have to be careful broaching that one, men. I just kind of asked, "Hey, are you all right, Boo? You seem like you're a little bit off." She said, "I just feel... I don't know. I just feel this morning a little sad. I feel a little melancholy. I don't know really what it is, but I just feel melancholy."

Again, I'm going, "Okay, is this a trap? How do I approach this one?" I think like a lawyer (Pray for me. God help me), so I'm going, "Okay, if this goes bad, how do I go about this but still win the argument if it goes bad?" So I said, "Well, is there any way I can help or any way I can serve you?" Because if she freaked out in that moment and started listing all of the things I have done wrong or how I led to that melancholy, I could just downshift into, "Why are you doing this? I'm just asking how I can serve you."

In that she said, "No, I don't think there's anything in particular you can do. I'm just in a weird spot this morning." Aren't emotions fickle? Who can understand them? /can't. You can just wake up in a great mood or just wake up in a bad mood. Six hours of sleep or 12 hours of sleep might not change that at all. Who can understand emotions? No one. They're like the wind. We don't where they come from. We don't know how long they're going to stay. Maybe they're bringing something with them that's going to give us a sinus infection. We don't know. So if you're building all the hope of your marriage on emotions, you've made an awful error.

Jesus says, "Let's get away from divorce. I don't even want to talk about that. I want to talk about faithfulness. I want to talk about in the life of your mind and the desires of your heart, latching that onto your spouse come hell or high water." You made the vow for better or worse, so today is worse. This week is worse. This year...worse. You don't let your heart drift to, "Oh, this other person who doesn't know me as well as this person would think I'm more awesome than I am because they don't know me yet. They're the solution." I'm not going to let my heart go there. I'm not going to accept the "flirtiness" from this person in my office. No, thank you. The shop is closed. Taken. My faithfulness is there. But do you see how Jesus is changing the scorecard? It's not divorce or no divorce; it's faithfulness where you *are*.

Then he'll keep going in verses 38-42. He's going to change it from retaliation, which is external, to simple contentment. Again, I don't want to give away too much of that sermon. It's four weeks away. But in the

end he's simply saying, "Do you trust God to be both the grace-giver and the just judge?" One of the ways we really have our hearts convicted of our own wickedness is in the reality that every one of us wants justice for other people but not for us. "You're going to let them get away with that, Lord?"

"Well, I let *you* get away with that."

"I don't want to talk about that! That's not what I'm talking about! Are you going to let them hurt me like that?"

"Well, didn't you do the same thing back here?"

"Again, that's not what I want to talk about! Now are you going to handle that, or do I have to handle that?" Right? God is going, "Hey, let's move away from retaliation and into you being contented with me extending grace to them like I extended it to you, or when all is said and done, judging justly for their sins against you and against me. Are you going to trust me or are you going to trust you? Who are you going to trust?"

Then in the last week from limited love, which is external (this is verses 43-48), into loving our enemies, which is internal. To be able to love those who are your enemies is an act, a work, of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. What Jesus is doing is he's moving it away from where all our energy is. Isn't it? All of our energy is, "I need to control this. I need to change this. I need to stop doing this. I need to work on this." All of our energy is on what's external and not on what's internal.

When Jesus says to be a part of the kingdom of God will take a superseding righteousness, a righteousness that is greater than the righteousness of the Pharisees, what he's saying is the touchdown for you and me cannot be external action; it has to be the state of our hearts. This is in some ways really great and in some ways really hard. It's really great because when Jesus does a work in your heart, these commands become like eating your favorite meal. You don't complain about it.

It's why David, when he starts talking about the Law of the Lord, talks about the Law differently than we talk about the Law. It's honey on his lips, right? He delights in thinking about the rules of God on his bed. What? I am never falling asleep going, "I'm so grateful you say 'Do this and don't do this.'" But David did. Why? Because he got this. He got that what the Lord was after was his heart. He understood that the scorecard was where his heart was, not where his behavior was, and if he would put his attention on where his heart was, behavior would be changed. But the more he put the weight on his external behavior, the more he got himself jammed up.

So in some ways, when Jesus has done a work in your heart, superseding righteousness is easy because it's like eating your favorite food. It's something you delight in getting to participate in. That's not hard for anybody. It's difficult in that nobody can flip the switch. If you're angry, you can't just go, "You know what? Okay, I'm not angry anymore." You have a heart filled with lust. Now we have to be honest, we have nowhere to go. If you have a lustful heart you can't just go, "You know, I'm not going to lust anymore."

Anger, lust...those are things that can own you. Are you hearing me? They can own you, drive you, make you their slave. It's not just as easy as "I'm not going to do that." In fact, if I had to bank, if I had to push my chips in, my guess is that a ton of you have said over and over and over again, "I'm not going to do that again. I'm not going to be a part of that again. Not happening," only to go right back. The question then is...*How do we participate in or get ourselves into this superseding righteousness, this righteousness that's at the heart level and not the external level alone?*

There are two ways I want to press, and the second way will have an A and a B. Here's the first way, and I need you to hear me. If you're a guest with us maybe we don't have enough trust built for this, but I'm going for it. *You will never gain victory over the sin in your life without submitting your life to Jesus Christ.* Ever. The best you'll be able to do is mow over your weeds. If you're from Texas you know what I'm talking about. At best you'll be able to mow over your weeds. You can make your yard look good for a day or so.

When all is said and done, our only hope for freedom over the things that haunt us is submitting our lives to Jesus Christ. That's it. If not, if you beat it in this area it'll just pop up in this area. You have no other hope but Jesus. None. "Well, I think I'm more disciplined than you." Okay, I don't know what your discipline has to do with it, because again, pointing back to Jesus' touchdown, you conforming your behavior to the right pattern without a transformed heart, according to Jesus, has you outside the kingdom of God, not inside. It has you *outside* fullness of life, not *inside* fullness of life. So that's the first thing, and I think of primary importance.

The second thing I need to press on with you is that some of you aren't walking in the freedom of a superseding righteousness for one of two reasons. The first goes back to this dot and iota idea that you don't take seriously the commands of God and the things of God he has revealed to us in the Scriptures. Let me give you a common conversation I have as I'm out and about in town.

People will come up to me and just introduce themselves. "Hey, I've been at the church for a few years. We've never been able to meet. This is me, this is my wife, and these are our kids." I'll go, "Oh man, that's awesome," and I'm always going to ask... The first question you're going to get from me is, "Hey, are you in a home group? Whose home group are you in?" Then things almost always get a little awkward. "Well no, we're really not. We've been trying. We can't really find one."

"Well, you know, there are 500 of them. You could probably just go to somebody's house on your street and there will be one there."

"Well, we just haven't had a time to go to Group Connect. They never fall on good days."

"So Sunday afternoons are really busy for you?" By the way, I would never really push you like this, but this is how I'm judging you in my mind. Let me just boil it down to this: There seems to be among a great deal of us a lack of seriousness about positioning ourselves in environments where God chisels and shapes. As great as the Sunday gathering is, as great as coming in here and singing and sitting under the Word is, God does his best work in smaller rooms.

God does his best work life on life where you can be fully known and not hide, because right now some of you are hiding. You are avoiding God in the crowd. God chisels and shapes in small rooms. God chisels and shapes when you're fully known, when people can watch the inconsistency in your life and love you enough to point out that inconsistency. That's where chiseling and shaping goes, because there are no silver bullets in this game.

So my heart is no longer defined by anger, but every once in a while it can flare up. I used to be an angry man. I do not consider myself an angry man at all. No one who knows me would go, "That dude is just angry." But you put the right circumstances out there and it would just take a little spark to rile me up. I need Christian community. I need people to walk with me. I need people to encourage me. I need people to point me in the right direction.

Some of you just don't take this seriously, so what you do is you *go* to church; you don't *belong* anywhere. Are you with me? Some of you are doing it right now. You go to like seven churches and belong to none of them. I'm not making a sales pitch here, because I can put all my truth on the table. I don't care where you go; I'm just telling you biblically you're supposed to be somewhere. You're supposed to belong somewhere. If it's here, praise God. If it's not, just let it be somewhere, and praise God. When you don't take seriously God's means of sanctifying and growing us, you're taking away dots and iotas, and in the end, you're not going to grow in this superseding righteousness.

Then here's the second thing. I haven't pushed on this in a long time and I need to push. I'm going to push hard on it. Superseding righteousness gets deeply wounded and becomes impossible to walk in if you're pretending to be something you're not. If you're walking in secret sin right now... Do you know what I'm saying? Like you show up at church with a happy face but your life is a train wreck. You're addicted to

pornography. You're flirting around with somebody. You have secret, unconfessed sin in your life. You're fishing on Facebook while your spouse is asleep.

You have secrets your roommates don't know about, your family doesn't know about, your friends don't know about, but you come in here on the weekends with a happy Jesus face on, knowing when to stand up, knowing maybe to raise your hands, maybe even taking notes. You are pretending to be pretty and clean when in reality you're not. You have enslaved yourself to foolishness when Christ has said, "I've come to set you free."

God marvels in when we go, "Look how ugly I am, and yet he loves me." That's where freedom is. Freedom is not in you looking pretty. Freedom is you understanding your ugliness and letting God's glory be seen in him loving the ugly kid. I don't know why we have to pretend. God's victory and strength is not found in your strength. Are you hearing me? God's glory is not found in how pretty you are. His glory is found in how ugly you are and yet he loves you anyway.

That works one way with men and it works another way with women. Every dude out there wants to be told, "Man, you married way over your head." I've never heard anyone tell a woman that. Women don't want to hear that. You don't say that to a woman. "How did you get *him*?" Women aren't going to receive that. It's going to go badly for you. Really, the glory of God is that people go, "Really? That's yours? You adopted *that* one?" The glory of God is, "Yeah, I adopted that one."

So what we're called to as men and women of God is to just be honest about where we are. Do you know how exhausted you are if you're pretending? Why would you do that to yourself? Have you heard me say that no one has lied to you, no one has deceived you, and no one is as big of an enemy to you as you are? This is what I'm talking about.

Why would you do that to yourself? Why would you decide to pretend that you're godlier than you are to impress people who you're not going to let know who you are either way? When you do that, you've enslaved yourself to keep your secrets, while carrying your own guilt, while pretending to be something you could be if you'd just be honest. It's insane! God brought you here today to simply hear that. You don't have to do it. It's not who you have to be.

It's a scary thing to confess sin. It is. But what happens in that moment where confession becomes the call of God on our lives is you realize who your God really is. Because when you say, "I refuse to confess because this might be the outcome," what you're really saying is, "I don't trust God to be my all in all. I don't trust God to be all I need. What I actually need is *this*, and if I do what God asks me to do I might lose this, and I can't lose this. I can lose *this* before I can lose *this*." By your refusal to come clean about sin,

secrets and habitual sin in your life, you're agreeing to enslavement over freedom. I just think that's a dumb choice, and it *is* a choice.

So here's what we're going to do. This is what we created space for. I want to give you an opportunity today to respond to the Lord. I want to give you an opportunity to take advantage of what has been offered to you in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Would you just bow your head and close your eyes for me? There's nothing magical about this. I just think it'll help you.

I want to extend two invitations today. The first is for those who are in this room who would say, "Matt, I've been here for a while. I've heard the gospel. I know what the gospel is. I know Jesus died for my sins. I've even tried to start lining up my life with what God has commanded. But if I had to be real honest, Matt, I haven't let too many people know about that. I haven't laid my yes down, and I need to lay my yes down, Matt. I need to just say, 'Okay, Jesus. Yes, I'm going to follow you. I'm going to put my life in your hands. I'm going to trust you.' I've yet to do that, and I need to do that today, Matt. If there's no victory over sin, no fullness of life outside of Jesus Christ, and if the gospel is true, I need to lay my yes down."

If that's you and you're in this place, would you just lift up your hand and go, "Matt, I need to lay my yes down. I haven't done that yet"? Just lift up your hand. Don't you dare be ashamed or afraid. God already knows your heart. You're not admitting anything that's not already well-known in this room. Okay, praise God. Put your hands down.

If you're in here and you would say, "Matt, I've laid my yes down. I've said yes to the Lord, but if I had to be honest, I've been wearing a mask and I'm exhausted. Matt, I have secret sin in my life. I'm being owned by anger. I'm being owned by lust. I have issues with pornography. I have issues with lying. I have addictions. I have things in my life I know God would say are wicked, and no one knows but me and I'm growing exhausted in that, Matt."

If that's you this morning and you would have the courage to be honest before a God who already knows, would you just lift your hand and go, "That's me, Matt. I have secret sin in my life. I have things no one knows about"? Okay, why don't you put your hands down. Now look up at me. Let me explain to you where we're going.

What we find in the Scriptures is the way to let the power of sin lose some of its power in our lives is to openly confess where we've fallen short of the glory of God, and we confess both unto God and we confess to others. So what we're going to do here in a minute is I'm simply going to pray for us, and as I pray for us there are going to be men and women who come up and stand up front, and then when I say amen, we're going to move.

If we raised our hands and said, "I just need to lay my yes down," then as soon as I say amen, we're going to come forward and we're going to grab the hand of one of these men and women and we're going to just say, "I need to lay my yes down. I need to say yes to the Lord. I've been not full-on public about this. My yes is down. I'm following him." I want you to do that, all right?

Then here's where this is going to get hard, guys. For those of you who raised your hands and you said, "I have secret unconfessed sin in my life; there are things going on in private that no one knows about but me," I'm going to ask you to confess that this morning to one of the men and women up front. If you're in Denton, all of this is taking place in the back. We're going to confess that because it's going to loosen the power of sin. It's not a silver bullet. It doesn't mean you're never going to struggle again. It simply loosens its power and then gives us hope for moving forward.

Here's my promise to you. Regardless of what the sin is that's in your life, however dark you might think it be, here's my ferocious commitment to you: If you're willing to fight and run, we're willing to fight and run right alongside of you. There's no sin in this room with more power than the cross of Jesus Christ, no shame in your background that Christ can't heal, nothing that's a present reality for you that's going to turn us off towards you, because we have been recipients of the grace he is offering to you.

I know you're going to argue with yourself about whether or not you should do this. I know you're going to argue about what the cost is, argue about whether or not you can't just conquer this on your own. Come on, bro. You have a ton of evidence that you can't. Let's move. I'm going to pray for us, and then immediately we're going to move and we're going to be prayed for and encouraged by other brothers and sisters. Let's pray.

Father, do now what only you can do. Accomplish now what only you can accomplish. I pray for courage for the men and women who raised their hand, the courage for those who raised their hand and said, "I need to lay my yes down," that they would very quickly just come grab a hand and say, "I need to lay my yes down." And for those who are stuck in secret sin, Father, I just pray for freedom. I pray they would keep or no longer in any way accept the chains of secret guilt and shame, but they would openly confess their need for you. You're good, you do good, and we'll have nothing but evidence of it in the minutes and hours to come. It's through your beautiful name I pray, amen.

Love you, guys. Let's move. Let's go.