Fulfilling the Law
Matt 5:13-20
SS Lesson for 07/07/2019

Devotional Scripture: Heb 10:1-12

OUTLINE

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Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary
Key Verse: Matt 5:16
Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

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Salt that displays itself by affecting a depraved generation (Phil 2:14-15)
Salt that displays itself by affecting like new yeast (1 Cor 5:6-7)
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The Reason for Righteous Living (5:13-16)
Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

When I was growing up, my father, older brother, and I enjoyed a yearly hunting week in the back country of Idaho. We didn’t always bag this elusive game, but we had great times of bonding and excitement. We partnered with another family who had two sons the same age as my brother and me, so there were two fathers and four sons. The year I was 12, the other father, his older son, and my older brother decided to try something new since we had not seen any deer in two days. They studied the forest service maps and thought there was a trail winding down an isolated creek near our camp. There was road access at the head of this stream and at a bridge about five miles below. The plan was for my father to dump the three out at dawn at the creek’s head and let them hunt down the isolated stream while we drove down to pick them up at the bridge in the early afternoon. We built a huge fire and began to cook a meal for the other team. We were sure that they would be cold and hungry when they arrived. But they did not come. It began to get dark, and the below-freezing night was near. We drove as far up the creek as we could, but the other team was not found. Finally, we stopped and fired a series of three shots from a rifle, the hunter’s universal signal. No response. Finally, my father decided to turn his Jeep around on the narrow road and go back to the bridge. He thought we might have missed them somehow. We were just ready to drive away when we heard shots. We waited as the other three came bounding out of the trees. They saw the headlights of the Jeep. What happened? The trail down the creek had failed them. As a result, they had waded through the icy water for several hundred yards where the stream went through an area with sheer rock walls. They were soaked and nearly frozen. They would not have survived the night alone, but they saw the lights and were thereby saved.

Matthew’s record of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount extends the length of chapters 5–7 in his Gospel. The opening feature is the section known familiarly to many as the Beatitudes (last week’s lesson). There Jesus spoke eight beatitudes in third person, seemingly as general statements of truth (Matthew 5:3–9). But in the two verses that follow, Jesus switched from third person to second person. This seemed to aim his thoughts there directly at his disciples. It is they who could expect to be insulted, persecuted, and generally bad-mouthed. But those eventualities were not to deter them from carrying out the role he had for them—the subject of today’s lesson.

Key Verse: Matt 5:16

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

5:13-16. To demonstrate the impact these people would make on their world, Jesus used two common illustrations: salt and light. Jesus’ followers would be like salt in that they would create a thirst for greater information. When one sees a unique person who possesses superior qualities in specific areas, he desires to discover why that person is different. It is also possible that salt means these people serve as a preservative against the evils of society. Whichever view one takes, the important quality to note is that salt ought to maintain its basic character. If it fails to be salty, it has lost its purpose for existence and should be discarded. A light is meant to shine and give direction. Individuals Jesus described in verses 3-10 would obviously radiate and point others to the proper path. Their influence would be evident, like a city on a hill or a lamp... on its stand. A concealed lamp, placed under a bowl (a clay container for measuring grain) would be useless. Light-radiating people live so that others see their good deeds and give praise not to them but to their Father in heaven. (Verse 16 includes the first of 15 references by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount to God as “your [or ‘our’ or ‘My’] Father in heaven,” “your heavenly Father,” “your Father.” Also see vv. 45, 48; 6:1,4,6,8-9,14,15,18,26,32; 7:11,21. One who stands in God’s righteousness by faith in Him has an intimate spiritual relationship to Him, like that of a child to his loving father.)

5:17-20. This section presents the heart of Jesus’ message, for it demonstrates His relationship to the Law of God. Jesus was not presenting a rival system to the Law of Moses and the words of the Prophets, but a true fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets—in contrast with the Pharisees’ traditions. “The Law and the Prophets” refer to the entire Old Testament (cf. 7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; Acts 13:15; 24:14; 28:23;
Rom. 3:21). I tell you the truth is literally, “Surely (or Verily, KJV) I say to you.” “Surely” renders the word “Amen” (Gr. amēn, transliterated from the Heb. āman, “to be firm, true”). This expression, “I tell you the truth,” points to a solemn declaration that the hearers should note. It occurs 31 times in Matthew alone. (In the Gospel of John this Gr. word always occurs twice: “Amen, Amen.” Cf. John 1:51.) Jesus’ fulfillment would extend to the smallest Hebrew letter, the “jot” (lit., yōd), and even to the smallest stroke of a Hebrew letter, the “tittle.” In English a jot would correspond to the dot above the letter “i” (and look like an apostrophe), and a tittle would be seen in the difference between a “P” and an “R”. The small angled line that completes the “R” is like a tittle. These things are important because letters make up words and even a slight change in a letter might change the meaning of a word. Jesus said He would fulfill the Law by obeying it perfectly and would fulfill the prophets’ predictions of the Messiah and His kingdom. But the responsibility of the people was made clear. The righteousness they were currently seeking—that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law—was insufficient for entrance into the kingdom Jesus was offering. The righteousness He demanded was not merely external; it was a true inner righteousness based on faith in God’s Word (Rom. 3:21-22). This is clear from what follows.

Major Theme Analysis
(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

Fulfillment Through the Church (Matt 5:13-16)

13 “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.
14 “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden.
15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.
16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Salt of the Church (13-14)

Salt in conversations (Col 4:6)
6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Salt that displays itself through effective prayer (1 Peter 4:7)
7 The end of all things is near. Therefore be clear minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

Salt that displays itself by affecting a depraved generation (Phil 2:14-15)
14 Do everything without complaining or arguing, 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe

Salt that displays itself by affecting like new yeast (1 Cor 5:6-7)
6 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast — as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Salt that displays itself in the knowledge of good things of God (Philem 6)
6 I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.
Salt that displays itself in a maturing faith (2 Peter 1:5-8)

5 For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; 6 and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; 7 and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. 8 For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Salt that displays itself through abiding in Jesus (John 15:5)

5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Salt that displays itself in a pure heart and a good conscience toward God (1 Timothy 1:5)

5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

Light of the Church (15-16)

A light that comes from controlling what we see (Luke 11:34-36)

34 Your eye is the lamp of your body. When your eyes are good, your whole body also is full of light. But when they are bad, your body also is full of darkness. 35 See to it, then, that the light within you is not darkness. 36 Therefore, if your whole body is full of light, and no part of it dark, it will be completely lighted, as when the light of a lamp shines on you."

A light that is the light of men (John 1:3-5)

4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

A light that is the light of the world (John 8:12)

12 When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

A light that shines in our hearts (2 Cor 4:3-6)

4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake. 6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

A light that deliverers from death (Ps 56:13)

13 For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life.

A light that means being in the presence of God (Ps 89:15)

15 Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O Lord.

A light that means putting away the deeds of sin and putting on the armor of God (Rom 13:12)

12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

A light that displays goodness, righteousness and truth (Eph 5:8-9)

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth)
A light that we trust in Jesus (John 12:36)
36 Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

A light that represents we love one another (1 John 2:9-10)
9 Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble.

Fulfillment Through Jesus (Matt 5:17-20)
17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.
18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.
19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Word of Jesus (17-19)

Word that fulfills the righteous requirements of the law (Rom 8:3-4)
3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

Word that brought the end of the law (Rom 10:4)
4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Word that fulfills the Scriptures (Matt 26:54-56)
54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?” 55 At that time Jesus said to the crowd, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not arrest me. 56 But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled.

Word that through rejection fulfilled prophecy (Acts 13:27)
27 The people of Jerusalem and their rulers did not recognize Jesus, yet in condemning him they fulfilled the words of the prophets that are read every Sabbath.

Word that fulfills the promise of redemption (Gal 4:4-5)
4 But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons.

Word that establishes and fulfills second covenant through Jesus (Heb 10:8-10)
8 First he said, "Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). 9 Then he said, "Here I am, I have come to do your will." He sets aside the first to establish the second. 10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

Word that fulfills the purpose and goal of the gospel (1 Cor 15:3-5)
3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.
Fulfilling the Law

Word that fulfills that all Scripture references to the Messiah (Luke 4:20-22)
20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21 and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." 22 All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

Word that fulfilled all that is written in the Scriptures (Luke 18:31)
31 Jesus took the Twelve aside and told them, "We are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written by the prophets about the Son of Man will be fulfilled.

Word that was fulfilled in Jesus (Luke 22:37)
37 It is written: 'And he was numbered with the transgressors'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment.

Word that fulfilled all promises through Jesus (Acts 13:32-33)
32 "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father

Righteousness of Jesus (20)

Righteousness through faith in Jesus (Rom 3:22)
22 This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference,

Righteousness through Jesus' obedience (Rom 5:19)
19 For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.

Righteousness that comes from God that allows knowledge of Jesus (Phil 3:7-9)
7 But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. 8 What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ — the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

Righteousness through Jesus becoming our righteousness (1 Cor 1:30)
30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

Righteousness through Jesus bearing our sins (2 Cor 5:21)
21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Righteousness that we have faith and hope in (Gal 5:5)
5 But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.

Righteousness that is the result of Jesus being the end of the law (Rom 10:4)
4 Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.

Righteousness which God wanted Jesus to do (Matt 3:14-15)
14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented.
Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Reason for Righteous Living (5:13-16)

Realizing that a life lived according to the beatitudes will surely lead to rejection and persecution, some Christians may be tempted to conceal themselves within their society. To counter this temptation our Lord explained the purpose for righteous attitudes and actions in verses 13-16. Essentially, the reason is that it is only by being distinctive as a Christian that a true believer can glorify God and contribute positively to his society. To illustrate His point, the Lord Jesus used two illustrations or figures: salt and light.

Salt was as common a commodity in biblical times as it is today. In the Old Testament, salt was used as a seasoning (Job 6:6), and it was to accompany many of the sacrifices which were offered (Leviticus 2:13). It was also used by the Orientals to seal an agreement (as, I am told, is still practiced by the Arabs today) and was used on covenants between God and Israel (Numbers 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5). Salt, then, was a seasoning ingredient, a symbol of purity and perpetuation.

There were great quantities of salt on the shores of the Dead Sea, which was of the rock or fossil variety. Because of impurities and contamination, much of the outer layer of this salt was useless as a seasoning ingredient. Our Lord’s reference to ‘salt’ in Matthew 5:13 may well refer to this contaminated ‘salt’ which was virtually useless. In this case, He is saying that the Christian who compromises with the world about him loses his purity and, at the same time, his usefulness to God and society.

Light is also one of the fundamental needs of man. The world at large is in spiritual darkness (Psalm 82:5; Proverbs 4:19; Ephesians 6:12, etc.). Our Lord Jesus came as the ‘light’ of this world (John 1:5ff, 8:12) and to call men out of the darkness and into the light (Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:4-5). We now reflect the light of His glory to the world about by our good works (which He performs in us). As lights we expose the evil deeds of darkness and we illuminate the divine path which God has prescribed for men to walk in righteousness. The purpose of light is to illuminate, to shine forth plainly in the darkness (Matthew 5:15); therefore, the Christian can only fulfill his purpose by being conspicuous in his distinct lifestyle.

The Christian lifestyle is by its very nature a distinctive one. Anyone who attempts to live according to the Sermon on the Mount will be able to do so only by the power of the Spirit of God. It is the life of the Christian for only the Christian desires to live thus, and only the Christian can live in this way. A conspicuous lifestyle will inevitably bring adverse reaction, and so we must prepare ourselves for persecution. Even in this we may rejoice, knowing it is for the sake of our Lord, that our reward awaits us in heaven, and that we are in the company of the prophets of old. Apart from a Christian lifestyle the Christian cannot glorify God or contribute to his society.

Our Lord’s Position on the Old Testament Law: Orthodoxy Versus Hypocrisy (5:17-20)

Our Lord’s position on the Old Testament Scriptures is even more orthodox and uncompromising than that of the scribes. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the Law, until all is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17-18).

Our Lord never intended to set aside the Old Testament Scriptures; He came to fulfill them. This fulfillment occurred in several ways. He came to fulfill those prophecies and types which promised His first coming to the earth as the Lamb of God, the Sin-bearer. He fulfilled the Old Testament Scriptures by living a life completely conformed to their requirements. Finally, He fulfilled the Old Testament writings by bringing their teachings and doctrines into clear focus. As Chrysostom expressed it: “His (Christ’s) sayings were no repeal of the former, but a drawing out and filling up of them.”

Not even the most insignificant change in the sacred Scriptures was permissible, according to the Savior. The Hebrew ‘jot’ (in Greek it is the iota) was the smallest Hebrew letter. The ‘tittle’ was the small projection on the stroke of a letter which distinguished one Hebrew letter from another. Here is reflected our Lord’s view of Scripture. It was the Word of God, inspired, inerrant, infallible. Whatever He might be accused of, it could not be an irreverence for the Old Testament Scriptures.

Turning the tables on those who would challenge Him on this point, Jesus brings our focus upon His critics. Could they make the same claims as He? “Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so
teaches others, shall be called least in the Kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of heaven” (verse 19).

The stage is now being set for the contrast Jesus made between Himself and the scribes and Pharisees. The real culprits were the scribes and Pharisees. They did not regard the Old Testament Law highly enough. They had set it aside, preferring their own rules, regulations and traditions (Mark 7:7-9). The one who was truly great in the Kingdom was he who would both teach the Old Testament faithfully (without watering it down), and who would live in accordance with this teaching. In the remaining verses, Jesus demonstrated how it was the scribes and Pharisees who failed to take the Law far enough, thus loosening and lowering its requirements. Worse still, they did not practice what they preached. “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the Kingdom of heaven” (verse 20).

It is almost impossible to convey the force of what our Lord has said here. He virtually has thrown a bomb into the laps of his opponents (though they are not present here in my estimation). How this charge must have stunned His audience. You see, the scribes and Pharisees were viewed as the very pillars of Jewish society and religion. They were considered the most moral, upright, influential people of their day. As one of my seminary professors once said, they were the kind of person you would want your daughter to marry. They were Israel’s best, the cream of the crop. But Jesus said their righteousness wasn’t satisfactory to God. His listeners would have to do better than them if they wanted to enter into God’s Kingdom.

Let me digress for a moment and simply remind you that if the best within Judaism could not merit entrance into God’s heaven, neither can you or I. Legalism seeks to win God’s heaven by the keeping of some code of conduct. If the scribes and Pharisees failed, my friend, so must you and I. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus did not lower the requirements of Judaism (which were thought to enable Israel to enter into the Kingdom). He showed them to be infinitely higher. The Old Testament Law was given to men as a standard of holiness. By its keeping, none of us would ever enter into eternal life, for it only condemns us. But by failing to keep it, we are drawn to depend upon the righteousness which God has provided in His Son, Jesus Christ.

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Visiting the famous Jewel Cave in the Black Hills of South Dakota, one is taken into the bowels of the cavern using an elevator, walkways, and electric lights. At a very deep point, the guide will halt the group and turn off all the lights. The darkness is so profound that you can wave your hand an inch from your nose and not see it. After letting everyone’s eyes adjust to the darkness, the guide will light a single match. The tiny flame seems like a blazing torch at first, breaking the darkness in a startling manner. For many, life is like living in a very dark cave with no light. The darkness in the world refuses to acknowledge God as king or live in obedience to Him. The only “righteousness” suggested by the darkness is self-determined and self-made. How, then, in this world of darkness do we let our lights shine for Jesus? It seems like an impossible task. The old spiritual says, “This little light of mine, I’m gonna let it shine.” The song puts forth no time limit, no expected results, and no real strategy. It just tells us to let our lights shine for Jesus. What if no one seems to notice? “I’m gonna let it shine.” May our lives and our churches be the cities on hills that become beacons of hope in our dark and lost world.

Concluding Thoughts from the Echoes Commentary

Salt and Light - In biblical times people considered salt extremely valuable. It preserved meat and added flavor to food. Jesus’ followers who adhere to His ways are also considered light, giving guidance to those who are in darkness or lost. Jesus referred to Himself as the light of the world, and His main purpose in coming to earth involved showing sinful man how to relate to a holy God. He handed over this responsibility to Christians who now lovingly shine His light on others.

City on a Hill - Jesus also referred to a city located in a highly visible place, drawing the public’s attention. True believers live a life others can’t ignore. It’s foolish to light a lamp then cover it up with a basket. Those who claim to know Christ should be like a lighthouse helping people find their way to God through His Son. They point to Christ as the way to salvation and new life.

God’s Purposes - Jesus wanted to be clear that with His commands He was not abolishing God’s law. But the Pharisees and scribes incorrectly preached that obeying rules resulted in receiving God’s good graces. The
people struggled under this burden, and Christ came to set them free. Those who live a Christian life understand
the importance of vocally lifting Him up. They want to make an impact for Him on those around them. Just
being patient and kind to others is only one part of representing the Savior. Right now, it's politically incorrect
to talk specifically about Jesus, His life, death, resurrection, and His return to the earth. Sadly, some Christians
are totally silent in the presence of unbelievers concerning their faith. God's children are not to be tyrannical,
unloving, and insolent about their faith, but they should be constantly praying for an opportune moment to bring
out the truth about Christ.