

Session 2 Outline: Righteousness as our Breastplate

Introduction

[Greeting:] → Welcome to “The Armor of Faith,” a show where we hope to bring our listeners closer to the Word of God and the blessings we receive through living in the fullness of the Catholic faith. My name is Doug and I will be your host as we discuss the blessings of the Church Christ built upon Peter.

I am joined today by my panel: [names]

Our panelists provide support for religious formation at St. Philip Benizi Catholic Mission in Cedaredge CO. Our panelists are also in the process of discernment and study to become Dominicans who are also known as the Order of Preachers. So, welcome to our panelists as well as our listeners.

Let us open with a prayer:

Heavenly Father, we lift up our hearts in thanks and praise for this opportunity to open and share your Holy Word this day. We pray that You are with us and all our listeners as we share with one another the blessings of faith. We pray You will grant us wisdom and understanding as we seek to learn Your Holy Truth. And so we say together:

Our Father....

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit we pray.

Presentation:

During our last episode, I mentioned that Saint Jerome once said, “Ignorance of scripture is ignorance of Christ.” In this same vein, we believe that those who do not know their faith leave themselves vulnerable to the one who would take it from them.

In case you were not able to join us last week, we are in the process of discussing what it means to put on the armor of faith. As a reminder, St. Paul listed the components of the armor of God in Ephesians 6:10-18. In summary, they are:

Loins Girded in Truth (some would interpret this as the belt of truth)
Righteousness as a breastplate
Feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace
Faith as a shield against the flaming arrows of the evil one
Helmet of salvation
Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Last week we discussed the **belt of truth** and how to discern it. Today, we are going to discuss the second component of the armor of God, which is **righteousness**.

Presentation: What is Righteousness?

One of the first mentions of righteousness within the Bible is in reference to Noah. In Genesis

6:9 it is written: “These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a **righteous** man and **blameless** in his generation; Noah walked with God.”

This description of Noah provides us with some insight as to what it means to be **righteous**. It tells us that Noah was *blameless in his generation* and that he *walked with God*. This does not mean Noah was without sin, for we also know that Noah liked to tip a few.

“Noah, a man of the soil, was the first to plant a vineyard. 21 He drank some of the wine, became drunk, and lay naked inside his tent. (Genesis 9:20-21)

Of course, these events came after the flood and the initial description of Noah, so while the dictionary definition of **righteousness** is to be “**free from guilt or sin,**” we might also see that the condition of a person can change for better or worse. If we are among those, like me, who have led a sinful life, there is hope, for it means **we can choose to do better.** If we are among those who have kept sin at bay, there should be **cause for concern,** for we can expect the evil one to conspire against us and **tempt us in our weakest moments.** **Righteousness,** therefore, is before us as a choice, but it can also be turned away by choice. Each moment where we must make a decision which impacts our relationship with God or one another determines whether we truly wear this component of God's armor; **whether we are willing to always do what is right and just in the eyes of God rather than in than the political eyes of the day.**

Keeping this in mind, let's turn to our panel and ask, what is righteousness and how do we discern it?

What is Righteousness?

According to Webster, righteousness is defined as:

- 1 acting in accord with divine or moral law : **free from guilt or sin**
- 2 **morally right or justifiable**

Scripture:

Old Testament:

*These are the descendants of Noah. Noah was a **righteous** man and blameless in his generation; **Noah walked with God.** (Genesis 6:9)*

*Then the Lord said to Noah: Go into the ark, you and all your household, **for you alone in this generation have I found to be righteous before me.** (Genesis 7:1)*

Abram put his faith in the Lord, who attributed it to him as an act of righteousness.
(Genesis 15:6)

*The LORD replied: If I find fifty **righteous** people in the city of Sodom, I will spare the whole place for their sake. (Genesis 18:26)*

(Note: As Abram pressed, the Lord said if he found ten righteous people, He will spare the whole place – Genesis 18:32)

1 Hear, O Israel! You are now about to cross the Jordan to enter in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than yourselves, having large cities fortified to the heavens, 2 the Anakim, a people great and tall. You yourselves know of them and have heard it said of them, "Who can stand up against the Anakim?" 3 Know, then, today that it is the LORD, your God, who will cross over before you as a consuming fire; he it is who will destroy them and subdue them before you, so that you can dispossess and remove them quickly, as the LORD promised you. 4 After the LORD, your God, has driven them out of your way, do not say in your heart, "It is because of my **justice** the LORD has brought me in to possess this land, and because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD is dispossessing them before me." [a] 5 No, it is not because of your **justice** or the integrity of your heart that you are going in to take possession of their land; but it is because of their wickedness that the LORD, your God, is dispossessing these nations before you and in order to fulfill the promise he made on oath to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. 6 Know this, therefore: it is not because of your **justice** that the LORD, your God, is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people. (Deuteronomy 9:1-6)

(Question: In what ways can we claim to be **righteous**? Can we?)

I, Tobit, have walked all the days of my life on paths of fidelity and **righteousness**. I performed many charitable deeds for my kindred and my people who had been taken captive with me to Nineveh, in the land of the Assyrians. (Tobit 1:3)

When you turn back to him with all your heart, and with all your soul do what is **right** before him, then he will turn to you, and will hide his face from you no longer. Now consider what he has done for you, and give thanks with full voice. Bless the Lord of **righteousness**, and exalt the King of the ages. In the land of my captivity I give thanks, and declare his power and majesty to a sinful nation. According to your heart do what is **right** before him: perhaps there will be pardon for you. (Tobit 13:6)

Jerusalem, holy city, he will afflict you for the works of your hands, but will again pity the **children of the righteous**. [10] Give thanks to the Lord with **righteousness**, and bless the King of the ages, so that your tabernacle may be rebuilt in you with joy. May he gladden within you all who are captives; may he cherish within you all who are distressed for all generations to come. (Tobit 13:9-10)

Go, then, rejoice and exult over the children of the **righteous**, for they will all be gathered together and will bless the Lord of the ages. (Tobit 13:13)

(Reference the above versus of Tobit: Our **righteousness** as elders and parents sets the example for our children and their children's children.)

The eyes of the Lord are directed toward the **righteous** and his ears toward their cry. (Psalms 34:16)

The **righteous** cry out, the Lord hears and he rescues them from all their afflictions. (Psalms 34:18)

Many are the troubles of the **righteous**, but the Lord delivers him from them all. (Psalms 34:20)

And **make your righteousness shine like the dawn, your justice like noonday.** (Psalms 37:6)

12 **The wicked plot against the righteous** and gnash their teeth at them; 13 **But my Lord laughs at them, because he sees that their day is coming.** (Psalm 37:12-13)

(A foreshadowing of the persecution of which Jesus speaks in Matthew 5-10. **“Blessed are they who are persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”** Though we may suffer evil within this world, we must trust that the day will come where the Lord shall set wrongs right and deliver the just. The question is, will we be counted among the righteous who will be invited into His kingdom or the wicked which must be cleared away? Our sin keeps us from being counted from among the **righteous**, but the confession of our sin and a contrite heart will open the doors to forgiveness so we may wash our robes white in the blood of the lamb (Revelation 7:9-17) so that our Lord may cleanse us of our iniquities.)

9 After this I had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue. They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches in their hands. 10 They cried out in a loud voice:

“Salvation comes from our God, who is seated on the throne, and from the Lamb.”

11 All the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures. They prostrated themselves before the throne, worshiped God, 12 and exclaimed:

“Amen. Blessing and glory, wisdom and thanksgiving, honor, power, and might be to our God forever and ever. Amen.”

*13 Then one of the elders spoke up and said to me, “Who are these wearing white robes, and where did they come from?” 14 I said to him, “My lord, you are the one who knows.” He said to me, “**These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.***

15 “For this reason they stand before God’s throne and worship him day and night in his temple. The one who sits on the throne will shelter them.

16 They will not hunger or thirst anymore, nor will the sun or any heat strike them.

*17 **For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to springs of life-giving water, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.**” (Revelation 7:9-14)*

New Testament

*Joseph her husband, since he was a **righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame,** decided to divorce her quietly. (Matthew 1:19)*

14 John tried to prevent him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and yet you are coming to me?" 15 Jesus said to him in reply, "Allow it now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all **righteousness**." Then he allowed him. (Matthew 3:14-15)

(NABRE Footnote: This dialogue, peculiar to Matthew, reveals John's awareness of Jesus' superiority to him as the mightier one who is coming and who will baptize with the holy Spirit (Mt 3:11). His reluctance to admit Jesus among the sinners whom he is baptizing with water is overcome by Jesus' response. **To fulfill all righteousness:** in this gospel to **fulfill** usually refers to fulfillment of prophecy, and **righteousness** to moral conduct in conformity with God's will. Here, however, as in Mt 5:6; 6:33, **righteousness** seems to mean the saving activity of God. **To fulfill all righteousness** is to **submit to the plan of God for the salvation of the human race**. This involves Jesus' identification with sinners; hence the propriety of his accepting John's baptism.]

*Blessed are they who hunger and thirst for **righteousness**, for they will be satisfied.* (Matthew 5:6)

*Blessed are they **who are persecuted** for the sake of **righteousness**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.* (Matthew 5:10)
(Remember Psalm 37:12?)

*I tell you, **unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*** (Matthew 5:20)

*"[But] **take care not to perform righteous deeds in order that people may see them; otherwise, you will have no recompense from your heavenly Father.*** (Matthew 6:1)

31 So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' 32 All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But **seek first the kingdom [of God] and his righteousness**, and all these things will be given you besides. (Matthew 6:31-33)

*Go and learn the meaning of the words, **'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.'** I did not come to call the **righteous** but sinners.* (Matthew 9:13)

47 Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net thrown into the sea, which collects fish of every kind. 48 When it is full they haul it ashore and sit down to put what is good into buckets. What is bad they throw away. 49 **Thus it will be at the end of the age. The angels will go out and separate the wicked from the righteous** 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth. (Matthew 13:47-50)

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites. You are like whitewashed tombs, which appear beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of dead men's bones and every kind of filth. 28 Even so, **on the outside you appear righteous, but inside you are filled with hypocrisy and evildoing.** (Matthew 23:27-28)

(Note: We must learn the lessons of those Jesus criticized, for if we are not careful, we may easily fill their shoes. How often do we render judgment upon the behavior of others before we address the faults within ourselves? We must look after one another,

but how often do our observations turn into gossip? What do we accomplish by talking in whispers rather than gently and peacefully encouraging through the example we set. We cannot set the example if we do not first address our own faults.)

34 Then the king will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father. **Inherit the kingdom prepared for you** from the foundation of the world. 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.' 37 **Then the righteous will answer him and say,** 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? 38 When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? 39 When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?' 40 And the king will say to them in reply, **'Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.'** (Matthew 25:34-40)

Catechism:

"The sum of your word is truth; and every one of your righteous ordinances endures forever." "And now, O Lord God, you are God, and your words are true;" this is why God's promises always come true. God is Truth itself, whose words cannot deceive. This is why one can abandon oneself in full trust to the truth and faithfulness of his word in all things. **The beginning of sin and of man's fall was due to a lie** of the tempter who induced doubt of God's word, kindness, and faithfulness. (CCC: 215)

(Note: We must consider how righteousness relates to truth.)

Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom: **"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."** He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed **his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast "joy in heaven over one sinner who repents."** The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life "for the forgiveness of sins." (CCC: 545)

578 Jesus, Israel's Messiah and therefore the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, was to fulfill the Law by keeping it in its all-embracing detail—according to his own words, down to "the least of these commandments." He is in fact the only one who could keep it perfectly. On their own admission the Jews were never able to observe the Law in its entirety without violating the least of its precepts. This is why every year on the Day of Atonement the children of Israel ask God's forgiveness for their transgressions of the Law. The Law indeed makes up one inseparable whole, and St. James recalls, **"Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it."**

579 This principle of integral observance of the Law not only in letter but in spirit was dear to the Pharisees. By giving Israel this principle they had led many Jews of Jesus' time to an extreme religious zeal. This zeal, were it not to lapse into "hypocritical" casuistry, could only prepare the People for the unprecedented intervention of God through the perfect fulfillment of the Law by **the only Righteous One in place of all sinners.** (CCC: 578-579)

Jesus scandalized the Pharisees by eating with tax collectors and sinners as familiarly as

with themselves. Against those among them “who trusted in themselves that they were **righteous** and despised others,” Jesus affirmed: “I have not come to call the **righteous**, but sinners to repentance.” He went further by proclaiming before the Pharisees that, **since sin is universal, those who pretend not to need salvation are blind to themselves.** (CCC: 588)

(**Question:** In what ways may we be blind to ourselves?)

The Scriptures had foretold this **divine plan of salvation through the putting to death of “the **righteous one**, my Servant”** as a mystery of universal redemption, that is, as **the ransom that would free men from the slavery of sin.** Citing a confession of faith that he himself had “received,” St. Paul professes that “Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures.” In particular Jesus’ redemptive death fulfills Isaiah’s prophecy of the suffering Servant. Indeed Jesus himself **explained the meaning of his life and death in the light of God’s suffering Servant. After his Resurrection he gave this interpretation of the Scriptures to the disciples at Emmaus, and then to the apostles.** (CCC: 601)

“For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man’s obedience many will be made **righteous.**” By his obedience unto death, Jesus accomplished the substitution of the suffering Servant, who “makes himself an offering for sin,” when “he bore the sin of many,” and who “**shall make many to be accounted righteous,**” for “**he shall bear their iniquities.**” Jesus atoned for our faults and made satisfaction for our sins to the Father. (CCC: 615)

(**Note:** Only through our Savior may we be cleansed so that **righteousness** may fill us.)

Quotes:

“**Moral principles do not depend on a majority vote.** Wrong is wrong, even if everybody is wrong. **Right is right,** even if nobody is **right.**” (Archbishop Fulton Sheen)

Points for discussion:

Righteousness is living and doing what is **right** and **just**. What is our guide as to what is **righteous**?

We face a society which constantly judges us according to a measure called “Political Correctness.”

Who determines what is Politically Correct?

Is Political Correctness always **righteous**? How do we know?

What measure do we follow?

How often are we tempted by social acceptance to follow the PC measure?

What do we risk when we live by His commandments?

What do we risk we we live by Political Correctness?

Wrap Up: Well, our time has come to an end. We hope you will be able to join us next week as we pick up our discussion with “Feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace.”

Let us conclude with a prayer: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to open and discuss Your Holy Word. We pray that as we go our separate ways, You will continue to walk with us and help us to see how we may share the blessings of **truth and righteousness** of the gospel not only for the benefit of our lives, but also the lives of all who cross our path. In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen.

Thank you all and God bless.

Next Session: Feet shod in readiness for the gospel of peace.