

²⁰“For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ²¹“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.”

There is only one way into the kingdom of heaven, and it’s to be righteous. For only the righteous will enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus declares: I am the way, the truth, and the life, no one comes to the Father, except through me.

Jesus is the only way to heaven. He came down to bleed, and die on Calvary’s Cross for all of your unrighteousness. For all of your sins, Jesus has died for you. Your sins are covered in his blood. It’s who Jesus is and what he has done for you as a child of God.

The scribes and Pharisees opposed Jesus at every turn, and Jesus used them as an example. Jesus says in verse 20: **unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.**

Why does Jesus use the scribes and Pharisees as an example? Because they lived very good lives? Morally speaking they lived good lives; they were following the letter of the Law (not the spirit). They were good neighbors because they were following the Law—doing the stuff.

But Jesus said your righteousness must exceed theirs—must go beyond theirs. The scribes and Pharisees who rejected Jesus are not going to heaven.

In verse 21 of the text: **“You shall not murder.”** When one murders and takes another life, they live as if there is no God. They live as if life doesn’t matter, and the only life that matters is their life.

Jesus teaches that before murder ever takes place, the sin that began far before that was the sin of anger.

That’s why God said to Cain in **Genesis 4:6-7** “Why are you angry, and why has your face fallen? ⁷If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.”

Sin is crouching at your door. The sin of anger left unchecked, can turn into rage. Cain's anger was left unchecked, and he murdered his brother Abel.

Abel's blood is crying out. He brought judgment upon himself, and he would be cast out of the Lord's presence as a restless wanderer on the face of the earth.

The Lord warns us that to be angry with your brother is to be liable to judgment. We live in a world that is full of anger.

People get angry for many different reasons—when they are driving, when they go shopping, when they are late for an important meeting, etc., —they get angry because things don't go their way.

James 1:19-20 “Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness that God requires.”

God desires that you live a righteous life. **James 1:21** “Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.”

Anger left unrepentant can bring destruction upon you. What can you do? Turn to the Word of God.

What can anger left unchecked do against another? It can lead to insults, name calling, and lying, to name a few (usually when they are not around).

Matthew 5:22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire.

When we become angry, we stoke the fires inside of us, and nothing good can come from it. **Matthew 15:18-19** ¹⁸But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

To slander someone is to slay them with your words. That's what makes you unclean, and unrighteous. We can say with Isaiah: “Woe is me! For I am a man with unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of people with unclean lips.”

So, what do you do? The Pharisees cannot save you. Jesus tells us in today's text that your righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, or you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Only one can save us! Jesus Christ, our Lord, who has come to pay all our debt. He has come to distinguish the fires of hell. He has died so you can live. He was persecuted and killed by those who were angry with him.

Jesus never insulted anyone, but suffered name calling and insults on the Cross. He took your sin, my sin, and bleeds and dies for you. He opens up the gates of heaven for you!

Romans 3:21-23 “But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it- ²²the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe.

All of us have become angry and slandered others, we have all name called. “For we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The Law in its full force shows us our sins and convicts us of our sins. The weight of the law also points to our great need for repentance. As sinners who are condemned to the fires of hell. Through the Law, we see our need for a Savior.

You are justified by Jesus’ blood, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. At your baptism, Jesus says that you are his, and he is well pleased. Heaven is open for you.

If you become angry? Give it to Jesus. When you want to insult another, give it to Jesus. Remember the Kyrie: Lord, Have mercy, Christ have mercy, Lord, have mercy.

Who needs your mercy? Your wife does, your husband does, your children do. Your brother or sister sitting next to you needs your mercy. Your pastor does. Those around you need your mercy.

Romans 6:11 “So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.”

This is who you are, your instruments of righteousness. **Romans 6:14** “For sin will have no dominion over you, since you are not under law but under grace.”

The Scribes and Pharisees were trying, but they were under the Law, you are under grace! You are under the forgiveness of sins. Living in the forgiveness of sins is who you are.

As members of the Christian church, we are persecuted and insulted. Jesus said in the gospel last Sunday: “Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven.”

Jesus teaches in the 5th commandment: You shall not murder. When we uphold the 5th commandment and speak up about the sanctity of any life we will be insulted, and ridiculed; whether it is an unborn life, or an elderly life.

¹³“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?”

As Jesus disciples we must not be lazy, but instead be faithful disciples. In verse 14, Jesus says for us to be **“the light of the world.”** ¹⁶**“In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”**

Jesus says rejoice. Blessed are you, because the kingdom of heaven is yours.

Live boldly speaking God’s Word of truth, for you are covered in his blood. Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven. Amen