

The Adopted Life

Fifth Sunday After Epiphany ~ 02.06.2011

How to be a Righteous Dude

The scribes and Pharisees were some seriously righteous dudes. They kept the law of Moses as perfectly as one can (Phil. 3:4-6). Yet Jesus says in this week's gospel text that we must be even more righteous than them (Matt. 5:20). Thanks, Jesus, way to crush our hope of ever being good enough!

Here's what Jesus is really telling us: righteousness is way more than following rules. Righteousness is living in every relationship the way the Father, Son, and Spirit live—freely, joyfully, and generously. Sure, the scribes and Pharisees were great at following rules (just like a lot of us today), but they were terrible at loving relationships (just like a lot of us today). In fact, the only person who's ever really been righteous and lived in every relationship as a reflection of the Triune Life is Jesus. The only way we can have that kind of righteousness is if Jesus freely gives it to us by grace—which he has done. Hallelujah!

As Tim points out this week, this good news is what will really heal our relationships. And, as John points out, this gospel is what will really heal our societies, our nations, and our planet. The Father isn't looking for slaves who will follow the rules. He's created children in his Son Jesus who can really live the way the Trinity lives because we are really included in the Triune Life through Jesus. You can be one righteous dude by believing this truth about yourself: In Jesus, you are righteous.

~ Jonathan Stepp