

Briefing Document: Matthew Lesson 66-Christ and the Law

May 10, 2026

Executive Summary

This document synthesizes the key themes from a service focused on the relationship between Christ, the Law, and the nature of true righteousness. The core message emphasizes that while religious leaders of Jesus' time practiced an external and partial form of righteousness, Jesus requires absolute holiness and perfection. Because humans are incapable of achieving this standard through their own works or by following the Law, righteousness is only obtainable as a gift through faith in Jesus Christ. Additional themes include the spiritual influence of mothers and the vital role of a private prayer life in developing a relationship with God.

Motherhood and Divine Design

The service coincided with Mother's Day, highlighting the unique role mothers play in both family life and spiritual development.

- **Selfless Guidance:** Mothers are described as the embodiment of sacrifice and unconditional love. They are responsible for nurturing children, teaching biblical values, and shaping them into the people God has called them to be.
- **Divine Formation:** The sermon references the biblical truth that every person is a deliberate creation of God. This is supported by *Psalms 139:13-14: For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well.*
- **The Perfect Source:** While mothers provide essential care and kindness, the document notes that God remains the perfect and ultimate source of love.

The Significance of Private Prayer

A central portion of the service focused on the "closet of prayer"—a metaphor for a private, intimate relationship with God.

- **Matthew 6:6:** The scripture instructs believers on the privacy of prayer: *But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.*
- **Deepening Communication:** Relationships deepen through communication. For believers, this involves reading the Bible, letting the Holy Spirit speak, and spending time in prayer for oneself and others.
- **Spiritual Transformation:** Regular time spent with God is expected to produce the "fruit of the Spirit," including love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.
- **The Power of One:** An illustrative story was shared regarding a construction worker in New Mexico who built a private prayer closet. His daily prayer for God to use him eventually led to the establishment of multiple Christian schools serving thousands of children.

The Critique of External Righteousness

The sermon provides a detailed examination of Jesus' criticism of the scribes and Pharisees, the religious leaders of His day. Jesus warned that entry into the kingdom of heaven requires a righteousness that "exceeds" theirs.

The Four Flaws of Pharisaical Righteousness

1. **External in Nature:** The Pharisees focused on looking good to others while remaining "rotten" on the inside. They sought the esteem of men rather than the approval of God.
2. **Partial Obedience:** They were meticulous about minor rules, such as tithing small herbs (mint, anise, and cumin), but they neglected "weightier matters" like justice, mercy, and faith.
3. **Redefined Standards:** They substituted God's eternal commandments with man-made traditions. They modified the law to make it something they felt they could achieve, effectively lowering God's standard to fit their own conduct.
4. **Self-Centeredness:** Their righteousness was based on their own actions and pride. They lacked a "holy dissatisfaction" with their spiritual state, wrongly believing they had already achieved what God required.

The Nature of True Righteousness

Jesus set a standard that was impossible for the religious leaders—and all humanity—to meet through effort alone.

- **The Standard of Perfection:** Jesus demanded total holiness. *Matthew 5:48* states: *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.*
- **Justification Beyond the Law:** The law cannot make a person right with God. *Galatians 2:16* explains: *knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.*
- **The Role of Faith:** Righteousness is described as a gift. Just as Abraham believed God and it was "accounted to him for righteousness" (*Romans 4:3*), modern believers receive the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ.
- **Internal Transformation:** True righteousness is not just about avoiding "bad" actions; it is an internal change. Jesus taught that even hateful or lustful thoughts are violations of God's standard, making every person a sinner in need of a Savior.

Conclusion and Call to Action

The document concludes by emphasizing that while humans are "incapable of being law-abiders in the eyes of God," there is a guarantee of heaven through Christ.

- **The Two Adams:** Death entered the world through one man (Adam), but the gift of righteousness comes through one Man (Jesus Christ). *Romans 5:17* says: *For if by the one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

- **The Requirement of Obedience:** While salvation is a gift received by faith, a true Christian is characterized by a desire to be obedient to God's word and a persistent hunger for righteousness.

Phonetic Pronunciation Guide and Definitions

Greek Word	Phonetic Pronunciation	Brief Definition
Anathema ^[^1]	uh-NATH-uh-muh	Something dedicated to evil; accursed or consigned to damnation.

[^1]: This word appears in the discussion of *Galatians 1:8*, where the Apostle Paul warns that anyone preaching a gospel other than the one originally delivered should be "accursed."