

# Like Father Like Son



**Matthew 5:48**  
**Bro Ricky Cunningham**

March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1983 Celisa gave birth to our second child. Because of an ultrasound that was done months earlier, we knew that it was going to be a he. After having a first-born girl, to now know that our second born was going to be a son, we were ecstatic. Immediately upon knowing that we were having a boy, we begin to contemplate what we were going to name him long before he was born. We had several months to get ready. We knew that Wayne was a given as a middle name, but we had different opinions about the first name. It just seemed natural to me that we would name him Ricky Wayne Cunningham, Junior. Celisa disagreed. As it got closer to the time for her to deliver, we could not agree between my name and her name, and before we left to go to the hospital I reminded her that I had been preaching the gospel for two years, I was raised in a church that believed the Bible, and that I was the head of our home—and normally we discuss things and when we agree it's no problem, but when there has to be a tie breaker I am the head, so I would have the final authority. ☺ So, when we left here to the hospital that day, there was no doubt in my mind that when he was born and the nurse came out and

said, what's the name? I was going to say, Ricky Wayne Cunningham, Junior. Now, the first time when Celisa delivered Kalista, she had to have a C-section. Back in that day, when you delivered your second child it was just assumed you would have a C-section. So going to the hospital that day, we knew there would be a C-section. This time, because of a change in hospital policy, I actually got to go in and observe the C-section. So I'm sitting there with the person who is putting her out and I can't see what's taking place, but all of a sudden, blood splatters. I was done. They tell me I didn't say another word until it was over. I was still conscience enough though that I could tell there was a point in the surgery where it wasn't going exactly the way the doctors thought it was going to go and Celisa was losing blood and she had to have several amounts of blood given to her. Then, we were back in the room and we are holding this new baby. She has just gone through a lot to bring him into the world, and so when the nurse come in and said, "What are you going to name him?" being the head of our household, since Memish did most of the work I decided to go with her name, not my name, and we named him Kory Wayne Cunningham. I can't tell you guys how many times since his birth that Celisa has looked at him, looked at me, and said, with a smirk on her face, "I should have let you name him Ricky Wayne Cunningham, Junior because he looks just like you." I remember when he was a teenager we were sitting in a restaurant and somebody was with him, and Celisa turned to the person and said, "If you want to know what he's going to look like in twenty years (she pointed to me), if you want to know what he's going to look like in forty years (she pointed to my dad), and I know you haven't seen him but if you want to see what he's going to look like in seventy years I can show you a picture of his Papaw." I don't know what it is about DNA in our family, but it runs strong.

Spiritually, we have God's DNA. Just as many people feel like Kory looks like me, God wants us to look like Him. We are going to open our Bibles to Matthew chapter 5. I know you are expecting us to start in verse 21 because we finished verse 20 last week, but we are actually going to skip to verse 48. We are going to come back to verses 20–47, but this morning so that we understand why Jesus says what He says in verses 21–47, we have got to look at verse 48.

Back in the winter, I was doing a funeral. I had my mind on what I was going to say and I stepped over to the side, and all of a sudden, this lady that I hadn't seen in twenty years stopped right in my face and said, "It's you!" She said, "I haven't seen you in twenty years!" she said, "I have been talking to you for the last fifteen minutes," and she pointed over the other side of the funeral home. She said, "I told him everything about my life for the last twenty years. I even looked at him thinking it was you and said to him, you hadn't changed in twenty years; I'm mad at you!" She said, "All you did was grin in the whole time; you hardly said a word." She said I left him thinking it was you and wouldn't have known it wasn't you if I wasn't seeing you right now! And then, she said, "That was your son, right?" She said, "He looks just like you did twenty years ago." Please hear me say this. That is what God desires for your life—for folks to see you and think they have seen God. Got it? Could we give the invitation right now? Let's read verse 48 and walk through this passage.

## **Scripture**

***"You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."***

Remember last week in the thesis statement, Jesus tells us that to enter the Kingdom of Heaven our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. Now, we know what that righteousness is—perfection—you being perfect, me being perfect. Without us being perfect, none of us will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Do you feel the weight of this? Does anybody want to say, "But Bro Ricky, nobody is perfect?" or "God, how can you tell us we must be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, because nobody is perfect?" If you are a follower of Christ, you must be perfect. Wow... Now, I will tell you why I have skipped verses 21–47. It's because we are not going to really understand what Jesus is doing in those six statements that describe the kind of righteousness the Pharisees were striving for versus the kind of righteousness He expects of us unless we understand what the standard of righteousness is. And according to Jesus, it's perfection...you.

Jesus is on the mountain with a crowd of people. Kory told us the first week that there were fans following Him because of what He has been doing, and it has benefited them and their loved ones. But then, there were the followers, the true disciples. Now in verses 3–16, Jesus talked about those who follow Him will have certain characteristics about them that will cause them to flourish as a human being. Jesus addresses identity in the Beatitudes before He ever starts talking about performance or behavior. This is why at Hardin we believe identity determines behavior; behavior doesn't determine identity. Your behavior should reflect who you. Your doing should flow from your being. Jesus, in the Beatitude, is stressing that as a human being, He wants us to flourish, and as we flourish and live this life before others, we will be salt and light in the world. And ultimately, the good works we are doing, are living out, will glorify, will make known, our Father who is in Heaven.

Then Jesus is going to switch to doing. But before He switches doing, He wants us to make sure we understand that He didn't come to abolish the Law but actually to fulfill the Law. Then He gave us that startling statement—unless our righteousness exceeds, is greater than the scribes and Pharisees, the standard bearers of the day, none of us will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Now, the reason I'm skipping to verse 48 is because I believe when He says, "You therefore...", I don't believe 'therefore' is just tying this to the last thing Jesus has said, but it's actually going back to everything He has been saying about our doing flowing from our being. So if you will stick with us over the next several weeks, we are going to look at each one of the statements in verses 21–47 but I want you to see the context. The context is what we are striving for, what we must exhibit, is nothing short of perfection. I know you have been raised in a grace church, but if you don't have perfection, according to Jesus you will never enter the Kingdom of God. Tell me you feel the weight of this. We are not going to jump to Paul, we are not going to jump to James, we are not going to Peter, we are going to stick with Jesus, the incarnate Word of God.

**"You therefore..."** Because Jesus has completely fulfilled the Old Testament Law, I believe this is what He is teaching in this Sermon on the Mount: He wants us to BE RIGHT in our relationship so we can DO RIGHT

in our relationships. Got that? Notice be right in our relationship—our relationship with God—Christ wants us to **be right** in that relationship, and if we are right in that relationship, then we can **do right** in all of our relationships. Now, what is going to happen here is Jesus is going to contrast the kind of righteousness we are to have versus the kind of righteousness the scribes and the Pharisees had. In verses 21–47, Jesus is going to give six examples of the righteousness of the Pharisee versus the righteousness of His followers.

If you were a scribe or Pharisee, here was righteousness: <sup>1</sup> you do not murder. If you are going to follow Jesus, that's not the standard. The standard is you don't ever get angry with a brother. Have any of you ever called somebody a fool? Jesus said you are in danger of hellfire if you do that—not a slap on the cheek, hellfire. Pharisees? <sup>2</sup> Strive not to commit adultery. If you want to follow Jesus, it's not standard. The standard is you do not lust. Pharisees? <sup>3</sup> When it came to where you couldn't live with your wife, you give her a bill of divorcement so that she could remarry. Jesus said if you are going to follow me, you stay married, except for...and He gives one exception. Pharisee? <sup>4</sup> If you made an oath, you kept your oath. Jesus says as you follow Him you are to be such a person of integrity that you never even make an oath. The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees? <sup>5</sup> If somebody did something to you, you did it back—no more, no less—just revenge, just retaliation. Your response matched their action. You couldn't go for blood if there was no blood drawn from you. If you are going to follow Jesus, there is no retaliation, no revenge at all—pure mercy. Then, Jesus builds to this last one. If you are a Pharisee, a scribe and you are striving to be righteous? <sup>6</sup> You love your neighbor. If you are a follower of Christ, you love and pray for your enemy. You know...that thorn in the flesh guy to you...that lady who just makes your life miserable. I had an enemy in high school. If I would see his vehicle at Pizza Hut, I wouldn't go to Pizza Hut. When I saw him coming down the hall, I would slip in another room. It was not Christian behavior at all. Jesus calls me to a standard of loving my enemy and praying for them.

Now, we are going to go into all six of these things over the next several weeks, but I want you to know why Jesus is saying this. It is because "You,

therefore," based on everything He has said up into this point, if you are right with God in relationship you then must be right and do right in relationships, in every one of them—not some of them, every one of them, and the standard is perfection. Now, the actual word that Jesus used when He said, "You therefore must be perfect," He said, you must be *teleos*. Someone asked me after the first service if the word for the Father is different. No. You must be *teleos* as your heavenly Father is *teleos*. Just about every translation in the English translates this word as perfect. It's an adjective. It derives from a noun. The noun form of this means 'to aim, purpose, end, goal,' therefore, as an adjective, what this is referring to is us fulfilling the purpose to which we was made, designed, or purchased. A thing is *teleos* when it fully realizes the purpose for which it was planned, designed, and made. So this word serves as a functioning word. It tells us how God wants us to function in the world. How does He want us to function in the world? He wants us to carry out our purpose. This word is translated in other places in the New Testament, primarily, not with the word, perfect, but with the word, complete or whole. Remember, Jesus didn't come to abolish the Law He came to complete the Law, to fulfill the Law. God wants you to know is that He made you, He designed you, He called you, He saved you, and He redeemed you for a purpose. His expectation of you is to be complete, to be whole, and to live up to the purpose He has for you, and for you to completely fulfill that purpose. Just as God the Father fulfills all of His purposes, you and I are to fulfill our purposes, and He is our example. Does that make sense?

Now, I saw some of you go, whew...this word, perfect, isn't referring to being flawless. It doesn't mean we don't ever make mistakes. It doesn't mean we don't ever get things wrong. It's not referring to flawlessness; it's referring to blamelessness. We are blameless in the sense that as a follower of Christ we are striving to fulfill our purpose for which God redeemed us. Amen? As a matter of fact, Memish uses this word, perfect, a lot. She doesn't even realize it, but it's one of her favorite words. I'm not exaggerating! Three or four times a week a box sits on our front porch. I have told her the reason brick and mortar stores are going out of business is because of her. I'm not talking about a little bitty box. I'm talking about a big box, a big box that'll have a rug in it, a big box that will have a chair

in it, a big box that will have a picture frame in it. Just the other day, I had to move all of the furniture away from the living room center and we unveiled a new rug to put in the center of the living room, and then we put all the furniture back. She backs into the kitchen to look at it. Oh, I'm hoping she says what I need her to say...and here's what she said, "That's perfect!" That rug did what it was supposed to do. It completed the room. Does that make sense? It made the room whole. It made it finished. Now, the reason I was nervous was because right before we did that, two weeks earlier, another rug was put into the dining room and I had to move the dining room table out. It was her grandmother and grandfather's table, so I had to be really careful with it. We moved it out, put the rug underneath it, got the table back in exactly where it was supposed to go, but I didn't hear "that's perfect." There was nothing wrong with the rug, except the tint of one of the colors didn't make the room perfect, so we had to send it back. We sent a chair back because it wasn't perfect. Now, I'm not talking about workmanship. There was nothing wrong with the chair, except the chair didn't make the room perfect. Get it?

We may be backing the truck up to the boat or to the camper, or the tractor to a disc or to the planter, and usually I'm standing there at the hitch and she's backing up and then she will get frustrated and say, "You do it." I haven't said a word...I am just watching her. So I get in the truck and she goes back to the hitch. She starts waving me back with her hand, pointing to the right or to the left with her finger, and then—I love this—she throws up both hands and says, "Perfect!" Now when she says perfect, that doesn't mean I perfectly backed up the truck on the first try. It may have been the third attempt. What perfect meant was I have completed the process of what I was trying to do. I have now got the receiver on the truck in line to where we can lower the boat because it's in perfect alignment. I have accomplished the purpose. It's complete. We are done. Amen?

Now, here's my favorite story. If you are new to Hardin and you don't know me, there is not an arrogant bone in me. I promise you. No arrogance in me at all, but I'm going to tell this story. It's going to sound arrogant. There have been about three or four times in our marriage where

somebody new comes into our family relationship (church I'm talking about), and somebody is wanting to ask her if I'm really the same at home as I am here. They will be questioning her and I will walk up and hear her say these words, "No. He's perfect. He's the perfect husband." Now, she's not meaning I have never made a mistake. She's not meaning we hadn't had a few discussions. She's not meaning I haven't hurt her feelings a few times. She's talking about when it comes to her needing a husband, I am whole, I am complete, I fulfill my purpose in her life, and she can say about me, "He's perfect."

Therefore, you must be perfect. You have been redeemed for a purpose and God wants you to complete that purpose...that purpose of being salt and light. How do we do this? By being right in a relationship with God. And once we are right in being, we can now do right in all of our earthly relationships. I want you to remember this. This is built on Jesus saying that He has come not to abolish but to fulfill the Law. The writer of Hebrews makes it clear. He goes through that Old Testament sacrificial system and shows how ultimately Jesus came as the mediator of a new covenant and He has fulfilled it all. He has brought it all to completion. Then in the 7th chapter, he starts talking about the sacrifice of Christ. Based on what the writer of Hebrews says, here is what I believe. We are perfect in our relationship with Christ because of Christ's death on the cross. Amen? We do not approach God on any act of behavior; we approach God only through the provision of Christ. And if we have repented our sin, put our faith in Christ, as the Old Testament talks about, we are brought into right relationship with God. And in relationship, we are perfect, we are right. Why? One of the reason God makes us right with Him is for this next part—so that we can be perfect in our relationships with others because of Christ's life in us. Last week, we alluded to the new covenant. The old covenant talked about a day when the Law would be written not on tablets of stone but on our heart, and the Spirit of God would not dwell alongside us, but in us. Because of Christ's death on the cross and us being made right with God, we now have Christ's life in us. We have the third person of the triune Godhead living inside us. Because we have Him living inside us, here is God's expectation: for you not only be



right with God, but for you to be right with everybody in your life and you do right toward them.

Now, we are going back up just a little bit. See, the problem with the Pharisees were they had an outward conformity to righteousness. They looked the part, but their inside didn't match their outside. So Jesus starts right in the beginning saying to us that the kind of righteousness He demands of us doesn't start on the outside, it starts on the inside; therefore, check your heart. Don't be angry. Don't lust. Do any of you struggle with anger? Are any of you struggling with lust? Don't talk to me about going to church. Don't talk to me about reading your Bible. Don't talk to me about praying. Don't talk to me about how much money you give. Huh-uh, it starts on the inside. Jesus wants your outside and your inside to match. Don't ever brag about having a short temper. Don't ever brag about giving somebody a piece of your mind! Jesus says no, not if you are a follower of mine.

Then Jesus builds and He builds. The last thing He told us is we have to love our enemy. The word for love here is that highest Greek word that meant you make a selection, you then elevate the need after you have evaluated, and then you look within yourself and you give up your own resources to meet that need. He said you don't do this to your neighbor or your husband or your wife only; you do it to your enemy, and you pray for them. Why? Jesus says, "...so that you may be sons of your Father..." Now, this isn't performance based. It's not saying we love our enemies so that we may become sons of God. See, up unto this point we are either a fan or follower, but Jesus expresses this thought—God didn't view you as a follower only, God views you as a son, and He wants the world to know who His sons and daughters are. Do you know how we let the world know who our sons and daughters are? It's how we treat our enemies. Do you always wonder why that guy doesn't like you? There may be a good chance that at work, at a ball game, wherever, the way you deal with that person is how all those around you are going to know who you really are, if you are a son or daughter of God, or you are not.

Now, we are going to get in this later, but this is the only time in these six statements that Jesus brings God into it. How many of you ever heard the

saying "it rains on the just and the unjust?" Don't you wish that wasn't true? I do. When I or other Christian farmers plant our crops and then the rain comes through, it would be awesome if it just rained on the Christian farmers. And then all the farmers that didn't get rain, we would all know they are not really Christians! Wouldn't it be so neat if in the morning when we all go back to work, the sun rose on the Christian farmer and the Christian worker and he walked and worked in light, but the sun didn't come up on the unjust person? Wouldn't that be cool? You are in a plant standing beside a guy and he's totally surrounded by darkness because God refuses to let the sun shine on him, but the sun shining on the righteous. You say, "Bro Ricky, you have lost it!" I have heard all my life it rains on the just and the unjust, haven't you? Have you ever examined the context? The context is God wants you to love your enemy in the same way He loves the unjust! He sends His rain. It's His rain, Jesus says. It's His son, Jesus says. And when God sends the rain and He sends the sun, it's indiscriminate. God doesn't discriminate. So why do you discriminate in how you love? I mean, be honest with yourself. Most of you just love those who love you. Most of you are just nice to those who are nice to you. And with those actions, you don't have a prayer of entering the Kingdom of Heaven because your righteousness is on the same level of the scribes and Pharisees. The righteousness of a follower of Christ looks at the love of God, and how God loves the just and the unjust, the saint and sinner alike, and that is how we love. That's how we love. Why? So that someone will draw the conclusion—not that you attend Hardin Baptist Church or you do religious things, but so people will see you as a son or daughter of God.

See, it's really easy for you to make a distinction and make an observation whether or not Kory looks like his dad because you have seen his dad. Some of you knew his dad twenty years ago and you see Kory now at that same stage. But nobody has seen our heavenly Father, and God wants the world to know who He is and what He is like. So, God has made us right with Himself through Jesus—and then through Jesus we have the Spirit of God living inside us, and He can live His life through us. When we live our life the way it's intended to be lived, others see, not just us, they see God. I can say this because I'm a pastor, but I just wonder if the reason America is becoming more non-Christian is because the Christians in

America aren't giving much hope of being a Christian. Somebody in your world, at your work while you are so busy trying to make a living, is observing you and they are making a judgment about God. They are doing the same thing with me. I don't recommend you study with this Bible, but there's a guy named Eugene Peterson who has paraphrased Scripture, and I love him. He nailed it, and I want to close with how he paraphrases Matthew 5:48, "In a word, what I'm saying is grow up. You are Kingdom subjects, now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others the way God lives toward you." Let's live this thing out and let's just hope somebody believes we are like our Father.