

SERMON ON MOUNT

by Various

A study of Christ's Sermon on the Mount from Matthew chapters 5-7, described as the most famous, profound, and admired yet least practiced sermon ever preached. The work examines the absolute authority and radical demands of Jesus's teaching.

55 Chapters

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Introduction

Introduction The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7) is the most famous, profound, and admired but least practiced sermon ever preached. The authority of the preacher is absolute (Matthew 7:28-29; cf. Matthew 28:18). The moral goal of this discourse soars to the heavens to God-like perfection (Matthew 5:48). Yet the lessons are eminently practical, meant to be obeyed (Matthew 7:24-27). The reward for obedience is entrance into the kingdom of heaven, both here (Matthew 5:19-20) and hereafter (Matthew 7:21-23).

The time was during Jesus' first preaching tour of Galilee about a year into His ministry on earth. The theme of his message was the good news of the approaching kingdom of God (Matthew 4:23; cf. Mark 1:14-15). His fame had spread throughout the region in and around Palestine as the result of His preaching and miracles, and huge crowds thronged Him from throughout this large area (Matthew 4:23-25). It seems He first preached a shorter, similar lesson to His disciples in the hearing of the throng (Luke 6:17-49) and then withdrew to the mountain with His disciples alone to speak more fully and plainly (Matthew 5:1).

He then took two steps to insure the perpetuation of His work in the then soon to come kingdom of heaven. After spending all night in prayer to God, He selected twelve messengers who would first take the announcement of the eminent kingdom to all Israel and later take the message of salvation through Christ to the whole world (Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16; Matthew chapter 10; 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-20; Luke 24:46-49). Then He delivered to His disciples the laws which would govern citizenship in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3; Matthew 5:10; Matthew 5:19-20; Matthew 6:10; Matthew 6:13; Matthew 6:33; Matthew 7:21). Those principles constitute the Sermon on the Mount.

Thus, the Sermon on the Mount is the announcement ahead of time of the rules governing citizenship in the kingdom of heaven. In the words of Foy E. Wallace, Jr., they are "Pentecost Pointers." Though, because the sermon was preached while the law was still in force, many of its illustrations pertain to the Mosaic covenant (e.g., Matthew 5:23), its principles apply to the New Testament age. In fact, in much of the sermon the Lord specifically replaces Mosaic legislation with His own (Matthew 5:21-48). As the kingdom of heaven Jesus promised is the rule of God through His Son in the hearts of His people, the church (Luke 17:20-21; Hebrews 1:1-2; Matthew 16:18-19) and is spiritual in nature (John 18:36; Romans 14:17), these laws pertain to the character of kingdom citizens. To enter the kingdom, one must be righteous (Matthew 5:20). The precepts of the kingdom lead its citizens to perfect character (Matthew 5:48). Seeking that kingdom first (Matthew 6:33) and obeying its precepts lead one to the final kingdom of heaven, the blissful abode with God (Matthew 7:21-23).

Even Matthew's introduction (Matthew 5:1-2) portrayed to his Jewish readers the gravity of the discourse. According to William Barclay, a rabbi would sit to deliver a formal, official announcement of His teaching. Barclay also observes that the clause, "Then He opened His mouth," was used in Greek to describe a solemn declaration that revealed that which was closest

to one's heart.

In the discourse, the Master first revealed the righteous character of citizens of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3-12). Then He showed the relationship which kingdom citizens sustain to the unrighteous world (Matthew 5:13-16). Next He presented an overview of the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven, thus setting the theme of the discourse, by contrasting it with both that of the law of Moses and that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:17-20). Afterward He gave a more detailed contrast in six points of difference (Matthew 5:21-48). Next He contrasted the righteousness of the kingdom with hypocrisy (Matthew 6:1-18), then with materialism (6:19-34). Finally the Lord revealed how to obtain the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 7:7-27).

The Master was not simply giving a correct interpretation of the Law of Moses in Matthew 5:21-48. The most critical point in which this is true is Matthew 5:31-32. Matthew 5:31 is a reference to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, the Mosaic regulation of divorce. A man could divorce his wife for any "uncleanness" ("indecency" – NASB, ESV), and the put away woman could then remarry. But Christ teaches that anyone who marries a woman who has been put away is committing adultery (verse 32).

Thus, while the Law of Moses contained the strictest moral code the world had known before Christ, the Lord Jesus raised the bar, instituting an even stricter moral standard, the standard of the kingdom of heaven. Moses had made allowances for the hardness of Israel's hearts; Christ makes none (Matthew 19:3-9). Thus, those who followed this higher standard during the earthly ministry of the Lord would certainly not violate the standard of Moses.

The authority with which the Master spoke amazed the people (Matthew 7:28-29). The scribes who taught the people would preface their teaching with Rabbi so and so has said (cf. Matthew 5:21; Matthew 5:27; Matthew 5:31; Matthew 5:33; Matthew 5:38; Matthew 5:43). Their authority was based on a combination of the written law and oral tradition from the fathers. The prophets of old demanded a hearing by announcing, "Thus says the Lord" (a phrase found in 431 Old Testament verses). Jesus simply announced, "I say to you" (Matthew 5:18; Matthew 5:20; Matthew 5:22; Matthew 5:26; Matthew 5:28; Matthew 5:32; Matthew 5:34; Matthew 5:44; Matthew 6:2; Matthew 6:5; Matthew 6:16; Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:29). He could do this because, as the Son of God, He was God's authorized spokesman (Hebrews 1:1-2), the Prophet (Acts 3:22-26) and Apostle (Hebrews 3:1) of God, and has been given all authority to speak for God (Matthew 11:27; Matthew 28:18).

In the Sermon on the Mount the Son of God revealed the principles of righteousness we must possess and live by to enter His kingdom now and to inherit it in the hereafter. These principles were not a correct explanation of Moses but an entirely new, much higher standard of righteousness, one which reflects the very moral nature of God. The wise will hear and obey; the foolish will not (Matthew 7:24-27). Is your life built on the unshakeable Rock or on shifting sand?

Outline Introduction To The Sermon On The Mount Matthew Chapter Five

Beginning in this chapter, Matthew records the "Sermon On The Mount".

The theme of the sermon is "The kingdom of heaven" (cf. Matthew 4:17;

Matthew 5:3; Matthew 5:10; Matthew 5:19-20; Matthew 6:10; Matthew 6:33; Matthew 7:21).

Jesus began with "The Beatitudes," describing the character and blessedness of those who would be citizens of the kingdom (Matthew 5:1-12) and illustrating their relation to world as salt and light (Matthew 13-16). Clarifying His own relationship with the Law, Jesus stressed how our righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:17-20) following with a series of contrasts between the oral interpretations of the Law and conduct expected of His disciples (Matthew 5:21-48).

POINTS TO PONDER - Matthew Five

- * The meaning of the phrase: "the kingdom of heaven"
- * The blessedness of those in the kingdom, and their relationship to the world
- * How our righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees

REVIEW QUESTIONS - Matthew Five

1) What are the main points of this chapter?

- The beatitudes - Matthew 5:1-12
- Salt and light - Matthew 5:13-16
- Jesus and the Law - Matthew 5:17-20

2) What do the beatitudes describe? (Matthew 5:3-12)

- The character and blessedness of the citizens of the kingdom

3) How are citizens of the kingdom to relate to the world? (Matthew 5:13-16)

- As the salt of the earth and the light of the world

4) What was Jesus' relation to the Law of Moses? (Matthew 5:17-18)

- He came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it

5) What does Jesus expect of those who would be citizens of the kingdom?

(Matthew 5:20)

- Righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees

6) List the five subjects whose interpretations are contrasted in this chapter (Matthew 5:21-48)

- Murder, adultery, oaths, retaliation, love

7) What phrases illustrate the contrast? (Matthew 5:21-22; Matthew 5:27-28; Matthew 5:31-34; Matthew 5:38-39; Matthew 5:43-44)

- "You have heard that it was said..." (not "It is written...")

- "But I say to you..."

8) Then what contrast is being made with these five subjects?

- The oral interpretation and application of the Law versus the

teaching of Jesus Matthew Chapter Six The "Sermon On The Mount" continues as Jesus teaches the righteousness

of the kingdom expected in those who would be citizens of the kingdom.

He discusses righteousness with respect to man's relation to God,

regarding charitable deeds (Matthew 6:1-4), prayer (Matthew 6:5-15), fasting

(Matthew 6:16-18), materialism (Matthew 6:19-24), and anxiety (Matthew 6:25-33).

POINTS TO PONDER - Matthew Six

* Performing acts of righteousness in ways that please God

* The danger of materialism and overcoming anxiety about such things

* Making the kingdom of God and His righteousness our number one priority

REVIEW QUESTIONS - Matthew Six

1) What are the main points of this chapter?

- Righteousness with respect to man's relation to God - Matthew 6:1-18

- Overcoming materialism and anxiety - Matthew 6:16-33

2) As we perform acts of righteousness, what should we avoid? (Matthew 6:1-2;

Matthew 6:5; Matthew 6:16)

- Doing it for the purpose of being seen by men

- Acting like the hypocrites in the synagogues and in the streets

3) How can we ensure that God will reward us for our righteous acts?

(Matthew 6:4; Matthew 6:6; Matthew 6:18)

- By doing them in secret where only the Father sees

4) How else does Jesus teach us to give, pray, and fast? (Matthew 6:3; Matthew 6:7;

Matthew 6:17)

- Do not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing as we give
- Do not use vain repetition as we pray
- Do not disfigure our faces as we fast

5) What is the likely purpose of "The Lord's Prayer"? (Matthew 6:9-13)

- To serve as a model of prayer ("In this manner...")

6) Of things in "The Lord's Prayer," on what does Jesus elaborate?

(Matthew 6:14-15)

- The need for us to forgive others their trespasses against us

7) Where are we to lay up treasure? Why? How? (Matthew 6:20; Matthew 6:24;

cf. Matthew 19:21; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)

- In heaven; to serve God rather than mammon; by giving to the poor 8) What is the key to overcoming anxiety? (Matthew 6:25-32)

- Trusting in the providential care of God

9) How can we ensure that God will provide what we need? (Matthew 6:33)

- By seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness Matthew Chapter Seven The "Sermon On The Mount" continues with Jesus discussing the

righteousness of the kingdom with respect to man's relation to man, with

a warning regarding judging (Matthew 7:1-6), the importance of persistence (Matthew 7:7-11),

and keeping "the golden rule" (Matthew 7:12). It concludes with exhortations to

enter the kingdom: choose the narrow and difficult path (Matthew 7:13-14), watch

out for false prophets (Matthew 7:15-20), do the Father's will (Matthew 7:21-23), being

doers of the Word (Matthew 7:24-29).

POINTS TO PONDER - Matthew Seven

- * The nature of judging condemned by Jesus
- * How Jesus' "golden rule" differs from that found in other religions
- * The importance of doing the Father's will to being saved

REVIEW QUESTIONS - Matthew Seven

1) What are the main points of this chapter?

- Righteousness with respect to man's relation to man - Matthew 7:1-12

- Exhortations to enter the kingdom - Matthew 7:15-29

2) What sort of judging is Jesus warning against? (Matthew 7:1-6)

- Not all judging, but hypocritical, censorious condemnation (cf. John 7:24)

3) How does Jesus illustrate the need for persistence? (Matthew 7:7-11)

- By literally saying "keep on" asking, seeking, knocking

4) How does Jesus' "golden rule" differ from that found in other religions? (Matthew 7:12)

- Most state it negatively (Don't do to others what you don't want done to you)

5) Contrast the two "ways" described by Jesus (Matthew 7:13-14)

- The way to life: narrow gate and difficult way, found by few

- The way to destruction: wide gate and broad way, traveled by many

6) How do false prophets operate? How can we identify them? (Matthew 7:15-20)

- As wolves in sheep's clothing; by their fruits

7) Who will not enter the kingdom of heaven? Who will? (Matthew 7:21-23)

- Many who believed in the Lord, did many great things for Him, but practiced lawlessness (i.e., did things without His authority)

- Those who do the will of His Father in heaven

8) What is the key difference between the wise and foolish listeners?

(Matthew 7:24-27)

- The wise do what Jesus said, the foolish do not 9) Why were the people astonished at Jesus' teaching? (Matthew 7:28-29)

- Because He taught as one having authority The Sermon on the Mount: Happiness and Woe The Setting (Matthew 5:1-2)

While Jesus was traveling the countryside teaching and healing people, he stopped for a while on a plain (Luke 6:17). People from not only Israel, but also from places as far away as Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia were among the crowd. Scholars place this event on the plains of Esdraelon, which is also known as the valley of Jezreel.

Before beginning to speak, Matthew's account (Matthew 5:1) mentions that Jesus moved up on a mountain because of the multitude. As you can see from there are several mountains along the edge of the plains, but the one most often attributed to being the location of Jesus' sermon is Mount Tabor.

The primary audience was Jesus' disciples who gathered around him, but we know that others from the multitude gathered also listened to Jesus' discourse (Matthew 7:28; Luke 7:1). Luke's record of the sermon, while covering much the same topics as Matthew's is much shorter. It is likely that neither Matthew or Luke recorded the entire lesson, but each gave us an abridged edition that was tailored toward their respective audience. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)

The first topic in both Matthew and Luke's accounts are a list frequently titled "the Beatitudes." Jesus gives a series of blessed attitudes. "Blessed" is just another word for happy. Each statement is a description of the people who are truly happy in life. The odd thing is that we would not normally associate happiness with these types of people.

The first group is the "poor in spirit." In other words people who are humble and do not demonstrate pride in themselves. Our world generally tells people that to get ahead in life one must have pride, or self-esteem. Only people who are noticed will get their way, so people learn how to be assertive to keep others from pushing them around. Yet, Jesus said it would be those who are seemingly lacking in spirit who would see the kingdom of heaven (a phrase referring to the church, Colossians 1:12-14). The kingdom, or the church, is comprised of those who are saved and God said, "For the LORD takes pleasure in His people; He will beautify the humble with salvation" (Psalms 149:4). A humble attitude has always been more valuable than pride and riches (Proverbs 16:19) because pride and riches only bring temporary earthly wealth. True riches last eternally and can only be gained by the humble (Proverbs 22:4) because God grants these eternal rewards (James 4:10).

Those who mourn" are the second blessed group. It is difficult to see how someone who is sad can be truly happy. David explained, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart - these, O God, You will not despise" (Psalms 51:17). It is to these people that God draws near and gives them salvation (Psalms 34:18). The reason is simple, only when a person truly sees the sad state of his life will he work to make changes in that life (2 Corinthians 7:9-11). When we, in turn, draw near to God we find comfort and happiness under His protective care (Psalms 126:6).

The third group declared blessed are the meek. Meekness is often defined as gentleness, but such doesn't adequately express the word. A meek person places the needs of others above his own concerns, even to the point of wearing himself out taking on the burdens of others. Of meekness Vines said, "Described negatively, meekness is the opposite of self-assertiveness and self-interest; it is equanimity of spirit that is neither elated nor cast down, simply because it is not occupied by self at all." Moses is described as being the meekest man on earth (Numbers 12:3) and we can see it illustrated in Exodus 18:13-23. Moses was literally wearing himself out trying to help everyone solve their personal problems. He never complained or even gave thought to what his efforts were doing to him. He willingly bore everyone's problems on his own shoulders. It took the effort of his father-in-law to get Moses to see that he needed to spread the burdens around. It is difficult to see how such people could conquer the world. We usually think of world conquerors as aggressive. "For evildoers shall be cut off; But those who wait on the LORD, They shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while and the wicked shall be no more; Indeed, you will look carefully for his place, But it shall be no more. But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. The wicked plots against the just, And gnashes at him with

his teeth. The Lord laughs at him, For He sees that his day is coming. The wicked have drawn the sword And have bent their bow, To cast down the poor and needy, To slay those who are of upright conduct. Their sword shall enter their own heart, And their bows shall be broken. A little that a righteous man has Is better than the riches of many wicked. For the arms of the wicked shall be broken, But the LORD upholds the righteous. The LORD knows the days of the upright, And their inheritance shall be forever” (Psalms 37:9-18). The true key is to understand that we are not talking about this physical earth. It is temporary, it will die (2 Peter 3:10), but the meek will inherit from the earth after its death. In other words, we are speaking of gaining heaven.

The next group are those who desire righteousness. Those in the world generally think that happiness comes from pursuing sin (Proverbs 1:10-19; Proverbs 6:14-19), but such fun is self-destructive. Instead we should see that real happiness comes from pursuing righteousness. “As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? My tears have been my food day and night, While they continually say to me, "Where is your God?" When I remember these things, I pour out my soul within me. For I used to go with the multitude; I went with them to the house of God, With the voice of joy and praise, With a multitude that kept a pilgrim feast” (Psalms 42:1-4). True satisfaction comes from being righteous before God (Psalms 17:15).

Next comes the merciful. The world believes we must not let anyone stand in our way in our rise to success. Only the ruthless can make the big bucks. But mercy is the idea of caring for others, easing their burdens, and releasing them from their debts. But in the end, everyone needs mercy, especially for our debts of sin before God. God promises no mercy to the merciless (James 2:13). “Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart, and so find favor and high esteem In the sight of God and man” (Proverbs 3:3-4). Thus a person who is helping others is also helping himself (Proverbs 11:17).

Jesus also states that the pure in heart, those freed from the stain of sin, are able to come before God. “Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to an idol, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation” (Psalms 24:3-5). God is righteous. He exists without a shadow of sin and if we are to come before Him, we must also be without sin (1 John 1:5-7). Pure religion is being unspotted by the world (James 1:27). Jesus is looking for a pure bride (Ephesians 5:27).

We also learn that peacemakers also have happiness. It is difficult to bring peace to a world that is not interested in peace. But, being a peacemaker is a mark of a follower of God. “If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men” (Proverbs 12:18). Since people in the world center their thoughts around themselves, when someone does them wrong, they look for ways to gain revenge. Everything has to be done “my way,” but not so with a child of God (Romans 14:19).

Finally, and hardest to understand, persecuted people are happy people. This is completely opposite from the world’s view. To worldly people, it is the popular people who are happy. However, Christians realize that persecution is merely temporary (2 Corinthians 4:16-18), and there are benefits to be gained from persecutions (James 1:2-4). Our faith and resolve to serve the Lord is strengthened. We look for the ultimate outcome, the ultimate bliss, of heaven (Revelation

7:14-17).

Sorrows (Luke 6:20-26)

Luke's account records a list of contrasts. The poor gain the kingdom of God, but the rich have their reward and are sorrowful as a result because their gain is so shallow and temporary. Those hungering now for righteousness will be feed, but those who believe themselves to be full now, will go hungry because the full don't seek righteousness. Those who are sad now will become happy, but those who laugh now will end up sad because they see the realities of life backwards. When people hate you because of Christ it is a time of joy because it shows we are walking the path the righteous before us have walked. But when people praise us, then we should worry because it is the false prophets who were popular with the world.

Influence (Matthew 5:13-16)

Knowing that we will be hated and persecuted because of our beliefs, there is a strong desire to lay low and let the storms of life pass over us. However, Jesus tells us we need to stand out and be noticed. If we don't we are worthless to God.

This is why confession is key to salvation (Romans 10:8-11). Unless we are willing to allow our faith in Jesus to be put on display, we cannot serve God (Matthew 10:32-33). Being on display is to our benefit. Sinners hide under the cover of darkness. Standing forth in the light places a hindrance to committing sin (Ephesians 5:8-12). "And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

Matthew 4:23-5:2

Matthew 4:23-5:2 Matthew 4:23-5:2, Preparing For The Blessed Life

Jesus' most famous sermon is found in Matthew 5-7 called the Sermon on the Mount. It is easy to begin a study of the Sermon on the Mount by opening to chapter 5 and beginning the study there. However, to appropriately understand this sermon, we must plunge ourselves into Matthew's world and read his gospel as his original readers would have understood it. We must further remember that these chapter numbers in our Bibles can be arbitrary. No doubt this is the case regarding the Sermon on the Mount because Matthew 5:1 begins, "Seeing the crowds..." What crowds is Matthew talking about? Clearly we are connected to the events in Matthew 4, yet that connection is often lost because of the chapter break.

Israel's History

Before we can grasp what Matthew is doing in his gospel, we need to refresh our memory concerning Israel's history. The book of Genesis ends with Jacob, one of the patriarchs, bringing his sons and their families to Egypt because Joseph, his son, has become prime minister over Egypt and has land to give them so that can survive famine that is affecting the land. However, the book of Exodus opens that after about 200 years a new pharaoh arises who does not know about Joseph and his family. Because the Hebrews are growing in population, the pharaoh enslaves the Hebrews, putting them to hard labor. Not only this, in order to cap the population growth, the pharaoh orders that all the baby boys two years old and under were to be killed. Under this circumstance Moses is born, leaves the land, and returns to be the deliverer of the people as designated by God. Moses performs miracles, sets the Hebrews free, crosses the Red Sea, and brings the great crowd to Mount Sinai. At Mount Sinai Moses goes up on the mountain, receives the law, and delivers it to the people.

Now look at Matthew's gospel. Jesus is born and Herod begins to kill all the boys two years old and under. Jesus must leave the land but returns to the land as the deliverer of the people as designated by God. Matthew records that Jesus came performing miracles, healing those who were oppressed (Matthew 4:24). Jesus passes through the waters of baptism and goes into the wilderness (Matthew 3). Rather than failing in the wilderness as Israel did, Jesus succeeds in the temptations of Satan. Now listen to the words of Matthew. After passing through the waters, performing miracles, and coming in the wilderness with great crowds following, Jesus went up on the mountain (Matthew 5:1). What has Matthew just set up for us? What happened when Moses went up on the mountain, he received the law and delivered it to the people. Jesus, after performing the same works as Moses, Israel's great deliverer, goes up on the mountain and taught them. Matthew is showing Jesus to be the prophet that Moses spoke of when Moses said:

15 "The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—it is to him you shall listen— 16 just as you desired of the Lord your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the Lord my God or see

this great fire any more, lest I die.’ 17 And the Lord said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him. (Deuteronomy 18:15-19 ESV) By Jesus going up on the mountain, he is not simply going up the mountain so the people can hear him. He is going up the mountain because he is about to deliver the law as Moses delivered the law. To miss this context of the Sermon on the Mount will cause one to miss everything about the message Jesus is delivering. Jesus is going to deliver the laws of the kingdom. To say this another way, Jesus is going to describe in this sermon those who belong to the kingdom of heaven. This is the gospel of the kingdom and an explanation of the nature of his kingdom.

We see this kingdom concept validated by the context Matthew gives to this sermon. In Matthew 4:17 we are told that Jesus began to preach and he was saying, “Repent, the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” In Matthew 4:23 we read that Jesus is “proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom.” We should expect the Sermon on the Mount to be the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom and as such the necessity of the people to repent. We must expect these two aspects in the sermon Jesus preaches: the gospel of the kingdom and the need for repentance. This is the context and foundation Matthew gives for this sermon.

Accomplishing the Mission

As we take a bird’s eye view of the Sermon on the Mount we can see how Jesus accomplishes the goals of proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom (good news) while at the same time proclaiming the necessity of repentance. To move the people to repentance they need to see that they have fallen woefully short of God’s righteous demands. A large section of Matthew 5 is spent by Jesus saying, “You have heard that it was said...but I say to you.” The people thought they were keeping the Law of Moses because they had lessened the regulations. Jesus is revealing what the Law of Moses truly taught so the people would realize that they were not doing what the Law required. We see these kinds of strong declarations about God’s law:

If you are angry with your brother you have sinned (Matthew 5:22). If you lust in your heart you have sinned (Matthew 5:28). If you do not do what you said you would do you have sinned (5:37). If you do not turn the other cheek you are not in God’s kingdom (Matthew 5:39). You must love your enemies or you have sinned (5:44). You must pray for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44). Then the hammer blow of the law falls in Matthew 5:48, “Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” The people had softened the regulations of the kingdom so that they thought they were in the kingdom and were God’s people. Jesus preaches the need for repentance by revealing that Moses taught these principles which shows you that you have fallen woefully short. No one was to listen to this sermon and walking away saying, “Check! Yeah, I’ve done it all!” The message was to hit the hearts of the people to bring about repentance. This happens immediately in the Sermon on the Mount. The Beatitudes, as they are called which are from Matthew 5:2-12 are meant to jar you from your complacency and lead you to question whether you have entered the kingdom of heaven. If the things that Jesus describes do not describe your life, then you are not a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. Is this not the purpose and nature of repentance? When Jesus tells us to repent it tells us that we are not fit for the kingdom the way we are. There are some things wrong

with us and that we are going the wrong direction. Hence, the truncated definition of repentance has been that our lives turn around in direction, a 180 degree turn. So we need to get hit in the face when we read the Sermon on the Mount, see our shortcomings, and feel the need for repentance. The Blessed Life

But we cannot ignore the other part of what Jesus was preaching. Matthew says that Jesus was proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. The gospel is the good news. The good news cannot be that we have all fallen short of the righteous demands of God's law. That is not good news at all. This is one of the reasons we try to lessen God's regulations. We want to feel like we are doing the law, accomplishing what God has asked us to do. But we will only feel that way by lowering God's standards. We are inadequate for the kingdom. We are inadequate for his righteous demands. The apostle Paul had to write a number of letters found in the New Testament to help people remain grounded and realize they cannot stand before God on their own acts of righteousness.

Yet, notice how the Sermon on the Mount begins. The first word from Jesus' mouth is the word, "blessed." Nine times Jesus begins his sentence with the word "blessed." What does this word mean? It is frustrating to see some translations try to simplify the word "blessed" to simply mean "happy." But this is really not the picture at all, which should be evident from verse 10. You are not going to be happy when you are persecuted. "Blessed" is the word we need to keep here because it causes us to dig into the rich meaning of this word. When we read about someone being blessed in the Old Testament we are seeing that God's favor is upon them. God created Adam and Eve and blessed them (Genesis 1:22; Genesis 1:28). God's favor was on them both. God blessed Abraham according to the scriptures. God blessed Isaac according to the scriptures. God also blessed Jacob in Genesis. What did this mean? It meant that these people were the privileged recipients of God's favor. To be blessed is to be in the best state of all. You have divine favor and delight. You have received the applause of heaven. You are enjoying the favor of God. The Sermon on the Mount opens with descriptions of the people who have the favor of God. In the first 11 verses we read about who have God's favor and the blessing that God gives that person. You will notice that the condition of being blessed is in the present (Matthew 5:3; Matthew 5:10) and also in the future (Matthew 5:4-9). The favor of God, while its focus and fulfillment is in the future, begins now in Christ. This is the good news of the kingdom. Sinful people can receive God's favor. Sinful people can be blessed by God and enjoy the benefits of the kingdom of heaven. To put all of this together, a blessed person is someone who, because of God's love and grace, enjoys presently and is promised in the future God's favor regardless of one's personal status or earthly condition.'

Conclusion

So the new Moses has arrived who will be the long awaited deliverer of the world. Jesus is chosen by God as the Savior, performs miracles, passes through the water, goes into the wilderness, and then goes up the mountain and declares the covenant of the kingdom of heaven. When you read the words of this sermon, be moved by the fact that God's favor and grace is available to those who will repent and follow Jesus. In Exodus 34:29 Moses came down from the mountain and his face shown because he had been talking to God. Moses comes down and leads his people to the promised land. In Matthew 8:1 we read that Jesus came down from the mountain and John

records, “We have seen his glory, glory of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Jesus is “the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature” (Hebrews 1:1-3) who leads his people to the kingdom of heaven. So listen with hope, awe, and amazement as we hear that we can have God’s favor and enter the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:3-12 ESV)

Outline: Matthew 4:23-25

Outline: Matthew 4:23-25 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Itinerant Ministry Of Jesus (Matthew 4:23-25)

INTRODUCTION

1. Jesus started His public ministry by moving to Capernaum - Matthew 4:12-17

a. A city on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee

b. A fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 9:1-2

c. From which He began to preach His message of the kingdom

2. But Jesus' work was not what you might call a "located ministry"...

a. He did not stay in one place

b. Where people might easily come to see and hear Him

3. His ministry was an "itinerant ministry"...

a. He traveled from place to place

b. If people wanted to hear Him more than once, they had to follow

Him

[In our text, Matthew 4:23-25, we find a summary of "The Itinerant Ministry

Of Jesus." In this study, let's begin by taking a look at...] I. THE NATURE OF JESUS' ITINERANT MINISTRY

A. HE DID NOT STAY IN ONE PLACE LONG...

1. He "went about all Galilee" - Matthew 4:23

2. He went about "teaching in their synagogues" - Matthew 4:23

3. Luke records an example: in the synagogue at Nazareth - Luke 4:14-30

4. But as mentioned by both Mark and Luke, Jesus felt compelled

to keep moving - Mark 1:35-39; Luke 4:42-44

B. HE PROCLAIMED THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM...

1. His preaching involved "good news" about the kingdom - Matthew 4:23;

cf. Mark 1:14

2. As recorded by Mark, this "good news" included the following:

a. "The time is fulfilled" - the time foretold by the

prophets, cf. Daniel 2:44

b. "The kingdom of God is at hand" - the kingdom foretold by

the prophets, cf. Daniel 2:44; Luke 1:32-33

C. HE HEALED ALL KINDS OF SICKNESS AND DISEASE...

1. He healed people afflicted with various diseases and torments

- Matthew 4:23-24

2. Including the demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics

- Matthew 4:24

3. Both Mark and Luke provide more detail at this point in their

gospels

a. Casting out an unclean spirit - Mark 1:21-28; Luke 4:31-37

b. Healing Peter's mother-in-law - Mark 1:29-30; Luke 4:38-39

c. Healing many after a Sabbath sunset - Mark 1:32-34; Luke 4:40-41

-- Matthew records these events after The Sermon On The Mount

in his gospel

D. HIS FAME SPREAD...

1. Throughout all Syria, the region to the north of Galilee

- Matthew 4:24

2. Evidently throughout Decapolis, Judea, and beyond the Jordan,

regions to the south and east - Matthew 4:25

3. The healing of a leper forced him to stay in deserted places

- Mark 1:45

E. GREAT MULTITUDES FOLLOWED HIM...

1. From Galilee and regions all around - Matthew 4:25

2. Mark says they came to Him from every direction - Mark 1:45

3. They came to hear Him, and to be healed by Him - Luke 5:15

II. OBSERVATIONS REGARDING JESUS' ITINERANT MINISTRY

A. EVERYONE NEEDS TO HEAR THE GOSPEL...

1. Jesus' concern was not just for those in his town of Capernaum

a. Compelled to preach the gospel in other cities, He went about "all Galilee"

b. He later sent His disciples to preach throughout all the cities of Israel

c. He finally commissioned them to preach to every person, making disciples "of all the nations" - Mark 16:16; Matthew 28:19

2. It has been said, "No one has the right to hear the gospel twice, before everyone has heard it once"

a. This statement reflects a sentiment worth remembering

b. Once the gospel has been shared, we are not under obligation to repeat it again and again to one not interested

c. If those who hear are not interested, they have judged themselves unworthy of eternal life - e.g., Acts 13:44-47

d. As long as there are souls who have not heard, we do not always have the luxury of "spoon-feeding" the spiritually indifferent in an attempt to reach them!

3. Similarly, churches may not always have the luxury to hold on to their evangelists

a. Some are like the people who tried to keep Jesus from leaving them - Luke 4:42

b. But having received the word, they need to appreciate the need for others to hear - Luke 4:43

c. Especially today, when we have Bibles to teach us, we can more liberal with letting evangelists do their work of evangelizing! - cf. Romans 10:14-15

B. THE PURPOSE OF THE HEALING MIRACLES...

1. Certainly they were an expression of Jesus' compassion
- Matthew 14:14; Matthew 20:29-34
2. Such miracles were also confirmation of prophecy - Matthew 8:16-17
 - a. They were recorded that we might believe - John 20:30-31
 - b. They were intended to confirm who Jesus was - cf. John 5:36
3. In a similar way, the miracles done by His followers was for the purpose of confirming their message as being from God
- cf. Mark 16:19-20; Hebrews 2:3-4
 - a. Their purpose was not to make Christians "healthy and wealthy"
 - b. Their purpose was not for personal benefit; e.g., Paul did not heal Timothy of his stomach ailments and frequent infirmities, prescribing medicinal treatment instead
- 1 Timothy 5:23
-- The primary purpose of such miracles, as always, was to confirm God's messengers; in this case, confirming Jesus to be the Son of God! - cf. Acts 2:22

C. AUTHENTIC MIRACLES CAN'T BE KEPT SECRET...

1. Jesus' reputation quickly spread throughout the region
2. Even His enemies had to admit His miracles were real - John 11 : 47
3. Such was true with the miracles performed by the apostles
- Acts 4:14-16
4. If one could truly heal today as Jesus and His apostles did...
 - a. It would be on every TV network
 - b. None would deny it, especially Christians who question the validity of what is often claimed to be miraculous today!
-- The more you study the miracles of the Bible, the easier it is see that those who claim to do miracles today are either

sincerely mistaken or deliberate deceivers!

D. FOLLOWING JESUS REQUIRES EFFORT ON OUR PART...

1. The multitudes who wanted to hear and see Jesus had to follow

Him where He went

a. It required leaving their homes, probably at great expense

b. It was probably very inconvenient, especially when sick and disabled!

2. Following Jesus today requires some effort also!

a. Time and energy must be expended to learn and grow in the teachings of Christ

b. It may not always be convenient to utilize opportunities to learn more about Jesus

-- The next time you stay home because of some physical inconvenience, think of those souls who followed Jesus on His itinerant travels!

CONCLUSION

1. Many Christians have often thought how wonderful it must have been to see Jesus on earth during His public ministry...

a. To see the miracles, to witness the healings

b. To hear His sermons proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom

b. To sit at His feet, listening to His gracious words of instruction

2. In reality, it may not have been as easy as one might think...

a. You would have had to leave home for an extended period of time

b. Contending with the multitudes, it might have difficult to even get close to Jesus

-- I wonder if many Christians today would have made the effort!

3. As we think of "The Itinerant Ministry Of Jesus", I hope we will remember...

- a. The importance of spreading the gospel of the kingdom today
 - b. The compassion our Lord had for the sick and oppressed
 - c. The effort we should be willing to make to follow the Lord
4. Perhaps most importantly, to realize...
- a. That once you have heard the gospel of the kingdom, no one is obligated to repeat it to you again and again
 - b. That having heard it once, you may never have the opportunity to hear it again!

It is your responsibility to heed the call to repent and accept the good news concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Have you?

Outline: Matthew 5:1-2

Outline: Matthew 5:1-2 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Introduction To The Sermon On The Mount (Matthew 5:1-2)

INTRODUCTION

1. In Matthew 5-7, we have recorded the most famous sermon that has ever been preached...

- a. Commonly referred to as "The Sermon On The Mount"
- b. It has touched more hearts, and in turn has sparked more sermons than any other

2. In Matthew 5:1-2, the setting for the sermon is given...

- a. He saw the multitudes that were following Him - Matthew 4:25
- b. He therefore ascended a mountain

1) Many believe this refers to a natural amphitheater between the "Horns of Hattin", on a slope that arises above Capernaum

(Believers' Study Bible)

2) This may be the same occasion as "The Sermon On The Plain"

- cf. Luke 6:17-49

c. When His disciples came to Him, He sat down and began to speak

1) It was common to speak while sitting, rather than standing as we do today

2) Cf. Matthew 13:1-2; John 8:2

3. What is Jesus talking about in this sermon?

- a. What is the main "THEME?"
- b. What is the "CONTENT" of this sermon?

[In this study we shall introduce "The Sermon On The Mount" by seeking

to answer these two questions. To begin, let's determine...] I. THE "THEME" OF THE SERMON

A. NOTE THE "SETTING" LEADING UP TO THE SERMON...

1. In Matthew 3:1-3, we read of the preaching of John the Baptist

a. Who was sent to prepare the way of the Lord

b. The theme of his preaching concerned "the kingdom of heaven"

2. In Matthew 4, we read of the beginning of Jesus' ministry

a. After His temptation, Jesus preaches a message similar to John's - Matthew 4:17

b. His preaching in Galilee pertained to the "gospel of the kingdom" - Matthew 4:23

-- Could Jesus' theme be "the kingdom of heaven"?

B. NOTE A "PHRASE" USED THROUGHOUT THE SERMON...

1. "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" - Matthew 5:3

2. "for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" - Matthew 5:10

3. "...shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven" - Matthew 5:19

4. "...shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" - Matthew 5:19

5. "...will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" - Matthew 5:20

6. "Your kingdom come" - Matthew 6:10

7. "But seek first the kingdom of God" - Matthew 6:33

8. ". . . shall enter the kingdom of heaven" - Matthew 7:21

-- Isn't Jesus talking about "the kingdom of heaven"?

[Both the setting and His repeated use a particular phrase should lead

us to conclude that the "theme" of Jesus' sermon on the mount is:

"THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN" With this in mind, let's briefly consider the "content" of the sermon

as I offer the following outline...] II. THE "CONTENT" OF THE SERMON

A. THE "CITIZENS" OF THE KINGDOM...

1. Their character and blessedness - Matthew 5:3-12

a. Qualities to be found in those who will be citizens of this kingdom

b. The blessings enjoyed by these citizens

2. Their relation to the world - Matthew 5:13-16

a. They are the salt of the earth

b. They are the light of the world

B. THE "RIGHTEOUSNESS" OF THE KINGDOM...

1. In contrast to the "traditional interpretations and applications" of the Law - Matthew 5:17-48

a. Jesus has not come to destroy or show disrespect to the Law

1) It will not pass away until it is fulfilled

2) Those who violate it teach contrary to it (while it exists) will be least in the kingdom

b. Jesus does require that the righteousness of those in the kingdom exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees

c. He illustrates by a series of contrasts concerning:

1) Murder and anger

2) Adultery

3) Divorce

4) The swearing of oaths

5) The taking of revenge

6) The treatment of enemies

-- In each case His teaching is consistent with the Law, but not the traditional interpretations and applications of the Law

2. With respect to man's relation to God - Matthew 6:1-33

a. Charitable deeds

b. Prayer

c. Fasting

d. Materialism

e. Anxiety

3. With respect to man's relation to man - Matthew 7:1-12

a. Judging others

b. Asking, seeking, knocking

c. The golden rule

C. THE "EXHORTATION TO ENTER" THE KINGDOM...

1. The "beginning" of the way - Matthew 7:13-14

a. It will be narrow and difficult

b. Not many will find it

2. The "progress" along the way - Matthew 7:15-20

a. Beware of false prophets who are wolves in sheep's clothing

b. You will know them by their fruits

3. The "end" of the way - Matthew 7:21-27

a. In which "sayers" will be contrasted with "doers"

b. In which "hearers" will be contrasted with "doers"

CONCLUSION

1. In view of its content, we can appreciate why this sermon has been called...

a. The Magna Carta of His Kingdom

b. The Manifesto of the King

2. Our next study will begin a look at the sermon in closer detail...

a. With the first of two lessons on "The Beatitudes" - Matthew 5:3-12

b. In which we examine the character and blessedness of those who

are citizens of the kingdom of heaven Have you responded to the exhortation to enter the kingdom? Remember

the words of our Lord to Nicodemus...

Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you,

unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."

Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old?

Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?"

Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

(John 3:3-5) Have you been born again of water and the Spirit? - cf. Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38

Matthew 5:3

Matthew 5:3 Matthew 5:3, Blessed Are The Poor In Spirit The beatitudes describe the characteristics of people who belong to the kingdom of heaven. This begins the most countercultural sermon one could probably imagine. The characteristics that are described in the Sermon on the Mount are not characteristics anyone in the world would believe would make you successful, joyful, or blessed. The Kingdom of Heaven

Let us start our study with the result of being poor in spirit. The kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit. The kingdom of heaven is an expression that is only found in Matthew's gospel and used extensively throughout Matthew's gospel. The kingdom of heaven pulls together the entire hope of Israel's story for the Messianic Age: a king (Messiah), the land, the holy people, and the redemptive power that will create holiness and peace. It is a phrase that represents the fullness of God's blessings. The kingdom looms large in Daniel's prophecy. Only in Daniel does the kingdom of God intersect with the Son of Man. This is important and interesting because the kingdom was Jesus' primary theme in his teachings and "Son of Man" was his most common self-designation. The kingdom of heaven cannot be oversimplified to say these are the people who go to heaven. The language of this sentence argues against this interpretation. Jesus did not say that "theirs will be the kingdom of heaven." Rather, "theirs is the kingdom of heaven." These are the ones who have the kingdom of heaven now. Jesus speaks in the present tense. Saying the kingdom of heaven is merely heaven misses the bigger picture. The kingdom of heaven represents that there is a king, Jesus, who rules over all nations and peoples, destroying the enemies and judging the wicked. Those who are in this kingdom enjoy the benefits as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, receiving the designation as children of God in relationship with the Father because they have been redeemed. The Poor In Spirit

If you were asked to describe the first characteristic of belonging in God's kingdom, what characteristic would you think about? Perhaps we would think of holiness or sinlessness. Perhaps we would think of the need for perfect righteousness or obedience. But as we noted at the beginning of the lesson, Jesus' sermon about who is in the kingdom is countercultural. But not only is it counterculture and counter-intuitive to the world, it is also countercultural to the thinking of the teachers and religious leaders of Israel in Jesus' day. Jesus begins by declaring that it is the poor in spirit who belong to the kingdom of heaven. What does it mean to be poor in spirit? To be poor in spirit is to recognize and understand our spiritual poverty before God. To know we do not have any resources within ourselves and therefore look to God for help and depend on him. To be poor in spirit is to stand without pretense before God, stripped of all self-sufficiency, self-security, and self-righteousness. I want to take a few moments to look at the examples that Jesus gave to show what poor in spirit looks like. With these pictures we will have a better understanding of this characteristic and what it will look like in our lives in practice. The parable of lost things in Luke 15 shows this contrast of what it looks like to be poor in spirit and what it looks like to not be poor in spirit. The parable concerning the older son begins in Luke 15:11 where Jesus first describes the attitude of the younger son, who we often call the prodigal son. Listen to what this younger son

says: Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me. (Luke 15:12 ESV) When the younger son comes to his senses and returns to the Father, listen to what he says: Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. (Luke 15:18-19 ESV)

Poor in spirit is the person who says I have sinned against the Lord and am not worthy to be your son or belong in your kingdom. The opposite of being poor in spirit is the person who stands before God and tells God to give what I deserve, as if God owes something to us.

Turn to Luke 18 and we will see another contrast that reveals what poverty in spirit looks like.

He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted." (Luke 18:9-14 ESV)

Why was the sinner justified? Was he justified because he had done righteous deeds? No. Was he justified because he was perfect? No. If you were to ask the average person in Israel who was justified they would readily answer that it is the Pharisee because he was not as bad as the tax collector. Look how good the Pharisee is! He did not do all these bad things and he did all kinds of righteous deeds like fasting twice a week and giving tithes of all he receives. But Jesus says that it is the tax collector who is justified. Why? He is justified because he is poor in spirit. He will not lift his eyes to heaven and all he can say is, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" He understands his spiritual destitution. He is stripped of all self-security, self-sufficiency, and self-righteousness.

This was the problem with the church in Laodecia that Jesus identifies as their sin. For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. (Revelation 3:17 ESV)

They did not see their spiritual condition before God. They did not recognize their spiritual poverty and therefore were lukewarm and were going to be vomited out of his mouth. The first principle of the kingdom of heaven is that you cannot enter the kingdom. We are beggars before God. Kingdom citizens beg; they do not brag. Jesus said it this way in John 15.

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5 ESV)

Listen to Jesus in John 9 : Jesus said, "For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, "Are we also blind?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, 'We see,' your guilt remains. (John 9:39-41 ESV)

All of these are pictures to show us what it means to be poor in spirit. This is the attitude that is required to belong to the kingdom of heaven. Depending on ourselves is at odds with this kingdom. God wants people who know they are spiritual needy. God wants people to see that their

personal goodness is not enough to measure up to God's standards. This is one of the problems with the world today. They all think they are good people and therefore do not need God. You know that you need God when you see that you are not good but are spiritually needy and destitute. In fact, this is the necessary first step in order to become a true believer and follower of Jesus. You have to know that you are deep in sin and cannot do anything to save yourself but beg for the mercy of God.

Only the poor in spirit want to live in God's kingdom because they know that they have nothing and are nothing apart from Jesus. Without poverty of spirit, we can endure only one ruler: Me! We will fight to the death to preserve our sovereign rule over our kingdom of one. We will continue to believe that what we want matters. We will continue to do what we think is best and live how we want to live and not allow Jesus to rule over us. Being poor in spirit is the only way we will allow Jesus to rule over our lives.

This is why Isaiah prophesied about the coming of the righteous king and who he was going to deliver. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound. (Isaiah 61:1 ESV) You have to know who you are so that you can be set free by Jesus. Jesus brought the good news to the poor and brokenhearted.

Why does modern Christianity reject self-emptying? Jesus emptied himself, according to Philippians 2 and we are to have the same mind that is in Christ Jesus. Can you imagine a best selling Christian book being called, "How To Be Nothing" or "The Blessing of Being a Nobody?" Being poor in spirit is recognizing that we have nothing to give God. The beautiful song that we sing, in our songbooks, "Rock of Ages" utters these very words that I hope come from deep in our hearts. Listen to the second and third verses:

"Not the labor of my hands, Can fulfill the law's demands; Could my zeal no respite know, Could my tears forever flow, All for sin could not atone, Thou must save and Thou alone."

"Nothing in my hand I bring: Simply to Thy cross I cling; Naked, come to Thee for dress; Helpless, look to Thee for grace; Vile, I to the fountain fly, Wash me, Savior, or I die."

Only the grace of gospel and the comprehension of our great sin and lack righteousness can bring us to poverty of spirit. We must hear the words of the scriptures that only God is good (Luke 18:19), that no one is righteous or does good (Romans 3:10-12), and to understand that it is not in us to direct our steps (Jeremiah 10:23). There is no grace for us until we are poor in spirit. It is not until we are poor in spirit that we can see how glorious Christ is or understand his riches toward us! We must grasp our deadness and blindness due to sin to see the life that is available in Christ. The last shall be first (Matthew 19:30). We must stand without pretense before God, stripped of all self-sufficiency, self-security, and self-righteousness begging for the mercy of God. The mark of Christianity is not sinlessness, for the apostle John says that such a person who thinks they are such are deceiving themselves. The mark of Christianity is a growing awareness of our sinfulness. God be merciful to me, the sinner!

Matthew 5:4

Matthew 5:4 Matthew 5:4, Blessed Are Those Who Mourn The Declaration of Independence declares that we have unalienable rights to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The pursuit of happiness is the intriguing part of this statement because it truly reflects the human mindset. We want to be happy. We want to do what will make us happy. We do not want to think about difficulties and pain. We do not want to be troubled by cares in life. We want to be happy. We want happiness and we will continue to pursue happiness. But this way of thinking is what causes Jesus' next declaration about the blessed life to be so jarring and so countercultural. "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted." Think about what Jesus just said for a moment. Those who belong to the kingdom of heaven and enjoy the rich blessings of God by being in relationship with him are those that mourn.

Blessed Are The Mourners

What is the type of mourning that Jesus is looking for as characteristics of people who enter into the kingdom of heaven? Is God telling that we just need to be sad all the time to be citizens of his kingdom? Sadness is not the concept that we see in the scriptures. There is a mourning that is needed but it is not being sad for sadness' sake. The scriptures give us a picture of the mourning that Jesus desires.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be wretched and mourn and weep. Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. (James 4:8-9 ESV) It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. (1 Corinthians 5:1-2 ESV) My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep your law. (Psalms 119:136 ESV)

God wants a mourning over sin. The first statement of blessing in the Sermon on the Mount was the blessed were those who were poor in spirit. These are people who recognize their sinfulness. These are people who see their sin and know that there is nothing they can do before God to redeem themselves. They are the people like the tax collector who simply say, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner!" Those who are in the kingdom of heaven are those who are stripped of all self-righteousness, self-sufficiency, and self-security. Now let us consider for a moment: if we are doomed because of our sins with nothing that we can offer to God to save ourselves or redeem ourselves, then what does God desires but those who mourn over their sinfulness. When my children come to me and they have done something wrong, it matters greatly if they are sorrowful for what they have done. If they do not care about their violation, then that will receive a very different response from me as a parent than if the children does care about their violation and is remorseful. This is the kind of mourning that God desires of his people. Notice again that the Beatitudes follow Isaiah 61, a prophecy about the coming Messiah and what he would do. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the

poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3 ESV)

Notice that Christ has come to "bind up the brokenhearted" and "to comfort all who mourn." The grace of God is to melt our hearts in the face of our sins, causing us to be sorrowful and full of shame. True mourning focuses on what we have done to our God, how we have violated his very nature and character. We mourn because we grasp the profound loss in our lives because we have separated ourselves from God because of our sins. Think about the faithful people of God that we read about in the scriptures. Think about some of the powerful confessions of sin in the Psalms. These people do not excuse their sins. They do not belittle their sins or ignore their sins. They cry over their sins. They do not make excuses but mourn over what they have done. This is what God has always wanted. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Psalms 51:17 ESV)

All that God has wanted was for people to recognize their sinfulness (poor in spirit) and then mourn over those sins. Listen how God declared this truth through the prophecy of Jeremiah.

Also on your skirts is found the lifeblood of the guiltless poor; you did not find them breaking in. Yet in spite of all these things you say, 'I am innocent; surely his anger has turned from me.' Behold, I will bring you to judgment for saying, 'I have not sinned.' (Jeremiah 2:34-35 ESV)

Go, and proclaim these words toward the north, and say, "'Return, faithless Israel, declares the Lord. I will not look on you in anger, for I am merciful, declares the Lord; I will not be angry forever. Only acknowledge your guilt, that you rebelled against the Lord your God and scattered your favors among foreigners under every green tree, and that you have not obeyed my voice, declares the Lord. (Jeremiah 3:12-13 ESV)

Notice what Jeremiah says the problem was. In Jeremiah 2 God says he will bring them into judgment, not because they have sinned, but because they refuse to acknowledge that they have sinned. The same plea is made in Jeremiah 3. They just needed to acknowledge their guilt and rebellion and God would be merciful toward them. But they refused to mourn over their sins. You will notice that the mourning over sins is tied very closely with confession of sins and repentance. Listen to Ezekiel's prophecy and then Joel's prophecy. And the Lord said to him, "Pass through the city, through Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and groan over all the abominations that are committed in it." (Ezekiel 9:4 ESV)

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; and rend your hearts and not your garments." Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster. (Joel 2:12-13 ESV)

God gave the same message in Ezekiel and Joel. In Ezekiel, the people who are mourning over the sins of the city are marked for spiritual protection but the rest are doomed. In Joel, God tells the people to tear their hearts! Come to God in mourning, weeping, and fasting and God will

receive you. Jesus is teaching the same principle of the kingdom in Matthew 5:4. In Luke's account, Jesus taught what happens to those who do not mourn over their sins now. Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. (Luke 6:25 ESV) If you will not be broken by your sins and weep for them now but take pleasure in your sins now, you will be made to mourn and weep in the coming judgment.

They Shall Be Comforted

Rather than ignoring our sins or excusing our sins, God wants mourning for our sins. God does not want fake contrition, but heart wrenching pain over our sins. But notice the blessing that comes to those who truly mourn over their sins. They shall be comforted. If we return to Isaiah's prophecy we see this imagery. The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn; to grant to those who mourn in Zion— to give them a beautiful headdress instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the garment of praise instead of a faint spirit; that they may be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he may be glorified. (Isaiah 61:1-3 ESV) The brokenhearted are healed. The mourners are comforted. The mourners are granted a beautiful headdress or crown and the oil of gladness. They are given the garment of praise and called oaks of righteousness that are planted by the Lord. Jesus' purpose is to come with comfort for those who are crushed by their sins. Notice that this point was made when Jesus as a baby was brought to the temple.

Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. (Luke 2:25 ESV)

Jesus came to bring comfort and consolation to sinners. There is no comfort to those who deny their sins. There is no consolation to those who act like their sins are no big deal. Comfort is to those who are broken by sins. Think about Luke 7:36-50 where we see the sinful woman weeping over the feet of Jesus. Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." To the woman caught in adultery in John 8 Jesus said to her, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and from now on sin no more." Do you see that Jesus is the comfort to the sinners?

Christian maturity is a growing sorrow over our sins. We do not deny our weakness or our sinfulness. Rather, we accept our guilt, confess our sins, and mourn over our actions. The mourners are comforted because only they will have their sins forgiven. Understanding the grace of God will only lead us to a greater sorrow over our sins. It is our sins that caused Jesus to go to the cross and die for us. We mourn our sinfulness and then stand amazed at the grace of God to comfort us with forgiveness because we love him so much. Forgiveness is given to the brokenhearted. Forgiveness is offered to the contrite. Forgiveness is extended to those who are crushed by their sins. Bring Christ your broken life today and submit to his rule and ways.

Matthew 5:5

Matthew 5:5 Matthew 5:5, Blessed Are The Meek

What does it mean to be meek? Meekness is not a word that we commonly use in our conversations nor hear on the news. The NASB and HCSB use the word “gentle.” The NLT read “humble.” The BDAG lexicon says of this Greek word, “to not being overly impressed by a sense of one’s self-importance, gentle, humble, considerate, meek.” Meekness means never asserting oneself for one’s own sake. Conceptually, the word carries the idea of restraint though one has the power to do something. Meekness does not mean weakness. The person has ability and power, but choose not to use it. Thus, it is a gentleness of spirit. We see this in Jesus when in Gethsemane Peter pulls a sword and lops off the ears of the high priest’s servant. Listen to what Jesus says,

Then Jesus said to him, “Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father, and he will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels? (Matthew 26:52-53 ESV)

We see in Jesus the gentleness and humility that he keeps his from defending himself or acting on his own behalf. The example of Jesus shows that meekness is not conflict avoidance. Jesus engaged in conflict but he did this as a defense of God the Father, not himself or his own pride. What we see is that meekness is strongly tied to self-control. The meekness of Jesus was prophesied by Isaiah.

He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. (Isaiah 42:2-3 ESV)

Jesus was not meek because he was powerless or weak. Jesus was meek because he had immense power, yet showed a gentle spirit and self-control, acting in accordance with God’s principles. You will sometimes see this word used in the scriptures tied to the idea of voluntary submission. When Peter instructed the wives concerning their conduct and adorning, he wrote: But let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle (praus) and quiet spirit, which in God’s sight is very precious. (1 Peter 3:4 ESV)

Again, this does not suggest a lack of worth, power, or strength. Rather, the disposition is disciplined, controlled, and does not act for one’s self. Now consider how completely countercultural this idea is. We live in a time that if you attack me, I must attack you. Further, if you do not attack back then you are looked upon as being weak. Meekness today is an insult and equals being powerlessness and weak, and the first century Greek saw meekness in the same way. Meekness was weakness then as it is also considered today. It is important to recognize that meekness is not a natural human disposition. Before we discuss how we can adopt this gentle and meek character, we will consider the result for the meek.

Inherit The Earth

Jesus declares that the meek are blessed because they will inherit the earth. Now this will cause people to immediately speculate with all kinds of ideas about what this means. But we cannot start to understand and apply this statement until we understand what this meant to Israel. What Jesus says here is a quotation from Psalms 37. Not only this, Psalms 37 is a description about God's people receiving the promised inheritance while the wicked are cut off. Turn to Psalms 37.

Notice that Psalms 37 begins with the admonition to not fret because of evildoers or be envious of wrongdoers because they will wither and fade like grass. This is the introduction to the thoughts of this psalm. Psalms 37:8-9 declare the same thing. Do not fret for yourself and do not be angry or wrathful because evildoers will be cut off. But notice verse 9: "But those who wait for the Lord shall inherit the land." Notice this again verses 10-11. In just a little while, the wicked will be no more; though you look carefully at his place, he will not be there. But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace. (Psalms 37:10-11 ESV)

Jesus quotes Psalms 37 as you can see. But Psalms 37 continues to make this point. Look at verse 22: "For those blessed by the Lord shall inherit the land, but those cursed by him shall be cut off." Look at verse 29: "The righteous shall inherit the land and dwell upon it forever." Finally, look at verse 34: "Wait for the Lord and keep his way, and he will exalt you to inherit the land; you will look on when the wicked are cut off." You see how many times David declares that the righteous are those who inherit the land.

Now we may read this and think that the psalmist only has in mind the land of Palestine. But that was not the hope of Israel. The scriptures picture the people of God possesses all the earth and all the nations, not just Palestine. The Messiah would arrive and restore peace and order by destroying all oppressors. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain that filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:35 ESV)

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the war horse from Jerusalem; and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall speak peace to the nations; his rule shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth. (Zechariah 9:9-10 ESV)

Please also read Micah 4:11-13 and Habakkuk 3:6-12. The prophetic pictures of the kingdom were never about merely returning to Palestine but that the kingdom of God will destroy the nations, fill the earth, and rule over all the earth (cf. Psalms 2). Ultimately, this is the fulfillment of the promise made to Abraham.

Now this is an important conclusion that we draw from these prophecies. To inherit the earth is to have the kingdom of heaven because the kingdom was pictured as the possession of the land of Israel or possession of the entire earth. The way the people would inherit the earth is through the Messiah conquering the world and establishing his kingdom. We see this in the Messianic prophecy of Isaiah 61. Jesus quotes this prophecy in Luke 4 and applies it to himself. In Isaiah 61:4 you see that when the Messiah comes he will enable the people so that they rebuild the ruins of the cities in the land, eat the wealth of the nations, receive a double portion, and have everlasting joy. You see the same connection of land promise to Abraham is fulfilled when the

kingdom arrives and the kingdom citizens inherit the earth. In short, to inherit the earth is kingdom language and speaks to the fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham.

Therefore, inheriting the earth does not necessitate that we think of a millennial kingdom on earth where we possess this physical dirt. Our future does not mean that we have an eternity with a large plot of land in Montana or somewhere else that we desire. Saying that you would inherit the earth is the same as saying that you belong in the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 5:3) because the kingdom of God would fill the whole earth and destroy the enemies and oppressors. With this in mind, listen to what Peter asked Jesus and Jesus' response:

Then Peter said in reply, "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life. (Matthew 19:27-29 ESV)

Those who were beheaded for the cause of Christ and did not worship the beast were told that "they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years" (Revelation 20:4). Do you see the contrast? The meek possess nothing now. They are gentle in spirit, disciplined, and self-controlled. So as a rule they do not get ahead in life. They do not become dictator over a nation, president over a country, or CEO over a corporation. The meek do not rule now. But the meek rule in Christ's kingdom. They inherit the earth and reign with him. The mighty and powerful do not enter this kingdom. The loud, intimidating, pushy, and boisterous do not enter this kingdom. The seeming "nobodies" are given honor and exaltation in Christ's kingdom that rules over the earth. We enjoy the blessings of Christ and his rule.

Developing Meekness/Gentleness So how can we be meek and gentle as Jesus says here in the Sermon on the Mount? First, meekness and gentleness come directly from being poor in spirit and mourning over our sins. How can we push ourselves as greater than others and worthy of attention when we see our own spiritual destitution and sinfulness? How can we knock others down to lift ourselves up when we see our own spiritual worthlessness because of our sins? Understanding our sinfulness leads to gentleness.

Second, Psalms 37 revealed a great picture of what the meek do, so that we can know if we are the meek and gentle our Lord is looking for. Psalms 37:3-5 twice said that the meek trust in the Lord. Psalms 37:4 said that they find their delight in the Lord. Psalms 37:7 said that they wait expectantly for the Lord. Psalms 37:9 said that they put their hope in the Lord. Their hope is not in this life. Their delight is not in the pleasures of this world. Their trust is not in themselves, their achievements, or abilities. They wait with eager anticipation for the Lord to come so they can inherit all the promises that God has made to his people. One of those promises is to have a crown of life, reigning with Christ forever in his eternal kingdom. You can try to rule the world on your own and fail or you can rule with world with God with joy and satisfaction.

Matthew 5:6

Matthew 5:6 Matthew 5:6, Blessed Are Those Who Hunger and Thirst For Righteousness

We understand the concept of hunger. You might be hungry right now. I do not know what hunger feels like to other people but I can tell you what it feels like to me. What starts out as a mild feeling of discomfort from the stomach turns into a hunger that affects my entire body. If I allow my hunger to go on long enough, I get a headache and experience dizziness. My body is screaming to my mind to tell my feet and my hands to get into the kitchen and do something fast! I am told that other people do not feel this way. That is why they will eat dinner at 8pm at night. The pain in my body would become so great that I could never wait that long.

Thirst operates in the same way. When you are thirsty you can hardly think of anything else. Your mind becomes consumed with needing water to drink. There is nothing better than a cold glass of water when you are truly thirst. After working outside in the Florida heat, you do not want anything else to drink than water. Nothing else will satisfy. You do not want to do anything else. Hunger and thirst will become so great that you cannot do anything else. When our hunger and thirst kick in, life stops and we quench our thirst and fill our hunger. This has become a metaphor for a having a strong desire. When a sports team wins a game, the athletes will often talk about being hungry for being a champion. The idea is that of a driving pursuit and a passion that comes from deep within the person. Another word that may help us understand the idea is ambition.

Hunger and Thirst

With this in mind, listen to the words of Jesus as he continues to teach the crowds that have come to hear him speak on the mountain. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." (Matthew 5:6 ESV)

Therefore, hungering and thirsting is not a mild desire. To say that you are hungry for something does not mean that you do not really care if you have it or not. To say that you are thirsting for something does not mean that you are presently content or satisfied. Hungering and thirsting speaks of having a deep craving, yearning, and passionate pursuit. The scriptures speak of having this hunger and thirst in a number of places. As a deer pants for flowing streams, so pants my soul for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God? (Psalms 42:1-2 ESV)

Like a deer panting and thirsting for flowing streams of water is the thirst that David has for the living God. Listen to David again:

O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. (Psalms 63:1 ESV)

We are reading these so we can have a sense of what the scriptures mean to hunger or thirst for the things of God. David does not speak of being mildly interested in God. He earnestly seeks the Lord. His souls thirsts for the Lord. His flesh faints for the Lord. Do you hear the passion? Do you

hear the desire dripping from his words? Now let us turn our attention back to Matthew 5:6 and notice what Jesus says those who belong to his kingdom hunger and thirst for. For Righteousness

Notice that Jesus says that our passionate pursuit is not simply for the Lord but for righteousness. Righteousness is used a few different ways in the scriptures. When we read the writings of the apostle Paul, righteousness refers to the idea of justification. Paul will often write about how we are not righteous but God makes us righteous through the cross of Jesus. Justification is the word that we typically use to describe this. Is Jesus saying that the kingdom of heaven belongs to the people who desire to be justified by God? While we could argue that this is true, in Matthew's gospel the word righteousness is never used in this way like Paul uses it. To see how Matthew uses the word righteousness in his gospel, we can look a few sentences down the page and understand the meaning. Look further into the Sermon on the Mount.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10 ESV) For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:20 ESV)

Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 6:1 ESV)

We will examine the meaning of these teachings in later lessons. For now, it is enough for us to see that Matthew is not using righteousness in these places to describe God justifying us or declaring us righteous. Rather, righteousness is used in Matthew's gospel in terms of personal righteousness by doing God's will.

God's people are those who passionately desire to do God's will and pursue to keep God's requirements. They look at God's laws and ways as spiritual necessities to be desired just as food and drink are physical necessities for physical life. Conforming to God's will is their highest desire. The character of God's people is that they long so much for a godly life and relationship with God as much as a starving person longs for his next meal or a parched tongue longs for drops of water. God's people are desperate for the things of God. All that we desire is to be right with our God.

It is interesting and sad to note how modern Christianity seems to have no concern for right living or holiness. Right living appears to be inconsequential these days. People think that they are Christians or that they serve the Lord while their desires are for any and everything else but God. Their desire for God is mild curiosity and not a burning passion or raging hunger. We cannot think that a mild interest in God is what Jesus is calling for. Listen to what Jesus said to the Samaritan woman at the well.

"If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." (John 4:10 ESV)

Just slow down over those words, "If you knew the gift of God" and if you knew who is speaking to you, you would have asked him for the drink and received living water. Those who know the gift of God and comprehend who Jesus is and what he is offering hunger and thirst for righteousness. Right living becomes as important to them as food and drink. These are the ones who cannot get enough of God's word. They see their relationship with God as Isaiah pictured it: the eating of rich food (Isaiah 55:1).

Satisfied

Looking for satisfaction is the pursuit and goal of our culture. All magazine headlines and television advertisements suggest that what they offer you will truly satisfy. Everyone wants to be satisfied. We try to fill our hunger and thirst with sin. It is sad how often we desire lesser things. The prophet Jeremiah pictured this problem in the second chapter of his book where the people are described as having broken cisterns that do not hold water. The reason it is so foolish is because God is offering flowing, clean, clear water. Yet we try to drink old, stale water thinking we will be satisfied in this way. This is why the scriptures so often tell us to be godly and pursue righteousness and holiness. Satisfaction will only come through such a lifestyle. Those in the kingdom understand that only filling and satisfaction is Christ. Listen to Jesus again:

Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst." (John 6:35 ESV) The more we are satisfied with God, the more we are dissatisfied with substitutes. What Jesus has done is create in us a hunger for God. The pursuit of righteousness destroys self-righteousness because the pursuit reinforces our poverty of spirit, insufficiency, and need for repentance.

What Jesus says challenges us to ask ourselves what we hunger and thirst for. Salvation comes only to those who truly and deeply want it. Our spiritual poverty and mourning over our sins should compel us to desire salvation, restoration, reconciliation, and righteousness. Those who hunger for God desire to conform to the will of God.

I am going to say this another way that I hope will make us a little uncomfortable so that we clearly get Jesus' message. Jesus is calling for religious fanaticism. We are fanatical about eating and drinking. We never miss meals and very regimented in our eating and drinking throughout the day. Now we have read all of these passages that tell us that Jesus is to be our food and drink. We want Jesus and we do not want any substitute. We want time with him and nothing can change us from that effort and passionate pursuit. Jesus is on our minds like food and drink are when we hunger and thirst. We are called to be consumed with Jesus and desire his ways in our lives.

What is your passionate pursuit in life? What satisfies you? What do you hunger and thirst for? Your time and your money will reveal the answers to you. Only Jesus can satisfy. Give your life to him today.

Matthew 5:7

Matthew 5:7 Matthew 5:7, Blessed Are The Merciful The Beatitudes are a description of the characteristics of people who belong to Christ's kingdom. In Matthew 4 we read that Jesus was preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Then Jesus went through Galilee proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing diseases and afflictions among the people. As Jesus goes up the mountain, he is reenacting Moses going up the mountain and receiving the Law. Jesus is now declaring the law, that is, the covenant of the kingdom of heaven. In Matthew 5:7 Jesus said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."

Understanding Mercy

The word "mercy" is used in the Gospel of Matthew to refer to showing compassion, pity, and favor toward the suffering and needy (Matthew 9:27; Matthew 15:22; Matthew 17:15; Matthew 18:33; Matthew 20:30). We get a good feel for this word when we read the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10). Remember that there was a man who fell among robbers and was beaten severely. A priest and a Levite pass by and do not offer assistance. But a Samaritan comes to his aid, takes him to an inn, and pays for his care. Jesus then asks, "Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" (Luke 10:36) The lawyer responded, "The one who showed him mercy" (Luke 10:37). Here we see that mercy is showing compassion, pity, and favor.

Mercy, therefore, is not just a feeling. Mercy is not some detached feeling or a sentiment that does nothing. Mercy is a feeling that causes the individual to act. Sometimes we describe mercy as not giving to others what they deserve. While there is truth to this declaration, we are going to see that this is not a complete definition for mercy. Mercy is not merely refusing to bring judgment on those deserving of judgment. Mercy is genuine compassion expressed in genuine help and selfless concern shown in selfless acts. The people in God's kingdom are those who are givers of mercy. Mercy is something that is shown, not merely felt. Later in Matthew, Jesus will call mercy one of the weightier matters of the law (Matthew 23:23).

Mercy was not a characteristic of 1st century culture, nor ours today. A popular Roman philosopher called mercy, "The disease of the soul." It was the sign of supreme weakness. We see this in the Jewish culture also. Matthew 5:43 records the saying was to love your neighbor and hate your enemy. We see in these cultures that mercy, if it was given, was reserved for those who had been merciful to you. Our world today is not far removed spiritually from the Roman world when Jesus gave these blessed statements. Our culture says the same thing: "If you don't look out for yourself, no one else will." Another slogan today: "Don't get mad, get even." People are still treated like things, power is the supreme deity, and financial success is the most important thing in life. There is even the saying to, "Show no mercy." Today, just as then, mercy is weakness in the minds of most. The Mercy of God

We see Jesus showing mercy on many occasions. He looked on people and was moved with pity and compassion (Matthew 9:36; Matthew 14:14; Matthew 15:32). Jesus showed compassion on the sinful woman caught in adultery. Jesus always showed compassion and love toward the people. This is what attracts us to Jesus! He truly cared for people. He had a legitimate concern for their needs and difficulties. In fact, we see the ugliness of the human heart with how the religious leaders treated Jesus. You will notice in the gospels that the more Jesus showed mercy and compassion, the more the religious leaders hated Jesus and looked for opportunities to kill him. The hatred grew so great that the people and leaders had Jesus nailed to a cross. Yet, even while hanging on the cross, with nails driven through his outstretched hands, we see the mercy of Jesus. "Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

Notice in this we see a distinction between mercy and forgiveness. The mercy of our Lord is the basis for his desire to forgive us. "...he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior..." (Titus 3:5-6 ESV). Mercy was the basis upon which forgiveness was extended. God's forgiveness of our sins flow from his abundant mercy. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, (Ephesians 2:4-6 ESV)

Notice that Ephesians makes the same distinction between mercy and forgiveness. Because God is rich in mercy with great love for us, he saved us by grace and made us alive together with Christ. While Jesus is on the cross we see his mercy as he extends the opportunity of forgiveness to them.

We must be merciful because this is the very character of God. Jesus declared, "Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful" (Luke 6:36). The mercy of God should be renewed in our minds and hearts at least every Sunday as we partake of the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper reminds us of the mercy of God that we have experienced. God's mercy is the basis of our forgiveness. This teaches us something valuable. Our lack of forgiveness and our unwillingness to forgive others comes from a lack of mercy for others. Mercy drives forgiveness. If I am not forgiving, then I am not merciful. If I am not merciful, then I am not in the kingdom of heaven. The Challenge of Mercy

Mercy is a challenge to develop in our character. Showing mercy means making ourselves vulnerable. We will be hurt by what other people do to us. We will extend ourselves to help people without reciprocation or thanks. We will give of ourselves to those who need us without regard for receiving something in return. Compassion and pity are not often praised in our world but it is the very heart of God that we are showing to the world. Mercy is not earned. Just like grace is no longer grace if it is earned, mercy is no longer mercy if it is deserved. Mercy is compassion that is undeserved. We are not to show mercy to whom we think deserve our mercy. We are to be like the character of God, extending mercy to all. Show mercy when people sin against us. The merciful expend themselves to assist others. But sometimes we misunderstand mercy. Mercy does not mean that sin is ignored. We know this because God is merciful toward us but that does not mean our sins are ignored. Mercy recognizes the reality of sin. Mercy has the recognition of wrongdoing. Jesus did not show mercy by pretending that people were not sinning. Jesus did not show mercy

by not convicting the people of their sins. Jesus was being merciful by identifying sins and giving them hope for forgiveness through him. Mercy identifies sin but then shows the way to reconciliation with God. Mercy does good toward the other even in the face of opposition or evil.

Now think about what Jesus taught a couple times in the Gospel of Matthew: "I desire mercy, not sacrifice." This declaration ought to be weighty to us and must not be emptied of its impact. God wants people who have a heart for him and for others. God does not want heartless pew sitters. We are people who help and heal. I am so troubled to hear how often Christians have an argument or a moment of an unkind word, and rather than showing mercy, there is division. People leave the congregation and go to another. People get their feelings hurt and dwell in bitterness and leave. Going to church is not the test to know if you have received God's mercy. Being merciful to others is the test to know if you have received God's mercy. Mercy is not desiring for other people to do good for others. Mercy is when we seek and act upon opportunities to be mercy givers, like the Good Samaritan in Luke 10. Think about what the prophet Micah declared to the people: And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy [kindness; ESV] and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8 NIV)

They Shall Receive Mercy

The sinner's plea can only be the words, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). God only shows mercy to the merciful. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy." Listen to the chilling words of James: For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13 ESV)

What terrifying words to hear! Judgment will be without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. We also have another saying: that person is getting what they deserve. But is that what we want to have happen to us? Do we want to get what we deserve for how we have treated others? I know I have made many, many mistakes with you and I do not want to get what I deserve. All of you have been very merciful toward me with all of my flaws and errors. You know others have been merciful toward you with your flaws and errors. Yet how often we will refuse to help people and refuse to be merciful because we think the person should not have put themselves in this mess in the first place! They are only getting what they deserve. But we want others to be merciful toward us and not give us what we deserve. Further, we want God to be merciful toward us and not give us what we deserve. Do we want to get what we deserve for how we have treated God?

Mercy toward others begins in our lives by having a penetrating awareness of our own desperate need of mercy from others, and especially from God. It is mercy that shows compassion to the helpless (Luke 10:37) and extends forgiveness even to the one who gives repeated offense (Matthew 18:21-22). But this is what is important: mercy is not prompted by the appeal of certain qualities of the offender. We see this truth when God showed mercy to us through the cross (Romans 5:8).

Matthew 18:33 "And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" God's mercy compels us to be gracious, kind, compassionate, and merciful toward others.

Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. Oh, how we need this! Let God's mercy transform your heart to be mercy givers to all people.

Matthew 5:8

Matthew 5:8 Matthew 5:8, Blessed Are The Pure In Heart Can you imagine what it would be like to see God? It is hard to even imagine or visualize what that moment would be like when we would be able to see God. Everything in the scriptures tells us that impact of humans seeing even the likeness of the glory of God caused people to tremble and fear. His majesty and glory is so great that no flesh could look upon the full glory of God. When the scriptures even try to describe the glory of God in places like Revelation 4 and Ezekiel 1, we cannot even begin to fully comprehend what we are reading. Can you imagine what it would be like to fully see God? Do you want to see God? Listen to what Jesus says in Matthew 5:8. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." The Heart

So what does it mean to be "pure in heart?" First, we need to understand the meaning of the heart. For us in our culture when we speak of the heart we are either using the heart in terms of emotions or in terms of our will and desire. We will say things like how our mind tells us one thing but our heart tells us to do another thing. It is important to understand that this is not how the ancients spoke of the heart and neither did the biblical writers. The heart for them was not about emotions but referred to our will, our desire, and our mind. The heart was the sum of the inner person with all of its many aspects. To say this another way, the heart was the control center of the body, much in the same way that we probably think of the mind as the control center over our bodies. You will note this difference sometimes in the older translations. Notice how the KJV translates Philemon 1:7. For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the bowels of the saints are refreshed by thee, brother. (Philemon 1:7 KJV)

You see that the ancients spoke of the place of emotions as one's bowels. But this does not make any sense to us in our culture. If we talk about our bowels it is because we ate something bad. So we translate this in a way that makes sense to us today. For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother. (Philemon 1:7 NKJV) But then we can get confused because when the scriptures do speak of the heart and translate it as such we might make the mistake of applying our understanding of the emotions to the heart rather than the will, the desire, and the mind. When the scriptures tell us to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength (cf. Matthew 22:37), these four things are indistinguishable to the ancients. There is not a division that we might be tempted to make as if these are four separate things. The statement is emphatic to refer to the whole of our very being.

Purity of Heart

Therefore when Jesus says that those who belong to his kingdom are those who are pure in heart, Jesus is not asking for people to be emotional or act from the heart. Rather, Jesus is declaring that his people have purity of mind, purity of will, and purity of desire. There are two aspects in the scriptures that picture what it means to be pure in heart: sincerity and cleanliness.

Sincerity of heart. To be pure in heart means that we are sincere and not double-minded. We will have unmixed motives as the basis for all that we do. James spoke directly to this problem.

You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (James 4:4 ESV)

Then James gives the solution to this problem a few sentences later.

Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. (James 4:7-8 ESV)

Notice that James says that purifying our hearts is about being sincere toward God and no longer being double-minded. This speaks to God's people having a singleness of devotion to God and complete faithfulness to God. We are to have an undivided loyalty to God so that we are not pulled away by anything else. Purity of heart means that those who belong to his kingdom are only focused on Jesus. They are not focused on the other cares and concerns of life. They do not try to serve two masters (Matthew 6:24). They know they only have one master, Jesus, and they serve him without veering from that course. Purity of heart means that our decisions have only one concern: Jesus.

Cleanliness.

There is a second aspect to being pure in heart that we see in scriptures and that is being clean and holy in our desire, will, and mind. This is the natural outcome of having a sincere heart that is focused on Jesus. The mind, the will, and the desires are transformed from impurity to purity and righteousness. We see this idea in many places in the scriptures also. The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? "I the Lord search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds." (Jeremiah 17:9-10 ESV)

But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a person. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. (Matthew 15:18-19 ESV)

Maintaining a pure heart is critical if we are going to hunger and thirst for righteousness. Righteousness cannot come from an impure heart. We have sick hearts that require transformation. God is the cause of the transformation, according to the scriptures. Who can say, "I have made my heart pure; I am clean from my sin"? (Proverbs 20:9 ESV)

Brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the gospel and believe. And God, who knows the heart, bore witness to them, by giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us, and he made no distinction between us and them, having cleansed their hearts by faith. (Acts 15:7-9 ESV) Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalms 51:10 ESV)

I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you.

And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. (Ezekiel 36:25-26 ESV)

God is opening and transforming the heart through his word which he has given us by his Holy Spirit. God is also transforming our hearts by displaying his love for us in the sacrifice of Jesus. God continues to cleanse our hearts by allowing trials in life, blessing us in life, and through answered prayers. God desires our hearts to be purge from uncleanness and made pure for his service.

Bringing these two concepts together we see that purity of heart means that we are so devoted and focused on the Lord that the impurities and uncleanness of the heart will be driven out. It is our uncleanness and lack of faith in the Lord that causes our double-mindedness. But when we devote ourselves completely to pursuing the Lord, the heart will become transformed into the pure heart that was previously depraved and darkened. For us, at some point we must decide what is our highest joy. Until we see Jesus as our highest joy and pursue him as such, we will always be double-minded, always be distracted by the world, always be caught by sins, and continue to have a sinful heart. We must decide what is our highest joy. Is our highest joy a worldly activity, a sinful pursuit, or some other distraction of life? Is our highest joy our work, our career, our wealth, our comfort, our family, or some thing else other than Jesus? What we continue to learn from these beatitudes is that Jesus is very concerned about our hearts. It matters if we have pure hearts. It matters if we have sincere hearts. It matters if we have devoted hearts. This is why the scriptures teach that God knows our hearts (Luke 16:15; Acts 1:24; Acts 15:8; Romans 8:27). God knows our will, our desires, and our intentions. God knows what our highest joy is. Coming to church on Sunday does not trick our Lord into thinking that he is our highest joy. Coming to church on Sunday does not fool the Lord into thinking we have pure hearts.

Purify your hearts by drawing near to the Lord (James 4:8). Purify your hearts by seeing Jesus as your highest joy and pursuing him like the great treasure that he is. For They Shall See God

The reason we must make Jesus our highest pursuit and joy is because Jesus says that only these people will see God. Stop and reflect on this outcome. What a reward! This is the highest possible blessing there is: to see God. Seeing God is the culmination of all our hungering and thirsting. Purity of heart is the indispensable prerequisite for fellowship with God. Only the transformed heart will be able to see God. The writer of Hebrews said that without holiness no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). I don't know what greater motivation could be given to us. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Seeing God is everything. Relationship with God is everything. If this goal is not all you are striving for, then you are not a kingdom citizen.

We must make a conscious decision to practice the instruction given by the writer of Hebrews: Let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV)

Set aside life's distractions and activities and run the race toward Jesus so that we can be with him and see him. The gospel message is that you can see God if you will run with a pure heart toward your God.

Matthew 5:9

Matthew 5:9 Matthew 5:9, Blessed Are The Peacemakers

What Peacemaking Looks Like

Jesus is describing the characteristics of those who belong to his kingdom. As he sits on the mountain, he declares to the crowds, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Peacemakers do not create strife, hate, fights, division, or disputes. Rather, they assist in reconciliation. Peacemakers make an active entrance into the middle of warring parties for the purpose of creating reconciliation and peace. While peacemaking seeks to reconcile, true peacemakers recognize that this reconciliation is not through tolerance, pretending there are no differences, nor suppressing differences. Peace comes by creating love for the other that transcends the differences or permits reconciliation in spite of the differences.

Before we think about ourselves as individuals, I would like us to consider how churches fall into the trap of false peacemaking. Churches will try to maintain peace by pretending that there are no differences or by suppressing differences. Pretending we have peace is not peace. We have seen this in the Middle East over many decades. We can claim that there is peace and pretend that there is peace, but just because there is not active aggression toward the other does not mean there is peace. Ignoring differences or avoiding difficult or controversial doctrines does not create peace but creates a bomb that is ready to explode when one of these differences becomes a conflict. This is where grasping what Jesus said is really important. Jesus did not say, “Blessed are the peaceful.” This is the direction we want to take. Let us ignore our problems and differences and be peaceful. Nor did Jesus say, “Blessed are the peacekeepers.” This is another mistake, believing that we must keep peace at all costs, even if the tactics are wrong. Being a peacemaker is far different than being a peace lover or a peace keeper. Being a peacemaker means that we do not get to say, “It is none of my business.” We are going to facilitate reconciliation and try to help end a conflict.

If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. (Romans 12:18 ESV) This command truly captures the essence of being a peacemaker. As much as depends upon us, we will be peacemakers with all, living peaceably with all. The apostle Paul also told the Christians in Ephesus:

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3 ESV) With all of these commands and teachings about being peacemakers, why do we struggle with having this attitude? Why is it that brothers and sisters in Christ fight, quarrel, and dispute rather than have peace? Why is there strife, conflict, and trouble? Why is peace so difficult?

Why We Lack Peace

What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you? You desire and do not have, so you murder. You covet and cannot obtain, so you fight and quarrel. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions. (James 4:1-3 ESV) This is God's explanation for why we do not have peace and do not live our lives as peacemakers. We fight, quarrel, and divide because we are listening to the desires of our heart rather than the desires of God. There are things that we are desiring in our hearts that are causing the conflicts. When you think about what these desires are that cause the hatred, malice, arguing, bitterness, divisions, and strife, how often these desires are foolish, insignificant desires!

We have strife because someone did not respect us. We are bitter because someone said some mean words. We are hateful because someone hurt our feelings. We separate ourselves from others because someone was unthoughtful, uncaring, or something else like this. I hope that you will see that the cause of our fractures and divisions is selfishness. We are thinking about ourselves. These are the desires that James is talking about. I am thinking about myself and I do not like what you did to me or said to me, so now we are going to have a problem. This is not being a peacemaker. This is being a troublemaker. We have plenty of troublemakers. Being a troublemaker is easy. Just think about yourself.

Listen to how James says this in verse 1: "What causes quarrels and what causes fights among you? Is it not this, that your passions are at war within you?" You have desires warring with your other desires within yourself. This is why Jesus said in the last declaration of blessing, "Blessed are the pure in heart." When we are double-minded we are going to have fights and strife with others. We are divided within ourselves. Jesus is calling for us not to be a troublemaker, but a peacemaker. Jesus is calling for every person to step into a conflict and help make resolutions and peace. Notice that we are not supposed to take sides. Oh, how often that happens! People take sides lining up with their families or with their long time friends. Divisions and strife happen because no one will turn to their own family member or own friend and tell them that they were wrong. We just circle the wagons and defend our own rather than trying to create reconciliation and peace.

We have been called to make peace. Who cares who started it? How is it going to end? We are supposed to be doing good in the face of evil (Romans 12:17-21)! So it does not matter if I am right and you did some sort of evil against me. We are to make the way for peace. This is why Jesus said that if your brother or sister sins against you, you go and tell him, between you and him alone (Matthew 18:15). You do not bring in your friends or your family or the church. You and that person alone. You do not wait for them to come to you. You do not try to be a troublemaker. You are to be a peacemaker and you do that by going to that person.

Becoming Peacemakers

The scriptures give us good reasons to be peacemakers. We are called to be peacemakers because God first made peace with us. We want to make peace with others because God made peace with us. This is what drives our hearts to be peacemakers. God could have immediately destroyed us for our sins. God could immediately judge us for our wrongdoing. But God determined to reconcile us to himself by making peace through the sacrifice of Jesus. For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things,

whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross. (Colossians 1:19-20 ESV)

Looking at the peace we enjoy because we have been justified by faith (Romans 5:1) causes us to seek to bring peace to all the relationships that we have. Listen to how Paul spoke to the other churches regarding this truth: So then let us pursue what makes for peace and for mutual upbuilding. (Romans 14:19 ESV)

Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. (2 Corinthians 13:11 ESV)

Further, listen to the consequences for us not being peacemakers, especially in regards to one another as the family of Christ. Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple. (1 Corinthians 3:16-17 ESV)

We bring judgment on ourselves if we are destroying the body of Christ by our selfish desires and intentions. The wisdom that comes from above is peace loving (James 3:17-18), not troublemaking. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:17-18 ESV)

They Shall Be Called Sons of God

The result of stepping into the fray and being makers of peace is amazing and truly satisfying. Jesus says that they will be called sons of God. This is one place where it is important to not translate this as gender inclusive "children of God" because being a son had a particular meaning in the Jewish world. To say that you were the son of someone was used to connect a person with a particular attribute. We still even use this kind of idiomatic language today when we say, "He is his father's son." What do we mean but that you have adopted the very character of your father. This is why Jesus said that Jews were not sons of Abraham but sons of the devil (cf. John 8:44). They were not acting like their father Abraham. This is exactly what it means Christian men and women to be called "sons of God." We are adopting the character of God because God's character is one of reconciliation. God ended hostility between ourselves and him and between the Jews and the Gentiles through Jesus. Jesus did not come to the earth and make things worse. Jesus brought peace. Therefore, being a peacemaker shows you are in the kingdom of Christ and are displaying the very characteristics of God. In all circumstances and difficulties let us be peacemakers. Let us not just try to keep peace but help to create peace in the relationships we are involved in and in the relationships of others. Do not sit back and say that it is not your problem. Peacemakers try to facilitate peace. Apply spiritual wisdom, not selfish desires and ambitions, to create the peace that God desires us to create so that we may be called sons of God.

Matthew 5:10-12

Matthew 5:10-12 Matthew 5:10-12, Blessed Are The Persecuted

We have been studying the beatitudes that are found at the introduction to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. We have observed that these blessing statements are counter cultural and not natural to human thinking. But Matthew 5:10-12 may be the most counterintuitive and countercultural statement Jesus makes in the beatitudes.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:10-12 ESV)

Even more interesting is that Jesus says it twice. Both of the "blessed" statements say you are blessed when you are persecuted. It is so hard to believe that Jesus had to say it twice so that we would not dismiss the declaration. We need to hear it twice so we do not deny its truth.

Notice the basis for the persecution. Those who belong to the kingdom of heaven will be persecuted for righteousness' sake. People will utter all kinds of evil against you on Jesus' account. Notice that persecution is not only torture or physical opposition, but insults and malice. Jesus teaches the need to expect suffering for right living and for godly teaching. Our natural inclination is to flee persecution by closing our mouth and forfeiting right living. But we must listen to Jesus. We are not doing something wrong when people speak evil against us because of the name of Jesus. We are not doing something wrong when we are persecuted for living a righteous, godly life. We will be tempted to change the way we live and speak because we think that the world's resistance to our lives means we need to make the change. We do not need to make the change. We are the light in the world. Light and darkness cannot mix. The scriptures are filled with declarations that the world is going to resist us and cause us harm for the sake of Jesus.

Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evil people and impostors will go on from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. (2 Timothy 3:12-13 ESV)

If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. (1 Peter 4:14-16 ESV) Not only should persecution be expected because we are trying to live a righteous life, but Jesus warns us to consider if we have no trouble at all. In Luke's account, often called the Sermon on the Plain, listen to what Jesus said:

Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets. (Luke 6:26 ESV)

Remember that these beatitudes are describing those who belong to the kingdom. Those who belong to the kingdom endure persecution and continue to live righteously. Jesus told a parable

about a sower sowing seed on different soils. Listen to the result from the seed sown on rocky ground. As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away. (Matthew 13:20-21 ESV) The point is that there are going to be all kinds of people who look like they have received the word of God, even receiving the word with joy. They will remain with the Lord for a time but when difficulties or persecution arises because of Jesus' word, these will immediately fall away. Suffering and persecution of the cause of Christ reveals the true motives of our hearts. God allows these tribulations for his name to occur so that we can be proven faithful to him (cf. Daniel 7). We see this in all kinds of areas in our lives. Marriage is always a useful analogy, especially because our relationship with Jesus is often pictured as a marriage in the New Testament. Marriage can be very easy during the honeymoon. The commitment is easy. But when our covenant vow to remain together "for better" turns into "for worse," then the commitment to the marriage is truly revealed. The same is true with our commitment to each other in the church. We must remain together not only for the better but also during the worse. God's true followers remain with him during resistance and suffering for his name. Our love for God is so great that we are faithful to him even when oppressed. We will follow Jesus without reservation such that we will suffer for him. We must seek God's will in spite of what others want. This is ultimately what our decision comes down to. The approval of God is greater than our desire for the approval of others. Otherwise we will not endure when others revile us, persecute us, and utter all kinds of evil against us for Jesus' name (Matthew 5:11).

Rejoice and Be Glad

But more than this, I want you to see that this is not just a simple statement of blessing upon those who will suffer for his name. There is a command given to us. There is encouragement given to us. Listen to it in verse 12: "Rejoice and be glad." Has that caught your eye before? When you are persecuted for righteousness' sake, rejoice and be glad. When people revile you because of Jesus, rejoice and be glad. When people persecute you, rejoice and be glad. When people utter all kinds of evil against you for Jesus, rejoice and be glad. We see the apostles practicing this. And when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. (Acts 5:40-41 ESV)

There are two reasons given as the basis for the ability to rejoice and be glad when you are reviled and persecuted. First, Jesus says to rejoice and be glad "for your reward is great in heaven." This is the sufficient reason for gladness in persecution. You are laying up for yourselves treasures in heaven when you are willing to be ridiculed for your faith and righteous living. You are making the right choice! When you decide to not deny Christ but openly admit your faith in him and live in such a way that confirms that faith to the world, your reward in heaven is great. This is the great reward. Here is our hope in the future. Notice that good living conditions today is not our hope to remain faithful to God in difficulties. Our hope is not that things will be better tomorrow. Our hope is not that we will not be killed for his name. Our hope is not that our suffering will be light or quick. Our hope is that the reward in heaven is great. This is all that matters! Disciples are willing to follow Jesus faithfully and boldly affirm his identity despite the cost to ourselves because of the promise of a great reward in heaven. This is the strength that God gives us to stand. This is why we will

withstand persecution faithfully.

There is a second basis for rejoicing and being glad when we are reviled and persecuted is that they persecuted the prophets also. You are experiencing what other godly people have suffered. To say this another way, join the club. What you are experiencing is not unique. You are not going through something that no other Christian has ever gone through. We sometimes think in these terms that we are the only ones who have to make such a sacrifice. Sometimes it will look like this in the present. We think that we are the only ones suffering for righteousness' sake and it does not look like anyone else is. But this is not a competition. Remember what happened at the end of John's gospel. Jesus is telling Peter that he is going to give up his life early for Jesus. "But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will dress and carry you where you do not want to go. This he said to show by what kind of death he was to glorify God." (John 21:18-19). Peter asks about the disciple whom Jesus loved, "Lord, what about this man?" (John 21:21). Remember what Jesus said. "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!" (John 21:22). It does not matter if no one else is sacrificing their lives for Jesus. What is that to you? You follow Jesus. You know what you are called to do. You are joining the club with the apostles and prophets who gave their lives completely for Jesus, even to the death.

It is a privilege to suffer for Jesus. We must change our thinking so that we understand this and act in this way. Remember what the Lord has taught us. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. (Php_1:29-30 ESV) The saying is trustworthy, for: If we have died with him, we will also live with him; if we endure, we will also reign with him. (2 Timothy 2:11-12 ESV)

Seek the Lord and love Jesus even when the conditions are not favorable to do so. Follow Jesus without reservation, willing to suffer for him. This can only happen by denying ourselves and loving Jesus. Keep your eyes on the future. Your reward is great in heaven and others have suffered just like you. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10 ESV)

Outline: Matthew 5:3-12 I

Outline: Matthew 5:3-12 I "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Beatitudes - I (Matthew 5:3-12)

INTRODUCTION

1. As we begin to take a closer look at "The Sermon On The Mount," we notice first that section known as "The Beatitudes" - Matthew 5:3-12
 - a. The word "beatitude" means "supreme blessedness or happiness"
 - b. We find Jesus discussing the blessedness of those who possess certain qualities
 2. It is as though Jesus was answering two questions people might have been asking:
 - a. Who will be the citizens of "the kingdom of heaven"?
 - b. What benefits do they receive?
 3. My treatment of this passage will be somewhat different than normal
 - a. Most examine each beatitude in detail before going on to the next
 - b. But I will look at the entire section in an overall fashion twice
 - 1) Looking at it from two different perspectives
 - 2) Taking two lessons to do so
 4. In this lesson, let's consider "The Beatitudes" from the viewpoint of the question:

"Who will be the citizens of the kingdom?"

[In other words, what is the character required of the citizens of the kingdom?]
- I. THEIR CHARACTER INVOLVES INTER-RELATED QUALITIES
- A. THEY WILL POSSESS ALL OF THESE GRACES...
1. Only those who have all of the qualities described will truly be citizens of the kingdom
 2. For it should be evident that some may be...
 - a. "Poor in spirit," but do not "hunger and thirst after righteousness"

- b. "Mournful," but are not "pure in heart"
- c. "Meek," but are not "peacemakers"
- d. "Persecuted," but not "for righteousness' sake"

B. THESE GRACES ARE INTER-RELATED...

1. It takes all of these qualities, working in conjunction with one another
2. In this the passage is similar to 2 Peter 1:5-11
 - a. Where various qualities are also listed
 - b. Where each are needed in conjunction to one another ("add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge...")
3. Only then can one have "an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom"

[How the qualities are inter-related becomes apparent as we consider that...] II. THEIR CHARACTER INCLUDES EIGHT QUALITIES

A. THEY ARE "POOR IN SPIRIT"...

1. "To be poor in spirit is to have a humble opinion of ourselves; to be sensible that we are sinners, and have no righteousness of our own; to be willing to be saved only by the rich grace and mercy of God" (Barnes)
2. I.e., convicted of one's own spiritual poverty
 - a. Exemplified by the tax collector in Luke 18:13
 - b. Such people God will accept into His good favor - Isaiah 57 : 15; 66:1-2
3. The opposite of "poor in spirit" would be "proud of heart," and those who are such are more like:
 - a. The Pharisee in Luke 18:9-14
 - b. The Laodiceans in Revelation 3:17-19

B. THEY "MOURN"...

1. But do so in a specific sense: over one's own spiritual

poverty, one's sinfulness

2. Like David did after his adultery with Bathsheba - Psalms 51:3-4

3. Note the relationship between these first two characteristics

a. Unless one is first "poor in spirit"

b. They will not "mourn" over their spiritual poverty

C. THEY ARE "MEEK"...

1. This means gentle, easy to be entreated

a. They would rather suffer injury than inflict it

b. Not out of weakness, but out of humility, realizing one's own poverty of spirit, one's own sinfulness

2. A good example of meekness is Moses

a. He was certainly not a weak or timid man - Exodus 32:19-20; 30-34

b. But when personally attacked, he was very humble - Num 12:1-3

D. THEY "HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS"...

1. They look for the righteousness which will meet:

a. Their spiritual poverty

b. Their mourning over the same

2. To "hunger and thirst" suggests not a half-hearted search, but one exemplified by:

a. David in Psalms 42:1-2; Psalms 119:12-14

b. Paul in Php_3:7-15 a

E. THEY ARE "MERCIFUL"...

1. Loving towards those in misery (e.g., the "Good Samaritan")

2. Possessing a forgiving spirit toward those who sin against them (Hendricksen)

a. As Jesus had toward those crucifying Him - Luke 23:34

b. As Stephen had toward those stoning him - Acts 7:60

3. Jesus stressed this characteristic on several occasions...
 - a. Later in this sermon, in teaching on prayer - Matthew 6:14-15
 - b. In His parable of "The Unforgiving Servant" - Matthew 18:21-35
4. This virtue grows "out of our personal experience of the mercy of God." (Lenski)

F. THEY ARE "PURE IN HEART"...

1. Defined as "singleness of heart, the honesty which has no hidden motive, no selfish interest, and is true and open in all things." (Lenski)
2. Refers to one who is sincere, honest, without hypocrisy
3. That such a quality is necessary to see God, see Psalms 24:3-4

G. THEY ARE "PEACEMAKERS"...

1. They devote their lives to making peace by following the Prince of Peace
 - a. Making effort to be at peace with all men - Romans 12:18-21
 - b. Helping others to be at peace with God by proclaiming the gospel of peace - cf. Romans 5:1; Ephesians 6:15
2. "At peace with God and thus themselves filled with sweet peace, they live in peace, if possible, with all men and work to keep and to make peace where peace is threatened or lost. Theirs is the work of true Christians who follow in the footsteps of the Prince of Peace." (Lenski)

H. THEY ARE "PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS' SAKE"...

1. "The tense and voice of the verb (passive perfect) may be regarded as permissive:
 - a. "Who have allowed themselves to be persecuted, or have endured persecution"
 - b. "The idea is that they did not flee from it but willingly submitted to when it came to them." (LENSKI)

2. In what way, is explained in verse 11, and includes being:

a. Reviled or reproached

b. Persecuted

c. Slandered falsely

-- All for Jesus' sake

3. That such persecution would often afflict those who are

citizens of the kingdom, see Acts 14:21-22; Php_1:29-30; 2 Timothy 3:12

CONCLUSION

1. Such are the characteristics of those who will be citizens of the kingdom of heaven:

a. They are poor in spirit (realizing their sinfulness)

b. Thus they mourn (for their sins)

c. Thus they are meek (gentle toward God and others)

d. Thus they hunger and thirst for righteousness (which they desperately need)

e. Thus they are merciful (for they know they need mercy)

f. Thus they are pure in heart (seeking to please God with singleness of heart)

g. Thus they are peacemakers (making peace with others, having found peace with God)

h. Thus they are persecuted for the kingdom of heaven (misunderstood by the proud and arrogant who are still in their sins)

-- Eight graces, all inter-related and working together to produce the right kind of character

2. Such is the character of the citizens of the kingdom of heaven...

a. Involving eight graces, all inter-related

b. Working together to produce the right kind of character

3. Is the kingdom of heaven worth whatever effort might be involved in developing this kind of character?

a. We shall see the answer to this question in our next study.

b. As we view "The Beatitudes" from the viewpoint of another question:

"What benefits do the citizens of the kingdom receive?" But if you are poor in spirit, mourning for your sins, hungering for

the righteousness that God provides only in Christ, what are you waiting for? As Ananias told Saul of Tarsus:

"And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord." (Acts 22:16)

Outline: Matthew 5:3-12 II

Outline: Matthew 5:3-12 II "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Beatitudes - II (Matthew 5:3-12)

INTRODUCTION

1. At the beginning of "The Sermon On The Mount," we find that section of Scripture commonly referred to as "The Beatitudes" - Matthew 3:3-12

- a. The word "beatitude" means "supreme blessedness or happiness"
- b. We find Jesus discussing the blessedness of those who possess certain qualities

2. As suggested in the previously lesson, it is as though Jesus was answering two questions people might have been asking:

- a. Who will be the citizens of "the kingdom of heaven"?
- b. What benefits do they receive?

3. In our previous study, we looked at the "The Beatitudes" from the viewpoint of the question: "Who will be the citizens of the kingdom?"

- a. We saw that their character would involve eight inter-related qualities
- b. We saw that they would be poor in spirit, mourning for their sins, meek, hungering for righteousness, merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and willing to suffer persecution

4. In this study, we shall look at "The Beatitudes" from the viewpoint of the question: "What benefits do they receive?"

- a. Is the kingdom of heaven worth the effort to develop such qualities of character?
- b. Is the kingdom of heaven worth whatever persecution we might endure?

[I believe the answer is a resounding "Yes!" This becomes apparent as

we take time to consider the blessedness of the citizens of the kingdom...] I. THEIR BENEFITS SUMMARIZED IN ONE WORD

A. THAT WORD IS "BLESSED"...

1. It is the first word of the sermon
 - a. Just as it is the first word of the Psalms - Psalms 1:1
 - b. Just as it is found in the beginning words of Revelation - Revelation 1:3
2. It is used nine times in nine verses (which is why this section is called "The Beatitudes")

B. THIS WORD INVOLVES GREAT JOY AND GLADNESS...

1. It can literally mean, "how very happy!" is the one described
2. We can also infer this from Matthew 5:12
 - a. "Rejoice and be exceedingly glad..."
 - b. Or as found in Luke: "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy!" - Luke 6:23

[The benefit of being in the kingdom of heaven is the condition of blessedness, a state of true happiness! To understand why, let's now look at...] II. THEIR BENEFITS ARE BOTH PRESENT AND FUTURE

A. "THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"...

1. As defined in a previous lesson (cf. Matthew 4:17), those who receive the kingdom...
 - a. Are under the kingly rule of God
 - b. Are in a spiritual kingdom
 - 1) Which today involves being in the "church," the present manifestation of the "kingdom of heaven" - Matthew 16:18; Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9
 - 2) Which will involve the "new heavens and new earth" in the kingdom's future and eternal manifestation - Matthew 25 : 34; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 2 Peter 3:13; Revelation 21-22

2. Note that the first (Matthew 5:3) and last (5:10) beatitudes include this expression...

a. Which I take to imply that the blessings in between

likewise apply to those in the kingdom

b. Just as the kingdom is both present and future, we shall observe that the blessings described involve both present and future

B. "THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED"...

1. This is in reference to those who mourn over their sins and spiritual poverty

2. They are comforted even now - 2 Corinthians 1:3-5

3. They shall be comforted in the future - Revelation 21:1-4

C. "THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH"...

1. In one sense, they inherit it now

a. As a result of putting the kingdom of God first - Matthew 6:33;
Mark 10:29-30

b. Though they may have less than some who are wicked, God enables them to enjoy it more! - Ecclesiastes 5:19 to Ecclesiastes 6:2

c. This explanation seems to be consistent with the context of Psalms 37, from which the phrase was taken - Psalms 37:1-11, 16-29

2. But in another sense, there yet remains a promise concerning a "new earth" for those in the kingdom now - 2 Peter 3:10-13

D. "THEY SHALL BE FILLED"...

1. That is, with the righteousness which we so desperately need, found only in Christ - Php_3:8-9

2. Received presently, through the precious blood of Christ - Romans 5:9

3. Received in fullness when adorned in the white linen of

righteousness in preparation for the marriage of the Lamb

- Revelation 19:5-9

E. "THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY"...

1. Those in the kingdom enjoy the forgiveness of sins now through the blood of Jesus - Revelation 1:5-6

2. They shall also be shown mercy in the future by escaping the righteous wrath of God in the Day of Judgment - Romans 5:9

F. "THEY SHALL SEE GOD"...

1. Presently, citizens of the kingdom can see God through their Lord Jesus Christ - John 14:6-7

2. But in the future, we shall see him face to face - Revelation 21:3; 22:3-4

G. "THEY SHALL BE CALLED SONS OF GOD"...

1. Even now we are called the sons of God - 1 John 3:1-2

2. How much more so, in the future! - Revelation 21:5-7

CONCLUSION

1. Perhaps we can better understand why those in "the kingdom of heaven" are truly called "Blessed", for while...

a. Poor in spirit, theirs is the kingdom of heaven!

b. Mourning for their sins, they shall be comforted!

c. Meek in their relation to God and man, they shall inherit the earth!

d. Hungering and thirsting for righteousness, they shall be filled!

e. Merciful to others, they shall obtain mercy!

f. Pure in heart, they shall see God!

g. Makers of peace, they shall be called sons of God!

h. Persecuted for righteousness' sake, theirs is the kingdom of heaven!

2. Certainly the benefits of the kingdom outweigh anything this world

has to offer, or any persecution it might inflict!

a. For there are blessings now "in this life"

b. And there are blessings "in the age to come" - Mark 10:28-30

3. But the "blessedness" of the citizens is only for those who have the

"characteristics" of the citizens in ever-increasing measure...

a. Do we have the qualities described in "The Beatitudes"?

b. If not, do not the blessings described in "The Beatitudes"

encourage us to develop such qualities? May this sermon of Jesus motivate us to examine our attitudes, to see

if there is not room for improvement in our relationships with both God

and our fellow man!

Matthew 5:13

Matthew 5:13 Matthew 5:13, Salt of the Earth

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. (Matthew 5:13 ESV)

What does Jesus mean when he tells his disciples that they are the salt of the earth? Much has been done with this text as people try to explain what it means that we are the salt of the earth. If you pick up any number of books you will find two things that most of them will tell you. Salt was used in a number of different ways in ancient times. Therefore scholars are vexed as to what attribute of salt to consider that Jesus is emphasizing. One of the primary points that is made is that salt was used as a preservative. They did not have refrigerators back then. So salt was an important ingredient in the life of those in ancient times so that they could preserve their meats. Further, salt was added to sacrifices to indicate the strength of the covenant. Salt also flavored the foods they ate. Many of the writers will then tell us one of two things. Either, we must not narrow down the meaning to one possibility and incorporate all of the different uses for salt in the ancient world or that the most valuable use for salt then was a preservative and this is the intended meaning.

Many lessons have been given with this cultural contextualization of salt as a preservative. Therefore, since we are to be the salt of the earth, we are to keep the world from corruption. Our job in this world is to prevent the decay of the world. Please think about this for a moment. How are we supposed to stop the corruption of the world? The world is already corrupt. The world is not righteous. The world is not good. The world is not moral. It is not like the world is decaying and we are trying to slow that process down. The world is sinful and utterly lost. It has decayed. It is corrupted. You cannot stop the reality of what has already happened. Think about the number of scriptures that make the point that the world is already dark, already lost, dead in its sins, and deserving the wrath of God. The idea that we are preserving the world from corruption gives the notion that the world is not bad. But it already is. To further confirm that this is not what Jesus means, please consider that the scriptures, for all of its uses of salt, never describes salt as a preservative. We know people used salt this way but when the scriptures speak of salt, preservation or retarding corruption is never the use. So what does Jesus mean? We would do well and go far if we would simply read what Jesus said and applied salt the way he said. Listen again to what Jesus said.

You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. (Matthew 5:13 ESV)

What function of salt does Jesus intend? What function of salt is Jesus talking about? "But if the salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?" Some translations read, "If the salt has

lost its flavor.” What is the point of salt that Jesus is talking about? He is talking about flavor and taste. He is not talking about covenants. He is not talking about preservatives. He is not talking about purification. He is talking about seasoning, just like how we use salt for cooking to flavor the food. Every cooking show I ever see is the need to put salt in with the ingredients. The same was true for the ancients. The bland food was made to taste better when salt was added to the cooking procedure. We must read what Jesus said about salt and apply the message the way he applied it, not coming up with our own “genius” ideas. So let us consider what Jesus was teaching.

Identity

The first point Jesus makes is about our identity. Notice that Jesus says you are salt. He does not say that you have salt. Jesus is telling you what you are. This is your characteristic. This is your identity. This is in keeping with the Beatitudes that introduced this sermon. Jesus is describing who you are. Jesus is describing the identity of those who belong to him and are in his kingdom.

Jesus’ disciples have an effect of people around them. This is the simple idea of salt. We will have an effect on the earth. I want us to think about what that looks like. What does it look like to salt the earth? Please consider that Jesus does not describe us as weapons on the earth. What I mean by this is that the way we affect the world is not in an aggressive, angry, caustic kind of way. The world around us is continuing to shift and continuing to decay as it walks further and further away from the principles of God. So how will we handle this? Jesus says we are the salt. So we cannot ignore what is happening. We cannot keep the salt to ourselves. But as salt we are not to be explosive either. We have to be careful that we are not simply reactionary so that we are not salt to those around us. The way Paul uses the idea of our saltiness may help us see the idea the New Testament has about us being the salt of the earth. “Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.” (Colossians 4:6 ESV) Notice that the idea is graciousness. Seasoning your speech with salt means that you have added graciousness to the words you have said. In the same way, we need to consider the concept of being the salt of the earth in terms of how are we speaking and showing grace to the situation. We need to affect people in a way that they will listen to what we have to say. So the way we talk about the election, Target, North Carolina, PayPal, Supreme Court decisions, and the like must all show that we are the salt of the earth with our identity tied to Jesus. Are we salt on Facebook and Twitter?

What Jesus is telling us is that we are putting the characteristics of the Beatitudes into practice. The Beatitudes describe us as people who are meek, merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers. We are added a different dimensions to relationships. We are showing something different to the world. The world is angry. The world is explosive. The world is destructive to others. The world is hateful. The world has malice. We are to be salt in this world. We are going to speak and act in a way that helps the situation so that God is glorified. This is who you are. We are practicing the characteristics of Jesus. We look different and we speak different. We react different. We handle life different. We understand the world differently. We deal with people differently.

Losing Saltiness

Notice that the rest of the verse is a warning. If salt has lost its taste, it is good for nothing. Jesus is concerned that you will lose your identity. Jesus warns us that followers can lose their ability to be

the agents of transformation when our lives are not pure, righteous, and different from the world. By losing our taste we are losing our effectiveness and thus become worthless. When those who claim to be disciples fail to be pure, hungering for Jesus, being poor in spirit, showing meekness, and being peacemakers, then our ability to change the world is damaged and cannot be restored. Disciples are supposed to have the ability to transform lives by practicing the gospel of Jesus. A lack of a virtuous life negates the gospel. We are to affect others, not be like others. The conduct of Jesus' disciples needs to be considered in its effect on the world. Jesus demands that we must not be like the world but affect the world. But affect the world in a way that God is glorified, not damaged.

Salt of the earth shows that we are not allowed to turn inward and only live our Christianity to ourselves. We must affect the world. We must be in contact with the world in a way that will season them in godliness. Our words will be gracious. Our actions will be merciful. Our hearts will be pure. Our minds will be focused on Jesus. Our attitude will be poor in spirit. The consequence is certainly frightening. Jesus says that we no longer have a purpose with God. We must see ourselves as instruments of God's righteousness. The apostle Paul said this: Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness. (Romans 6:13 ESV)

Every member of our body is presented before God for his use. But if we have lost our saltiness, then we are no longer able to be used by our God. We want to be tools that God uses. We want to be his hands and feet. We want to be his tongue. Think about how Peter pictured this very idea for us.

Whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen. (1 Peter 4:11 ESV) This is what it means for us to be given the calling of being the salt of the earth.

Transformation

So we must ask ourselves if we are still salty. Have we lost our taste? Have we lost our saltiness? We are transforming lives by pointing them to Jesus. We are changing relationships by the way we speak. The picture is very simple. Salt makes food better. What is the point of salt if it is not doing that? We are not make the earth better. We are not make things better, not worse. Do not forget who you are! You are to be demonstrating Jesus to the world. Who do you influence? How do you influence? Where do you influence? So let's think about how we talk to people at work. Let us think about how we post on Facebook or Twitter. Are we speaking in ways that discredit the gospel? Are we behaving worldly and not in a way that shows the glory of the gospel. We must embrace our identity and live according to who Jesus has made us. You are the salt of the earth.

Outline: Matthew 5:13-16

Outline: Matthew 5:13-16 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Influence Of The Kingdom (Matthew 5:13-16)

INTRODUCTION

1. In "The Beatitudes" (Matthew 5:3-12), we saw...
 - a. The character of those who would be citizens of the kingdom
 - b. The blessedness of the citizens described
2. In the final beatitude, Jesus implied the attitude the world would often display towards the citizens of the kingdom - Matthew 5:10-12
 - a. The world would revile and persecute those in the kingdom
 - b. The world would say all kinds of evil against them falsely for His sake
 - c. The world would persecute them just as it persecuted the prophets before them-- Thus the influence of the world upon the kingdom would often be one of persecution
3. Jesus then proceeded to describe the opposite...
 - a. The influence of the kingdom upon the world
 - b. The impact the kingdom was designed to have upon those in the world [He uses two metaphors in doing so. The first, in Matthew 5:13, involves the figure of salt...] I. "YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH"
 - A. SALT HAS SEVERAL CHARACTERISTICS...
 1. It is white, enhances flavor, preserves, etc.
 2. Based on the context, it is probably salt's ability to enhance flavor to which Jesus refers in his illustration
 - a. Notice: "...but if the salt loses its flavor..."
 - b. Salt has the ability to give flavor to that which is

otherwise bland

c. Job mentioned this ability in Job 6:6

B. THROUGH THE METAPHOR OF "SALT"...

1. Jesus depicts the relationship of the citizens of the kingdom to the world as one of:

a. Making the world palatable (bearable) to God, and possibly to others as well

b. Perhaps making it possible for God to continue to bear with this world and its "distasteful" wickedness

2. The idea that the "righteous few" can make it easier for God to forbear the many wicked is illustrated:

a. In Abraham's conversation with God over Sodom - Genesis 18 : 20-32

b. In God's dealing with Jerusalem - Jeremiah 5:1

-- So from God's point of view, the citizens of the kingdom give the world what good "flavor" it has!

C. JESUS WARNS AGAINST LOSING OUR FLAVORING ABILITY!

1. With pure salt...

a. It actually never loses its flavor

b. But when mixed with impurities salt can lose its ability to enhance flavor

2. We too might lose our ability to be a "flavoring agent" for the world...

a. By allowing "impurities" into our lives - 1 Corinthians 15:33

b. Therefore, we need to keep ourselves from sin - Ephesians 5:3-7

D. IF WE LOSE OUR "FLAVOR"...

1. How are we going to be "seasoned"? (impurities prevent us from being useful)

2. We will be thrown out!

- a. Is Jesus teaching the possibility of losing our salvation?
- b. He certainly does elsewhere! - Matthew 13:40-43; Revelation 3:15-16

[First of all, then, we are told of the relationship of the kingdom to

the world FROM GOD'S POINT OF VIEW: "You are the salt of the earth." In Matthew 5:14-16, we find Jesus teaching concerning those in the kingdom

as to their PRIMARY FUNCTION in the world...] II. "YOU ARE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"

A. USED BY GOD TO TRANSMIT HIS GLORY TO THE WORLD...

- 1. They are "lights" in a dark world - Php_2:14-15
- 2. Their purpose: to proclaim the praises of God! - 1 Peter 2:9; Ephesians 5:8 b-9

B. THEY ARE NOT A "LIGHT" IN AND OF THEMSELVES...

- 1. Only in the Lord - Ephesians 5:8 a
- 2. Christ is the "true" or "original" light - John 8:12
- 3. Citizens of the kingdom are simply "luminaries" reflecting The One True Light, just as the moon reflects the sun - 2 Corinthians 4:6

C. THEIR TWOFOLD RESPONSIBILITY AS "THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD"...

- 1. They must be visible
 - a. Implied by Jesus in His use of a "city" and a "lampstand" as metaphors
 - b. Jesus therefore expects His followers to be seen by the world - e.g., John 13:35; John 17:21
- 2. They must radiate (give light)
 - a. This principle conveyed by the idea of the lamp
 - 1) Designed to shine on a lampstand
 - 2) Not put under a basket
 - b. This principle explicitly stated in "let your light SO SHINE before men"
 - The purpose of such visible radiation: so men may glorify the Father in heaven - e.g., 1 Peter 2:11-12; 2 Corinthians 9:12-13

CONCLUSION

1. The influence and impact that the citizens of the kingdom are to have on the world can be simply stated...

a. "You are the salt of the earth"

b. "You are the light of the world"

2. Why make the effort to be salt and light? Because of He who is described as "your Father who is in heaven"!

a. An expression which should remind us that God is both:

1) Tender (He is our "Father"; a term of tenderness)

2) Majestic (He is "in heaven")

b. Such a Majestic Being, willing to be our Father, makes Him:

1) Worthy to be pleased!

2) And worthy to be praised!

3. We who claim to be the children of God, citizens of the kingdom, are we:

a. Pleasing to our Father (by being "the salt of the earth")?

b. Praising Him (by being "the light of the world")?

If not, then may the prayer of David in Psalms 51:10-15 become our own:

Create in me a clean heart, O God,

And renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence,

And do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.

Restore to me the joy of Your salvation,

And uphold me by Your generous Spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors Your ways,

And sinners shall be converted to You.

Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed,

O God, The God of my salvation,

And my tongue shall sing aloud of Your righteousness.

O Lord, open my lips, And my mouth shall show forth Your praise.

Matthew 5:14-16

Matthew 5:14-16 Matthew 5:14-16, Light of the World

After giving the Beatitudes which describe who the people are who are blessed and belong in Christ's kingdom, Jesus continues to describe who his people are. There is an identity that Christ's people understand that they possess. First, Jesus said that we are the salt of the earth. It is not that we have salt but that we are salt. We are to influence people for Jesus. We asked who do we influence, where do we influence, and how do we influence. Jesus' concern was that we would lose our saltiness. We are to influence in a way that brings grace to the person and to the situation. We must consider our words and actions to determine if we are bringing graciousness that glorifies Jesus. Jesus gives us another picture of our identity in Matthew 5:14-16.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 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. (Matthew 5:14-16 ESV)

You Are the Light of the World

The second picture of the identity that Jesus' followers possess is that they are the light of the world. Now what is the aspect of light that Jesus focuses upon for our identity? Consider the two illustrations that he gives in verses 14-15. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. People do not light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand. The point is that the light gives light to all in the house.

We must not be hidden. A disciple is supposed to be as obvious as a city set on a hill. True disciples are not hidden. Consider the picture. God did not make you light so that you would be hidden under a basket. Light must shine. No one turns on the light switch in a room and then puts aluminum foil over the light. What does it mean that we are called the light of the world? What does light represent? Now First, consider that Jesus called himself the light of the world in John 8:12.

Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12 ESV)

Notice that the concept of light is being able to have life. The concept in the scriptures is always that God is the light and his word provides direction and guidance for our lives in the darkness. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalms 119:105 ESV)

What we see in Jesus calling himself the light of the world and David declaring that God's word is a lamp and a light tells us that light is supposed to shine in the darkness so that people can see the way to live their lives. The light is to shine so that they can have direction because the world is full of darkness (cf. John 1:4-9. Light shows the way. Light illuminates the path. Light provides the direction needed. Keep this idea in mind as we think about being the light of the world. We are to

show the way. We are to give direction to the world. We are to illuminate the path. The Gospel of John points out in its prologue that the world has been full of darkness waiting for the coming of the light. The Gospel of Matthew sets up the Sermon on the Mount by teaching that the people were dwelling in darkness but now have seen a great light. And leaving Nazareth he went and lived in Capernaum by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali, so that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned." From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 4:13-17 ESV) So how amazing is it to consider that the shining of this great light into the world as seen in Jesus is now described by Jesus as the identity of his disciples (cf. Isaiah 9:1-2; Isaiah 51:4; Isaiah 60:3)! In fact, the next paragraph in Matthew 4 is Jesus choosing his disciples. Jesus is the light and we are to take up that role for ourselves and shine as lights into the world of darkness. Just as Jesus warned that salt is useless if it is not influencing, so also light is useless if it is not shining. The light is useless if it is covered up. How sad it is when we willfully choose to hide our light!

How We Shine As Lights

So how are we supposed to shine as lights of the world since this is our identity? Matthew 5:16 tells us what this is supposed to look like. "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works...." Notice that Jesus describes our light shining as people seeing our good works. The New Testament is filled with this picture of living a righteous life that is distinct from the world as shining as light. Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. (Php_2:14-16 ESV)

Notice that shining as light means not grumbling or disputing but maintaining our innocence and blamelessness so that we are without blemish in a crooked and twisted generation. We are holding fast to the word of life as a means of shining as lights. Notice that Peter makes the same connection. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God's people; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation. (1 Peter 2:9-12 ESV)

Peter says that we are to a holy nation, called out of darkness into his marvelous light. So what does this mean? Peter says it means that we abstain from the passions of the flesh and keep our conduct honorable in the world so that they will see your good deeds and glorify God. Very similar message as Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. How are we to shine as lights in the world? We must try to have a pure life before them. We cannot live as they live and do what they do in the world. We cannot join in their worldliness as if there is nothing wrong with that. Listen to how the apostle Paul tied these two ideas together when he wrote to the Ephesians.

Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not become partners with them; for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, "Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:6-16 ESV) Do not participate in the unfruitful works of darkness but expose those works. Notice that Paul says you are light in the Lord. Therefore you are to walk as the children of light and exhibit the fruit of light, which is all things found in what is good, right, and true. So you must look carefully how you walk, being wise in your life and making the best use of your time because you are light. We do not live like the world. We do not make purchases like the world. We do not party like the world. We do not live for the weekend like the world. We will not be immoral like the world. Our worldliness and desiring to look like the world is how we put our light that God has given us under a basket. We cannot be the revelation of God to people in the world and show them the light of Christ when we are doing what they are doing, talking like they are talking, loving the world like they love the world, and behaving like they behave. As the darkness appears to grow in our culture it is all the more imperative that we shine as lights and be distinct. We will influence with graciousness in our words and actions (salt) and shine with our good deeds, pointing the way to Jesus (light).

Why We Are Light

Finally, Jesus explains why we are to be the light of the world. Matthew 5:16 teaches us that we are light "so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." We do not do good works because we are trying to make the world a better place. We do good works so that people will turn and glorify God. How will the world glorify God by our good works? I want us to recognize that this can never happen if we do not say to the person that are good works are because of Jesus. Faith does not come by seeing our good works, but faith comes by hearing the word of God (Romans 10:17). They are to see our good works and hear the gospel message so that God can be praised. Our good works are not just helping people. Our good works are to be the shining of the light to the world so that they see the way to God. We shine so that people can see God, not us. We must point to Jesus when we do good. This is what the rest of the Sermon on the Mount is going to describe: God glorifying good works. True righteousness.

Let us end by going beyond just thinking about doing good deeds for people. This declaration is far more than that. Being light means not acting like the world around us. We cannot live corrupt, worldly lives. But let us go beyond this also. Being the light of the world means that everything we do is God glorifying. Do people look at our marriage and see a God glorifying marriage? Do people look at our family and see a God glorifying family? Do people look at us at work and see a God glorifying employee? Do people look at you on vacation and see a God glorifying life? Do people look at everything we do, big and little thing, and see God glorified? That is what it means to be the light of the world. We live such radical lives that people want to know God.

Matthew 5:17-20

Matthew 5:17-20 Matthew 5:17-20, Exceeding Righteousness

It is tempting to come to Matthew 5:17-20 and consider this section of the Sermon on the Mount to be a departure from the theme thus far about describing who belongs in God's kingdom. This paragraph is not a defense of himself (though certainly the text does defend what Jesus is teaching) but teaches us about the kingdom of God. The first sixteen verses of the Sermon on the Mount (the Beatitudes, salt and light teachings) were the preamble to this discourse about the kingdom. Recall that we saw in Matthew 4:23 that Jesus was going through Galilee "proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom." The Sermon on the Mount is the contents of this gospel proclamation of the kingdom. What we are going to see is that Matthew 5:17-20 is the hub of the whole sermon. What Jesus teaches here is the critical foundational teaching of the gospel of the kingdom upon which the rest of the sermon (all the way through chapter 7) hang. Without understanding this paragraph we will be apt to misunderstand the rest of Jesus' teaching in this sermon. In this paragraph, Jesus makes two important declarations that we will look at today.

Upholding the Authority of the Scriptures (Matthew 5:17-18)

Jesus begins by upholding the authority of the scriptures. We should consider the gravity of the words in verse 17. Jesus did not come to destroy the Law and the Prophets. The phrase, "the Law and the Prophets" would be the way they would say "the Scriptures." The Law and the Prophets are the sum of the Old Testament and that was all the scriptures that existed when Jesus walked the earth. Jesus has come but the Law and the Prophets were not to be ignored and counted as irrelevant. I think we must stop and think about this for a moment because for far too long Christians have had this very attitude toward the Law and the Prophets. They will assert that all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable to make us complete for every good work. They understand that Genesis through Malachi is the revelation of God. But how often Christians have not studied the Old Testament! How often studies have remained in the New Testament as if the other 39 books were of less value. How often preaching has remained in the New Testament! Jesus is clear that he did not nullify the scriptures. Rather, Jesus fulfills the scriptures. Matthew's gospel has been showing that the shadows and prophecies of scripture are fulfilled in Christ in the first four chapters. Jesus has brought what the Old Testament was looking forward to. Consider that if Jesus came to abolish the Law and the Prophets, then we truly would only want to read the New Testament and should not carry the Old Testament as scripture. But the Old Testament was all about Jesus. Jesus brought what the Old Testament looked forward to. Therefore we read the Law and the Prophets looking at how these things point to and were fulfilled in Christ. Listen to what Jesus says as recorded at the end of Luke's gospel.

Then he said to them, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled." (Luke 24:44 ESV) So we do not ignore the Old Testament or consider it useless or irrelevant. We have an incomplete understanding of Jesus if we do not read and learn from the Old

Testament. Remember that for most of the first century these were the scriptures that those Christians had, studied, and taught others to become Christians by. Jesus fulfills what the scripture anticipated, predicted, and taught. This is the thrust of verse 18. Every tick and stroke of the Old Testament scriptures will be fulfilled. Jesus affirms that every word that was uttered would come to pass. The Law and the Prophets remained valid until its intended culmination. All prophecy in scripture must take place. Not a dot will fail in its fulfillment. We do not look at the Law and consider that they were abolished but have been realized in Christ (cf. Galatians 3:19; Galatians 3:22; Galatians 3:24). In Romans 3 the apostle Paul describes the relationship of Christ and the Law. Listen to what the apostle Paul said regarding the Law. But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. (Romans 3:21-25 ESV)

Now listen to how Paul concludes this paragraph:

Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law. (Romans 3:31 ESV).

Consider the conclusion Paul draws in Romans 10.

Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. (Romans 10:4 NIV) No one was preaching the destruction of the Law and the Prophets but their fulfillment. Galatians 3:24 tells us that the Law as given as a babysitter/guardian until Christ came. The reason the writer of Hebrews says the Old Testament was obsolete is not because the Law was destroyed but because everything in it was about Jesus and Jesus has now come. Jesus is telling us how to read the scriptures. It is all about him. As long as the present world persists, nothing from the Law would be loosened. All would be accomplished.

Greater Righteousness (Matthew 5:19-20)

This is the significance of Matthew 5:19. Since all of the Law is to be accomplished, no one is allowed to relax even one of the commandments. God's laws are not to be relaxed. True disciples do and teach all of God's commands. God's law must be observed. Anyone who tries to relax any aspect of the scriptures is least in the kingdom of heaven. Being least does not mean that you are still in the kingdom, which we see in verse 20: "You will never enter the kingdom of heaven." Being last or least means that you are excluded in the scriptures (cf. Matthew 7:21-23; Matthew 8:11-12). Now we are getting to the heart of what Jesus is doing in the Sermon on the Mount. What do we like to do with God's laws? We like to lessen God's laws so that we think we have obeyed them. By doing this we think we have some sort of righteousness before God. We lower the high requirement of God's law so that we feel good about our supposed obedience. This is exactly what the Pharisees and scribes were doing which Jesus declares in verse 20. Listen to this powerful second declaration. "Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven!" This was shocking because the Pharisees were known for their piety, devotion, and righteousness. They were the righteous. Remember what Paul said about himself as a Pharisee: "As to righteousness under the law, blameless" (Php_3:6). By looking

at the rest of Matthew 5 we can see what the Pharisees were doing. Jesus begins each paragraph with, "You have heard it was said...but I say to you." The Pharisees were relaxing the Law so that they had achieved righteousness and obedience. But Jesus says that you cannot take God's laws, lower them to a level that you think you can do, and think that are in the kingdom of heaven. Your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees' system of righteousness is inadequate to enter the kingdom. Remember that the scriptures teach that the purpose of the Law was to show sin and increase sin. Attempting obedience to God's law was to cause a person to sense their great need for God's help to attain righteousness. Rather than facing their own inadequacy before the law, they chopped down the law to their own measure. What Jesus will do in the rest of Matthew 5 is reveal how inadequate they truly are before the Law. In fact, Jesus will press this so hard that he will conclude this section with the declaration: "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). This was supposed to be the weight of the scriptures. You were supposed to look at perfect law of God, see your complete failure, and cry out to God for mercy. Those are the people who are in the kingdom of heaven. This is how the poverty of spirit, meekness, and thirst for righteousness is generated, as we read in the Beatitudes. But how easy it is for us to make the same error as the Pharisees and scribes. Do we lower the God's law? Do we define faithfulness to God as going to church on Sunday? Do we define our righteousness as being baptized? Do we lower God's high and holy standards to just being more moral and not as bad as the rest of the world? You see that we often try to make ourselves feel good by comparing our righteousness with the lost in the world or even to other Christians. The Pharisees saw themselves as blameless because they were certainly better than the Gentiles and they were far more pious and righteous than the rest of the Jewish nation. The word "Pharisee" means "the separated." They were better than everyone else. Yet Jesus teaches you need a righteousness that exceeds their righteousness if you are to enter the kingdom of heaven. This is what we will see in Matthew 5:21-48 — our complete failure before God's high and righteous demands. We have completely subverted God's requirements when we boil down being a Christian to being baptized, going to church, and being a pretty good person. Why is the Bible so big if this is all that is demanded of us? God's law was never intended for us to think that we are doing well but to show us how terrible we are doing and that we need a Savior. This is why Jesus is preaching repentance and the gospel of the kingdom. The gospel is that our righteousness can never measure up but a Savior was sent to make atonement for our complete moral failure.

Jesus goes to war on our definition of righteousness. Do not relax God's law so that you think by your activities that you are righteous in the sight of God. Your righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The demand of exceeding righteousness deflates all our moral pride and righteous arrogance so that we humbly approach God, begging for mercy because our righteous has not been and cannot be what God's law demands. Stop trying to justify yourself. Stop trying to vindicate yourself. We have no righteousness to present before that can acquit us of sin. God's law puts us in prison (Galatians 3:23) and Jesus did not come to relax any aspect of God's law. Jesus did not lessen the load or lighten the demand. Rather, Jesus fulfilled the law so that we can be set free from our enslavement to sin through faith in Jesus. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time,

so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:22-26 ESV)

We cannot think we are being successful in keeping the laws of God if we are going to appreciate Jesus and come to him. If we think we are doing good, then we will not see our need for Jesus. We must see our complete failure before God's law and turn in faith to Jesus to save us.

Outline: Matthew 5:17-19

Outline: Matthew 5:17-19 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Jesus And The Law (Matthew 5:17-19)

INTRODUCTION

1. Up to this point, Jesus has been describing the "citizens" of the kingdom...

a. Their character and blessedness - Matthew 5:3-12

b. Their influence on the world - Matthew 5:13-16

2. The next section details the "righteousness" of the kingdom...

a. The righteousness conduct Jesus would expect of His disciples

b. In contrast with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees

3. He begins by correcting any false impression some may have had about His relationship with the Law of Moses and the Prophets...

a. Had He come to destroy the Law and the Prophets?

b. Are His teachings contradictory to the Law and the Prophets?

[In Matthew 5:17-19, we find His answer to such questions. Our first

observation is that...] I. HE CAME NOT TO DESTROY, BUT TO FULFILL

A. SOME MAY HAVE THOUGHT JESUS INTENDED TO TOTALLY DISREGARD THE LAW...

1. That His coming and teaching would regard the Old Law in a negative light

2. For the expression "to destroy" means literally to "to destroy utterly, to overthrow completely" (VINE)

B. ON THE CONTRARY, HIS PURPOSE WAS TO "FULFILL" THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS...

1. For they foretold the coming of the Messiah (Christ)

a. There are approximately 330 prophecies concerning the

Christ found in the Law and the Prophets

b. For example, Deuteronomy 18:15; Deuteronomy 18:18-19; Isaiah 53:1-12

2. For they foretold the coming of the kingdom of God

a. One example is Daniel 2:44

b. Jesus proclaimed the fulfillment of that prophecy was now at hand - Mark 1:14-15

3. For they also foretold the establishment of a new and different covenant for the people of God

a. See Jeremiah 31:31-34

b. That Jesus brought in this new covenant is confirmed in Hebrews 8:6-13

C. THEREFORE, UNTIL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS WERE FULFILLED, JESUS TAUGHT THAT...

1. The Law would be as permanent as the heavens and the earth - Matthew 5:18

a. As He said in Luke 16:17, "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for one tittle of the law to fail."

b. There would be no change at all, until it was fulfilled

c. Not even a "jot" or a "tittle" (Hebrew grammatical markings, similar to the dotting of an "i" or the crossing of a "t")

2. A person's treatment of the Law (while still in force) would affect their standing in the kingdom - Matthew 5:19 How so...?

a. Remember that the kingdom has a future aspect - Matthew 7:21-23

b. Those who lived before the coming of the kingdom in its present sense (i.e., the church) could still be in the kingdom in its future sense

1) Note what is said about Abraham, Isaac, Jacob - Matthew 8:11

2) But then notice what was said about the "sons of the

kingdom," those Jews who by the Law had the right to inherit the kingdom but did not appreciate its

fulfillment in the coming of Jesus Christ! - Matthew 8:12

-- Thus, one's standing in the kingdom (in its future sense) would be affected by their treatment of whatever Law of God was in effect when they were alive!

D. AN IMPORTANT QUESTION: "DID JESUS FULFILL THE LAW?"

1. If He did not...

a. He failed His purpose in coming to this earth! - Matthew 5:17

b. We had better observe the Law in its strictest sense!

- Matthew 5:18-19 (including circumcision, and not eating unclean meats!)

2. If He did...

a. He accomplished His purpose! (notice John 17:4)

b. We should not be surprised to find a NEW Law or Covenant governing God's people today

3. Indeed, Jesus must have fulfilled the Old Law...

a. For there has been changes:

1) In the priesthood - Hebrews 7:11-14

2) In the Law itself - Hebrews 7:18-19; Hebrews 7:22

b. As the Law itself foretold, it has been replaced by a New

Law - Hebrews 8:6-13

[Though Jesus ultimately fulfilled the Law and the Prophets, at the

time He was preaching this sermon they had not been fulfilled. So,

true to His statement in verse nineteen, He taught His disciples to be

faithful to God's Law as it then stood. But what about the contrasts found in Matthew 5:21-48? Are not these to be

viewed as comparisons between the Old and New Law? Here are some

thoughts along these lines...] II. THE CONTRAST MADE BY JESUS

A. MANY UNDERSTAND JESUS WAS CONTRASTING THE "OLD" AND "NEW"...

1. I.e., comparing the "Law of Moses" with the "Law of Christ"

which would govern His kingdom

2. This in essence has Jesus teaching:

a. That the "Old Law" only condemned the outward actions

b. But that the "New Law" introduced by Jesus condemned the inner conditions which lead to the outer actions

B. HOWEVER, I UNDERSTAND THE CONTRAST TO BE DIFFERENT...

1. It was a contrast between:

a. The "traditional interpretation and application" of the Law

b. The "righteousness of the kingdom" Jesus would require of His disciples

2. In fact, Jesus demonstrated that the righteousness of the kingdom...

a. Was not only contrary to the manner many had interpreted and applied the Law

b. But was in harmony with the original spirit of the Law as given to Moses and the Israelites

C. REASONS FOR SUCH A VIEW...

1. The other view would seem strange in light of verse 19

a. Jesus had just warned against any alteration of the commandments of the Law!

b. The first view has Jesus doing the very thing He had just warned against!

2. If Jesus was referring to what Moses had commanded in the Law itself, it is likely different wording would have been used

a. At other times, when Jesus was definitely referring to what the Law actually said, He prefaced it with things like:

1) "Moses commanded" - Matthew 8:4

2) "It is written" - Matthew 4:4; Matthew 4:7; Matthew 4:10

b. Instead, we find Jesus repeatedly using phrases more likely to refer to ORAL teachings and interpretations rather than the WRITTEN Word of God:

1) "You have heard that it was said to those of old"

- Matthew 5:21; Matthew 5:27

2) "Furthermore it has been said" - Matthew 5:31

3) "Again you have heard that it was said to those of old"

- Matthew 5:33

4) "You have heard that it was said" - Matthew 5:38; Matthew 5:43

3. In two of the contrasts, Jesus refers to statements not even found in the Law of Moses!

a. "...and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment"

- Matthew 5:21

b. "...and hate your enemy" - Matthew 5:43

-- Here, Jesus reacted, not to the Law itself, but to the way it was often used!

4. We should also remember that the "Law and the Prophets" were just as concerned with the inner thoughts of the heart as the Law of Christ is - cf. Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Isaiah 29:13-14

CONCLUSION

1. So Jesus came...

a. Not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill the Law

b. Which He did, by fulfilling its many prophecies

-- That Law has now been replaced by the New Covenant of our Lord

2. In illustrating the righteousness expected of those under the New Covenant, Jesus will...

a. Contrast it with the traditional interpretations and applications orally handed down

b. Demonstrate how our righteousness must indeed exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees! In our next lesson, we shall begin looking at the righteousness Jesus demands...

Outline: Matthew 5:20

Outline: Matthew 5:20 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Righteousness Of The Scribes And Pharisees (Matthew 5:20)

INTRODUCTION

1. As Jesus prepares to contrast the righteousness of the kingdom with the traditional interpretation and application of the Law, He does so with a strong warning to those who would enter the kingdom of heaven 2. Found in Matthew 5:20, Jesus warned that...

"unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven!"

[To appreciate and apply what Jesus said, it might help if we first

examined...] I. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES

A. THEY WERE KNOWN TO "SAY AND DO NOT" - Matthew 23:1-4

1. Though they often taught the truth, they did not often practice what they preached!

2. From them many parents got the saying "Do as I say, not as I do"

B. THEY WERE KNOWN TO DO THINGS TO BE SEEN OF MEN - Matthew 23:5-7

1. They enjoyed wearing religious garments that separated them from others, and delighted in places and titles of honor

2. Does this sound like any religious leaders today?

C. THEY WERE KNOWN TO NEGLECT PARTS OF GOD'S LAW - Matthew 23:23-24

1. In their case, they would emphasize the "lighter" matters of the law, while neglecting the "weightier" commands

2. Or as we would say today, they "majored in minors and minored in majors"

D. THEY WERE KNOWN TO BE LOVERS OF MONEY - Luke 16:13-15

1. "Mammon" was their god, though they would be quick to deny it and try to justify themselves before men

2. Does this sound like any "prosperity preachers" we see and hear today?

[Such was the level of "righteousness" the scribes and Pharisees as a group. Not all scribes and Pharisees were guilty of such things (e.g., Nicodemus, John 3:1; John 7:45-52; John 19:38-42).

Why must our righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees?

The righteousness of the kingdom demands more!] II. THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE KINGDOM

A. WE LEARN IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT THAT...

1. We cannot "say and do not" - Matthew 7:21
2. We cannot "do things to be seen of men" - Matthew 6:1
3. We cannot "neglect" ANY commandments of God's law - Matthew 5:19
4. We cannot be "lovers of money" - Matthew 6:24

B. THIS SHOULD SERVE AS A WARNING TO ANY WHO THINK THEY CAN BE FAITHFUL CHRISTIANS, BUT DO NOT...

1. Combine their profession of faith with suitable deeds - cf.

James 2:14-17; 1 John 2:4-6; 1 John 3:18

2. Keep their personal, private lives consistent with their public appearance and profession - cf. Mark 4:22

3. Make diligent effort to observe ALL that Jesus commanded - cf.

Matthew 28:20; John 8:31-32; 2 John 1:9

4. Remain free from the enticement of materialism - cf. 1 Timothy 6 : 9-10; 1 John 2:15-17

CONCLUSION 1. Without question, our righteousness as citizens of the kingdom must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees

2. But how can our righteousness be consistent with that demanded by our King? It is possible only by the grace of God...

a. Whereby His mercy provides forgiveness to those in Christ - 1Jn

1:9

b. Whereby His strength makes it possible to live according to the

"righteousness of the kingdom of heaven"! - Php_4:13 In our next study, we will begin to notice the various examples Jesus

gave us as to how our righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and

Pharisees...

Matthew 5:21-26

Matthew 5:21-26 Matthew 5:21-26, Anger In the last paragraph we saw that Jesus calls for a greater righteousness than that of the scribes and Pharisees. The point was to show that Law was to cause a person to sense their need for God's help to attain righteousness. This is why Jesus is going to end this section of the Sermon on the Mount with the declaration, "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). Rather than feeling their inadequacy before the Law, what the teachers of the Law did was lower the requirements of the Law so that they could feel like they were doing the Law. Jesus is going to set the record straight about the intention of the Law. What Jesus is going to call for is a change from the inside out. The Law was not calling for outward conformity but an inward transformation that led to fruit of obedience. Jesus is about the clean out the heart. He will explore how the Pharisees' righteousness had failed. As each of these paragraphs begins in Matthew 5:21-48 you will notice that Jesus begins with the phrase, "You have heard that it was said." What Jesus is quoting is what the scribes and the Pharisees were teaching the people about the Law. When Jesus is directly quoting the scriptures, he will say, "It is written" like he does in Matthew 4 during the temptation in the wilderness (Matthew 4:5; Matthew 4:7; Matthew 4:10). We will notice that their quotations of the Law were sometimes accurate, yet how they were applying the Law was off the mark. It is important to observe, as we will notice as we go through this section, that Jesus is not abolishing the Law and giving his new covenant law. He just said in Matthew 5:17 that this is exactly what he did not come to do. So we cannot say that Jesus is giving his new kingdom law here. Rather, Jesus is teaching who belongs to the kingdom by showing that the people have not been living up to the demands of the law like they think they have. Jesus states the actual requirements of God's law. John Calvin summed up what is happening in this section of Jesus' teaching. "Christ restored the Law to its integrity, in that he freed and cleansed it when it had been obscured by falsehood." While it is easy to criticize the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees for lessening the Law's requirements, we may find as we study that we have done the same so as to justify ourselves before God's law./

Anger and Insults (Matthew 5:21-22)

As humans we are always inclined to lower the moral and spiritual level of the law. We try to make the law attainable by lowering it to a level that we think we can achieve. So Jesus is going to move the bar back to where it was originally set by God when the law was given. As we read this paragraph we see that the teachers of the law had lowered the standard to not doing something against another person that brought a civil penalty. So do not murder or commit any other high crimes that would bring you before the court and you have kept God's law.

Jesus says that if you have anger against your brother you are just as liable to judgment before God as the one who murders. Please think about the weight of what Jesus just said. Kingdom citizens are not those who merely keep from murdering someone. Kingdom citizens are not those who merely keep from assaulting another. Jesus says that God's law is much harder than that. Kept at this level we would give each other a high five, look around the room, and see that we

have not killed anyone this week. We must be God's people! Jesus says if you are angry with your brother you are liable to the judgment.

Jesus goes further and talks about the fruit of anger in Matthew 5:22. If you verbally insult your brother you are just as liable before God. If you say, "You fool" you are also liable for God's judgment. We lower the law and say that we cannot physically harm another. Jesus restores God's law and says you cannot be angry with your brother and you cannot insult them. Jesus' concern is clearly about how we respond when someone does something to us. Not murdering the other person is not the goal. Our goal is to not be angry and lash out in our words against someone. We are not allowed by God to have a selfish or malicious response. Anger desires to harm the other person and words are often the vehicle for that harm. Jesus teaches us that our anger is what puts us in danger of the hell of fire. James made the same point.

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

Anger keeps us out of God's kingdom because anger is always a selfish concern. My rights have been violated. My feelings have been hurt. My sense of justice was violated. We want to often pretend that we have righteous indignation. But our anger is not in defense of God and his holiness. Our anger is a defense of ourselves, our rights, and our desires. This is not a new command that Jesus is giving but was always part of God's law.

You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason frankly with your neighbor, lest you incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:17-18 ESV)

Listen to what the law said. Do not hate your brother. Do not take vengeance. Do not bear a grudge. Love your neighbor as yourself. Murder is not the threshold of sin and it never was. Hate was the threshold. Anger was the threshold. Listen to what the apostle John says.

Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. (1 John 3:15 ESV) Is this a New Testament law alone? No, because three verses earlier he uses the example of Cain. He hated his brother and that is why he murdered Abel. God takes very seriously the heart of contempt for another person. Anger is not acceptable among us. God does not look only out the outward actions. God is looking at the heart. He knows if we have hatred, malice, and anger for another. We are liable for judgment when this is in our hearts.

God Given Solutions (Matthew 5:23-26)

Jesus now gives us solutions to relationship problems and tells us seriousness of these solutions. Matthew 5:23 pictures a person who has come to worship God. He has traveled a great distance from home to be able to worship at the temple. Yet, if he remembers that a person has something against him, he is to leave his offering to God, go back and be reconciled to your brother first, then travel back and worship God. God cares about our hearts. It is important to take care of offenses that may exist between other Christians before we worship. Worship is a sham if we hate our brother or sister in Christ. Worship is a sham if we are leaving wrongs unresolved. We are to live reconciled, peaceful lives. Notice that it does not matter what the wrong is or if you think you are

justified in being upset. Go and reconcile before you come to worship. External worship does not cover over the sins of mistreating one another. Reconciliation is paramount to God. This is why we are called to be peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). We are supposed to intervene and help two people reconcile and come to peace. We must have the initiative to restore broken relationships.

Further, Jesus warns in Matthew 5:25 to not sit back and think you are right. Go and settle matters and do not let it escalate. Personal conflicts should be quickly resolved before matters are made worse. Evil consequences can follow for not making peace with others. This means we must learn to take responsibility for our mistakes. This means we must learn to say sorry to another person. We must love the other person more than being right. We must love peace more than defending our feelings or our rights. Notice that Jesus does not say that if someone has a problem with you that you just tell them to get over it or deal with you. You and I are called to deal with it by solving the problem, not by leaving the situation unresolved. God does not want our worship if we are choosing to be angry, bitter, or hateful toward another. Worship is not a cover for our moral failure. This is the very idea that Jesus means when he quotes Hosea, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13; Matthew 12:7).

Why do we allow anger to remain in our hearts? I think the primary reason is that we enjoy the feeling of anger and the supposed advantage we now think we have over another person. I am angry so now I can manipulate the other person to bend to my will because they have wronged me. What a grievous sin! We are being evil, malicious, and devious when we choose anger because we are going to use it for our own selfish advantage. We want to control the situation. We want to control the relationship. This is sin!

Now what did Jesus just do? If I said how many of you have not murdered, I think we would all raise our hands. So then we would pat ourselves on the back and think that we have done well. But Jesus says that you have anger for another, hate another, or say malicious, insulting words to another you are liable to the hell of fire. Now if I ask you to raise your hand if you have never had anger for another, never had hatred, or never said an insulting word to another, no one's hands would be raised. We are all guilty! This is where Jesus wants us. Jesus wants us to see our sin and admit our failures. He does not want us to try to justify ourselves or excuse ourselves. What was the first characteristic of those who are in the kingdom of God as given in the Beatitudes? Blessed are the poor in spirit. Jesus wants you to see your sin, admit your failure, quickly go correct your error with your brother or sister, and then come to God for forgiveness and worship our Lord who saves us from our sins. Anger quickly turns to sin. Reconcile quickly and do not justify yourself. See your moral failure and beg your Lord and Savior for mercy.

Outline: Matthew 5:21-26

Outline: Matthew 5:21-26 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Anger That Kills (Matthew 5:21-26)

INTRODUCTION

1. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus challenges us to attain to a high level of righteousness...

a. To exceed "the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees"

- Matthew 5:20

b. He illustrates what is meant through a series on contrasts

1) Between what they had heard from those of old

2) And what He was now declaring to them

2. The first contrast (Matthew 5:21-26) pertains to properly understanding and applying...

a. The Sixth Commandment

b. I.e., "You shall not murder" - cf. Exodus 20:13

[How should the sixth command be understood and applied? Is the actual

act of murder the only thing we need to be concerned about? Before we

consider what Jesus taught, let's look at...] I. THE "TRADITIONAL" INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

A. NOTE THAT I SAY "TRADITIONAL"...

1. Jesus is responding to traditional interpretations of the Law, not the Law itself

a. I.e., what had been taught by the "traditions of the elders" - cf. Matthew 15:2

b. Note His preparatory remarks: "You have HEARD that it was SAID..."

c. Referring to oral traditions rather than the written Law

(cf. earlier lesson on "Jesus And The Law")

2. Which traditions had likely been accepted by the scribes and Pharisees

B. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION...

1. Is seen in the phrase "whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment"

2. The term "judgment" likely refers to the local courts of their day (see below)

3. This interpretation may sound fine, but evidently did not go far enough in how the Law should have been interpreted and applied

a. Was the Law only concerned about the actual act of murder?

b. Should the disciples of Jesus also limit their concern to actual acts of murder?

[To answer these two questions, let's now take a closer look at...] II. THE TEACHING OF JESUS

A. JESUS PRONOUNCED JUDGMENT ON ANGER...

1. As found in Matthew 5:22...

a. One angry without a cause should be in danger of the "judgment"

1) I.e., the local courts through Palestine

2) Which were normally reserved for common criminals

b. One who calls his brother "Raca!" (stupid, empty-headed) should be in danger of the "council"

1) I.e., the Sanhedrin council

2) Which was the high court normally reserved for special criminals

c. One who says "You fool!" would be in danger of "hell fire"

1) I.e., Gehenna

2) The place of everlasting torment - Mark 9:43-48

-- The judgment normally accorded to murderers, Jesus deemed

worthy of those whose anger led to just verbal abuse!

2. Jesus' teaching was in harmony with the Law regarding anger

- cf. Proverbs 6:16-19

a. "Hands that shed innocent blood" (murder) are an abomination to the Lord

b. So also a "heart that devises wicked plans" and "one who sows discord among brethren" (due to anger)

-- This being true, the Law should have been interpreted and applied accordingly

3. Thus the traditional interpretation and application of the Law fell far short

a. The "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees" only condemned murderers when those with hateful emotions were just as guilty!

b. While the righteousness of the kingdom would be in harmony with the original intent of the Law

1) The Law taught to forsake wrath and anger - Psalms 37:8

2) So does the righteousness of the kingdom - cf. Galatians 5:19 - 21; Ephesians 4:31

B. JESUS ILLUSTRATED THE SERIOUSNESS OF ANGER...

1. We should not try to worship God when we are "at odds" with a brother - Matthew 5:23-24

a. Repair strained relationships with a brother before worshipping God

b. Just as a husband must treat his wife with understanding if he desires to have his prayers heard - 1 Peter 3:7

-- Wrong emotions toward others can "kill" our relationship with God!

2. We should be quick to "make amends" lest uncontrolled anger

cause us to wind up in court, possibly prison! - Matthew 5:25-26

a. Many "hot-heads" let anger prompt them to do things that send them to prison

b. But note how those in the kingdom are to act - Romans 12:18-21

-- Wrong emotions can "murder" our relationships with man as well!

CONCLUSION

1. In His first contrast between the "righteousness of the kingdom" and the "traditional treatment of the Law", Jesus:

a. Declared that the ancients did not go far enough in applying the Law

b. Illustrated how it should be applied by those seeking to surpass the "righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees"

-- The "righteousness of the kingdom" is actually in harmony with the Law!

2. Jesus also reminds us that there is "The Anger That Kills"...

a. Improper anger toward our fellow man can "kill" our relationship with God

b. It can "murder" our relationships with our fellow man, and ruin our lives in the process

-- One does not have to be guilty of actual murder to do this!

Thus Jesus calls upon us to deal with the anger that often leads to murder, if we desire to truly be His disciples! This requires that we be "born again"... - cf. John 3:5; 1 Peter 1:22-23

Matthew 5:27-30

Matthew 5:27-30 Matthew 5:27-30, Lust

We are in a sermon series called Inside Out. In Matthew 5:21-48 Jesus is showing his disciples how their righteousness is to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). The teachers had lowered the standards of the Law of Moses so that they believed they were attaining righteousness. Jesus is showing the true standard of God's law and how the people have fallen woefully short. Remember that Jesus preaching repentance (Matthew 4:17) and the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23).

Jesus is teaching that there is depth to the law. In the last lesson we noticed that a person could not say that all the feelings a person has against a person (hatred, malice, anger) are acceptable so long as you do not murder the person. Nor could a person say that it was acceptable to verbally insult the person so long as you did not murder the person. Jesus is preaching for the change to come from the inside, not mere conformity of our actions. In the same way, Jesus addresses the heart again. The command given in the Law of Moses was to not commit adultery. But that did not mean that you could do whatever you wanted to do sexually so long as you did not commit the actual act of sexual relations. Listen to what Jesus says. But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:28 ESV) To understand the concept of lust here, I think the ESV does a great job with its translation "lustful intent" to express what is intended by the Greek word. It is not sin to look at a man or a woman. Nor is it sin to notice that a person is attractive. I feel confident to say that the reason any man began to date the person that they now have married was because they found the woman attractive. Further, God created these desires within us. To find another person attractive and desirable is not sin because these thoughts and feelings were created within us by God. Jesus describes what the sin is: it is lustful intent. It is the gathering of the mind to lust. The Greek here indicates a person who turns his mind to a thing. This same Greek word is translated "longing" in Luke 15:16 and Matthew 13:17. Lustful longing or sensual longing is the concept under consideration. The looking is in order to lust.

The Law of Moses was clear about this and condemned lusting. Jesus is not giving a new command that would have shocked his listeners. The tenth commandment at Mount Sinai gave the same command.

You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his male servant, or his female servant, or his ox, or his donkey, or anything that is your neighbor's. (Exodus 20:17 ESV)

Three commandments earlier God declared that you shall not commit adultery. But that was certainly not the end of the matter. You were not allowed to covet your neighbor's wife. That word means to lust, desire, or delight in (Kohlenberger/Mounce), desire (HALOT). Therefore it is not merely looking but what is going on in the mind while looking.

Jesus does not allow us to think that we can do in our hearts whatever we like or even act upon those thoughts and desires but just do not commit the actual sexual act. Jesus says that you have already committed adultery with this person in your heart. This is why what you allow in your mind is so important to you and to God. People will ask what is the big deal if you fantasize about another person or look at those kinds of images online or in magazines. Listen to what Jesus said: For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a person. (Matthew 15:19-20 ESV)

Sin begins in the heart. These sins do not happen by accident but begin by allowing the mind to indulge in this kind of thinking. You are allowing your mind to have lustful intent. Paul Earnhart said it well, "No married person can do justice to his mate while given over to unrestrained desire for another." Think about this and try this with your spouse. Tell him or her that you enjoy lustfully thinking about another person rather than him or her, but there is nothing to worry about because you did not do anything physically. You just like to think about other people. This is why God called Israel's unfaithfulness to him and his covenant adultery. The people wanted to be with anything else and anyone else but God. Their hearts were far from him. In the same way, we cannot have our hearts far from our spouse, desiring someone else, and think that we are not destroying the marriage. Only a dishonest person would believe that you can desire another person yet still be faithful to your spouse. This is why Jesus calls this very thing, "committing adultery in the heart." The Remedy

Notice that the remedy is to deal drastically with sin. We should easily understand the logic that Jesus is making in verses 29-30. We will cut off limbs when it is a matter of life and death. There was a story a few years ago a hiker who fell in a ravine where his arm was trapped under a rock. Stuck there for days he ended up having to cut off his arm to be free and live. You can make that clear decision because you realize that it is a matter of life and death. This is the logic Jesus is giving to us. Lustful intent is a matter of spiritual life or spiritual death. There is the serious need for removing ourselves from these sensual opportunities for this sin. I think it is important to note that Jesus picks this sin for this kind of response. He did not say this about anger in the last section. He does not say to cut off your eye or hand with the sins later described in this chapter. This sin, lustful intent, needs an aggressive response. A person who does not make an extremely aggressive response against lust does not love the Lord. We must fight for purity if we are God's people. God's people do not get close the fire or think that they can play close to sin. God's people make extreme decisions to cut off access to potential sexual sin because it is a matter of life or death spiritually.

If our eyes cause us to sin, then we need to not look! Act as if you have no eyes and will no longer look at those sinful things. If our feet cause us to sin, then we need to not go to that place. Act as if your feet are cut off and you will choose to no longer go there. If our hands cause us to sin, then no longer do what your hands are doing. This is what the Lord is saying when we are told to put to death the sins of the flesh.

Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. On account of these the wrath of God is coming. (Colossians 3:5-6 ESV)

Listen to what the scriptures are saying. We are responsible to take extreme measures in our fight against sin. Fight against the computer. Fight against the movies. Fight against the TV shows. You are falling into sin through these things and you must fight against them. We must act decisively even if it is painful to us to make choice. Cut sin and temptation out of our lives. So flee youthful passions and pursue righteousness, faith, love, and peace, along with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. (2 Timothy 2:22 ESV) The Reason To Fight For Purity

Jesus gives the reason why one must fight against lustful thoughts. Not only has Jesus declared that the person has committed adultery in the heart but also states that the person who does not fight for purity will be cast into hell. This is the second time Jesus has spoken about hell in this sermon. In the last paragraph Jesus said that the person who insults his brother will liable to hell of fire (Matthew 5:22). Now Jesus says that those who do not put to death the sinful members of the body will be cast into hell. This means we must fight for our hearts. Jesus is teaching us that these things are stemming from our hearts. It is not enough to say that we have not committed the sexual act of adultery. The ultimate problem is the heart. We must protect our hearts by protecting our eyes and protecting our hands and feet. Jesus is awaking our hearts to the reality of our failure before it. Adultery must not only be avoided but lustful intent also. As we end it is important to state that sexual sin is forgivable before God. God will forgive any and all sins. This is why Jesus is preaching this sermon. Jesus is preaching repentance and the gospel of the kingdom. The good news of the kingdom is that you can be forgiven when you turn from sin and come to Jesus. Your sinful acts and thoughts are forgiven by God when we are poor in spirit and mourn over the sin we have committed (Matthew 5:3-4). But this does not mean that there are not physical consequences for our decisions. Though forgiven by God, we will still experience the consequences for our sins, which we will even see in the next paragraph where Jesus allows divorce for adultery (Matthew 5:31-32).

Cut the temptations that bring you to sin out of your life. Protect your heart. Fight for purity. Flee lust. Turn to the Lord forgiveness. This is the call of Jesus.

Outline: Matthew 5:27-30

Outline: Matthew 5:27-30 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Nipping Adultery In The Bud (Matthew 5:27-30)

INTRODUCTION

1. Though our society takes adultery lightly, it is a serious offense

in the eyes of God...

a. He listed it right after murder in the Ten Commandments - Exodus 20 :

13-14

b. He made it a capital offense in the Old Testament, worthy of the

death penalty - Leviticus 20:10

c. God has promised to judge those who are adulterers - Hebrews 13:4;

1 Corinthians 6:9-10

-- It destroys friendships, marriages, and families, contributing to

the destruction of many children's lives!

2. How can one avoid the sin of adultery?

a. Is the solution one of just making sure that you don't commit the

actual act?

b. Or is there way that one can "nip it in the bud"?

3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus challenged His disciples...

a. To exceed "the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees"

- Matthew 5:20

b. He illustrated what He meant through a series on contrasts

1) Between what they had heard from those of old

2) And what He was now declaring to them

4. In the second contrast (Matthew 5:27-30), Jesus addressed the issue of

adultery...

a. In which we learn where adultery really begins

b. And what steps can be taken to ward off committing such a serious offense [On the subject of adultery, let's first note the contrast between...] I. JESUS AND THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION

A. THE "TRADITIONAL" INTERPRETATION...

1. The oral traditions of the Scribes and Pharisees certainly repeated the written commandment found in the Law - Matthew 5:27
2. But they evidently stressed that as long as one did not commit the actual act, one was not guilty
3. Thereby emphasizing the "letter" of the Law, but not appreciating the "spirit" behind the Law as well

B. JESUS TAUGHT DIFFERENTLY...

1. One does not have to commit the "act" to be guilty of adultery
2. One is just as guilty when one "looks at a woman to lust for her" - Matthew 5:28
3. Note: Not the "looking" per se, but looking "to lust" for her is what is wrong
 - a. "to lust" means to have a strong desire for, to possess and dominate completely
 - b. A person may look at another with admiration for beauty and not be guilty of "lust"

C. JESUS' INTERPRETATION WAS IN HARMONY WITH THE LAW...

1. Notice that the Tenth Commandment condemned coveting a neighbor's wife - Exodus 20:17
2. Even in the time of Job, to "look at a woman to lust for her" was considered wrong - Job 31:1

[So the problem begins in the heart (cf. Mark 7:21-23). If we can prevent the lusting in the heart (or the "lustful eye"), the problem of adultery is "nipped in the bud"! Jesus goes on to say what we should

do with respect to the lustful eye or any other stumbling blocks...] II. JESUS' PROGNOSIS FOR LUSTFUL EYES AND OTHER STUMBLING BLOCKS

A. "PLUCK IT OUT AND CAST IT FROM YOU..."

1. That Jesus is not being literal should be obvious, for one could still stumble with the left eye or hand
2. The key to understanding this passage is found in Matthew 18:7-9
 - a. The "eye" and "hand" represent "offenses"
 - b. Offenses are "stumbling blocks" that lead a person to sin
 - c. These would be enticements to do wrong, beguiling allurements

B. THE MEANING OF JESUS' TEACHING...

1. "Take drastic action in getting rid of whatever in the natural course of events will tempt you to sin" (Hendriksen)
 2. Such should be the case in regards to ALL sin, as well as the sin of adultery [As we contemplate Jesus' words, there are several...]
- III. IMPORTANT LESSONS TO BE LEARNED

A. THE PRESENT IS NOT OUR ONLY LIFE; WE ARE DESTINED FOR ETERNITY!

1. The future holds the possibility of "hell" (Greek, GEHENNA, the place of everlasting torment)
2. What we do or not do in the present will determine our place in the future

B. NOTHING, NO MATTER HOW PRECIOUS, SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO DOOM OUR GLORIOUS DESTINY!

1. God's goal for us is the "kingdom of heaven" in all its eternal glory!
2. What on "earth" (such as an adulterous relationship) can be worthy of losing that?

C. SIN, BEING A VERY DESTRUCTIVE FORCE, MUST NOT BE PAMPERED!

1. Do we need to be convinced that sin (like adultery) is destructive to those around us?
2. Sin is to the soul what cancer is to the body

- a. Delay can be deadly!
 - b. Halfway measures, halfhearted efforts, only give sin time to wreak havoc!
2. "Radical surgery" is what's necessary to treat the "cancer" of sin!
- a. Cut off those things that might lead you to look upon others to lust after them
 - b. How much better to dwell upon such things as mentioned in Php_4:8!
 - c. Remove all stumbling blocks that encourage you to sin!
 - 1) Such as certain books, movies, pictures
 - 2) Or possible companions, associates - cf. 1 Corinthians 15:33
- As Paul exhorted the Corinthians , and Joseph illustrated by example, "flee sexual immorality"! - 1 Corinthians 6:18; Genesis 39:7-12

CONCLUSION

1. Our families, our friends, our lives, and especially our souls are too precious to allow the sin of adultery to destroy them!
 2. But if we desire to "nip it in the bud", we cannot be content with the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees...
 - a. Who may have faithfully quoted the Law to others
 - b. But were unwilling to deal with the real problem, which is one of the heart!
 3. In view of the reality of hell, the eternal abode of impenitent adulterers...
 - a. Let us be willing to tackle the "cancer" of sin seriously
 - b. Performing whatever "radical surgery" might be necessary!
- While one may not be able to rebuild the lives destroyed by the sin of adultery, for the penitent adulterer there is still the hope of salvation in Christ Jesus, as there is for all... - cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

Matthew 5:31-32

Matthew 5:31-32 Matthew 5:31-32, Divorce

We are in a sermon series called Inside Out. In Matthew 5:21-48 Jesus is showing his disciples how their righteousness is to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 5:20). The teachers had lowered the standards of the Law of Moses so that they believed they were attaining righteousness. Jesus is showing the true standard of God's law and how the people have fallen woefully short. Remember that Jesus preaching repentance (Matthew 4:17) and the gospel of the kingdom (Matthew 4:23). Jesus is teaching that there is depth to the law.

Jesus now quotes another teaching of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law. "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce'" (Matthew 5:31). This appears to be a summary of Deuteronomy 24, but we must not that this is not what Deuteronomy 24:1-4 taught at all. When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter man hates her and writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter man dies, who took her to be his wife, then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled, for that is an abomination before the Lord. And you shall not bring sin upon the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance. (Deuteronomy 24:1-4 ESV)

You will notice that the command of Deuteronomy 24 was not a license or allowance to divorce, but a command not to remarry the defiled person who had been divorced. The Jews took this law to mean that a man could divorce his wife for any reason (which we explicitly read in Matthew 19:3). This was the common teaching. Josephus, who lived in the first century AD, records that divorce was permitted "for any causes whatsoever" (Ant. 4.8.23). The apocryphal book Ecclesiasticus, which is not inspired but was written around 150 BC, stated, "If she will not do as you tell her, get rid of her" (25:26). The Mishnah (which was the authoritative collection of the oral traditions of Jewish law) which was composed around 200 AD stated all kinds of ridiculous grounds for divorce including if she was barren, if she had a physical defect, if she had poor posture or thinning hair, if she ate something he forbid her to eat, if she burned his meal, or if he simply found someone that he thought was prettier (see Quarles, Sermon on the Mount, 125-126). From reading ancient Jewish sources the impression is that divorce was relatively easy and was not considered a grave misdeed.

Unfortunately, our world also believes that divorce can be for any reason. If you do not want to be married anymore, you do not need any cause at all to get a divorce today. People divorce and remarry for all kinds of reasons including no reason at all except wanting to be with someone else. Even the Christian world has moved with our culture in the same direction and does not uphold the sanctity of marriage. The only test for a reasonable divorce today is if the person is going to be happy by divorcing. There truly is no other concern. Is this what God taught? Is this what the Law

said? Could a person divorce for any reason? Jesus now states what God's law regarding marriage has always been.

God's Universal Marriage Law

But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery. (Matthew 5:32 ESV)

Notice how different the actual law of God was in contrast to what the Pharisees and scribes taught. What the people taught was that you could divorce for any reason. God taught that everyone who divorces his wife commits adultery (Matthew 19:9) and makes her commit adultery (Matthew 5:32), unless the divorce was for the cause of sexual immorality. The Old Testament ideal for marriage was not changed by Jesus. The marriage law of Genesis 2 is maintained by Moses, Jesus, and Paul. The message is that you do not get out of marriage. Marriage is for life. Marriage must not be entered into flippantly but covenantally. You are married for life. Can you divorce for any reason? The answer Jesus gives is no. But this is not a new command but was the intent of God when he blessed humanity with the gift of marriage in Genesis 2. "The two shall become one flesh" means that they are not to separate from each other because they are now one. This is how every marriage must be entered. This is a covenant made between the man and the woman, joined together by God for life. People are not to divorce and certainly God's people are not to divorce.

You will notice that there is only reason allowed by God for divorce and that is for marital unfaithfulness. We have studied this word translated "sexual immorality" in our other studies, like 1 Corinthians 7. But allow me to remind you that the Greek word is *porneia* which is a broad word used for any kind of physical sexual activity. This was not given as a way out of marriage but the only ground given for divorce that is not sin. What I mean is that the divorce is to occur because of the sexual immorality committed has destroyed the marriage. Sexual immorality is not the escape hatch but is the reason that the marriage has splintered. God recognized that this was the effect of sexual immorality. Sexual immorality destroys the trust that was built in the marriage. Sexual immorality damages the relationship that may not be able to be repaired. Jesus is not saying that one has to divorce. But the option is given when sexual immorality occurs within marriage. The Consequence of Divorce

But Jesus draws attention to what happens when there is a divorce that is not for the cause of sexual immorality. We are used to saying that if you divorce and remarry YOU commit adultery. We read Jesus saying this in Matthew 19:9. And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery. (Matthew 19:9 ESV)

If you read Matthew 5:32 carefully you will notice that this is not exactly what Jesus taught in this sermon. You will see that it is a little different when describing the effect of divorce. The first distinction is in who is committing adultery. Not only is the person who divorces not for the cause of sexual immorality committing adultery but the person who is divorced is made to commit adultery. Why would it be that you would make the woman commit adultery? The assumption is that this divorced woman would have to remarry. Remember that we have an entirely different society in the first century Israel than we do today. She was not going to be in court, get half the

assets, receive alimony, go get a job, rent an apartment, and therefore take care of herself. This would not be possible. She would have to marry to be cared for and provided for. She would not have a choice. This is why he makes her commit adultery. He has divorced for some cause or no cause at all that is not the cause of sexual immorality given by God, and now she is put in the position of marrying another, which is adultery.

Further, notice there is even more affected by this divorce. The person who marries this divorced woman is also committing adultery, according to Jesus in Matthew 5:32. He unlawfully divorced her. When he remarries, he commits adultery. When she remarries, she commits adultery. Further, whoever marries either of them also commits adultery. This unlawful divorce is causing all kinds of people to be drawn into sin. Jesus teaches these people that when the husband divorced his wife, he was committing adultery, he was causing her to commit adultery, and whoever married her was also committing adultery.

Jesus sets forward an important principle: a person who has no right to divorce has no right to remarry. To remarry initiates a whole chain of adultery because remarriage after divorce results in adulterous relationships for all parties involved.

Let us return to the thrust of the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus is resetting the high bar of God's law to where it belongs because the teachers of the law had lowered it. They taught that divorce for any reason was acceptable to God. Jesus told them that they were wrong and that there is to be no divorce at all unless for the cause of sexual immorality. This was to cause people to see their sinful state before God and understand that they were not keeping the law as God gave it. So what were the people who were divorced to do?

We must state that all sins can be forgiven. We can be forgiven of committing adultery and we can be forgiven for divorcing for the wrong reason. We spoke about this in the last lesson. But just because we are forgiven by God does not mean that there are not consequences for our actions. While Jesus did explicitly teach what to do if you are divorced, Paul did. To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. (1 Corinthians 7:10-11 ESV)

Notice that the apostle Paul quotes Jesus' command to not divorce. But then Paul gives what the solution is to be for the person who is divorced not for the cause of sexual immorality. "But if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband." If you have divorced and the reason for the divorce was not because your spouse cheated on you, then you have two options: remain unmarried the rest of your days or be reconciled to your spouse.

Now many seem to find this command difficult. But I want us to think about what Jesus said regarding lust and apply it to this situation. It is better to sacrifice marriage now and enter heaven than willfully choose to disregard God's marriage law, remarry which is adultery and lose your soul in eternal punishment. While it is difficult to remain unmarried, it is better than choosing to violate God's command for marriage and divorce. You can be forgiven of your sins. But the truly repentant and contrite heart desires to do whatever God says. When we see the gravity of our sins and how sinful we are, and then see the grace of God to forgive us from all our sins, then we will have the desire to do whatever he says because God has graciously chosen to forgive us for what we have

done. Do not look at what you think you are losing by remaining unmarried or being reconciled. Rather think about how you have severely violated God's law but graciously forgives for what you have done. Now we are grateful that we can still be in relationship with Jesus and we able to stop the chain of adultery so that no other people are committing adultery because of our sinful decisions.

Outline: Matthew 5:31-32

Outline: Matthew 5:31-32 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Treachery Of Divorce (Matthew 5:31-32)

INTRODUCTION

1. We live in an age of easy divorce...
 - a. Many if not all states have "no-fault" divorce laws
 - b. In some cases, all it takes is for one person to decide to have a divorce, and their spouse can do nothing to prevent it
2. What does God think about divorce?
 - a. What was His view of divorce in the Old Testament?
 - b. What does He think of it now?
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus addressed the issue of divorce...
 - a. As He taught His disciples concerning the righteousness of the kingdom
 - b. In which He described the effects of divorcing one's spouse

[In this lesson, "The Treachery Of Divorce", we shall use Matthew 5:31-32 as our text. To understand Jesus' comments in their context, let's first determine what was...] I. THE "TRADITIONAL" INTERPRETATION

A. "WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE" - Matthew 5:31

1. This was the "traditional" interpretation of Deuteronomy 24:1-4; handed down orally
2. In applying the Law, they had focused on the idea of giving certificates of divorce
3. They concluded divorce was permissible as long as a certificate of divorce was given

B. IS THIS WHAT THE LAW ACTUALLY SAID?

1. Please read Deuteronomy 24:1-4 carefully...

a. Verses 1-3 simply describe a particular situation

1) WHEN a man is displeased with his wife and gives her a certificate a divorce and sends her out of the house...

2) WHEN she has left and becomes another man's wife...

3) IF her second husband detests her and gives her a bill of divorcement and sends her out of his house, or if the second husband dies...

b. It is in verse 4 that Moses actually commands what must not be done

1) Which was: "her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination to the Lord"

2) This passage is simply forbidding a man to remarry his wife after she had been married to another - cf. Jeremiah 3:1

2. Note also Paul's understanding of the Law - cf. Romans 7:1-3

a. A woman was bound by the Law to her husband as long he lived

b. If she married another while her first husband was still living (implying a certificate of divorce was given), she became an adulteress (i.e., defiled)!

[So the scribes and Pharisees had interpreted the Law to permit divorce as long as a certificate of divorce was given to the wife. We have

tried to point out that was not the case. What does Jesus say?] II. JESUS' INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

A. "WHOEVER DIVORCES HIS WIFE FOR ANY REASON EXCEPT SEXUAL IMMORALITY CAUSES HER TO COMMIT ADULTERY" - Matthew 5:32

1. The only acceptable grounds for divorcing a wife is SEXUAL IMMORALITY

2. Otherwise, divorcing a wife "causes her to commit adultery"
3. How? By placing her in a position where she is likely to remarry, in which she becomes an adulteress
4. This is what the Law implied in Deuteronomy 24:4 and Jeremiah 3:1
 - a. That is why the first husband couldn't take her back
 - b. Even if her second husband had died!
 - c. Because the wife had become "defiled"!

5. Notice these comments by KEIL & DELITZSCH...

"The second marriage of a woman who had been divorced is designated by Moses a defilement of the woman...a moral defilement, i.e., blemishing, desecration of the sexual communion which was sanctified by marriage, IN THE SAME SENSE IN WHICH ADULTERY IS CALLED A DEFILEMENT in Leviticus 18:20 and Num 5:13,14..."

"Thus the second marriage of a divorced woman was placed implicit upon a par with adultery, and some approach was made towards the teaching of Christ concerning marriage (Mt 5:32)..."

"If the second marriage of a divorced woman was a moral defilement, of course the wife could not marry the first again even after the death of her second husband...because the defilement of the wife would be thereby repeated, and even increased, as the moral defilement which the divorced wife acquired through the second marriage was not removed by a divorce from the second husband, nor yet by his death."

6. Jesus simply made clear what the Law itself implied: To divorce a woman for any reason other than sexual immorality would cause her to be defiled (when she remarried)!
7. Therefore, I believe that a careful study of the Law

concerning divorce reveals...

a. That Jesus' teaching was really in harmony with the Law
itself

b. But the "traditional interpretation and application" of the
Law had missed the mark by placing emphasis upon the
mention of giving a certificate of divorce

B. "WHOEVER MARRIES A DIVORCED WOMAN COMMITS ADULTERY"

1. Jesus goes on to say that anyone who marries a person who has
been divorced (lit., "put away") also commits adultery!

2. Jesus does not use the definite article in reference to one
put away, therefore He seems to refer to ANY "put away"
person! In other words...

a. A person put away for reasons OTHER than adultery cannot
remarry

1) Because such would "cause them to commit adultery"

2) Or to put it in O.T. terms: "become defiled"

b. Nor can a person "put away" for the reason of adultery
remarry

1) For such a person is an "adulteress" or "adulterer"

2) As such, is "defiled" and would thereby cause anyone who
married that person to commit adultery!

CONCLUSION

1. Jesus later taught more concerning the subject of divorce and
remarriage - Matthew 19:3-12

a. Defining who has the right to divorce their spouse and remarry

b. Indicating that some might need to "make themselves eunuchs" for
the sake of the kingdom of heaven

2. But in our text (Matthew 5:31-32), Jesus reveals "The Treachery Of
Divorce"...

a. A man who divorces his wife for any cause other than sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery (by placing her in a situation where she is likely to remarry and become defiled; i.e., an adulteress)

b. Whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery
-- The harmful effect of divorce is seen in that it creates situations where adultery is committed!

3. Perhaps we can better understand why God hates divorce - Malachi 2:13-16

a. When we put away our spouses, we treat them treacherously!

- Malachi 2:14

b. When we divorce our spouses, we cover our garments with violence!

- Malachi 2:16

4. Making divorce "legal" does not change the facts of the matter...

a. The one put away still becomes defiled (commits adultery) if they remarry

b. Whoever marries the one put away still commits adultery

-- It is still a "treacherous" act! As difficult as Jesus' teaching on the subject of divorce might seem in

today's permissive and immoral society, those who respect the authority

of Jesus Christ will abide by His teaching. Have you found yourself in an adulterous relationship? There is hope

in Jesus Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)! Yet true repentance requires that

you stop committing adultery, even if it means becoming a "eunuch" for

the sake of the kingdom of heaven (cf. Matthew 19:11-12).

Matthew 5:33-37

Matthew 5:33-37 Matthew 5:33-37, Truthfulness

We come again to another text within the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is addressing how the teachers of the Law and the Pharisees were incorrectly teaching and misapplying the Law of Moses. As we have seen so far in our study, Jesus is correcting these errors and showing the heart needed to be God's people as well as identifying the high standard of God's law.

Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn." (Matthew 5:33 ESV)

Jesus quotes what the teachers are saying the Law declared. In this case it appears that they are quoting the Law fairly accurately.

You shall not swear by my name falsely, and so profane the name of your God: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:12 ESV)

If a man vows a vow to the Lord, or swears an oath to bind himself by a pledge, he shall not break his word. He shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth. (Numbers 30:2 ESV)

Further, we need to note that the Law did instruct the people to make vows and oaths by the name of the Lord. We see this in the above passages just read (Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2). The condemnation was not against taking oaths, but that they must not make a false oath or break their oaths. This is confirmed in the Law as read in Deuteronomy 10:20.

You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear. (Deuteronomy 10:20 ESV) But when we read Matthew 5:34-36 we are able to get a sense of what the people were doing and the Pharisees were teaching. Notice that they were taking oaths by all of these other things rather than the name of the Lord. They would make an oath by heaven, by earth, by Jerusalem, by their head, and the like. When we read the Jewish teachings it becomes even clearer what was happening. Notice the writing from the Mishnah, which is the collection of historical rabbinical teachings. m. Sebu. 4.13: If a man said, "I adjure you" or "I command you" or "I bind you," they are liable; but if he said "By heaven and earth," they are exempt. m. Ned. 1.3: If he says, "May it be by Jerusalem," he has said naught.

m. Sanh. 3.2: If a man take an oath before his fellow, and his fellow said to him, "Vow to me by the life of your head," R. Meir says he may retract. Rabbi Maimonides: If any swear by heaven, by earth, by the sun, etc although the mind of the swearer be under these words to swear by Him who created them, yet this is not an oath. Or is any swear by some of the prophets, or by some of the books of the Scripture, although the sense of the swearer be to swear by Him that sent that prophet or that gave that book, nevertheless this is not an oath. Later Jewish commentary argued that a vow made "by" Jerusalem was nonbonding but a vow made "toward" Jerusalem was binding (t. Ned. 1.2.3). By contrast, Josephus says of the Essenes who were rigorous about avoiding oaths: "Any word of theirs has more force than an oath, swearing they avoid, regarding it as worse

than perjury, for they say that one who is not believed without an appeal to God stands condemned already” (Jewish War 2.135). Jesus gives us even more clarity on the problem later on in the Gospel of Matthew.

Woe to you, blind guides, who say, “If anyone swears by the temple, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.” You blind fools! For which is greater, the gold or the temple that has made the gold sacred? And you say, “If anyone swears by the altar, it is nothing, but if anyone swears by the gift that is on the altar, he is bound by his oath.” You blind men! For which is greater, the gift or the altar that makes the gift sacred? So whoever swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And whoever swears by the temple swears by it and by him who dwells in it. And whoever swears by heaven swears by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it. (Matthew 23:16-22 ESV)

Now we are able to understand what is happening in the first century. They read the command in Leviticus 19:12 and Numbers 30:2 to mean that if you made your oath to the Lord, then you must keep what you have vowed. But, if you made your oath on the basis of something else or someone else, then you did not make your vow to the Lord and your word could be broken. Do you remember when you were kids and you or your friends would make some solemn promise to you about what they were about to do and then later on they would say that they had their fingers crossed? As kids we thought having our fingers crossed meant that we were exempt from whatever we were promising. In the same way, if these vows were made by something other than the name of the Lord, then you were allowed to break the oath. This is what Jesus is observing and condemning in Matthew 5:34-36. Do not take an oath by heaven as if that will relinquish your need to keep what you vow because heaven is the throne of God. Do not take an oath by earth because earth is the footstool of God. Do not take an oath by Jerusalem because it is the city of the great King. Do not take an oath by your head because you cannot make your hair white or black. Do not make oaths like this as if this gives you a way out of your vow in the future. Everything belongs to God. Heaven and earth belong to God. Jerusalem belongs to God. The hairs on your head belong to God. You are not able to get out of your promise just because you did not swear by the name of the Lord. Everything is God's and therefore every oath is binding. There is nothing you can take an oath by or some action you can take like crossing your fingers that allows you to violate what was promised.

Declaring God's Law (Matthew 5:37)

This brings us to what God was actually teaching. God's people are to be truthful and honest. God hates deception (Proverbs 6:17; Proverbs 12:22). The purpose of an oath was to guarantee that the promise would be fulfilled. The Jews were using oaths as a means of avoiding what was promised! They were taking oaths to get out of what they were saying. God's people are to have speech that is straightforward. Every word we utter is before God and subject to judgment (Matthew 12:36-37). A simple yes or no puts us under no less obligation to tell the truth and honor it than taking an oath. Oaths were never intended to heighten the swearer's obligation to tell the truth. That obligation already existed when the words left your mouth. Rather, oaths were intended to give greater assurance to those who receive the promise. Please consider that this is exactly what God did. For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” And thus

Abraham, having patiently waited, obtained the promise. For people swear by something greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he guaranteed it with an oath, so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us. (Hebrews 6:13-18 ESV)

Why did God swear by himself when he made the promise to Abraham? Was it so that God would now have to be bound to his word? No, for once God says anything he is bound to his word. The purpose of the oath was that “God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose.” The purpose of the promise is to give greater assurance to the recipient of the promise. This is why we read about God making oaths to his people (cf. Luke 1:73; Acts 2:30). God is convincing us by what he says. This is the point Jesus is making. Your word is always binding. Your “yes” must be “yes,” and your “no” must be “no.” We do not get to avoid our obligations simply because we did not make an oath before God. Please do not misunderstand what Jesus is saying. When Jesus says, “Do not take an oath at all” and when James says the same in James 5:12, the point is not to say that making an oath is a sin. We should understand this because God made oaths and we see his people rightly making oaths in the scriptures. Jesus’ point is that when you say “yes” it is just as binding as if you took an oath. You do not say something thinking that if you say it is a particular way that you are freed from your obligation. You are bound by your word. This should solve the question about whether a Christian can make an oath today. In a court of law a Christian can and must take an oath and this is right to do because you are declaring the veracity of your words before people. Remember, the purpose of an oath is to give greater assurance to the recipient. We have every need to do this for people in a world that is full of liars and deceivers. But Jesus’ greater point is that just because you did not take an oath does not mean you are not bound to your word. When Jesus says, “Do not take an oath at all,” we must read the rest of verse 34. Jesus is saying do not take oaths like that because the reason they took such an oath was to give themselves a backdoor option to not keeping their promise. Have the character that when you tell someone you will do something, they believe you. We should not have to convince people who know us about our truthfulness. We will always be honest and truthful. But for those who do not know us, like in a court situation, make your oath to God to give greater assurance to those who listen concerning what you are about to say.

Outline: Matthew 5:33-37

Outline: Matthew 5:33-37 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Swearing Of Oaths (Matthew 5:33-37)

INTRODUCTION

1. Are you a man or woman of your word?
 - a. When you say "yes" or "no", do people take it as "gospel" (i.e., truth)?
 - b. Are you someone whose word is questioned, unless confirmed with an oath?
2. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus dealt with the issue of swearing oaths...
 - a. In which He set a high standard for His disciples to follow
 - b. A standard that exceeded that of the scribes and Pharisees, and exceeds the standard followed by many people today
3. In this lesson, "The Swearing Of Oaths", we shall consider what Jesus taught from the viewpoint of four questions:
 - a. What did the Law of Moses actually teach concerning the swearing of oaths?
 - b. How had the Jews, and in particular the Scribes and Pharisees, traditionally interpreted and applied the Law?
 - c. What did Jesus teach in response to this abuse of the Law concerning oaths?
 - d. Did Jesus forbid even those oaths made in court?

[To answer the first question, "What did the Law of Moses actually teach concerning the swearing of oaths?", let's take a moment to

consider...] I. THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE SWEARING OF OATHS

A. THREE PASSAGES MAKE VERY CLEAR THE TEACHING OF THE LAW...

1. "And you shall not swear by My name falsely, nor shall you profane the name of your God; I am the LORD." - Leviticus 19:12

2. "If a man vows a vow to the LORD, or swears an oath to bind himself by some agreement, he shall not break his word; he shall do according to all that proceeds out of his mouth."

- Numbers 30:2

3. "When you make a vow to the LORD your God, you shall not delay to pay it; for the LORD your God will surely require it of you, and it would be sin to you." - Deuteronomy 23:21

B. THE EMPHASIS WAS ON TRUTHFULNESS AND FAITHFULNESS...

1. A person must be truthful when he swears an oath; he must truly mean it

2. He must also be faithful in keeping the oath; he must carry out his word

C. THIS EMPHASIS ON TRUTHFULNESS "IN THE HEART" WAS STRESSED BY THE PSALMS AND PROPHETS AS WELL...

1. In the Psalms - Psalms 15:1-2; Psalms 24:3-4

2. The Prophets often bemoaned the lack of truth in the heart

- Jeremiah 5:1-2; Hosea 4:1-2 [So the teaching of the Law was clear: Vows to the Lord should be kept,

and truthfulness in all things was expected. This leads to our second question: "How had the Jews, and in particular

the Scribes and Pharisees, traditionally interpreted and applied the

Law?"] II. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION

A. IT APPEARS THE EMPHASIS HAD SHIFTED...

1. FROM truthfulness in all things

2. TO honoring only those vows sworn "to the Lord"

-- As implied by Jesus comments in Matthew 5:34-36

B. IN APPLICATION, ONLY VOWS "TO THE LORD" WERE BINDING...

1. That the Jews had made such arbitrary distinctions between

their vows is seen in Matthew 23:16-19

2. Because of this distinction, daily conversations were often spiced with meaningless oaths to make impressions; e.g.,:

- a. "I swear by heaven"
- b. "I swear by the throne of God"
- c. "I swear...by the earth...by Jerusalem...by the altar...by the temple...by my head..."

[By shifting the emphasis from truthfulness to honoring only those vows made to the Lord, the Pharisees in their application of the Law justified the use of meaningless vows.

Now to our third question: "What did Jesus teach in response to this

abuse of the Law concerning oaths?"] III. THE TEACHING OF JESUS

A. HE EXPOSED THE HYPOCRISY IN SUCH ARBITRARY DISTINCTIONS...

1. Matthew 23:20-22 clearly shows that when one swears by...

- a. "the temple"
- b. "the throne of God"

...he is swearing by the LORD also!

2. Matthew 5:34-36 likewise teaches that one cannot swear by these things without involving God

- a. Heaven is the throne of God
- b. Earth is His footstool
- c. Only God can change our hair color (without the use of dyes)

-- Therefore, any oath is an oath "to the Lord"!

B. HE ENJOINED "TRUTHFULNESS IN THE HEART"...

1. Let your "yes" mean "yes"

2. Let your "no" mean "no"

-- Any more than this is evil, and would be contrary to speaking "truth in his heart" (Psalms 15:1-2)

[In exposing the hypocritical distinctions made by the scribes and Pharisees in their oaths, and in commanding us to speak simply and truthfully, the words of Jesus have led many to ask our fourth and final question: "Did Jesus forbid even those oaths made in court?"] IV. MAKING OATHS IN JUDICIAL MATTERS

A. ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT OF SWEARING JUDICIAL OATHS...

1. Both Jesus and James qualified their statements concerning oaths

a. Matthew 5:34 ff - "swear not at all" is immediately qualified by Jesus to refer to flippant and hypocritical oaths commonly voiced by the people

b. James 5:12 - the command "do not swear" is also qualified by James to refer to the same kind of meaningless oaths

2. Also, consider the following points:

a. God has sworn an oath to us - Hebrews 6:16-18

b. Jesus was willing to answer under oath before the Sanhedrin court - Matthew 26:63-64

c. Paul made solemn oaths in his epistles - 2 Corinthians 1:23; Galatians 1:20

d. An angel of God swore an oath - Revelation 10:5-7

B. IN LIGHT OF THESE ARGUMENTS...

1. Some understand Jesus and James to condemn only the flippant, profane and hypocritical oaths...

a. Used to make impressions

b. Used to spice daily conversations

...but were never intended to be kept

2. Therefore the EXCEPTION to not swearing oaths can be:

a. Solemn oaths made in judicial circumstances

b. Those oaths on occasions of solemn religious importance (as in the case of Paul)

C. I PREFER TO TAKE THE "SAFE" COURSE...

1. In other words, to "swear not at all"
2. Fortunately, in this country we are allowed the option to "confidently affirm"

-- But I would not judge brethren who themselves solemnly and honestly "swear oaths" in judicial circumstances

CONCLUSION

1. The righteousness of the kingdom is to exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees...

a. They would often spice their statements with vows and oaths in order to be believed...

b. Christians are to be so truthful, their "yes" means "yes" and their "no" means "no"

-- So truthful and trustworthy are the disciples of Christ to be, it would not be necessary for them to swear oaths or have to say "I promise" in order to be trusted

2. Can this be said of us, when people know that we are Christians?

a. Can others "bank" on our words?

b. When we say we will do something, is it as good as done? May the words of our Lord remind us that even our speech reflects

either honor or dishonor upon the God we serve!

Matthew 5:38-42

Matthew 5:38-42 Matthew 5:38-42, Sacrificing

What does “an eye for an eye” mean? Most of the time when people use this term they mean payback. We are a world that is built on giving payback. Movies are built upon the idea of getting people back. Today the idea of “an eye for eye” means retaliation or retribution. It appears from reading Matthew 5:38-42 that the Jews in the first century also had this idea. Is this what the Law meant when God taught the principle of an eye for an eye?

First, the Lord specifically condemned retaliation and personal retribution in the Law of Moses.

You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:18 ESV) When we read about the principle of an eye for an eye, it is always given in terms of Israel’s civil law, not for personal retribution. You will notice this in Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, and Deuteronomy 19:21, which is below. The judges shall inquire diligently, and if the witness is a false witness and has accused his brother falsely, then you shall do to him as he had meant to do to his brother. So you shall purge the evil from your midst. And the rest shall hear and fear, and shall never again commit any such evil among you. Your eye shall not pity. It shall be life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot. (Deuteronomy 19:18-21 ESV)

God had given guidance to the judges of Israel when deciding cases that the punishment is supposed to fit the crime. This was to mitigate against the temptation to try to get more than what was just. Punishment should not be less than the crime (“Your eye shall not pity”) but the punishment must not be more than the crime (“life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth”). This was God’s principle for the court system and the judgments they passed. This law did not teach individuals to harm the other person as equally as they have harmed you (cf. Leviticus 19:18; Proverbs 25:21; Proverbs 24:29).

Understanding God’s Law (Matthew 5:39-42)

Jesus states the principle for living for God’s people and then gives four illustrations to show what God expects. The principle is stated in verse 39: “Do not resist the one who is evil.” The point is not that we do not oppose evil or that we do not resist the devil, which God commands (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9). We are told to resist evil within the church so that it does not leaven the whole lump (1 Corinthians 5:13). Jesus is speaking about personal vengeance because this is how the teachers of the Law were applying the “eye for an eye” principle. Jesus is speaking about someone doing harm to us. How are we supposed to deal with the person who does evil to us? The principle is that we will not resist or stand against the evildoer who harms us. Now what does Jesus mean by this? What does this look like? Jesus gives four illustrations to help us understand what this looks like in our lives.

Turn the other cheek (Matthew 5:39). The first illustration is a picture of a physical offense or insult. The slapping of a person on a cheek was the showing of extreme contempt for a person. We still use this idea as an idiom today: "It was a slap in the face." So what are you supposed to do when someone insults you, shows extreme contempt for you, or is deeply offensive to you? Jesus says to turn the other cheek. We do not respond in kind. We do not have the right to return fire with equal proportion because someone harmed us. Someone hurts us then we want to hurt them and we think we are justified in doing so. But Jesus reveals that we do not retaliate when harmed or insulted.

Give your cloak (Matthew 5:40). Next, Jesus says that if someone would sue you to take your tunic, give your cloak as well. There are a few things we need to consider to have the proper understanding of what Jesus is teaching. First, we must notice that you are being sued. This is not a picture of a robbery but a picture that we owe something to the person and they have gone to court for what is owed. Second, we must understand what it means to give one's cloak. Under the Law of Moses the cloak was one of the Israelites' rights.

If you lend money to any of my people with you who is poor, you shall not be like a moneylender to him, and you shall not exact interest from him. If ever you take your neighbor's cloak in pledge, you shall return it to him before the sun goes down, for that is his only covering, and it is his cloak for his body; in what else shall he sleep? And if he cries to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate. (Exodus 22:25-27 ESV)

Notice that even if a cloak was given in a pledge, it was to be returned to him that night for his covering to stay warm. The cloak was a right for every Israelite. So think about that Jesus says you give the one who sues you your cloak. The point is that we are to be willing to pay our debts and even more than owe. Someone sues you for your tunic, you give your cloak also. You give what is owed and be willing to give even more. There is a practical example of this in the New Testament with Zacchaeus. He learned this principle in Luke 19:8 when he says that if he had defrauded anyone, he would repay it four times over. This is exactly what Jesus is teaching. We give above and beyond what is owed to those whom we owe. The person had the right to keep his cloak, but Jesus says to give that also.

Go two miles (Matthew 5:41). Jesus illustrates this idea further with something from Roman times. The Romans could commandeer civilians to carry the luggage of military personnel for a prescribed distance, one Roman mile. Rather than only going one mile, Jesus teaches going two miles. Notice the picture again is not doing the bare minimum. If you are compelled to do something, be willing to go even further. Cheerfully accept the imposition. Do not insist upon your rights but be willing to do more.

Give (Matthew 5:42). The final illustration is the willingness to give your property to another. The implication is that this is something the person genuinely needs. We are not fulfilling wants and wish lists. But we do not refuse those who have a legitimate need for something. We will not see our property as ours but as gifts of God that we give to those who have need. The Message

So what is Jesus teaching are the characteristics of those who belong in his kingdom? First, we do not retaliate. An eye for an eye does not mean we get to respond with equal treatment to those who wrong us or do evil against us. There is no justification in saying, "He started it." Second, we

are not here to make much of our rights. You will notice in each of these illustrations we are seeing our rights being voluntarily revoked. We do not say, "I have a right." We give up our rights for others. In Christ Jesus we do not say that we have a right. Personal sacrifice replaces personal retaliation, just as Jesus showed us in his own life. This is the big idea: we do not make our rights the basis for our relationships with others. Be prepared to take a lowly position as a humble servant. Be prepared to sacrifice your rights for a life of following Jesus. Be prepared to pay the price of imitating Jesus.

Third, Jesus followers go above and beyond. They do not look for doing the minimum for others. They go the extra mile. They give more than required. They do not look for the least they can do. God's people ask what else they can do.

Finally, these instructions are not what we do for other Christians or for those who treat us well. Go back to Matthew 5:39. The principle is to not resist the one who is evil. We are talking about doing good in the face of evil. Jesus is teaching the principle here that Paul would later teach to the Roman Christians.

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:14-21 ESV)

Justified retaliation is not the picture of a Christian. The picture of a Christian is selfless sacrifice. Give your cheek, give your tunic, give your body, and give your possessions. This is what life in the kingdom looks like.

Outline: Matthew 5:38-42

Outline: Matthew 5:38-42 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Responding To Evil (Matthew 5:38-42)

INTRODUCTION

1. When someone treats you wrong, how do you respond?

a. Do you react in kind, treating evil with evil?

b. Do you just stand there and take whatever abuse is given?

-- What is the proper way to respond to evil?

2. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus taught concerning the righteousness of the kingdom...

a. He did so by contrasting it with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees

1) Noting how the Law had often been interpreted and applied

2) Declaring what He expected of His disciples

b. We have seen Jesus contrast this righteousness in such matters

as:

1) Murder and anger - Matthew 5:21-26

2) Adultery - Matthew 5:27-30

3) Divorce - Matthew 5:31-32

4) Swearing Oaths - Matthew 5:33-37

[In this lesson, we shall look at what Jesus taught concerning

"vengeance" (Matthew 5:38-42) as we discuss "Responding To Evil". First,

let's compare...] I. THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION

A. CONCERNING "AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH"...

1. It is found in Exodus 21:24-25

2. A parallel passage is Deuteronomy 19:21

B. THESE STATEMENTS WERE LAWS FOR CIVIL COURTS TO APPLY...

1. Notice carefully Deuteronomy 19:15-21; Exodus 21:22-23
2. They were given to guide the priests in meriting out proper punishment

C. WHAT THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES HAD DONE...

1. Interpreted these statements so as to justify personal retribution!
2. Applied them by frequently taking matters of revenge into their own hands

-- Just as many people do today!

D. THE LAW REPEATEDLY FORBAD "PERSONAL" VENGEANCE...

1. Consider Leviticus 19:18; Proverbs 20:22; Proverbs 24:29
2. In both Old Testament and New Testaments, the matter of vengeance was to be left up to God and His duly appointed agent: civil government! - cf. Romans 12:19; Romans 13:1-4

[There really is no difference between the Law and what we find in the New Testament in this regard: Personal vengeance has no place in the lives of those who are the children of God!

Now let's examine more closely...] II. THE PROPER RESPONSE TO EVIL

A. JESUS PROCLAIMED TWO PRINCIPLES...

1. Do not resist an evil person (Matthew 5:39a)
 - a. Not only should you not take vengeance into your own hands...
 - b. But don't even oppose (resist) the evil person when the evil is being done!
2. Respond to evil by doing good! (Matthew 5:39-42)
 - a. Jesus illustrates this principle with several examples...
 - 1) Responding to physical abuse (Matthew 5:39 b)
 - a) "Turn the other cheek"
 - b) This may refer to offering the other cheek as an

expression of love

2) Responding to a civil suit, by giving more than what the person is suing! (Matthew 5:40)

3) Responding to government oppression, by offering to do more than what is being demanded of you! (Matthew 5:41)

4) Responding to those asking for help, by giving them what they ask! (Matthew 5:42)

b. In each case, the principle is the same

1) We are not to resist the person...

a) Who would mistreat us

b) Who would try to deprive us of our possessions

2) Instead, respond in a positive manner...

a) Demonstrate love towards them

b) Do so by freely giving them more than they were hoping to gain by force, oppression, or manipulation!

B. IS THIS TO BE TAKEN LITERALLY?

1. Why not?

a. We have several O.T. examples...

1) Joseph, in forgiving his brothers - Genesis 45:4-15

2) David, in sparing the life of Saul - 1 Samuel 24:8-15

3) Elisha, in feeding the army of the Arameans - 2 Kings 6 :

8-23

b. We also have several N.T. examples...

1) Jesus, our prime example - 1 Peter 2:20-23

2) Stephen, when he was being stoned - Acts 7:59-60

3) The Hebrew Christians, who "joyfully accepted" the plundering of their goods - Hebrews 10:32-34

c. We have the clear teaching of Paul in Romans 12:19-21...

1) We are not to avenge ourselves

2) We must seek to overcome evil with good

2. If not, then how do we apply these words of Jesus?

a. What does Jesus mean?

b. Give some examples of how to apply these teachings... ???

C. ARE WE TO APPLY IT "UNCONDITIONALLY"?

1. I.e., must we decide who is "worthy" to receive this kind of treatment?

a. Jesus does not give us any indication that we are to use "discretion"

b. Paul does give some qualifying instructions (e.g., 2 Th 3:10)...

1) But it applies to those who are Christians

2) And we have a responsibility to "judge" those in the church, leaving those outside to God - 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

2. I do find striking the attitude of Christians in the second century, A.D.:

a. "Do good, and give liberally to all who are in need from the wages God gives you. Do not hesitate about to whom you should not give. Give to all. For God wishes gifts to be made to all out of His bounties." (Hermas, 135 A.D.)

b. "And he said to love not only our neighbors but also our enemies, and to be givers and sharers not only with the good but also to be liberal givers towards those who take away our possessions." (Irenaeus, 185 A.D.)

c. "Do not judge those who is worthy and who is unworthy, for it is possible for you to be mistaken in your opinion. In the uncertainty of ignorance it is better to do good to the unworthy for the sake of the worthy, than by guarding against those who are less good not to encounter the good.

For by sparing and trying to test those who are well-deserving or not, it is possible for you to neglect some who are loved by God, the penalty for which is the eternal punishment of fire. But by helping all those in need in turn you must assuredly find some who are able to save you before God." (Clement of Alexandria, 190 A.D.)

-- These statements were written at a time when Christians were constantly mistreated, abused, and manipulated by others!

3. The teachings of Jesus in this passage are admittedly challenging...

a. It is opposed to what we might call "human nature"
b. But we are called upon to be "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4); in other words, to be more like God than men

4. As we will see in the next lesson, it is in order to be truly "sons of your Father in heaven" that Jesus teaches a standard of righteousness that far exceeds...

a. That of the scribes and Pharisees
b. That of most people today!

5. At the very least, let us expend as much energy...

a. In seeing how we can apply this passage to lives...
b. ...as many do trying to explain how it doesn't really mean what it appears to say!

CONCLUSION

1. Summarizing the teaching of Jesus concerning "Responding To Evil"...

a. We are not to resist evil
b. We are to respond by doing good in turn

2. We may never face the exact situations Jesus used to illustrate His

point...

a. But the principles can be applied to so many things we do face

b. E.g., how people treat us at work, in our communities, in our own families, in the church

Whenever mistreated, take the challenge to see how you might overcome evil with good. Then your "righteousness" will exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees!

Matthew 5:43-48

Matthew 5:43-48 Matthew 5:43-48, Love In 1958 Dr. Normal Pittenger published a critique of C.S. Lewis. Among his criticisms was the accusation that Lewis did not care much for the Sermon on the Mount. Lewis' responded to this accusation this way: As to "caring for" the Sermon on the Mount, if "caring for" here means "liking" or enjoying, I suppose

no one "cares for" it. Who can like being knocked flat on his face by a sledge hammer? I can hardly

imagine a more deadly spiritual condition than that of a man who can read that passage with tranquil pleasure. (C.S. Lewis, God In The Dock, 181)

We come to the final lesson of our Inside Out series, which is the final lesson of the fifth chapter of Matthew. This is the last of Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount where he quotes what the Pharisees and teachers of the Law were saying and answers that with what the Law of Moses actually taught. Remember that the teachers were lowering God's standards so that they would think that they are accomplishing God's law and have a way of righteousness. Jesus is destroying their thinking and showing them that they have not kept God's law and they need the grace of God if they are going to be righteous in God's sight. We saw this in the last paragraph where Jesus taught that a person is not to resist the one who is evil but to do good to those who try to harm you. No one has perfectly done this and this teaching again shows us our deficiency before God's high and holy character and law. The Sermon on the Mount is intended to destroy any sense of self-righteousness that we may feel. When Leviticus 19:18 taught to love your neighbor, the teachers of the law did not teach this to mean that we are to love every person that we know and come in contact with. Rather the teaching then sounded like this in Matthew 5:43, "You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy." Of course the Law of Moses did not teach to love your neighbor and hate your enemy. It only taught to love your neighbor. But these teachers of the law understood this exclude your enemies. We see this illustrated in Luke 10 when Jesus must teach the parable of the Good Samaritan to rid this false thinking. So when God declared that we are to love our neighbors, what did that mean? What did that look like?

Love Your Enemies (Matthew 5:44)

What our Lord meant when he said to love your neighbor was that you would love even your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Just stop for a moment and listen to that command. Let it sink into your heart. Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. It seems unthinkable! It is not the natural course of action for humans. The wonderful thing is that Jesus is not telling us to do something that he did not do himself. Consider how he loved his enemies. Romans 5 reminds us that he came to the earth while all of us were still enemies and died for us so that we could be saved from our sins. Jesus while on the cross prays for his enemies and persecutors. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). But it just seems impossible for us to do, doesn't it? How can we love our enemies and pray for those

who persecute us? Jesus is going to give the motivation and help we need to strive for this goal.

Basis For Loving Enemies: God's Character (Matthew 5:45)

Notice the basis given for loving your enemies is "so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven." What is the point? God's very nature and practice is to love all people, even enemies. As we noted, we see this in Jesus who loved his enemies and prayed for his persecutors. It is his character and nature. Children resemble their parents. Sons resemble their fathers. We do this so that we resemble our Father in heaven. We show that we are God's children and in relationship with him when we choose to love our enemies. But it is even more than this as you will notice in verse 45. Jesus does not merely say that you will be sons of your Father. But there is also a further explanation given. "For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust." Do you see the point that Jesus is making? You are to love your enemies because God does good to all. His sun does not just rise on the good but also on the evil. His rain does not only fall on the just but also on the unjust. God shows repeated and prolonged favor on all. We are to resemble the Father and our Father does good to all. We are showing the world that we are children of God when we love all people, including our enemies and not just our friends. Jesus said this also in John 13. A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." (John 13:34-35 ESV)

All people will know that we are disciples when we show love for others. God does the same. He has shown his love for all people.

Basis For Loving Enemies: Called To Be Different (Matthew 5:46-47)

The second reason we are supposed to love our enemies is because we are called to be different as lovers of God and disciples of Jesus. If we only love those who love us, what have we done that is so special? It is amazing that we think we are doing so well because we love people who love us! We think we are really nailing God's command because we love our friends and love people who are nice to us. Jesus says that this thinking is crazy. Almost every person does this. What credit is it to you that you love people who love you? You love your spouse, you love your children, you love your parents, and you love the people in this church. Big deal! Yet we can sometimes struggle with this, which shows how far removed we are from obeying this command. Loving people who love you is the easy part. Loving people who are your enemies is the hard part. Do not just love those who love you. Love everyone by doing good for all. This is expressed again in Matthew 5:47. Kindness and greetings to only those you like is also just like the world. Be gracious to all, not just your circle of friends and not just other Christians. Jesus removes all the fences and is breaking down all the walls. Our Lord has left no room for self with this command. We must think about others first, even if they are our enemies. The point Jesus is showing us is that people like us who have been beneficiaries of such undeserved graciousness ought to be able to understand this concept and apply it to others. They receive our undeserved kindness and graciousness because we have received the same from God. Be Perfect (Matthew 5:48)

In Matthew 5:48 we have a grand and amazing statement is also disturbing. "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect." This is the ideal: to be perfect. The ultimate mark of perfection is a love that is not determined by the loveliness or attractiveness found in the

person. This is how God loves. God's love is not controlled by the response of the individual. God simply loves because that is who he is. We are called to the same love. Our love for others is not controlled by the response of the individual. Our love is not determined by the loveliness or attractiveness of the individual. We just love because we are adopting God's character in our lives.

Yet the command is also disturbing in a way. To be perfect like our Father in heaven is the highest of standards. Some have tried to make this idea a little easier by pointing out the word for perfect also means complete and mature. While this is true, because our comparison is to the character of God, it does not help us any. To be complete like our Father is complete or mature as our Father is mature is just as daunting. This command brings us full circle back to the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, that we are to be poor in spirit. When we look at the law of God and see his character in that perfect law, it causes us to be poor in spirit and mourn over our sins, which is what God desires from us. This does not lessen our obligation to the law. This does not mean that since we have failed that we are not required to keep the law. No, the goal is that we must be perfect like our heavenly Father. We strive for this. We strive for perfect love. We strive to turn the other cheek. We strive to go the extra mile. We strive to be truthful. We strive for purity. We strive for not being angry with others. We strive to not insult. That is what the law of God commands. But at this point we do not read this commands, give each other high fives, thinking that we are doing it. We have not done what God says. We still are not doing what God says even though we have been Christian perhaps for many, many years. Does God want us to keep striving? Absolutely. We are in the process of being sanctified by the word of God. But more than this, we are also to read these commands like our need to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, and bow the knee before God, crushed by our failure, declaring the words, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." Paul was always striving and pressing on to the goal while at the same time saying that he was the chief of sinners and God showed him mercy. The law shows us the character of God and our utter deficiency before him. Let us seek God's will and strive to obey, all the while understanding that we need to grace of God to bring us home for all of our failures and shortcomings. Know that God loves me still, even when I fall short and even when I was an enemy. Now we go and love our enemies, reflect the love of God to the world.

Outline: Matthew 5:43-48

Outline: Matthew 5:43-48 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Acting Like Our Father (Matthew 5:43-48)

INTRODUCTION

1. When Jesus spoke about "Responding To Evil", He laid down two principles:

- a. Do not resist an evil person - Matthew 5:39 a
- b. Respond to evil by doing good - Matthew 5:39-42

2. This is certainly a challenging task Jesus put before His disciples...

- a. It is tempting to respond to evil in kind
- b. Especially when the mistreatment comes from an enemy!

3. But in the text for this lesson (Matthew 5:43-48)...

- a. We find Jesus teaching concerning the treatment of our enemies
- b. We are told why we ought to act in the manner described in Matthew 5:38-42 [Keeping in mind the context of the sermon on the mount, let's first

compare...] I. THE LAW OF MOSES AND THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION

A. THE LAW DID NOT SAY "HATE YOUR ENEMY"...

- 1. It did teach to "love your neighbor as yourself" - Leviticus 19:18
- 2. But it also taught kindness was to be shown to your enemy
- Exodus 23:4-5; Proverbs 25:21-22

B. THE TRADITIONAL INTERPRETATION HAD MISAPPLIED THE LAW...

- 1. Though it did enjoin the command to "love your neighbor"...
- 2. It inferred from this command one had the right to "hate your enemy" - Matthew 5:43

a. "This phrase is not in Leviticus 19:18, but is a rabbinical inference which Jesus repudiates bluntly. The Talmud says

nothing of love to enemies." (Word Pictures In The New Testament, Vol. I, Robertson)

b. "The rabbis corrupted Leviticus 19:18, which sums up the Law of Israel, by adding 'and hate your enemy.' By thus tampering with Scripture, they intended to define their neighbors to include only Jews and to exclude Samaritans and Gentiles."

(Believers' Study Bible)

[Having noted the difference between what the Law actually taught and the wrong interpretation given by the scribes and Pharisees, let's now consider what Jesus taught on...] II. HOW TO TREAT OUR ENEMIES

A. JESUS REQUIRES THAT WE...

1. "Love" our enemies
 - a. Not hate them
 - b. Rather, show "active good will" towards them
2. "Bless" those who curse us
 - a. They may speak evil of us
 - b. But in response we are to speak kindly of them
3. "Do good" to those who hate us
 - a. They may either ignore us or do evil things to us
 - b. Yet we are to treat them kindly in either case
4. "Pray" for those who spitefully use us and persecute us
 - a. Notice, we are to pray FOR them, not just about them
 - b. I.e., pray for their well-being, salvation, etc.

B. THIS IS AN EXPANSION OF THE PRINCIPLES IN Matthew 5:39-42...

1. Don't seek vengeance!
2. Don't resist an evil person!
3. Instead, react by manifesting aggressive love!

[Why should we respond to our enemies in this way? Jesus goes on to provide...] III. REASONS TO REACT IN THIS WAY

A. "THAT YOU MAY BE SONS OF YOUR FATHER IN HEAVEN"...

1. That is, to demonstrate ourselves to be truly His children!

- Matthew 5:45 a

2. What is our Father like?

a. He gives material blessings to both the evil and the good,

both the righteous and the unrighteous - Matthew 5:45 b

b. He is kind to the unthankful and evil - Luke 6:35-36

c. He offered His Son while we were yet sinners and enemies!

- Romans 5:8; Romans 5:10

d. He loved us before we loved Him - 1 John 4:10

3. As taught elsewhere, we are to imitate our Heavenly Father

- 1 John 4:11; Ephesians 4:31 to Ephesians 5:2

B. TO BE DIFFERENT THAN "TAX-COLLECTORS"...

1. In Jesus' day, they were despised by the Jews, because they made themselves rich by collecting taxes from their fellow-men for the Roman government

2. And yet, these tax-collectors would...

a. Love those who loved them

b. Greet cordially those who greeted them

3. We are no different if our love is limited to our "brethren"

or "friends"! - Matthew 5:46-47

C. TO BE "PERFECT" AS OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN IS PERFECT...

1. The word "perfect" means "brought to completion, full-grown, lacking nothing"

2. In this context, it has reference to the matter of showing love and mercy; note the parallel passage:

a. "Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful." - Luke 6:36

b. "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in

heaven is perfect." - Matthew 5:48

3. When we display love and mercy to our enemies...

- a. We are "complete," "full-grown" in demonstrating love
- b. Just like our Father when He shows kindness to evil and unthankful men!

CONCLUSION

1. If we really want to be...

- a. "sons of your Father in heaven"
- b. "perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect"

2. It is imperative that we be influenced...

- a. More by the teachings and example of the Son of God
- b. Than by the attitudes and example of the "tax-collectors"! Are you "Acting Like Our Father" who is in heaven? Or do you emulate

the most carnal people around us? May the "sayings" (cf. Matthew 7:28) of our Lord provoke us to consider the proper way to respond to our enemies and to any who might abuse us!

Matthew 6:1-18

Matthew 6:1-18 Matthew 6:1-18, For Real or For Show

Today we enter into the next segment of our study on the Sermon on the Mount. In the last section which we read from Matthew 5:17-48 we read about Jesus correcting the false teachings concerning the Law of Moses. The Pharisees and teachers of the law had lowered God's high and holy law so that they could, as they believed, attain righteousness. Jesus restores the message of the Law to show them that they have failed before God's law and are in need of the Savior.

Before we look at the details of the message I would like for us to look at the form of the sermon that is given to us. You will notice that there are three aspects of practicing righteousness that Jesus addresses in the first 18 verses of Matthew 6. Jesus addresses giving (Matthew 6:1-4), praying (Matthew 6:5-6), and fasting (Matthew 6:16-18). You will notice the significant similarities of these three sections. In each section Jesus begins with a warning of what not to do (Matthew 6:1-2; Matthew 6:5; Matthew 6:16) and then continues to teach what to do (Matthew 6:3-4; Matthew 6:6; Matthew 6:17-18). Notice resting in between these three aspects of practicing righteousness is what we call the model prayer or the Lord's prayer. The model prayer is bookended by warnings about practicing good works. We will look at the significance of this location later in the lesson. For now, I just want us to see the structure of this section, seeing the similarities in how Jesus addresses our acts of righteousness so that we can learn from the repetition Jesus gives. The Warning (Matthew 6:1-2; Matthew 6:5; Matthew 6:16)

Practicing righteousness and doing good works is the life of the Christian. Remember back in Matthew 5:16 Jesus said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven." We are to do good works so that people will see what you have done and glorify God. But there is a danger in this and the Pharisees and people of the day had fallen into a particular sin. Therefore, in each of the three sections Jesus begins with a warning. He teaches his disciples what they must not do when they are doing good works before God. The warning is that we would not do these good works with the motivation that other people see us. Listen to this in Matthew 6:1. "Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them." In Matthew 6:5 they are praying in the synagogues and street corners to be seen by others. In Matthew 6:16 they are disfiguring their faces when they fast to be seen by others. Do not desire to be seen by others. Do not let your motivation for doing good to be that you want others to see or know what you are doing. What a warning for how subtle our pride is! There is no greater rival for the love of God that we owe him than our own human ego.

Notice what Jesus says about this. If our motivation is for self when we do good works, then we have already received our reward (Matthew 6:2) and we will have no reward from our Father (Matthew 6:1). We must hear this and let it sink into our hearts. First, the praise of other people is all the reward you will receive. How trivial! How useless! How temporary! You were able to get people to honor you for what you did. What an exchange of our eternal reward for a temporary moment of praise! What foolishness! Second, doing good can be of no worth to God when we are

doing it to honor ourselves rather than God. Our hearts must be pure and God must be the object of everything. Proper giving, prayer, and fasting requires a proper heart that is not motivated by self.

How easy it is to have other people know what we are doing! How hard it is to not desire to draw attention to ourselves. Look at Matthew 6:2. Jesus says to not blow a horn every time you do something good. Do not advertise. Do not make a name for yourself. Do not do things in a way so that you will certainly receive praise for what you have done. Have you ever thought about why donors need to be given recognition? Why do we have to let people know about these kinds of donations? Why does their name go on the building or in some publication or what have you? The reason is because fewer donations would come in otherwise. People always do things for personal praise and honor. They are seeking glory. Humans are glory seekers. Humans are glory thieves, stealing the honor that rightly belongs to God. This is a sin of the heart and we must fight against it. You will notice that in each of the three sections Jesus calls such people hypocrites. They do good works for the show and not for the love of God. When you are being fake, then you have your reward here and have lost your reward with God. Please consider what Jesus declared. Jesus says that a person can give every appearance of righteousness and not be righteous at all! They can play the part and look the role but be nowhere near righteous. They are hypocrites. They are fooling other people. We must not be surprised by this. People are going to claim to be Christians and seem to be Christians before our eyes, but not be Christians in their hearts or in secret. Jesus had to deal with the fake people in his day and nothing has changed today.

How To Practice Righteousness (Matthew 6:3-4; Matthew 6:6; Matthew 6:17-18)

The principle of how to live before God is laid out for us in Matthew 6:3. "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing." When you act for God, forget about yourself and forget about others. Think about God only. Keep what you are doing between yourself and God. Do not even announce what you are doing to your own heart. Do not make a big deal about what you are doing in your own mind. Do not seek your own glory in your acts of kindness and righteousness. What a picture to say that we would be so secretive about what we are doing that the left hand would not know what the right hand is doing. You will notice this repetition throughout these three paragraphs. In verse 6 he says when you pray to go into your room and shut the door and not stand on the street corner or stand in the synagogue. When fasting Jesus says to wash your face and anoint your head so that you do not reveal what you are doing for the Lord.

What a danger we face! How we will try to change our appearance so that people will ask what is going on with us! We may think that we will not come out and tell people what we are doing for the Lord, but if they ask we will speak about it. So we act in certain ways and make ourselves look certain ways so that people will ask, giving us the opportunity to talk about what we did. This is the same sin. Do not think about yourself or others when you are doing your good deeds. Just do what you are called to do and do not think about what others think, if others know, or if others will commend you for what you have done.

Now consider our proper motivation. Jesus three times says that your Father sees in secret and he will reward you (Matthew 6:4; Matthew 6:6; Matthew 6:18). God sees what you are doing. We have spoken before about how God seeing in secret is a blessing or a curse depending on what you are doing. If you are a hypocrite, then the secret things you are doing and the sins you are committing

that you think no one knows about God sees. Your sin will find you out for God knows what you are doing. But if you are pure in heart and poor in spirit, then the secret things you are doing and the righteous acts you are performing that you think no one knows about God sees. Your righteous acts will find you out for God knows what you are doing. All that should matter to us is that God sees. God knows what I am doing for the Lord and it does not matter if anyone else knows or recognizes what I am doing. This is how we must approach our work in the kingdom of God.

Conclusion

So how can we work in the kingdom of God in a way that God approves? How can we make sure that we have the proper motives before we doing our acts of love and service?

First, ask ourselves what we are seeking from our righteous act? Are we seeking God's approval, self-approval, or people's approval? Are we keeping what we are doing to ourselves or do we feel the need to tell others about what we are doing? If we are doing these things because we want others to think well of us or for any other reason than seeking God's approval, then we have no reward with the Lord.

Second, we notice the structure of this paragraph at the beginning of the lesson. We see that prayer is in the center of the discussion. Prayer is the critical component for our acts of righteousness. Prayer must be the hub of our righteousness. There is perhaps no better way to check our hearts and rid ourselves of pride than to pray before we are about to do our good works. Pray for the right heart. Pray that God's will is being done. Pray that God is glorified and not us. Pray for the power to not tell others about this that you are doing. Pray for the joy of knowing that we are being pleasing to God. Let prayer lead our acts of righteousness.

Outline: Matthew 6:1-4

Outline: Matthew 6:1-4 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Charity That Pleases God (Matthew 6:1-4)

INTRODUCTION

1. Are you a charitable person?

a. If so, are you sure that your charity is pleasing to God?

b. Were you aware that some forms of charity actually displease God?

2. In Jesus' day, there were religious people who were extremely charitable...

a. The Pharisees, for example, would give ten percent to God - e.g.,

Luke 18:11-12

b. They tithed even the smallest of seeds - Luke 11:42

-- But as indicated in these two cases, not all charity or giving pleased God

3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus taught His disciples to have a righteousness which exceeded that of the Pharisees - Matthew 5:20

a. Jesus first contrasted the "righteousness of the kingdom" with what the scribes and Pharisees were teaching

b. He then contrasted what He expected of His disciples with what the scribes and Pharisees were practicing

[In Matthew 6:1-4, we find the first of several examples concerning the practice of righteousness. In it, we learn about "Charity That Pleases

God." Note first what Jesus taught about...] I. THE BASIC PRINCIPLE GOVERNING ACTS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS (1)

A. CONCERNING THIS VERSE...

1. Some manuscripts, upon which the KJV and NKJV are based, have the Greek word *eleemosunen*

- a. Translated "alms", or "charitable deeds"
 - b. Which would make this verse refer specifically to almsgiving, or charitable deeds
2. Older manuscripts, upon which the ASV and NASV are based, have the Greek word *dikaiousunen*
- a. Translated "righteousness"
 - b. Which would make verse one speaking in general terms, establishing the principle to be applied to ALL acts of righteousness
- Textual support seems strongest for *dikaiousunen*, making verse one an introductory statement concerning all righteous acts

B. THE BASIC PRINCIPLE...

1. Stated simply: we are not to do acts of righteousness to be seen of men - Matthew 6:1a
- a. Note: It is NOT to completely avoid ANY practice of righteousness before men - cf. Matthew 5:16
 - b. Rather, it is to avoid doing them JUST TO BE SEEN OF MEN
2. Therefore, it is proper to do good works before men...
- a. When we are trying to secure praise for GOD
 - b. But not when we are trying to secure praise for OURSELVES!

C. CONSEQUENCES OF IGNORING THIS BASIC PRINCIPLE...

1. If, in the innermost being of your heart, you do not mean to please and glorify God, He will not reward you!
2. What reward you may have (cf. Matthew 6:2; Matthew 6:5; Matthew 6:16) will be limited to the praise of men [Let's now consider how Jesus applies this to the matter of charitable deeds...]

A. WHAT "NOT" TO DO...

1. Don't be like the "hypocrites" (literally, "actors") - Matthew 6:2a
- a. Who sound trumpets in the synagogues and streets

- b. Who are looking to be honored by men
- 2. "They have their reward" - Matthew 6:2b
 - a. They receive exactly (and only) what they wanted: the praise of men
 - b. But remember verse one...
 - 1) They have no reward from the Father in heaven
 - 2) Neither in the present or in the future!

B. CHARITY THAT PLEASES GOD...

- 1. "Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing" - Matthew 6:3
 - a. This involves avoiding not only the praise of others, but self praise as well
 - b. Some thoughts by others on what this metaphor means:
 - 1) "The right [hand], [represents] me with my good deed; the left, me with my good opinion about my deed." (Lenksi)
 - 2) "The expression probably refers to the fact that as much as possible a person must keep his voluntary contribution a secret not only to others but even to himself; that is, he should forget about it, instead of saying in his heart, `What a good man, woman, boy, girl, am I!'" (Hendricksen)
 - c. How can one develop the ability to give in this way?
 - 1) Perhaps by giving so often it becomes "second nature"
 - 2) So that you do it without much thought (just as with anything you do often)
- 2. Note: Jesus is not condemning public giving per se - cf. Acts 2:44-45; Acts 4:34-37
 - a. He is condemning the spirit which seeks publicity

b. He is teaching "secret-giving" in the sense of "secret to one's self"

c. "The true Christian cares not how much men hear of his public charities, nor how little they hear of his private ones." (Toplady)

C. THE REWARD FOR CHARITY THAT PLEASES GOD...

1. "Your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly." - Matthew 6:4

2. The reward may be experienced to some degree in this life-Psalms 41:1-3

3. Without a doubt it will be experienced on the day of judgment

a. For every secret thing will be made known - Ecclesiastes 12:14

b. We will experience the benefit of the good we have done-2 Corinthians 5:10

CONCLUSION

1. Christians who have been blessed materially have been given a charge to be "rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share" - 1 Timothy 6:17-19

2. But if we desire that our charity will indeed store up "a good foundation for the time to come"...

a. We must be sure to practice "Charity That Pleases God"

b. We must learn to give, not to be seen of men, but to glorify God

c. We must learn to give without self-praise for what we are doing Do our charitable deeds exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees in

Jesus' day, not only in quantity, but in the quality of our giving? May the Lord keep us free from the giving of hypocrites!

Outline: Matthew 6:5-15

Outline: Matthew 6:5-15 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Prayer That Pleases God (Matthew 6:5-15)

INTRODUCTION

1. A wonderful privilege enjoyed by the children of God is prayer...
 - a. Through prayer we can receive mercy and grace to help in time of need - Hebrews 4:14-16
 - b. Through prayer we can find peace that guards our hearts and mind - Php_4:6-7
2. But the privilege of prayer assumes God will heed our prayers...
 - a. Not all prayers are acceptable to God - cf. Proverbs 28:9
 - b. Indeed, God does not hear the prayers of all men - cf. Isaiah 59 : 1-2; 1 Peter 3:12
 - c. Jesus described the prayer of one man which did not please God - Luke 18:9-14
3. Do we know what qualifies as "Prayer That Pleases God"?
 - a. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus had much to say about prayer
 - b. Especially the kind of prayer which finds favor in God's sight

[In this study, let's take a look at Matthew 6:5-15, where Jesus taught

His disciples regarding prayer. First, we find Jesus telling us...] I. WHAT "NOT" TO DO IN REGARDS TO PRAYER

A. DO NOT BE LIKE THE HYPOCRITES...

1. Who love to pray...
 - a. Standing in the synagogues
 - b. On the corners of the streets
2. This they do "that they may be seen of men" - Matthew 6:5

B. "THEY HAVE THEIR REWARD..."

1. That is, they are indeed seen by men
2. But that is the extent of their reward (the praise of men)
3. They have no reward or blessing from God!

C. JESUS IS NOT CONDEMNING ALL PUBLIC PRAYING...

1. Evident from the fact that He Himself prayed in public - Matthew 11:25;
John 11:41

2. As did Paul - Acts 27:35

[The emphasis is the same as stated in Matthew 6:1, "do not do your [deeds of righteousness] before men, TO BE SEEN BY THEM."

How, then, are we to pray as to be heard by God?] II. PRAYER THAT PLEASES GOD

A. OFFERED "TO BE SEEN OF GOD," NOT MEN...

1. This is the main idea of "praying in secret" - Matthew 6:6
2. "The sincere and humble worshiper, one who is not interested in making a public display for the sake of enhancing his prestige, will find the secluded nook or den to be most appropriate for his devotions." (unknown)
3. The person who prays much in secret is praying to be seen of God, not men!

B. OFFERED "TO BE HEARD OF GOD," NOT MEN...

1. Avoiding the use of "vain repetitions" - Matthew 6:7
 - a. As was often practiced by the heathen religions
 - b. "The heathen tried to tire out their gods with such endless prayers. Mere formulas were repeated over and over again; the Jews had such prayer formulas, Catholics also have them in the form of their rosary." (Lenski)
2. This is not condemning all repetition, but "vain" (insincere, useless) repetition
 - a. Jesus repeated Himself in prayer at Gethsemane - Matthew 26:36-44
 - b. Paul repeated his requests concerning his "thorn in the

flesh" - 2 Corinthians 12:7-8

3. Since "your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him," prayers to be heard by God do not have to be filled with superfluous words

a. Have you ever noted the brevity of prayers recorded in the Scriptures?

b. God is not swayed the by quantity of words, but by the quality of the heart!

C. OFFERED ACCORDING TO THE PATTERN...

1. The phrase "in this manner" suggests that this prayer...

a. Is a pattern for praying

b. Not a liturgical exercise as sometimes practiced

2. The pattern of proper prayer:

a. First, simplicity

1) Notice the word "therefore"

a) It connects what follows with what was said before

b) Jesus' pattern for prayer is an "illustration" in contrast to the "many words" used by the heathen

2) In the prayer itself, note the brevity of words

b. Then, in its content, proper prayer includes...

1) Reverence for God and His "Name" (i.e., His being and character) - Matthew 6:9

2) Prayer for the progress of God's Kingdom and His Will on the earth - Matthew 6:10

3) Asking for physical necessities - Matthew 6:11

4) Also, our spiritual needs

a) Forgiveness of sins - Matthew 6:12

b) Protection and deliverance from evil - Matthew 6:13

5) Praising God - Matthew 6:13

D. OFFERED WITH A MERCIFUL SPIRIT...

1. As indicated in the pattern prayer itself - Matthew 6:12; Matthew 6:14-15
2. Otherwise, we cannot expect mercy for ourselves - cf. Matthew 18:21-23;
James 2:13
3. This must be very important to Jesus, for this is the only part of the pattern upon which He elaborates!

CONCLUSION

1. This is not the only occasion in which Jesus taught on prayer...
 - a. Later, His disciples would ask Him to teach them to pray - Luke 11:1-4
 - b. He taught them about the importance of persistence, faith and humility in prayer - Luke 11:5-13; Luke 18:1-14
2. But in this sermon Jesus sought to stress prayer that is designed...
 - a. To be seen by God, not man
 - b. To be heard by God, not man

-- Who knows better what kind of prayer that is, than He who now sits at the right hand of God!

If we believe that God hears prayer (Psalms 65:2) and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6), then let's be sure we offer the kind of "Prayer That Pleases God"!

Outline: Matthew 6:16-18

Outline: Matthew 6:16-18 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Fasting That Pleases God (Matthew 6:16-18)

INTRODUCTION

1. You don't hear much about fasting these days

a. In a culture where the landscape is dotted with shrines to the "Golden Arches" and an assortment of "Pizza Temples" (Richard Foster, *Celebration Of Discipline*, p.47)...

b. ...fasting seems out of place, out of step with the times

2. But the Scriptures have much to say about fasting...

a. There is more teaching in the NT on fasting than repentance and confession!

b. Jesus taught more on fasting than on baptism and the Lord's Supper!

-- Yet some question whether fasting is something for Christians today

3. In His sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught concerning "Fasting That Pleases God"...

a. In connection with other acts of righteousness like charity and prayer

b. In calling His disciples to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees

[In this study, we will examine Matthew 6:16-18, and consider what Jesus had to say about "Fasting That Pleases God." But in so doing, let's

begin by answering a few questions...] I. SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST TODAY?

A. THE EXAMPLE AND TEACHING OF JESUS...

1. He fasted during his forty day period of temptation in the

wilderness - Luke 4:1-2

2. In His teaching on the subject of fasting:

a. He assumed His disciples would fast -- He said "when" not "if" - Matthew 6:16-17

b. He said they would fast when He was gone - Matthew 9:14-15

c. He taught:

1) How to fast so as to incur God's good pleasure - Matthew 6 :
16-18

2) When done properly, fasting would incur God's good
pleasure - Matthew 6:18 b

3) Fasting should be done only when appropriate - Matthew 9:16 -
17

4) There were occasions when prayer needed to be joined
with fasting - Matthew 17:20-21

B. THE EXAMPLES OF FASTING IN THE EARLY CHURCH...

1. The brethren at Antioch - Acts 13:1-3

a. Fasting in their service to the Lord

b. Fasting and praying as they send out Paul and Barnabas

2. The churches in Galatia - Acts 14:21-23

a. Done in EVERY church

b. When appointing elders

C. THE EXAMPLE OF PAUL FASTING AS A MINISTER...

1. He listed fasting among things which proved him as a minister
of Christ - cf. 2 Corinthians 11:23-28

2. Are we not commanded to imitate him, even as he imitated
Christ? - 1 Corinthians 11:1 (and both fasted in their service to God!)

[At the very least, we can say that it is not inappropriate for
Christians to fast today. Unless we have medical reasons not to fast,
we have very good examples to motivate us TO fast! But to be sure that

we fast for the right reason, we should answer another question...] II. WHY SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST?

A. PEOPLE OFTEN FAST TODAY FOR VARIOUS REASONS...

1. Some do it solely for health reasons
 2. Others do it only in times of grief and sorrow
 3. Still others do it as a way to gain self-control
- But these are not reasons Christians should fast in their service to God - cf. Colossians 2:20-23

B. CHRISTIANS SHOULD FAST WHEN SEEKING DIVINE HELP...

1. In the Old Testament; people of God fasted...
 - a. In times of war, or at the threat of it (Israel)
 - b. When loved ones were sick (David)
 - c. When seeking God's forgiveness (Ahab, Daniel)
 - d. When seeking God's protection (Ezra)
 2. In the New Testament; fasting occurred...
 - a. When dealing with temptations (Jesus)
 - b. When serving the Lord (the church at Antioch)
 - c. When beginning a work for the Lord (again at Antioch)
 - d. When selecting and appointing elders (in Galatia)
 3. Such fasting should be done in conjunction with prayer
 - a. For fasting, when done properly...
 - 1) Humbles the soul - Psalms 35:13
 - 2) Chastens the soul - Psalms 69:10
 - b. The prayers of the humble are more likely to be heard!
- cf. Ezra 8:21-23 [This being true, this should help us to answer the next question

specifically...] III. WHEN SHOULD CHRISTIANS FAST?

A. WHENEVER WE DESIRE GOD'S HELP...

1. These may be occasions on an individual level
 - a. When faced with difficult temptations

- b. When faced with the serious illness of a loved one
- 2. These occasions might be on a congregational level

- a. As when appointing elders
- b. As when sending out missionaries

B. WHENEVER SITUATIONS CALL FOR PERSISTENT PRAYER...

- 1. Such would be an occasion for fasting joined with prayer
- 2. Are we not taught that God is more likely to answer our

prayers...

- a. If we are persistent? - cf. Luke 18:1-8
- b. If we fast in the proper way? - cf. Matthew 6:17-18

[So whenever there is a matter requiring much prayer, fasting in conjunction with such prayer would be appropriate. Finally, let's take

a look at...] IV. FASTING THAT PLEASES GOD

A. NOT TO BE SEEN OF MEN...

- 1. As practiced by the hypocrites of Jesus' day, it involved:
 - a. Doing so with a "sad countenance"
 - b. Doing so with "disfigured faces" (perhaps by applying ashes?)

-- The only good such fasting might do them is win the praise of men, but certainly not of God! - Matthew 6:16

- 2. Rather, our fasting is to be seen of God

- a. To be done without any outward appearance of fasting - Mt 6:17

1) Therefore, it should include "anointing your head"

2) Also, "washing your face"

-- I.e., what people would normally do to as part of their daily ablutions

- b. By doing this, only God will see your fasting and He will reward you openly (perhaps by answering prayers offered

while fasting) - Matthew 6:18

B. NOT AS SOME REGULAR RITUAL...

1. This point Jesus made in Matthew 9:14-17
2. It should be done only when the occasion calls for it (such as situations where you would already be spending much time in prayer)

C. NOT WITHOUT TRUE REPENTANCE...

1. Cf. Isaiah 58:3-9
2. All the praying, all the fasting, is of no avail if it is not accompanied with penitent obedience on our part

D. SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS...

1. Don't go out and fast just because it sounds like "a neat thing to do"
 - a. Take the subject seriously and prayerfully
 - b. Fast only when the occasion is a serious one
 - c. One in which you desperately desire God's help
2. If you have never fasted before...
 - a. Start slow, fast only for brief periods of time
 - b. End slow, gradually breaking your fast with fresh fruits and vegetables in small amounts
3. Fast when you have time to spend in prayerful meditation
 - a. Remember the purpose for fasting
 - b. To humble oneself in God's sight; to seek a favorable answer to prayer for some important plea

CONCLUSION 1. There is much more that could be said on the subject of fasting (cf. Fasting - A Special Study)

2. But I hope this suffices to stimulate our thinking on a subject which has often been neglected in both study and practice
3. But implied in Jesus' teachings is that His disciples would fast,

and so it is important that we know what is involved in "Fasting
That Pleases God"

Now as useful as fasting might be, praying and fasting alone cannot
save a person who is lost. Paul found this out when he fasted three
days after coming to believe in Jesus as the Lord (Acts 9:3-9; Acts 22:6-16). Have you heeded
what Paul was told to do?

'And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash
away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord.' (Acts 22:16)

Matthew 6:7-9

Matthew 6:7-9 Matthew 6:7-9, The Basis of Prayer

Jesus is delivering his sermon while on the mountain to his disciples and the multitudes have gathered to hear him. He is teaching the people about what true righteousness in the kingdom of God looks like. In our last lesson we notice that Jesus taught a warning about performing acts of righteousness so that you can be seen by others. One of the righteous acts is prayer, about which Jesus goes into more detail.

I believe most Christians admit that prayer is a difficult discipline. There is a reason that the disciples as Jesus to teach them to pray. I want to slow down over this section where Jesus teaches about how to pray as a way to help us improve our prayer life and encourage a greater desire for prayer.

How Not To Pray (Matthew 6:7-8)

First, Jesus teaches that when we pray to not heap up empty phrases like the Gentiles do. The NASB reads, “meaningless repetition.” The Greek meaning is idle, thoughtless chatter. So the concern is that meaningless words are said without mind or heart. Notice that the Gentiles do this because they think they will be heard for their many words (6:7). They believed that the longer the prayer, the better to get their gods to listen. Jesus teaches us something very important. Saying certain words does not activate God or get his attention. But think about how often this model prayer that Jesus gives is used as meaningless repetition or thinking that these words activate God. Nor does saying more words make God more apt to listen. Nor does making the prayer really long get God to listen. We are called to just talk to God. So do not pray thinking that you have to say certain words or make your prayer a certain length.

Second, Jesus reminds his disciples that the reason you do not have to pray like the Gentiles is because “your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” How wonderful this is for us! God is not ignorant so that we need to instruct him nor think that we need to persuade him. Many will ask what the purpose of prayer is since God already knows. The purpose of prayer, at minimum, is the opening of our hearts to God, inviting him into our lives. Prayer pushes us to depend on God. When we do not pray, it is often because we are relying on ourselves. Prayer is a function of faith. One of the most important elements of effective praying is the deepening of our relationship with the Father. So do not pray as if God does not know what you need. Pray in faith for God to act regarding your requests.

How To Pray (Matthew 6:9)

Before we consider how Jesus begins this prayer as he teaches his disciples, it is useful for us to consider the structure of the prayer. You will notice that there are six requests in this prayer. There are three requests directed toward the glory and praise of God: hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, and your will be done. Following this there are three requests directed toward the

daily needs of the disciples: give us this day our daily bread, forgive us our debts, and lead us not into temptation. These six things teach us how to pray. Notice that Jesus does not say to repeat this pray or say these words. Rather, Jesus says to “pray like this.” This is the form and basis for how we pray. But now we see something very special as this prayer begins. “Our Father in heaven” is how we are taught to begin. To be able to call God our Father speaks to the intimate personal relationship disciples can have with God. This relationship exists to those who are his children. They are the ones who can say, “our Father.” This reminds us of what we read in the opening of the Gospel of John.

He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:11-13 ESV) To those who received Jesus, he gave them the right to become children of God which means that God is our Father. Only those who have received the gospel are privileged to say this. I hope we can appreciate this idea when it is presented to us in the scriptures.

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. (1 John 3:1 ESV)

Now the idea of God being Father is not new to the scriptures. In Psalms 68:5 God is called “a father to the fatherless.” God calls himself Israel’s father in Deuteronomy 32:6. But very few people ever personally called God as their father in the writings we have. It is so special that God is called our Father which should draw us into prayer. Our God constantly pictures himself as a loving father. Think about the parable of lost things that Jesus told in Luke 15. Regarding who we call the prodigal son, consider that God is pictured as a longing father desiring and waiting for the son’s return. Our Father is the Lord God who is welcoming us into his presence. Think about all that God does as he shows himself to be the perfect loving Father. God does not merely forgive us, which is amazing in and of itself. God transforms our relationship with him so that we are his children and not slaves (Romans 8:15-16; Galatians 4:4-5). This is the idea that God gives about us bring adopted. God cleanses us from our sins and gives us a new name (Revelation 2:17; Revelation 3:12).

These are beautiful concepts regarding our adoption. Our relationship is transformed from outsiders to children, and we are given a new name, just like the adoption process. Adoption is amazing because it shows the love and will of the parent. He chose you and made you his. There is no such thing as an unplanned adoption. With your spotted past and messy life God chose you to belong to him, to be his child belonging to his family. Why did God adopt you? Simply put, because he wanted to.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will. (Ephesians 1:3-5 NRSV)

God has done everything so that you can be his child. An adopting parent does not ask the child if he can provide for his own clothing, college tuition, and place to stay if adopted. The adoption means that God is stepping in and taking care of what we could not take care of ourselves. God’s

declaration is that he loves you, wants you to belong to him, and has signed the adoption papers so that you are his. God did not make you his child because of what you have or what you did.

Now I think it is important to say something right now and it is shame that we need to, but it is necessary because of our culture. Do not confuse your earthly father with your heavenly Father. Here is what I mean by that. I will fail my children as a father, as much as I love them. But God never fails. God as Father always does good by you. God does not have a bad day and take it out on you. No good father says, "You made a mistake and are therefore no longer my child." But think about the parable of lost things and how that prodigal son was so hateful to his father and yet the father did not disown him, but loved him. What a broken thought we often bring into our relationship with God that we would think we were chosen because we were good and are rejected because we are bad. He chose us while we were still sinners and its not over when we slip. This is the message of Romans 8:38-39. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. Think about this with the history of Israel. God chose them, not because of who they were or what they did. The people of Israel sinned one day after God delivered them from Egyptian slavery. They are backed up against the Red Sea and they turn against Moses and God. The people rebel and sin at Mount Sinai. They sin repeatedly in the wilderness. The judges of Israel were a disaster and the people did what was right in their own eyes. The kings of Israel and Judah were extremely sinful, some worse than others but none of them were close to perfection or sinlessness. Judgments are befalling the people because of their sins. Yet what does God tell them over and over again? Return to me. He chose you while you were a sinner and its not over when you sin. God says if you will return to me I will heal you. In fact, God offers his true son as an offering for sins so that we can be forgiven.

Now why would we not pray to him? What an amazing grace that God has opened the door and said for us to come in and speak to him! Jesus has made it possible for us to come into the very throne room of God, and to come before him, not in fear, but as our father.

14 Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. 16 Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:14-16 ESV)

Notice what the throne is called: the throne of grace. It is the throne of grace that we can approach with confidence. How can it be that we have gained this access and this status as children of God! How deep the Father's love for us! Let us come to our loving Father. Let us draw near the throne of grace to receive mercy and grace to help in time of need. How could we not want to pray all day long!

Matthew 6:9-10

Matthew 6:9-10 Matthew 6:9-10, The Priority of Prayer

We are studying the model prayer that Jesus gave for his disciples as he teaches them to pray in the Sermon on the Mount. The first declaration of the prayer that Jesus gives us is to understand that God is our Father. Understanding this should change everything about our desire to pray. Seeing God as our perfect Father who draws us into relationship with him so that we can be his children. We noted in the last lesson that there is a structure to this prayer. The first three requests are directed toward the glory and praise of God. The final three requests are directed toward the needs of the disciples. In today's lesson we will look at these first three requests that are directed toward God and his glory.

Hallowed Be Your Name (Matthew 6:9)

On the surface this may not sound like a prayer request but a statement. But this is not simply saying that God's name is holy, as if we are recognizing that truth. Rather, we are praying that God's name would be honored as holy by all creation. We can see this in some modern translations of this phrase. Your name be honored as holy. (Matthew 6:9 HCSB)

May your name be kept holy. (Matthew 6:9 NLT)

May your name be honored (Matthew 6:9 NET)

God's name must be upheld as holy and we are praying that all people would do so. To honor his name as holy means we hold his nature, character, and personality in reverence. This is what worship is all about: revering his name. We are praying for and calling for the true worship of God. The scriptures give us a concept of this honor and reverence in many places. Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth! (Psalms 46:10 ESV) But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him. (Habakkuk 2:20 ESV)

These concepts should impress upon us how we are addressing God as Father. While he is our Father, there is a respect and honor that he deserves. Some has suggested that "Abba, Father" means something like saying in prayer, "Dear daddy." Many scholars have written that this is not true and is a strong overstatement of the meaning. Just because little children used the word "Abba" for daddy does not mean that was the only way the word was used. Older children and adults also used the word "Abba." We must enjoy that God is our Father, enjoying all the blessings of this new relationship he has created for us. But at the same time we must never forget who we are and who God is. This is seen when Jesus says, "Our Father in heaven." God is not on our level. He is in heaven. God is not on the same plane as us. His name must be upheld and honored as holy. We must hold God in reverence. Christ's followers are asking their Father to act so that they and an increasing number of others will reverence God, glorify God, and consider him holy. This is the goal of life, that all people in all places would honor the name of the Lord! Your

Kingdom Come (Matthew 6:10)

I have heard many arguments made that we cannot pray this prayer anymore because God's kingdom did arrive and was established as we read in Acts 2. So is Jesus instructing his disciples to pray for something only for the next two or three years and then no longer pray this? I have a difficult time believing that Jesus is modeling a prayer that would be invalid two or three years later. Further, God in his sovereignty was going to establish his kingdom on the day of Pentecost whether anyone was ready to accept it or pray for it or not. While the kingdom was established in Acts 2, is that the sum total of what it meant for the arrival of the kingdom of God?

We have spent quite a bit of time studying the concepts of the arrival of God's kingdom when we studied the book of Daniel this summer on Sunday and Wednesday nights. Think about how Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 describes the subjugation and destruction of wicked nations when the kingdom of God arrives. In Daniel 2 we see the stone, representing the kingdom of God, shattering the whole image in that dream which represented the world powers of the earth (Daniel 2:35; Daniel 2:44).

Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold, all together were broken in pieces, and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away, so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. (Daniel 2:35 ESV) And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever. (Daniel 2:44 ESV) The same occurs in the vision of the terrifying beasts in Daniel 7 (Daniel 7:17-18; Daniel 7:27).

These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom and possess the kingdom forever, forever and ever. (Daniel 7:17-18 ESV) And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; his kingdom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him. (Daniel 7:27 ESV)

These are pictures of God's kingdom. When God's kingdom arrived on the day of Pentecost that was not the end but the beginning. Jesus is reigning on the throne and subjugating his enemies and the enemies of his people. The apostle Paul explain that Jesus will continue to rule until all the enemies are put under his feet, and the last enemy that he must destroy is death (1 Corinthians 15:25-26). Jesus is repeatedly pictured as the conquering king (Psalms 2:5-12; Revelation 19:11-21; Revelation 22:20). The prayer for God's kingdom to come is not only the establishment of his kingdom, which occurred on the day of Pentecost, but the continued reign of God to destroy his enemies and subjugate the earth. Satan is called the prince of the power of air (Ephesians 2:2) and is seen using kingdoms and powers against the people of God (cf. Daniel 7; Revelation 12). But this is what Revelation 20 is picturing when Satan is cast into the lake of fire for his final judgment, along with all the peoples and nations that remained in rebellion to the Lord and did not repent.

Therefore, we are praying for the kingdom of God to come into the hearts of people so that they would obey and become citizens of his kingdom. We are praying for the kingdom of God to come

into this world so that we would see the destruction of the wicked nations that oppose God. We are praying for the kingdom of God to come against Satan and cast him into the lake of fire. Jesus is reigning on the throne and we are praying for him to continue to judge the earth with his righteous judgments. Notice that we are praying for God's will and purposes on earth to continue to be accomplished. Your Will Be Done (Matthew 6:10)

As you can gather at this point, this statement that God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven is really three concepts to communicate the same point. We are praying that God's name would be revered as holy and honored by all people. We are praying that God's kingdom would come and destroy the enemies of his rule. We are praying that God's will would be carried out and accomplished on this earth like it is carried out in heaven. Three facets of the same idea that God is carrying out his will. The message we are learn regarding how we pray to God is that our prayers must be about God's purposes. Our priorities are to be the promotion of God's reputation, the advancement of God's rule, and the performance of God's will. It would be our burning desire to see the Father honored on earth like in heaven, as we read in Revelation 4. But why is it important for our prayers to consist of focusing on God's praise and God's purposes? We must recognize that praying that God's will to be done, that his name be honored as holy, and his kingdom continue to come in this world means we are committing ourselves to learning all we can about his will and by his grace doing his will. We are committing ourselves to glorifying God's name through our good works (Matthew 5:16). Think about the hope and confidence this should give us in prayer. We are praying to our Father that we are trusting in him that his plans would be accomplished and his will would be done through all the chaos, evil, and suffering we see in the world. We are praying that we would be instruments to carry out his will on earth like it is carried out in heaven. We are praying that God would bring down the evildoers and destroy those who willfully rebel against him. We are recognizing the power of God's kingdom and how we will enjoy reigning with him if we will remain faithful to him.

Matthew 6:11-15

Matthew 6:11-15 Matthew 6:11-15, The Requests of Prayer

Jesus is teaching his disciples how to pray in this section of the Sermon on the Mount. After showing us that we can call the Lord our Father, Jesus taught us to pray for God and his will to be praised. Our desire must be that God's name be honored, his kingdom to continue to conquer evil, and his will to be accomplished on the earth. After teaching us to request things for God's glory, Jesus teaches us the ability to make requests concerning our lives. In these next three requests we are learning something that should draw us closer to God and motivate us to pray. We can pray to our Father for our personal needs. So let us look at what Jesus says we should pray for when it comes to our needs.

Give Us Today Our Daily Bread (Matthew 6:11)

This request represents everything we need for the day. This shows us that there is nothing too small that we cannot bring to God. I think this can sometimes be the fear of prayer. We think that there are certain things that we should not pray about. We might think that there are some things too small to take to God in prayer. But this is where the Father relationship imagery must help us. A parent wants to hear everything that is on the child's mind, even if they may be small or seemingly insignificant things. If it is bothering my child, then it is significant. There is nothing too small to bring to our Father. Our Father in heaven cares about our well-being. What you need today is what God wants to hear about from you. Think about how many scriptures try to reinforce this idea. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Php_4:6 ESV)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6-7 ESV)

What this request is intended to do for us is to bring us recognize a dependence on God each day. This request has a powerful spiritual benefit, teaching us faith. We must depend on God. God is the giver of all things that we have. This prayer makes us conscious of our day to day dependence on God. This is why God dealt with Israel the way he did in the wilderness: to cause them to depend on him. And you shall remember the whole way that the Lord your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not. And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord. (Deuteronomy 8:2-3 ESV)

Bring every need to God. Trust God to meet your needs, recognizing that everything comes from him (James 1:17). Jesus presents to us the urgency of prayer. We depend on him and bring him every need in life. Do Not Lead Us Into Temptation (Matthew 6:13)

This prayer request generates a lot of questions because we know that God tempts no one (James 1:13). So we are not praying for God not to tempt us. To try to help this, some have understood this to mean like the NRSV reads: And do not bring us to the time of trial (Matthew 6:13 NRSV) The Greek word for temptation and trial is the same. But using the word trial does not help us either because we know that we need trials to refine our faith and that God uses trials as a tool (cf. James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 1:6-9). So what are we being told to pray? I think most understand this properly that we are praying to keep us from temptation and to keep us from sin when tempted. We can see this in the parallel statement, "And deliver us from evil." Oh how we need to pray in the face of temptation! Oh, how we need to pray before we are tempted for the strength that we need to overcome our weakness and keep our hearts and minds pure! This prayer reflects the desire of the forgiven to live a new life by conquering temptations and weaknesses. We truly want to run from sin. We truly want to be transformed people. Prayer reveals the intensity of our desire to overcome sin. Lord, deliver us from Satan and his attacks! Lord, deliver us so that we do not yield to temptations. We know that we cannot stand on our own strength but in the strength God supplies for us. So we are again showing a dependence on our Father.

Forgive Our Debts (Matthew 6:12; Matthew 6:14-15)

Next, Jesus says that we should pray that God forgive our debts. I think it is important for us to consider that Jesus does not say to forgive our sins, which is true, but to forgive our debts. Debt is the consequence of sin. We are in debt because of our sins and it is an unpayable debt. Sin gives us an unpayable debt before God. We must always feel the weight of this. When we do not see our debt and feel the burden of our great debt is when we fail to be truly repentant and are no longer poor in spirit. This is the idea that Jesus is presenting because he ties our need for forgiveness with forgiving those who have debts with us. Seeing the debt of your sin will cause you to forgive those who have debts against you. Therefore, seeing our debt being forgiven by God is to cause us to forgive others. What a blessing it is that we can ask God to forgive our debts! Our balance sheet of debt before God is completely erased in Christ. How amazing it is! When sins are forgiven then the debt is gone before God. We are not debtors from our sins when we are forgiven in Christ. This is why 1 John 1:9 is so powerful.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9 ESV) This is why we sing, "Grace that is greater than all our sins!" But please notice that our forgiveness is tied to us forgiving others. He says this not only in verse 12 but also expands upon it and emphasizes it in verses 14-15. There is an expectation placed on us because we have enjoyed this great grace that erases our debt. We are called to forgive. Later in this gospel we will read Jesus tell Peter that we must forgive our brother even 70 times 7 times.

Now a question arises that I want to address and I hope bring clarity to the question. Do we have to forgive those who do not repent? I think it is important to understand the question and have clarity about this answer. I have taught on this many times but want to make sure we are seeing what God is telling us. First, I cannot find a place in the scriptures where the term forgiveness is ever applied to an unrepentant person. Not only this, but it is clear from the scriptures that repentance is required for forgiveness.

Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you

must forgive him.” (Luke 17:3-4 ESV)

God does not forgive us unless we show repentance toward him. Every scripture teach us to forgive when someone repents. Even in the above passage of Luke 17:3-4 and the well known parable of Matthew 18:21-35 there is the picture of the person begging for mercy and forgiveness. We are to be forgiving people. If someone desires forgiveness from us, we are supposed to give it without hesitation. If someone repents to us, we are desire to give it and willingly do so. Forgiveness is about erasing the debt and restoring the relationship. This is what Jesus is teaching us about our prayer to God. What is God doing? When we pray for forgiveness, God is erasing the debt and restoring the relationship. We must do likewise to those who come to us desiring forgiveness. We erase the debt and restore the relationship.

I think the reason why people are concerned about this is because of how this is misused. People seem to indicate that they can be bitter or mistreat a person because they did not ask for repentance. The idea sounds like this: That person did not come to me seeking forgiveness so I'm not going to forgive them! But that is not the attitude revealed in the scriptures. We desire to give our forgiveness. We want to restore the relationship. We want to barrier of debt removed. There is no place for our heart to harbor ill will, malice, bitterness, anger, or anything akin to these attitudes. We hand over our anger to God, we lay down our ill will, and we seek reconciliation. Friends, please consider that there is no forgiveness if a person does not desire it. God cannot restore a relationship with us and erase the debt if we do not want that forgiveness. If we do not want a restored relationship with God, how can there be forgiveness? In the same way, we cannot restore a relationship with someone who does not want one with us. We cannot forgive because there is no opportunity to do so. Reconciliation is not possible, which is the effect of forgiveness.

Let me use my life to illustrate the idea and I hope this will help understand the concept. Most of you know that my parents were divorced because my mother committed sexual immorality. So they were divorced when I was around 9 or 10 years old. When I was in college I received a letter from the man with whom my mother had the affair. The letter attempted to have an apology. It was really a terrible apology, if you can even call it that. It probably did more harm than anything because it basically said that things happen in life and I'm sorry about that but at least he was able to restore his family. It was bad. He did not truly desire forgiveness. He was not try to restore a relationship with me. He was not seeking out how to help me in what he had done in this. So is there forgiveness? No. Why? Is it because I am withholding it from him, expecting something else from him? No. There is not forgiveness because he has no interest in fixing the relationship. Now, this is what is important. So can I be angry at him? No. Can I be bitter at him? Can I have malice against him? Can I wish ill will on him? Can I treat him badly? The answer to all of these things is no. Now I have lost my soul when I have such sinful thoughts and attitudes. I must desire restoration, and friends, that is not an easy thing to do. But that is what we are called to do because God has forgiven us repeatedly in Christ. Yes, we are hurt. Yes, we are broken. But we have a far greater debt before our God and is not worthy of forgiveness and yet God forgave the debt. Now how can we not desire be forgiving people to all who seek it? We must desire it! We show mercy and grace. Remember Romans 12:18 that we are to bring peace, as much as it depends on us. Our sins and the great debt we incurred before God is to cause us to love God because we grasp how much he has forgiven us. It is truly amazing, staggering grace! This makes us be forgiving people. We try to fix relationship, bring about reconciliation, and act peaceably with

all because of how we have been forgiven. No matter what someone does to me, I have no right for personal vengeance or selfish anger or vindication. I must see a lost soul and desire its rescue. Even if someone has hurt you 490 times, when they are repentant, you want to forgive and restore the relationship. God takes us back every time we sin and repent. We must take others back every time they hurt us and repent. This is the picture of the scriptures.

Conclusion

You will notice that there is a similarity in all three of these requests. In each of these we are revealing our dependence on God. We depend on him for our needs. We depend on him for overcoming temptations. We depend on him for our debts to be erased. God as our Father gives our needs, forgives our debts, and delivers us through temptations and from evil. Now how could we not desire to pray to God to receive these things? Do not these benefits compel us to pray to our Father?

Matthew 6:21-24

Matthew 6:21-24 Matthew 6:21-24, Treasures In Heaven Of all the social issues that Jesus could have spent his ministry speaking about, Jesus spoke about wealth the most. He spoke more about wealth than about marriage, politics, work, sexual immorality, or power. This indicates to us that wealth is a problem that stands in the way of true righteousness. God created us to be treasure seekers but the problem is that we are often pursuing the wrong treasure. Jesus addresses this issue to correct us so that we can belong to his kingdom and be true disciples.

Two Treasures (Matthew 6:19-21)

Jesus begins with a simple command: Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth. So does this mean that we cannot have any possessions? Does this mean that we cannot possess any excess at all? While some may be tempted to move this direction with the teaching, it does not fit the pictures that we see of righteous people in the scriptures who were blessed by God with wealth. We do not see the condemnation of simply owning possessions in this verse, though we are warned in the scriptures that these things can steal our hearts from God. Rather it is the pursuit of possessions that is an even greater danger. Do not accumulate possessions for yourself. It is the accumulation process that is the even greater warning. Notice that this is the contrast that is given to us in this command. Do not lay up, store up, and accumulate treasures on earth but lay up, store up, and accumulate treasures in heaven. Do not make treasures on earth your treasure. Make treasures in heaven your treasure. So Jesus is challenging our hearts by looking at our lives. Does it look like we are treasuring treasures in heaven or treasuring treasures on earth? Are we accumulating for ourselves treasures in heaven or treasures on earth?

Now Jesus gives us reasons why we must not accumulate for ourselves treasures on earth. The first reason is because everything that we accumulate for ourselves on earth does not last. You all still own your first car, right? You all still own and use your first smart phone, right? You still own and wear your clothes from college, right? Why not? We understand the problem. All of these things get old, wear down, break, and do not work like they used to. Do not treasure earthly treasures because these things are useless and do not possess lasting value. They are temporary. They wear out. They cannot satisfy because they are not lasting. By contrast, the treasures of heaven are permanent and lasting. They cannot wear out. It does not take much for us to understand this but it requires us to think about this truth. Consider, when you die, how important will your accumulated wealth matter? What value will all your wealth and possession have for you when you die? This is what Jesus is doing is trying to put these things in proper perspective. Treasure heavenly treasures because those are the only lasting treasures. The problem is that greed is subtle. Everyone thinks that what they are doing with wealth is necessary. No one believes they are accumulating wealth. No one thinks they are laying up treasures for themselves on earth. No one thinks they are materialistic. We think others are materialistic but certainly not us! It is amazing how easily these things capture our hearts and minds. So this command requires some real honesty with ourselves. Notice that Jesus does not give an amount.

Jesus does not say that if you have more than 6 days or 6 months of food or wealth that you are storing up treasures on earth. This really is a question of the heart. What do you love? What do you prize? What do you desire? Do you desire eternal riches or earthly riches? This is the point of Matthew 6:21. "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What happens to our treasure happens to us. What we treasure is where our total person and being will be. This is the mirror into our hearts. We can carry on the charade of faithfully going to church while having our heart on earthly treasures. The location of our treasure indicates where the heart is already at.

Notice again that Jesus does not say that the possessions are the problem. The problem is your heart is chasing after and trying to accumulate these things. So let us honestly examine our hearts by considering some questions to determine if we are treasuring the treasures of earth or of heaven. What do we worry about: spiritual things or wealth and possessions? What occupies our thoughts and desires? What do we dread losing? What do we measure others by? What can we not be happy without? Jesus tells us that the reason we must truly consider these things is because whatever controls our heart is what controls our behavior. The thing that you treasure will control you.

Two Eyes (Matthew 6:22-23)

Now it is easy to read Matthew 6:22 and think that Jesus has changed the subject in his sermon. But if we carefully look at the context we will notice that he has not left the discussion of treasures in heaven because in Matthew 6:24 he will continue to warn about serving God or serving money. So what is the point Jesus is making when he tells us to consider our eyes? First, Jesus begins with a statement. "The eye is the lamp of the body." Jesus continues that when your eye is healthy, then your whole body will receive light. But if your eye is bad, then your whole body will be full of darkness. It is truly a simple image. What are you looking at in life? What is your eye set on? What is your focus? The way we look at wealth is a sure barometer of our spiritual condition. Wealth is not to be hoarded and accumulated. It is a blessing from God. Do we see what we have as a blessing from God to enjoy and use? Do we see what we have as God's blessing to enjoy with our family? Do we see what we have as God's blessing to advance the work of God's kingdom? The condition of the eye determines if our body is receiving light or darkness. What is the condition of the eyes of our heart? What is blocking our spiritual vision? You see that Jesus is telling us that if we are continuing to look at money and possessions then this problem cannot be fixed. What you are staring at is what is going to affect your heart. It is like thinking that we are going to stare at Halloween candy and not eat a few pieces. What we look at affects our hearts. This is why lust corrupts the heart. Wealth corrupts the heart. Envy and jealousy corrupt the heart. Rivalry corrupts the heart. To address our problem we must stop looking at these things and setting our hearts on these things.

Two Masters (Matthew 6:24)

Therefore Jesus gives us this truth that we must accept and believe. "No one can serve two masters." We think we can but we cannot. It is impossible for a divided heart to serve a master properly. Either I am putting my hope in and seek after the treasures of this earth for my joy and satisfaction or I am putting my hope in and seek after God for my joy and satisfaction. We cannot be a full and faithful slave to both. Either we are serving God over self or we are serving self over God. There is not another option. The things of this world are rivals to the love of God. Money is

one of the greatest rivals of God's love because we look to money to bring us security, peace, happiness, and hope rather than God. A Christian is a person who turns from idols to serve the living God (1 Thessalonians 1:9).

I want us to think about what Jesus is teaching. We cannot store up treasures in both places. Your devotion is either with God and his pursuits or it is with self and your own pursuits. We cannot serve God and also serve something else or someone else. Only one person can be on the throne of our hearts. It is either God on the throne of our heart or it is myself that is on the throne. They cannot coexist. This is why Jesus said that we had to deny ourselves, take up our crosses, and follow him. I cannot rule my life and think that I am letting God rule my life. I cannot store up the treasures of earth for myself and think that I have stores up the treasures of heaven for myself also. We must choose this day who we will serve. One of the verses from a song we often sing in worship reminds us of this truth. From the song Trust and Obey, a verse begins, "But we never can prove the delights of his love until all on the altar we lay." How true this is! We have not begin to enjoy the delights of God's love if we have not sacrificed our worldly pursuits.

Conclusion

Jesus calls for true disciples to truly be honest with themselves and consider where they have accumulated treasures. One way we can know is by looking at our hearts. "Where our treasure is, there your heart will be also." So what do you look at? What do you desire? What do you trust in? What do you hope for? What is your goal in life? What are you striving for?

Jesus presents a choice between two ways of life. There are two treasures. Will we store treasures on earth or in heaven? There are two eyes. Will our eyes be light or be dark? There are two masters. Will we serve God or serve money?

Outline: Matthew 6:19-24

Outline: Matthew 6:19-24 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Gaining Mastery Over Mammon (Matthew 6:19-24)

INTRODUCTION

1. In writing to Timothy, Paul described the danger of seeking to be rich...
 - a. The desire to be rich is filled with temptations which have destroyed many - 1 Timothy 6:9
 - b. The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil which have led many astray - 1 Timothy 6:10
2. Jesus also described the difficulty of the rich entering the kingdom of heaven...
 - a. When the rich young ruler asked concerning eternal life - Matthew 19 : 16-22
 - b. Jesus said it was difficult, but not impossible - Matthew 19:23-26
3. In Matthew 6:19-24, Jesus taught how it was possible...
 - a. For the rich person to have "treasure in heaven"
 - b. For us to overcome "mammon", which can easily enslave us
4. According to Easton's Bible Dictionary, "mammon" is...
 - a. A Chaldee or Syriac word meaning "wealth" or "riches" - Luke 16 : 9-11
 - b. By personification, the god of riches - Matthew 6:24
5. Thus if not careful, wealth and riches can become our "god"...
 - a. Paul called a covetous person an idolater - Ephesians 5:5
 - b. He told the Colossians to put to death "covetousness, which is idolatry" - Colossians 3:5

[To prevent Mammon from become our "god", let's examine the teachings

of our Lord as found in His sermon on the mount. Beginning with Matthew 6:19,

we find the first of three keys to "Gaining Mastery Over Mammon"...] I. LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN (Matthew 6:19-21)

A. WHY IN HEAVEN, AND NOT ON EARTH...

1. On earth:

a. Moth and rust destroy (material things are perishable)

b. Thieves break in and steal (material things are subject to theft)

2. In heaven:

a. Neither moth nor rust destroys (our treasures are imperishable - 1 Peter 1:3-4)

b. Thieves do not break in and steal (our treasures are securely guarded - 1 Peter 3:4-5)

B. WHERE YOUR TREASURE IS, THERE YOUR "HEART" (AFFECTIONS, HOPE, DREAMS) WILL BE ALSO...

1. If your treasure is on earth, your heart will experience much disappointment

a. As things for which you have affection decay or are one day destroyed by fire

b. As things in which you find your primary joy are suddenly gone through things like theft

2. But if your treasure is in heaven, your heart will not suffer great disappointments

a. For your treasure is "incorruptible, undefiled, and does not fade away"

b. Nothing can take your treasure away from you, for it is

1) "reserved in heaven for you"

2) "kept by the power of God through faith"

3. With treasures laid up in heaven, whatever happens on earth

will not devastate you!

- cf. the Hebrew Christians in Hebrews 10:32-34

4. When these words of Jesus are taken to heart and applied, how true His words in Matthew 7:24-27 will be!

a. The "storms" of life will not overwhelm us

b. Because we've built our foundation upon the words of Jesus found in our text!

C. HOW CAN WE LAY UP TREASURE IN HEAVEN?

1. First, by becoming children of God...

a. Thereby becoming "joint-heirs with Christ" - Romans 8:16-17

b. And the recipients of "every spiritual blessing" in heavenly places - Ephesians 1:3

2. Then, by using material wealth we may have to bless those around us...

a. As Jesus instructed the rich young ruler - Matthew 19:21

b. As He instructed His disciples, in order to have "a treasure in the heavens that does not fail" - Luke 12:33-34

c. As Paul wrote Timothy to charge those rich in this present age, that they may be "storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life" - 1 Timothy 6:17-19

[Through such generosity and liberality, then, we are well on the way to "Gaining Mastery Over Mammon." At the same time, we need to make sure that we observe the second key...] II. KEEP YOUR EYE GOOD (Matthew 6:22-23)

A. IN THE METAPHOR USED BY JESUS...

1. The "body" likely represents the "soul" or "inner man"

2. The "eye" likely represents the "gaze of the soul" or the "heart of man"

3. The word "good" in Greek means "simple, single, uncomplicated"

4. The word "bad" in Greek means "wicked, evil"
5. And in the Scriptures, the expression "evil eye" is used to mean "envious, covetous" - cf. Proverbs 23:6; Matthew 20:15; Mark 7:22

B. AN EXPLANATION BASED UPON THESE DEFINITIONS...

1. If the heart or gaze of the soul be "good" ("single" in its love of God and the things of God)...

- a. Then one is filled with "light"
- b. In other words, goodness, righteousness, and truth - cf.

Ephesians 5:8-10

2. But if the heart or gaze of the soul be "evil" (full of envy, covetousness)...

- a. Then one's soul is filled with "darkness"
- b. The opposite of light: selfishness, wickedness, and falsehood!

C. THUS THE NEED FOR THE WARNING...

1. To guard what goes in your eye

- a. I.e., what you allow your eyes to dwell upon
- b. Remember, there is such a thing as "the lusts of the eyes" (i.e., materialism)

2. To be rich toward God, free from covetousness - Luke 12:13-21

- a. Note Jesus' warning - Luke 12:15
- b. Also His conclusion - Luke 12:21

[The third and last key to "Gaining Mastery Over Mammon" is most

crucial, and will make it impossible for one to serve Mammon...] III. MAKE GOD YOUR MASTER (24)

A. NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS...

1. A "master" by definition demands "total loyalty", and we are unable to please two masters at the same time

2. Such is certainly true with God - cf. Exodus 34:14

3. Mammon is evidently no different

B. WE HAVE TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GOD AND MAMMON...

1. When wealth is coveted, and becomes the priority in our lives, it becomes a "god" - cf. Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5

2. So the choice becomes one as to whether we shall worship the One True God, or be "idolaters" following after a false god!

C. CHOOSE TO SERVE GOD...

1. As Jesus would later say, "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" - Matthew 6:33

2. Do this, and God becomes our Master

3. Since we can't serve two masters, this effectively eliminates Mammon from being our "god"!

CONCLUSION

1. These are the three keys to "Gaining Mastery Over Mammon"...

a. Lay up treasure in heaven (by helping others)

b. Keep your eye good (guard what you allow to influence your inner man)

c. Make God your Master (and you will not be able to serve another Master)

2. Why seek to gain mastery over mammon and serve God instead?

a. Because Mammon...

1) Is susceptible to decay and theft

2) Will make us blind, selfish creatures

b. Whereas with God...

1) Our treasures are secure

2) We will be kind, righteous people

3. By gaining mastery over Mammon we will also avoid...

a. Falling into a temptation and a snare

b. Falling into many foolish and harmful lusts

c. Straying from the faith because of greediness

d. Piercing ourselves with many sorrows - cf. 1 Timothy 6:9-10 But most importantly, Christians will be "storing up for themselves a

good foundation for the time to come", and "lay hold on eternal life"

(1 Timothy 6:17-19). Isn't that what we really want?

Matthew 6:25-34

Matthew 6:25-34 Matthew 6:25-34, The Worldliness of Worry Our culture is an age of shameless materialism. The goal of life is to accumulate and store up all the wealth you can possibly get your hands on. In Matthew 6:19-24 Jesus has taught that we must not accumulate treasures on earth but accumulate treasures in heaven because these are true, lasting treasures that satisfy. But now Jesus addresses a natural concern that we will have when we no longer accumulate treasures for ourselves on earth. If I am not storing up treasures to take care of myself, what is going to happen to me and how am I going to be taken care of? If I use my wealth for the furthering of God's kingdom and to store up for myself heavenly treasures, then what is going to happen to me?

One of the reasons we have anxiety and worry is because we do not believe that God is going to take care of us. This is why God tells us that we must not worry. Worry says that I do not trust God. I do not believe he cares for me or that he will take care of me. So we feel like we need to take matters into our own hands because God is not going to do something. I have to do something. Since I have to do something, then I worry about what I am going to do. I think you see how this works. So people have come along and tried to provide solutions for us. The most popular solution is: don't worry, be happy! Of course, this does not work at all. Worry is not combatting by faking happiness. The most recent solution has been to "Keep Calm and Play Volleyball" or something other activity. This has been met with this response: "I Can't Keep Calm; I Have Anxiety." So do we fight anxiety and worry? Accumulating possessions and serving money is not going to solve our worry problems. We have all tried this and it does not work. So how can we come to this kind of peace in life that is free from the anxieties and cares of the world? In particular to our context, how can we not worry about physical things like wealth, possessions, and money?

Life Is More Than Stuff (Matthew 6:25)

How sad is it to boil down our life into stuff! How materialistic! Think about how ridiculous it is that we would find our identity and worth by what car we drive, how big our house is, what brand name or label we wear, or how nice of things we have! Life is far more than the accumulation of things. How sad that we would turn our existence on this earth into such a vain and useless pursuit of physical possessions! Notice that Jesus says that life is more than food and the body is more than clothing. Therefore do not worry about these things. But do we believe this? Can we trust God who gave us life to give us food? This is the whole temptation when Satan tempts Jesus to turn stones into bread, which is recorded earlier in this gospel. "Man does not live on bread alone" (Matthew 4:4). Humans do not live on food alone but depend on God for life and breath. Your Heavenly Father Cares For You (Matthew 6:26)

The second way Jesus gives us to defeat worry is to know that the Father cares for us. Jesus uses the birds to illustrate this truth. Do birds worry? Do birds store up treasures in barns and houses? No. They do not accumulate yet they are fed by your heavenly Father. See the emphasis placed on "your heavenly Father." Your heavenly Father feeds the birds. How much more will your heavenly Father care for you! Are you more valuable than the birds? Yes, you are! Seeing how

God cares for his creation is to develop faith in us that God will also care for us. If you believe that God is your heavenly Father then you have nothing to worry about. As a parent would you intentionally allow your child to starve? Absolutely not. We would provide for them and never let them starve. How much more will our heavenly Father provide for us when we are depending upon him and truly putting our lives in his hands!

What Good Will Worry Do? (Matthew 6:27)

The third reason Jesus gives us for not worrying is that worrying does not do any good. Jesus asks if you can add a single hour to the time of your life through worry. There is an old English proverb that parallels what Jesus said. "Worrying is like sitting in a rocking chair. It gives you something to do but it doesn't get you anywhere." Worry is pointless. Even when you have a legitimate problem, worry does not solve the problem or make you feel any better. Worry and anxiety cannot solve the past and cannot change the future. But in particular to our context, Jesus' message is not worry about money. Do not worry about your possessions. Look again at Matthew 6:25. Do not worry about what you will eat, or drink, or your body, or what you will wear. Your worry will not do you any good. Your Father Will Clothe You (Matthew 6:28-30)

The fourth weapon we are given to fight against worry is the knowledge that God will care for us. Jesus says to not worry about what clothes you would wear. Look at the flowers of the field. Just like the birds that do not sow or reap, so also the flowers do not work or make their own clothes. Yet they are beautiful and splendid. If God covers with such beauty the short-lived grass, how will he clothe us who are destined for eternity with him? Once again Jesus is asking if we believe if God will take care of us?

Please look at the end of Matthew 6:30 : "O you of little faith." This is the truth of the matter. This is the crux of the problem. Worrying about these things shows that we do not have faith in God. God is your heavenly Father so you have nothing to worry about. Why do we make our lives this agonizing struggle for life's possessions? We agonize and strive because we have so little faith and confidence in God.

You Are Acting Like The World (Matthew 6:31-32)

The fifth tool for fighting worry is found in Matthew 6:1-32. Jesus says to not worry about earthly possessions because these are the things that the world seeks after and worries about. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus has declared that his people think different and act different. They are the salt of the earth and the light of the world. When they lose their impact on others by being different and shining as light, then we are good for nothing (Matthew 5:13). When we worry about money, food, clothing, and our bodies then we look just like the world who lives with no belief in the Creator who loves and cares for them. If you worry like everyone else in the world, how does this reflect upon God and how does it show the world your faith? Your Heavenly Father Knows You Need Them All (Matthew 6:32)

The sixth point Jesus makes to keep us from worry is for us to know that God knows what we need. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. God knows what you need. God knows how to sustain your life. Do not think that God does not see your circumstance. God knows what you need and you are to live your life depending on him to provide what you need. This is a test of faith. God knows what I need for tomorrow so I do not need to worry about tomorrow. Have A

Higher Ambition (Matthew 6:33)

The seventh instruction for us to fight worry is to have a higher ambition. We are to first seek the kingdom of God. Seek God's kingdom above all else. This is where we are to expend our energies. This is how we store up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Seek the kingdom of God. It is God alone who deserves our full ambition and concern, not wealth or possessions. So what does it mean to seek the kingdom of God above all else?

First, seeking the kingdom of God means that we submit our will to God's will.

We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ, being ready to punish every disobedience, when your obedience is complete. (2 Corinthians 10:5-6 ESV)

Seeking the kingdom of God means taking every thought, every idea, and every desire and making it obey Christ. Whatever stands against God in our hearts we will actively go to war against and make it obey Christ. This is our daily battle of submission for the Lord.

Second, Jesus not only says to seek the kingdom of God first but to also seek his righteousness. We are supposed to live righteous lives. We are to live changed lives. Seeking God first will show a completely different way of living. I will not be pursuing worldly things but spiritual things. I will not care for the things of the world but for the purposes and desires of God. Decisions will not be made around food, clothing, money, and the like. Decisions will be made with God as our center of living.

Please notice the result of this kind of radical living. "All these things will be added to you." What we will eat, wear, and drink will all be added to us. If we will pursue God first and foremost, God says that he will take care of the rest. We should not be surprised by this instruction or lack faith in it. We see this very command given to Israel in the Old Testament. The people were instructed to pursue God and his righteousness. When they did so God promised he would take care of them. They would not have to worry about food or famine. They would not have to worry about wars or nations attacking. They had no need to fear and worry. But they chose not to trust God and therefore lost all of God's blessings for their lack of faith. Will we make the same mistake as Israel and not believe in the promises of God who says that he will take care of us if we will seek him and his righteousness first?

Let Tomorrow Be Tomorrow (Matthew 6:34)

The eighth and final instruction to combat worry is found in Matthew 6:34. Jesus says to not be anxious about tomorrow because tomorrow is tomorrow. It is not today. You have what you need for today. Tomorrow will worry about tomorrow. Today has enough trouble. Deal with today. Live today. Take what God has given you today. You cannot fix tomorrow. Worry will not change tomorrow. God is in control of tomorrow. You handle what God has given you today by faith. Anything could happen tomorrow. Nothing could happen tomorrow. The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us that sometimes life will just be the same tomorrow as it was today. So what are you worried about? But tomorrow may also be a day of radical change and there is nothing you or I can do about it. So do not worry about what is beyond our reach. Put your hope and trust in God for today and for whatever comes to us next. God is our heavenly Father and we are his children. Never

forget the love God has for you and let that knowledge cause you to end your worries about this world and give you hope in your God who cares for you.

Outline: Matthew 6:25-34

Outline: Matthew 6:25-34 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Winning The War Over Worry (Matthew 6:25-34)

INTRODUCTION

1. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus exhorted His disciples to...

- a. Lay up treasure in heaven (by helping others)
- b. Keep your eye good (guard what you allow to influence your inner man)
- c. Make God your Master (and you will not be able to serve another Master)

-- Which we examined in the lesson "Gaining Mastery Over Mammon" (Matthew 6:19-24)

2. But if we do what Jesus says, what about the future here on earth?

- a. If we lay up treasure in heaven instead of on earth, how will we provide for our future?
- b. Where will our physical necessities like food and clothing come from?
- c. How can we keep from worrying about such things?

3. Jesus' discussion concerning material riches (i.e., "mammon") did not end with verse 24...

- a. It really continues on to the end of the chapter
- b. In which Jesus addresses such concerns regarding the future [Beginning with verse 25, Jesus gives several reasons why we should not worry about such things. In so doing, He establishes two important principles that are crucial to "Winning The War Over Worry". The first principle might be stated as...] I. HAVE FAITH IN GOD'S PROVIDENCE

A. JESUS TELLS US NOT TO "WORRY"...

1. The word in the original means "distracted"

2. I.e., don't let anxiety about food and clothing distract you

from more important things in life (like Martha did - Luke 10:38-42)

B. JESUS MAKES FOUR ARGUMENTS WHY WE SHOULDN'T WORRY...

1. Is not life and body more important than food and clothing?

- Matthew 6:25

a. This is an argument from the GREATER to the LESSER (similar to Romans 8:32)

b. Life and body are certainly more important than food and clothing

c. Who provides our lives and our bodies? God!

a. If He is powerful enough to create life...

b. Isn't He also able to provide food & clothing to sustain that life?

d. "He who has displayed so great goodness as to form the body, and breathe into it the breath of life, will surely follow up the blessing, and confer the smaller favor of providing that the body be clothed, and that life preserved." (Barnes)

2. Look at the birds of the air, are you not more valuable than they? - Matthew 6:26

a. The birds are an example of God's ability to provide

1) Through His providential workings in nature, God provides for their needs

2) This does not mean they do not work for their needs (indeed, they are often very busy, gathering food, preparing nests, caring for their young)

3) But they are not guilty of overdoing a good thing (as the rich fool was in the parable of Luke 12:16-21)

b. We are certainly more valuable to God than birds!

1) This is an argument from the LESSER to the GREATER (cf. verse 25)

a) If God through His providence provides for their needs, will He not for you?

b) A similar argument is found in Matthew 10:29-31

2) How are you more valuable than birds?

a) You were created in the image of God!

b) You were redeemed by the blood of His Son!

c. Why, then, let concern over physical needs distract you from what is really important in life?

3. Can you grow simply by worrying? - Matthew 6:27

a. This argument illustrates the helplessness of man

1) There are many things in this life which we cannot affect by "worrying"

2) For example, worrying will not make our bodies grow any taller

b. The implication of this argument seems to be:

1) "Worrying" about food and clothing cannot guarantee that you will have them tomorrow

2) As victims of "Hurricane Hugo", the "Great Quake of '89" and "Hurricane Andrew" have come to realize

4. Consider the lilies, won't God provide for you also? - Matthew 6:28-30

a. Another example of God's ability and willingness to provide

1) Like the argument in verse 26 (the "birds of the air")

2) It is another argument from the LESSER to the GREATER

b. Look at how they grow...

1) Without any "toil" whatever on their part, nor any "care" bestowed on them by any human agency

2) Yet their glory surpasses Solomon in all his glory! How?

a) Through God's providential care!

b) By so ordering the affairs of this life to assure

that they accomplish what they were designed to

accomplish!

c. Will God not much more clothe you?

1) If God is able to so clothe the grass of the field...

2) Is He not ABLE and WILLING to do so for you?

a) You who are created in the image of God?

b) You who are designed to spend eternity with God?

C. IF WE WORRY, WE ARE OF LITTLE FAITH...

1. If we worry about food and clothing, then we are "little

faith" - Matthew 6:30

2. We have "little faith" in God's...

a. Promise to care for us!

b. Power to deliver that promise!

D. JESUS' SUMMARY CONCERNING GOD'S PROVIDENCE...

1. Don't worry about food and clothing - Matthew 6:31

2. People without God (e.g., the Gentiles) naturally worry about

these things - Matthew 6:32

3. But we have God as our Heavenly Father, and He knows that we

need such things!

[So we need to develop faith in God's providence, both in His ability

and willingness to provide for His children. But the promise of His

providence is conditioned upon our willingness to...] II. MAKE GOD'S WILL YOUR NUMBER ONE

PRIORITY

A. SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD...

1. This is the second key to "Winning The War Over Worry"

2. We must make the will of God the number one priority in your

life - Matthew 6:33

3. We do this by:

- a. Serving God instead of "mammon"
- b. Letting the "lamp" of our body be a "good eye" (i.e., focused clearly on that which is good, true, and righteous)
- c. Laying up treasure in heaven (by using earthly treasure to help others - Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33-34; 1 Timothy 6:17-19)

4. Do this, and God will provide for your physical needs

- a. For He is certainly "able"
- b. And He is certainly "willing"

B. DON'T WORRY ABOUT TOMORROW...

1. Today has enough trouble with which to concern yourself

- Matthew 6:34

a. We are not capable of handling tomorrow's worries

- 1) We have no control over the future
- 2) And worrying about the future only distracts us from the duties of the present

b. Today's problems are all we are capable of handling without becoming distracted

2. Let tomorrow take care of itself

- a. By trusting in God!
- b. By doing God's will today!

3. Let your undivided attention be given to seeking God's rule in your life...

- a. Make His kingdom the number one priority in your life
- b. Concern yourself with His righteousness, not your riches

CONCLUSION 1. The motto of many is "Don't worry, be happy!"; but Jesus qualifies that motto by saying:

"Don't worry, seek God's will first, and you will be happy!"

2. If we take to heart what Jesus says, then our lives will be like homes built on a rock (cf. Matthew 7:24-25)...

a. No matter what "storms" of life may come our way...

b. ...our treasure is in heaven and our Father will provide for us during our earthly sojourn!

3. If we don't heed Jesus' teachings, if we allow ourselves to serve perishable "mammon"...

a. Then we must go through life on earth without God's help

b. And we have no hope of eternity with God when we die That is why we must "Seek first the kingdom of God..."!

Matthew 7:1-6

Matthew 7:1-6 Matthew 7:1-6, How To Judge

Perhaps the most well-known, most quoted, and most taken out of context scripture: “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1). When a judgment is made against another, if a person knows any little bit about the Bible, often this verse will be the response: “The Bible says to not judge me.” How dare you question me or suggest that I am wrong! Thus, this verse is used to teach that zero judgments should be made about others. Is this what Jesus meant? Does Jesus mean that we all should leave each other alone and not make any judgments regarding sin in the lives of others?

I would like us to see that this interpretation of Jesus’ words is absolutely impossible. Listen to what the rest of the New Testament teaches us to do. The spiritual person judges all things. (1 Corinthians 2:15 ESV) For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. (1 Corinthians 5:12-13 ESV) But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:8 ESV)

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world. (1 John 4:1 ESV) But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. (Galatians 2:11 ESV)

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. (Matthew 18:15 ESV) Do not judge by appearances, but judge with right judgment. (John 7:24 ESV)

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will recognize them by their fruits. (Matthew 7:15-16 ESV) The scriptures are clear that we are make judgments. In fact, in this very text Jesus is commanding judgment because we are determining if our brother or sister in Christ has a speck in their eye. So this must not saying that there can never be any judgment made. So we must determine what Jesus does mean so that we are not violating this command. So let us read the whole paragraph and then we can draw the proper interpretation of this command. The Reason Not To Judge (Matthew 7:2-4)

Jesus taught to not judge others because “with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.” This explanation shows that Jesus is not speaking about right, godly judgments. Jesus is speaking about human judgments, unrighteous judgments, and unreasonable judgments. The command should make us want to be fair with others. Do you want God to judge you fairly and mercifully? Then judge others fairly and mercifully.

Matthew 7:3-4 helps us understand the problem Jesus is dealing with. Jesus pictures a person who is able to see everyone else’s faults but is unable to see his own. How easy it is to judge other

people but have no desire to judge ourselves by the same measurement! The illustration Jesus uses is intended to be humorous because it is hyperbole. You see the speck (literally a splinter of wood or chaff) in the eye of another person. You are able to look so closely at others and examine their lives to the finest detail that you are able to see the splinter of wood that is in a person's eye. But you do not notice the log (literally a large beam of wood used in roof construction or to bar a door) in your own eye. You see the splinter in another person but you do not see the wood truss coming out of your own eye! Now we need to consider how this happens? How is it possible for a person to not see the glaring plank of wood coming out of one's own eye? The reason why is that we fail to pay attention to ourselves. We fail to look at ourselves. We are so interested in looking at the problems and issues of others that we do not see the enormous failures and glaring shortcomings in our own lives. This is the very nature of self-righteousness. We condemn others but justify ourselves for the same activity. Have you ever done this? You pass judgment on another person for something that they are doing but when it comes to you and you do the same action, you have a good reason for doing so. You have an excuse as to why it is okay for you and not for others. We apply to others what we are unwilling to apply to ourselves. You judge others without understanding or compassion. James gave us a warning for not seeing ourselves for who we really are. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. (James 1:22-24 ESV)

We do not look in the mirror and see ourselves for who we are and what we have done. This causes self-righteousness and arrogance. How sad it is when we do look into the spiritual mirror and we still cannot see ourselves for who we are! We judge others but do not see ourselves and judge ourselves. The Solution (Matthew 7:5)

Jesus calls us hypocrites when we engage in this behavior. When we judge others in a way that we would not judge ourselves, we are hypocrites. When we hold other people to a different standard than we hold ourselves to, we are hypocrites. So what is the solution? Look at yourself before you look at others. Think about your own sin and your own failing before you confront another with their shortcomings. First judge your life by the same judgment you are about to judge another.

Now we can properly understand the first two verses of this chapter. Do not judge with hypocritical judgment! Do you want people to be fault finders in your life? Do you want someone to bring up every mistake you make? Do you want to be nitpicked for every shortcoming in our lives? No! Look at yourself first. If you don't want others doing that to you, then why do you do this with others? Measure yourself by the same judgment that you are going to measure others. This will make us not be so fast with our judgments. This will keep us from making false judgments on others. Paul Earnhart summed up the idea well:

“Our own accurate understanding of kingdom righteousness should not produce in us a spirit of harsh, censorious judgment toward those who are having a struggle of it. Men need to be helped to see the nature of true righteousness, but not by an uncaring and self-righteous hypocrite who is more concerned with the sins of others than his own. If the sermon is first applied rigorously at home, we will easily find the compassion and humility to treat the sins of others.”

Making Proper Judgments (Matthew 7:6)

Now we may come to Matthew 7:6 and think that this just does not fit what Jesus has been talking about regarding hypocritical judgment. But we are seeing that Jesus is not saying that we should never judge or make evaluations about others. The point is that we would make proper, godly evaluations and judgments of others. Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. (Matthew 7:6 ESV)

We must be warned to not waste our time on those who have no interest in the gospel or in the discipleship of Jesus. Pigs were counted as unclean in the Law of Moses and dogs were wild and nasty savages. In the illustration, the pigs and dogs want the scraps of food. They do not want what is good.

We are called to identify who are dogs and pigs. This is not a characterization about the person but understanding how they treat the gospel message. This is describing their spiritual condition. They will not appreciate the message. They are antagonist to the gospel and are not going to respond to it. I think an appropriate illustration matching the idea that Jesus is saying is this: Don't take your children to Ruth's Chris Steakhouse because they will not appreciate it. Your kids are happy at McDonalds so you do not take them to a fine dining restaurant. They will not appreciate what they are receiving. The scriptures often give us this kind of warning. Do not speak in the hearing of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of your words. (Proverbs 23:9 NASB) The apostle Paul practiced this teaching of Jesus. The next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and began to contradict what was spoken by Paul, reviling him. And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, saying, "It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Since you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles." (Acts 13:44-46 ESV) At some point we have to make a determination of when our efforts in righteousness are not fruitful. There is a point where we say that we have done all that we know to do. There is no use in continuing to bring about repentance. There is no use in continuing to call a person's heart to God. Our efforts are in vain. You have said what needed to be said. You have done what needed to be done. Do not cast the pearls of the gospel to those who will have none of it. They are casting off that which is holy as foolishness and garbage.

Conclusion

We must not be self-righteous, judging others inappropriately. Consider if you are using a judgment that you would want applied to yourself before you apply it to others. Do not be hypocritical in your teaching or application of God's word to others. This should be the nature of our teaching and preaching. We are able to say these important words of God to others because we have first let these very words of God hit our hearts first. But this does not mean that we do not make any spiritual judgments. We are required to make righteous judgments (John 7:24). We are not naive about what we are doing. We know that there are people who are not going to listen. We know that there are people who do not want to hear and will not respond. There are people who will show contempt for God. We shake the dust off of our feet and work with those who are responsive to the gospel message of repentance and salvation.

Outline: Matthew 7:1-6

Outline: Matthew 7:1-6 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" To Judge Or Not To Judge (Matthew 7:1-6)

INTRODUCTION

1. A favorite saying of many people is "Judge not, that you be not judged"...

a. Frequently quoted whenever someone is pointing out the sins or faults of another

b. The impression is that we should never make moral judgments in what we see in others

2. Is that true? Is that what Jesus meant when He said this?

a. Are we never to make moral judgments about the right or wrong in other?

b. If we see wrong in others, can we never point it out?

3. I am persuaded that Jesus' statement is often misused, that Jesus taught...

a. There are times when we must judge

b. There are times when it is appropriate to point out the faults in others

["To Judge Or Not To Judge", that is the question before us. The proper

answer comes from a closer look at Jesus' words in Matthew 7:1-6. First note

how His words are frequently misused...] I. HIS WORDS OFTEN USED TO FORBID "ALL" MANNER OF JUDGMENT

A. SUCH AS ADVERSE OR UNFAVORABLE CRITICISM...

1. Like pointing out a fault in someone else

2. Even if it be truly "constructive" criticism

B. SUCH AS THE EXERCISE OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE...

1. Exercising discipline of any sort does require "judging"

others as to their moral or spiritual condition

2. Since such "judgment" is involved, some feel verses 1-2 rule

out any sort of church discipline

C. SUCH AS EXPOSING THOSE WHO TEACH ERROR...

1. Admittedly, it requires making a judgment in order to consider

whether someone is teaching error

2. Therefore, some people, in light of verses 1-2, believe we

cannot speak out against those who teach error

[Is that what Jesus means? Must we remain silent when we see people

overtaken in a fault, bringing reproach upon the name of Christ, or

blatantly teaching error? Let me suggest that...] II. JESUS DID NOT RULE OUT "ALL" FORMS OF

JUDGMENT

A. NOTE THE "IMMEDIATE" CONTEXT...

1. Which reveals that in some cases "proper" judgment must be

made

2. Matthew 7:6 implies judgment is to be made as to who are "dogs" and

who are "hogs"

a. Otherwise, how can we know when not to give that which is

holy to "dogs"?

b. Or how can we know when not to cast our pearls before

"swine"?

3. Matthew 7:15-20 implies that we must make judgments in determining

who is a false teacher ("by their fruits you will know them")

B. CONSIDER THE "REMOTE" CONTEXT...

1. Which speak of times when judgment must be made!

2. Elsewhere, Jesus taught people to "judge with righteous

judgment" - John 7:24

2. Christians have a responsibility to "judge those who are

inside" the local church - 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

3. We are taught by the apostle of love (John) to "test the spirits" (which requires making judgments) - 1 John 4:1 [There is no contradiction here, for as we continue with our text, we

notice that...] III. JESUS DEFINED WHAT "KIND" OF JUDGING HE IS CONDEMNING

A. JUDGING WHEN ONE IS BLIND TO HIS OR HER OWN FAULTS...

1. Read carefully Matthew 7:3-5

2. Jesus is saying "that is it wrong for anyone to concentrate his attention on the speck in his brother's eye, and while thus occupied, to ignore the beam in his own eye" (Hendriksen)

3. Just Paul taught the necessity of proper "introspection" when helping others - Galatians 6:1

B. JUDGING WITHOUT MERCY AND LOVE...

1. "The Lord is here condemning the spirit of censoriousness, judging harshly, self-righteously, without mercy, without love, as also the parallel passage (Luke 6:36-37) clearly indicates." (Hendriksen)

2. James warned against making judgments without mercy - James 2:13

a. If we make judgments without showing mercy, then no mercy will be shown when we are judged!

b. Just as Jesus said in verse 2...

1) "For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged"

2) "With the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you"

[The implication is not we should never judge, but when we do judge, remember that we shall be judged by the same standards we use! Let

mercy and love temper our judgments. Finally...] IV. JESUS IMPLIES THERE ARE TIMES WHEN WE "MUST" MAKE JUDGMENTS!

A. IT IS "AFTER" WE HAVE CORRECTED OUR OWN FAULTS...

1. First, we must remove the "beam" from our own eye - Matthew 7:5

2. When we have done so, we are able to see, discern (judge), and be of help to others who are overtaken in their faults

3. Indeed, "the law of Christ" requires us to! - cf. Galatians 6:1-2

B. AGAIN, WE MUST JUDGE BETWEEN THOSE "WORTHY" AND THOSE WHO ARE "HOGS & DOGS"...

1. Note carefully Jesus' words in Matthew 7:6

a. Some are not worthy of that which "holy"

b. Some are like "dogs" and "swine"

-- Determining who is which requires "judgment" upon our part!

2. With those who are receptive, we are to be long-suffering in trying to help them come out of their error - cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-26

3. But for those who are not, we are not to waste what is good and holy on them!

a. Cf. the instructions of Jesus to His disciples - Matthew 10 : 12-15

b. Cf. the example of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch of Pisidia - Acts 13:42-46

CONCLUSION 1. The kind of judging forbidden by Jesus is that which LENSKI calls:

"self-righteous, hypocritical judging which is false and calls down God's judgment on itself."

2. This is the kind of judging that was also condemned by James when he wrote:

"Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge."

"There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?"

(James 4:11-12)

3. May God help us to refrain from such judging...

a. To be more apt to remove the "beams" from our own eyes

b. To then be more useful in helping others with their problems But to say we should never judge, is to abuse what Jesus teaches, not

only in this passage but elsewhere as well!

Speaking of judging, are you preparing yourself for the day in which you will be judged by the Lord? - cf. John 12:48; 2 Corinthians 5:10

Matthew 7:7-12

Matthew 7:7-12 Matthew 7:7-12, The Golden Rule

Jesus is bringing the Sermon on the Mount to its conclusion. In doing so, Jesus is describing the standards for living in his kingdom. In the first six verses of Matthew 7 Jesus gives a summary of how we are to not treat others. We are not to use false standards of judgment. We are not to judge others differently than we would judge ourselves. We are not to judge hypocritically. In Matthew 7:7-12 Jesus is going to give us a beautiful picture of love. The first six verses tell us how not to act toward others and Matthew 7:7-12 tell us how to act toward others.

Just Ask (Matthew 7:7-12)

Jesus begins with wonderful words. “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7 ESV) With this wonderful blessing we consider the context of this promise. Jesus has been teaching us about the kingdom and our need to seek it above all else. Jesus taught us that we do not need to worry about what we will eat, drink, or wear because God knows we need it and he will provide these things to his children who are seeking first the kingdom and his righteousness. It is important for us to keep the context of Jesus’ sermon so that no one tries to come to this verse, lift it out of its context, and try to pray in a way that is not in line with the purposes of God as we learned in the model prayer in chapter 6. We are people who are seeking righteousness, sincerity, humility, purity, and love. We are praying for the kingdom and for God’s will to be done. But with these things in mind I want you to notice that Jesus is teaching us to be persistent. The tense of the Greek verbs is not a one time act but is a perpetual asking. Jesus encourages this persistent intensity in prayer with three different words: ask, seek, and knock. These are three great pictures. Ask God. Ask God for the things that are on your mind. Seek God and his righteousness. Seek him and you will find him. Knock is a great picture. It is as if we are on the outside of the kingdom doors knocking to come in and the Lord opens the door and brings us in. Ask of God. Seek God. Knock on God’s door. Notice the reason we should do this in verse 8. Jesus says that if we ask, seek, and knock that we will receive it. Jesus tells us to expect to receive what we ask of God. This is amazing! Expect to receive when you ask, seek, and knock. But Jesus does not end the discussion by teaching that we need to ask God more. Jesus does not simply tell us to pray more. Jesus gives us great encouragement for coming to God in prayer. Jesus tells us why we should expect to receive from God. Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? (Matthew 7:9-10 ESV)

If your child asks for bread, would you reject your child’s request? If your child asked you for a fish, would you give your child a serpent instead? Parents do not give their children bad things. Parents do not give children things that they do not need. My children may not understand what I am giving them but I am giving them something they need. They learn to trust that I am not going to give them bad things and I am not going to give them things that they do not need. When they ask of me, I will give them what they need, not something bad. Now listen to what Jesus says.

If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him! (Matthew 7:11 ESV)

Now we are sinful people and yet we know how to give good gifts to our children. So how much more will our heavenly Father give us good things when we ask him! Our heavenly Father answers from the depths of his goodness. These are comforting words! This is the heavenly Father's positive, gracious call to come to him and ask. God is not ignorant of what we need. God is not impotent so that he cannot give what we need. God is not malevolent so that he will give us what we do not need. We are comforted by the affirmation of God's benevolence in this text. This is hope and comfort for the poor in spirit who are mourning over their sins. God is not ignorant. God does not lack power. God is not malevolent.

God tells us to ask him. God tells us to seek him. God tells us to knock on his door. When we do, Jesus tells us that God will answer and he will give us what we need. He will give to us what we need from the storehouse of his blessings. So keep asking him. Keep seeking him. Keep knocking! How comforting it is to be his children who are in the hands of their heavenly Father! The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)

This brings us to Matthew 7:12 which has been frequently called the golden rule. Notice the first word of verse 12 is "so" or "therefore." Because of what God has done for us as a loving and benevolent heavenly Father, do to others as you would have them do to you. God's benevolence is to lead to your benevolence to others.

It is interesting that almost everyone in this country has heard of the golden rule. They may not know that it is from God's word but they have heard of doing to others as you would have them do to you. Yet it is hardly practiced. I want you think about something for a moment. Imagine what this world would look like if every person did for others what they want others to do for them. Can you imagine what the world would look like? It is an amazing idea. How radically different the world would be if we would follow just this one command of our Lord Jesus! So why do we not do it? If this command can change the world, why does no one practice it? The answer is that we are simply too selfish and self-centered. We refuse to think about others. We want to think about ourselves. We are self-consumed. We do not want to think about others. We only want to think about ourselves and how other people affect us. When we think about ourselves, we hurt so many other people. Our culture seems to be unable to see this. When we think about ourselves, we hurt others. But if we would do for others as we would want them to do for us, then there would be an end to the hurt that we inflict on others. This is why this command cannot sit in isolation. You cannot pull this command out of the context and expect it to work. Everyone knows to do to others as you would have them do to you. Yet no one practices this. Why not? The reason we do not do it is because it is not rooted in a reason. Why should I do for others as I would want them to do for me? Notice that the answer is not a selfish pursuit. The message is not to do for others in some sort of selfish manipulation to get out others what you want. How often we try this! We do something kind expecting kindness in return. When that kindness is not reciprocated, we get angry and attempt to hurt the other person. This is often why marriages experience trouble because people are operating under the same selfish manipulation rather than truly giving oneself for the other person. The motivation for doing to others what we want do for us is because of Matthew 7:7-11. God is a benevolent heavenly Father who calls us to approach the throne and ask of him

and he will give us what we need. Now go and give to others what they need. Do for them as you would have them do for you. God's love for you is to motivate your love for others. We do not do for others so that people will do it for us. That is a corruption of what Jesus taught. This command compels us to deal with others by beginning with ourselves. Here is what I mean by that. We do not determine the treatment of others by looking at them and asking what do they deserve. Rather, we start with ourselves and ask what would we want and need and do that for the other person. Notice what Jesus has done. Jesus is using our sense of self-interest that is innate in us and use it to treat others graciously.

Notice how verse 12 ends. "For this is the Law and the Prophets." Jesus calls this command to do for others as you would have them do for you as the very heart of the Law and the Prophets. This command is the heart of the kingdom and is truly the very heart of God. This is what the Law of Moses was teaching and what the prophets were preaching. God said, "Love your neighbor as yourself" in Leviticus 19:18. This has always been God's message. But the cross now amplifies this message in our hearts. Look at what God has accomplish for you through the cross. He draws you to him. He tells you to ask of him and expect to receive because he is a loving, heavenly Father. He is the powerful God who gives good gifts to his children. Now do the same. Give good gifts to others. Change the world and be the light: do for others what you would want them to do for you.

Outline: Matthew 7:7-11

Outline: Matthew 7:7-11 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Virtue Of Perseverance (Matthew 7:7-11)

INTRODUCTION

1. Why do some people...

a. Succeed in having their prayers answered?

b. Have a greater understanding of the Bible?

c. Reach more souls for Christ?

-- Is it skill, genius, or luck?

2. The answer is suggested by Calvin Coolidge:

"Press on! Nothing in the world can take the place of perseverance.

Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with

talent. Genius will not; unrewarded genius is almost a proverb.

Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts."

3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus talked about the virtue of perseverance...

a. Especially in its relevance to prayer

b. Giving us motivation to persevere in our service to God [Our text is Matthew 7:7-11, in which we find Jesus teaching about...] I. THE PRINCIPLE OF "PERSEVERANCE" (Matthew 7:7-8)

A. PERSEVERANCE IS IMPLIED IN THESE VERSES...

1. By the tense of the Greek

a. It is the present tense, which most often stresses

"continuous action"

b. Literally, then, Jesus is saying:

1) "keep on asking," and it will be given to you

2) "keep on seeking," and you will find

3) "keep on knocking," and it will be opened to you

2. By the progression of the terms themselves
 - a. "asking" is one level of inquiry
 - b. "seeking" suggests a step up, as one goes about to find what they ask (asking plus action, Hendricksen)
 - c. "knocking" is another step up, as one persists in finding that which they seek (asking plus action plus persevering, Hendricksen)

B. PERSEVERANCE IS PARTICULARLY RELEVANT...

1. To the matter of "prayer"
 - a. As later implied in Matthew 7:11
 - b. Jesus often stressed persistence in teaching on prayer
 - 1) In the parable of "The Persistent Friend" - Luke 11:5-8
 - 2) In the parable of "The Persistent Widow" - Luke 18:1-8
2. To the matter of "Bible study"
 - a. Many people give up too soon in their Bible studies
 - b. But those who persevere in their studies are the ones who benefit from the blessings God's Word provides - Psalms 1:1-3; 119:97-104
3. To the matter of "evangelism"
 - a. Many do not bear fruit because they give up too soon
 - b. But we reap what we sow; the more persistent we are in sowing, the more we will eventually reap

[If we desire success in any venture, but especially in prayer, Bible study, and evangelism, then we must adopt "The Virtue Of Perseverance."

To encourage us to do so, Jesus goes on to provide...] II. A MOTIVE FOR PERSEVERANCE (Matthew 7:9-11)

A. GOD DELIGHTS TO GIVE GOOD THINGS TO HIS CHILDREN...

1. To illustrate, Jesus gives a simple argument (from the lesser to the greater)

- a. I.e., men give good gifts to their children who ask
 - b. How much more so, will our Father in heaven!
2. Jesus stressed this Fatherly attribute of God in His sermon
- a. In regards to our physical necessities - Matthew 6:31-32
 - b. And now in regards to things that are good for us - Matthew 7:11

B. THIS IS ESPECIALLY TRUE IN REGARDS TO PRAYER!

1. As Jesus promised to His disciples in John 15:7
- a. Conditioned upon our abiding in Him
 - b. Conditioned upon His words abiding in us
2. As the apostle John wrote in 1 John 5:14-15
- a. Conditioned upon our asking according to His will
 - b. Which assumes we know His will for us (i.e., His word is abiding in us)
3. And as James wrote in James 4:3
- a. Presuming we are not asking for personal and selfish gain
 - b. But many do not enjoy God's favor, simply because they do not ask!

CONCLUSION

1. To persevere, then, is a noble virtue, especially in regards to prayer...
- a. We have a Father in heaven who is not untouched by the persistent pleas of His children
 - b. Providing we do not ask amiss, persistent prayers will not go unanswered!
2. If we desire to receive, find, and have doors opened to us, then let us...
- a. Keep on asking
 - b. Keep on seeking
 - c. Keep on knocking

...not only in regards to prayer, but in all ventures worthy of

Christians (e.g., Bible study, evangelism)! Have you asked, sought, or knocked today...?

Outline: Matthew 7:12

Outline: Matthew 7:12 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12)

INTRODUCTION

1. Have you ever found yourself in a situation...

a. Faced with the need to make a decision on the spur of the moment?

b. Wondering what is the right way to act?

c. Unable to recall whether the Bible specifically addresses the moral dilemma in which you find yourself?

2. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus provided a helpful tool in such a situation...

a. A quick and easy way to know what to do

b. Something that is easy to remember 3. It is found in Matthew 7:12, and is commonly called "The Golden Rule"...

"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:12)

[But what is "The Golden Rule"? Was Jesus teaching anything new or

original by what He stated? Well, in a way it was something new...] I. THE "GOLDEN" RULE VS. THE "SILVER" RULES A. MANY HAVE TAUGHT THAT WHICH IS SIMILAR...

1. The HINDU religion taught: This is the sum of duty: do naught to others which if done to

thee would cause thee pain. - The Mahabharata 2. The BUDDHIST religion taught:

Hurt not others with that which pains yourself. - Udana-Varga 3. The JEWISH traditions taught:

What is hateful to you, do not to your fellow men. That is the

entire Law; all the rest is commentary. - The Talmud 4. The MUSLIM religion taught: No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother

that which he desires for himself. - Hadith 5. The BAHA'I faith teaches:

He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for

himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil. - The

Book of Certitude

6. Some other sources:

- a. Do not that to thy neighbor that thou wouldst not suffer from him. - Pittacus of Lesbos (650-570 BC)
- b. What you do not want others to do to you, do not do to others. - Confucius (551-479 BC)
- c. Do not do unto others what angers you if done to you by others. - Isocrates (436-338 BC)
- d. "Tzu-kung asked, 'Is there a single word which can be a guide to conduct throughout one's life?' The Master said, 'It is perhaps the word "shu". Do not impose on others what you yourself do not desire.'" - Analects, 15.24
- e. Treat your inferiors as you would be treated by your betters. - Seneca (4 BC-AD 65)

B. JESUS' "RULE" WAS SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT...

1. Jesus requires you to do something favorably to others, while the others only prohibit you from doing something unfavorably to others!

- a. Jesus: Do unto others what you want them to do to you
- b. Others: Don't do to others what you don't want done to you

2. Note the difference...

- a. With the others, all that is required is that you don't harm other people
- b. With Jesus, what is required is that you show kindness to others

3. Jesus' rule is truly the "Golden" rule

- a. The others are "Silver" rules
- b. Of value, yes, but not as much as "gold"

4. The only ones that come close to teaching exactly what Jesus taught was:

a. That found in Hadith, the traditions of Islam; but then, much of Islam is based upon what Jesus taught 600 years before Mohammed

b. That stated by Seneca, who lived about the same time as Christ (I wonder if he had been influenced by the teachings of Christ?)

[So what Jesus taught was something new compared to what many teachers had taught prior. But in another sense it was nothing new; rather, in

a simple and easy to remember statement, Jesus gives us...] II. A GUIDELINE FOR RIGHTEOUS CONDUCT TOWARDS OTHERS

A. ONE IN HARMONY WITH THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS...

1. As we have seen earlier in the sermon (cf. Matthew 5:20-48)

a. Jesus taught a standard of righteousness that contrasted with that of the scribes and Pharisees

b. But it was in harmony with what the Law actually revealed

2. This one "rule" summarizes what the Law and the Prophets were all about

3. Just as the commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" summed up the Law according to Paul - Romans 13:8-10

B. A SORT OF "POCKET KNIFE" OR "CARPENTER'S RULE"...

1. That is, something that is always ready to be used

2. For example, even in an emergency, when there is no time to consult a friend, teacher, or book for advice, "the golden rule" can be guide for proper conduct

3. Treat others as you would be treated, and it is unlikely you

will ever do the wrong thing III. SOME EXAMPLES OF HOW TO APPLY THIS "RULE"

A. IN TEACHING THE LOST...

1. Imagine what it must be like to be told you are wrong, or in sin

2. Wouldn't you want to be told in a loving and patient spirit?
3. As you would have others try to persuade you to change religiously, so treat those you seek to convert - cf. 2 Timothy 2 : 24-26; Ephesians 4:15

B. IN CORRECTING ONE ANOTHER...

1. No one likes to have their mistakes, errors, etc., pointed out
2. When necessary, wouldn't we prefer to be approached with a meek and patient spirit?
3. As you would have others offer you constructive criticism, so give it to them - cf. Galatians 6:1-2

C. IN TREATING OUR FAMILY, NEIGHBORS, ENEMIES...

1. Everyone likes to have loving families, good neighbors, and no enemies
2. Applying the golden rule will not only transform ourselves, but may also transform those around us!
 - a. Sibling rivalry would cease
 - b. Neighborly squabbles would be non-existent
 - c. Enemies would become friends
3. Don't limit the application of the Golden Rule to religious matters!

CONCLUSION

1. "The Golden Rule would reconcile capital and labor, all political contention and uproar, all selfishness and greed." Joseph Parker (1830-1902)
 - a. Such would be the impact on our society if more followed Jesus' words
 - b. But let's start close to home, and let the Golden Rule transform our own lives and those closest to us!
2. "We have committed the Golden Rule to memory; let us now commit it

to life." Edwin Markham (1852-1940)

a. This reflects what is true with most people; they know the rule,
but don't live by it

b. If Jesus is truly our Lord, then His "golden rule" will govern
our life!

Matthew 7:13-29

Matthew 7:13-29 Matthew 7:13-29, Choose!

Jesus brings his marvelous sermon that we call the Sermon on the Mount to end with a call for the people who are listening to him to choose. Jesus gives us a number of pictures as he ends his sermon for us to decide between the two choices that lie before us. Let us notice the first picture Jesus gives. The Narrow Gate (Matthew 7:13-14)

This is the appeal that Jesus has been moving toward throughout this sermon. Now is the time to decide about becoming citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Jesus has shown the characteristics of his kingdom in his sermon. The first picture Jesus gives is very simple but surprising. There is a wide gate that many enter through, yet it leads to destruction. Enter the narrow gate. Few will find it and the way is hard but it leads to life. Notice that this decision is a matter of life and death. Jesus' sermon cannot be admired for its ethics. Jesus forces a decision. There is one right way that few find and there are many false ways that lead to destruction. We should have a good grasp of the narrowness of this gate to life when we think about what Jesus has said about the character of those who are truly kingdom citizens. It is a gate that requires denying self, being poor in spirit, mourning over sins, loving your enemies, not being angry with your brother, not lusting in the heart, turning the other cheek, laying up treasures in heaven, not being anxious about this life, and doing to others what you would have them do to you. This narrow gate that leads to life requires a constant striving to enter. Notice verse 14 again: "The way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few." This path is hard. There is nothing easy about entering through the narrow gate. Joining masses in belief, doctrine, or practice will not lead us into eternal life. Following the masses is a destructive spiritual choice. Jesus did not give us any kind of picture that declares that you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven if you pick a church and go every Sunday.

God has always called for his people to make the choice to follow him to receive life. Moses declared that he had set the choice of life and death, blessing and curse, before the people (Deuteronomy 30:19-20). Joshua set before the people to choose this day who they would serve (Joshua 24:13-15). Elijah on Mount Carmel to stop waffling between the two choices (1 Kings 18:21). Jeremiah declared, "Thus says the Lord, 'Behold, I set before you the way of life and the way of death'" (Jeremiah 21:8). Jesus sets before us the same decision of life or death. One way is easy and many find it but it goes to destruction. One is way hard and few find it but it leads to life. The Warning of False Teachers (Matthew 7:15-23)

Now Jesus gives a warning. There are all kinds of people who look like they are Christians but they are not. Isn't this sad? Beware of false prophets. Beware of false teachers. There are those who come to you in sheep's clothing but they are wolves in their hearts. There are churches that look like they are doing what is right but they are not because the gate is narrow and there are many false teachers and prophets. There are many Bible teachers who look like they love God but they are not to be listened to because they are false. What are we supposed to do to know? How can we know what is the right church? How can we know who is a true teacher? Listen to what

Jesus says.

First, in Matthew 7:16 Jesus says that you will recognize them by their fruits. Healthy trees bear good fruit and diseased trees bear bad fruit. Healthy trees do not bear bad fruit and diseased trees do not bear good fruit. Fruit is the first component to watching out for false prophets and teachers. We are looking for pure motives and good hearts which can only be ultimately evaluated by the fruit in one's life. Pure motives and hearts that love God will bear the fruit that reflect that. People like to say to ignore someone's actions because they have a good heart. Jesus tells us that this is not possible. Good hearts produce good fruits. People who are inwardly ravenous wolves will deceive you with their words, but you will see by their actions who they truly are. The other way to recognize those who are false is given in Matthew 7:21-23. You will notice the similarity of what Jesus just said. Christianity is not about words but about submission and obedience. Now I want you to carefully consider Matthew 7:21-22. There are going to be many people who say the right things. There are going to be people who claim to be followers of God. There are going to be many who seem to be devoted to the Lord because of the way they talk. Further, there are going to be many people who on the day of judgment will say that they did many good works in the name of the Lord. Not only are there going to be people who look like Christians, who speak like a Christian, and look like they act like Christians. They had Bible classes. They had worship services. But notice what Jesus will say to them in Matthew 7:23 : "I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness." Is this surprising to hear? We live in such a pluralist society which says that you can go to any church, that there are multiple ways to God, that if you are generally a good person, or something like this that you will go to heaven. I want us to pause and listen to what Jesus has told us. The way to life is a narrow gate that is hard and few find it. There are many people who are false teachers that will try to take you off of the narrow path to life. There are many people who will speak like Christians and do works like Christians but Jesus says that he does not know them. Why does Jesus not know them? They are confessing the Lord. They are prophesying in the Lord's name. They are doing many mighty works in God's name. Why does Jesus not know them? Look carefully at the text. Jesus calls them "workers of lawlessness."

Jesus does not know them because they are lawless. They are workers of lawlessness. What does this mean? Simply break down the phrase. The works that they are doing are without the law of God. That is, they do not act with God's authority. They are saying the right things and they are doing good works but they are operating outside of the law and authority of God. We cannot have a lax view of God's law and cannot have a lax view regarding our obedience to God's law. The gate is narrow that leads to life and people who seem to say Christian things and do good works are not entering the kingdom of heaven if they do not keep to the laws of God as revealed to us in the scriptures. This is why you cannot pick the church of your choice. All religions do not lead to God. All denominations do not lead to God. All churches do not lead to God. Not even all churches of Christ lead to God. Look again at Matthew 7:21. Only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter the kingdom of heaven. It is not doing good works or saying Christian things. We must do what Jesus has told us to do. We must do the will of the Father. We must act within the authority of God's law. Otherwise we are also workers of lawlessness. This changes everything about how we live our lives and how we function as a church. There are all kinds of churches today that say, "Lord, Lord" but are false teachers because they are not doing the will of the Father. They are not acting within the authority of the scriptures. There are churches that teach

that sexual immorality is acceptable. There are churches that teach that homosexuality is acceptable. There are churches that teach that adultery is acceptable. There are churches that refuse to pass judgment on sinful behaviors. There are churches that teach that divorce for any reason is acceptable. There are churches that teach that promiscuity is tolerable. There are churches that do not emphasize the word of God and “thus says the Lord” but instead are more concerned about entertaining you and making you comfortable. There are churches that are invested in social activities, offering softball leagues and other social functions. There are churches that do not think it matters how we worship God even though the scriptures are filled with commands and examples that how we worship God is of the utmost importance to God. We cannot act without God’s authority in worship. Sure, it would be fun to put instrumental music in the building and rock out. But that is lawlessness because there is no authority in the scriptures to do that. There are churches that turn worship into a show so that we come to be entertained rather than coming to give God the glory and praise he deserves. There are churches that teach that we can use the treasury of the church for all kinds of social uses, when the scriptures give us that we must use the money of our Lord teach the lost (evangelism), teach the saved (edification), and help those brothers and sisters in Christ who are in need (benevolence). Do we see what Jesus is saying? We must have a spiritual intensity about us because the gate is narrow and few find it. The easy path leads to our spiritual destruction. We must have a spiritual intensity about what we are doing and what we are teaching because there are false teachers, and they will look like they love God but they are wolves who lead people away from the Lord. We must have a spiritual intensity because Jesus just said that even people who say, “Lord, Lord” and do good works will still be excluded from the kingdom of heaven if they are not acting within God’s authority as revealed in the scriptures. Friends, this should make perfect sense to us. Jesus did not give this sermon so that people would think that however you come to Jesus is fine. Jesus has taught us some very hard lessons in this sermon. From anger, lust, judging, loving others, forgiving others, and trusting God we have seen how narrow the gate is to the kingdom of heaven. How can we possibly be surprised to know that there are going to be many people who want to look like Christians but are actually workers of lawlessness? As a church we cannot do whatever we want to do. As a church we cannot worship however we want to worship. As a church we cannot teach whatever we want to teach. We cannot teach warm, fuzzy stories that are devoid of the word of God. As a Christian, we cannot do whatever we want to do either.

Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-29)

Jesus concludes by contrasting wise and foolish builders. There was a wise man who built his house on the rock so that when the rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew, that house did not fall. There was also a foolish man who build his house on the sand so that when the rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew, that house fell and its fall was great. Who is the wise person in this illustration? Look at Matthew 7:24. “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock.” Who is the foolish person? Look at Matthew 7:26. “Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.” What is the difference between these two individuals? Both of them heard Jesus’ words. Both of them have listened to this sermon. The difference is one person did what Jesus said and the other did not. Do we hear and do what Jesus says or do we just hear? We must not disregard God’s law! We must not ignore what Jesus is

teaching! How amazing it is that this is exactly what happens! We have a choice. The way to life is not easy and few find it. Let that sink into our hearts. Jesus said that few find the way to life. The ways of God are not intuitive. The ways of God are not to follow your heart or your desires. The ways of God are to listen to what Jesus says and then to do them. The poor in spirit, the pure in heart, the meek and humble, and the ones who hunger and thirst for righteousness are the blessed in God's kingdom. Now we can see why the crowds were astonished by this sermon and the way Jesus taught (Matthew 7:28-29). What challenging words!

Build your house on the rock. Hear the words of Jesus and do them. Take the narrow path to life and enter that narrow gate. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. Jesus says it is foolish to hear what he is saying and still build your life on anything other than his will and his authority. It matters how we live our lives. It matters how we worship. It matters what teachers say. This is our spiritual lives at stake. We must have an intensity for the outcome of our souls. Be wise and build your house on the rock.

Outline: Matthew 7:13-14

Outline: Matthew 7:13-14 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" Are You On The Right Way? (Matthew 7:13-14)

INTRODUCTION

1. Everyone is on a spiritual journey as they travel through life...
 - a. Whether religious or not, we travel a spiritual path
 - b. Every day we make choices that affects the direction in which we are headed
2. Many people think that the paths we can travel are many...
 - a. In one sense that may be true; there are all kinds of religions
 - b. But in another sense there are really only two paths or ways
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus spoke of these two ways - Matthew 7:13-14
 - a. Each with its own beginning, each with its own end
 - b. One way is heavily populated, the other is traveled by few
4. Where are you in your spiritual sojourn?
 - a. Are you on the right way?
 - b. Are you heading in the right direction?

[To answer such questions, let's look closely at what Jesus said. Note first that...] I. THERE ARE TWO GATES

A. THE WIDE GATE...

1. "for wide is the gate..." - Matthew 7:13
2. This "gate" represents the beginning to the "way" that leads to destruction
3. It is described as "wide"; evidently it is a gate which:
 - a. Allows many to enter with no sacrifice on their part
 - 1) It does not require giving up anything
 - 2) One is allowed to bring along whatever "baggage" they

desire

- a) E.g., materialism
- b) E.g., prejudice, hatred, an unforgiving spirit
- c) E.g., believe whatever one wants to believe

b. Is therefore chosen by most people

1) For there are no restrictions concerning belief and behavior

2) It also opens the way to "the path of least resistance"

B. THE NARROW GATE...

1. "Enter by the narrow gate.." - Matthew 7:13

2. This "gate" represents the beginning, or starting point, to the "way" that leads to life

3. Why is it "narrow"? Because it is a gate which:

- a. Requires self-denial and obedience - cf. Matthew 16:24
- b. Has no room for...

1) A consuming desire for earthly goods - Matthew 6:19-20

2) An unforgiving spirit - Matthew 6:14-15

3) Self-righteousness - Matthew 6:1

-- As Jesus has already stressed in His sermon on the mount [These two "gates" are only the starting points. Let's now take a

closer look at the fact that...] II. THERE ARE TWO WAYS

A. THE BROAD WAY...

1. "...broad is the way" - Matthew 7:13

2. The way that leads to destruction is broad because it allows:

- a. Any behavior one desires
- b. No need for reformation or changes in one's "lifestyle"

3. Many people love this path

- a. They think they are "free"
- b. They believe they are "open-minded"

c. They view themselves as "tolerant" of others in this same way

B. THE CONSTRICTED WAY...

1. "...difficult is the way" - Matthew 7:14 (NKJV)

a. "...narrow the road" (NIV)

b. "the way is narrow" (NASB)

c. "narrow is the way" (KJV)

-- The picture is one of a narrow and difficult path between two cliffs

2. The way that leads to life is "difficult" because it requires:

a. A righteousness that exceeds that of many religious people

- Matthew 5:20

b. A change in our behavior - cf. Matthew 5:21 to Matthew 7:12

3. Because of its difficulty, many choose not to travel its path

a. They think it too "confining"

b. They think it is too "narrow-minded"

[As Jesus describes the two gates and the two ways, He also reminds us that...]

III. THERE ARE TWO GROUPS

A. THE MANY...

1. "There are many who go in by it" - Matthew 7:13

2. We have seen reasons why this is so:

a. The entrance is wide: "Come as you are! No changes necessary!"

b. The way is broad: "Make your own rules! Believe what you want! Do what you want!"

3. This is the way people travel by default; unless they are actively seeking the narrow path, this is the one they will travel

B. THE FEW...

1. "there are few who find it" - Matthew 7:14
2. As proven true so often in the past, only few will be saved
 - a. E.g., the millions lost in the flood vs. the eight saved on the ark
 - b. E.g., the hundreds of thousands lost in the wilderness vs. the two who entered the promised land

-- So Jesus warned on another occasion - Luke 13:23-24

3. That it must be "found" suggests effort must be extended
 - a. As Jesus said in Luke 13:24 : "Strive to enter through the narrow gate..."
 - b. Even then not all will be saved: "...for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able."

-- Not just effort, but the right kind of effort - cf. Matthew 5:6;

6:33 [Finally, we note that Jesus tells us that...] IV. THERE ARE TWO DESTINATIONS

A. DESTRUCTION...

1. "...broad is the way that leads to destruction" - Matthew 7:13
2. Paul wrote of the "everlasting destruction" that is to come
 - 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9
 - a. Upon those who know not God
 - b. Upon those who obey not the gospel of Jesus Christ
3. John described it as "a lake of fire" - Revelation 20:15; Revelation 21:8

-- A most sobering thought are these words of Jesus: "...there are many who go in by it." - Matthew 7:13

B. LIFE...

1. "...difficult is the way which leads to life" - Matthew 7:14
2. This "life" is the "everlasting life" received at the judgment
 - Matthew 25:46
3. It is the "gift of God", given at the end - Romans 6:22-23
 - a. To those who have been set free from sin - cf. Romans 6:3-7

b. To those who became slaves of God and of righteousness

- cf. Romans 6:17-18

c. To those who bore the fruit of holiness - cf. Romans 6:20-22

-- Another sobering thought are these words about the way that

leads to this life: "...there are few who find it." - Matthew 7:14

CONCLUSION 1. So we have seen that Jesus describes:

a. Two gates

b. Two ways

c. Two groups

d. Two destinations

2. Are there many roads that lead to heaven?

a. Many people like to think so

b. That all religions lead to heaven

c. That it really doesn't matter what you believe or do, as long as you are sincere

3. But according to Jesus...

a. There are only two roads (ways)

b. One leads to life, i.e., heaven

c. The other road, filled with many people with many different beliefs, leads to destruction!

4. Are you on the right way, the only way, that leads to life?

a. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." - John 14:6

b. The way that He provides is a narrow one, for He requires that

people keep His commandments - Matthew 28:19-20 Will you be among the few, or the many? Let Jesus direct you along the

narrow way that leads to eternal life!

Outline: Matthew 7:14

Outline: Matthew 7:14 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" The Difficult Way To Life (Matthew 7:14)

INTRODUCTION

1. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus spoke of two ways...

a. The way to destruction - Matthew 7:13

b. The way to life - Matthew 7:14

2. In describing these two ways, He pointed out the contrasts...

a. The way to destruction is broad, and many chose to follow it - Matthew 7:13

b. The way to life is difficult, and there are few who find it - Matthew 7:14

[If we desired to be saved, to experience eternal life, there will be

hardship along the way. As we use this lesson to contemplate "The

Difficult Way To Life", we note first that...] I. WE SHOULD NOT BE SURPRISED

A. WE HAVE BEEN WARNED...

1. By Jesus in our text and elsewhere - Matthew 7:14; John 15:18-20;

16:33

2 By Paul to his fellow disciples - Acts 14:22; 2 Timothy 3:12

3 By Peter in his epistle - 1 Peter 4:12

-- Jesus and His apostles have given full disclosure that the way

to life is difficult

B. WE HAVE MANY ENEMIES...

1. Satan himself, who seeks to devour - 1 Peter 5:8-9

2. People who think us 'strange', who may ridicule and ostracize

us - 1 Peter 4:3-4

3. The lust of the flesh, with its bad habits - 1 Peter 2:11

-- Without and within, there are forces at work making the way to

life difficult [Forewarned, what should our attitude be? Though the way to life is

difficult...] II. WE SHOULD NOT BE RESENTFUL

A. WE ARE TOLD TO REJOICE...

1. By Jesus in His sermons - Matthew 5:10-12; Luke 6:22-23

2. By James in his epistle - James 1:2

3. As did the apostles, when persecuted - Acts 5:41

-- Jesus and His apostles say that we should rejoice. Why?

B. BECAUSE IT MAKES US STRONGER...

1. Which is why Paul gloried in his tribulations - Romans 5:3-4; 2 Corinthians 12:10

2. Which is why James told us to rejoice in our trials - James 1:2-4

3. "In the difficult are the friendly forces, the hands that work on us." - Rainer Maria Rilke

-- Can we begin to see why God would allow the way to life to be so difficult?

[So rejoice, not resent, when trials and tribulations befall us on the way to life. What may appear to be stumbling blocks may in fact be

stepping stones to victory. Especially as we consider why...] III. WE SHOULD NOT BE DEFEATED

A. WE HAVE GOD ON OUR SIDE...

1. He will not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability to endure

- 1 Corinthians 10:13 a

2. He will provide a way of escape, enabling us to endure - 1Co 10:13b

3. This includes strength to stand strong

a. His Spirit to empower the inner man - Ephesians 3:16; cf. Romans 15:13

b. His armor to protect, and fight the good fight - Ephesians 6:10-13

-- Through God's providence and provision, we have the ability to be victorious!

B. WE HAVE JESUS TO INSPIRE US...

1. He provided an example of suffering, for us to follow - 1 Pe 2:21

2. We should look to Him, as we seek to endure - Hebrews 12:1-4
3. Even as Stephen did, emulating His forgiving spirit - Acts 7:54-60;
cf. Luke 23:34

-- Through Jesus' example, we have the inspiration and motivation to succeed!

CONCLUSION

1. This is not to say we will never misstep along the way to life...
 - a. As Christians we sin - 1 John 1:8; 1 John 1:10
 - b. When we stumble, we have mercy and forgiveness - 1 John 1:7; 1 John 1:9
2. So as we travel on the way to life, finding it at times to be difficult...
 - a. Let's not be surprised
 - b. Let's not be resentful
 - c. Let's not be defeated But as the writer to the Hebrews penned in his epistle...

"Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed."

"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:"

"Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled;"

- Hebrews 12:12-15 And as Paul confessed in his epistle...

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." - Php_4:13

Note: The idea and main points for this study came from a daily devotional written my cousin and brother in the Lord, Gary Henry. Visit his website at WordPoints.com to find lots of good material!

Outline: Matthew 7:15-20

Outline: Matthew 7:15-20 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Watch Out For Wolves! (Matthew 7:15-20)

INTRODUCTION

1. Many people like to think that you can trust religious leaders...
 - a. Ministers normally rank high in polls concerning people you can trust
 - b. People will often accept whatever a preacher, priest, or rabbi says as the truth
2. Yet Jesus told His disciples to beware of false prophets - Matthew 7:15-20
 - a. They may appear like sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves
 - b. We need to be able to identify them, knowing what to look for
3. Are you concerned about false prophets today? You should be!
 - a. The great diversity of teaching suggests that many are being misled
 - b. We need to be reminded of the danger, and know how to spot any "wolves" that might come our way!

[With the words of our Savior in Matthew 7:15-20 fresh on our mind, I wish to use this opportunity to remind us to "Watch Out For Wolves!" Let me first re-emphasize the point that...] I. THERE WILL BE FALSE PROPHETS

A. AS PAUL WARNED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS...

1. To the Ephesian elders - Acts 20:28-31
 - a. Telling them to take heed
 - b. For even from among themselves would men arise, misleading people
2. To the church at Corinth - 2 Corinthians 11:13-15
 - a. Referring to false teachers present even then

b. Appearing as ministers of righteousness, even as Satan appears as an angel of light

3. To the young preacher Timothy - 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-9

a. Warning of the apostasy that would come

b. Describing the character and tactics of those who would mislead others

B. AS DID OTHER NEW TESTAMENT WRITERS...

1. Peter, in telling of the rise of false teachers - 2 Peter 2:1-3

2. John, in calling for people to "test the spirits" - 1 John 4:1

3. Jude, in writing of some who had already come - Jude 1:3-4

[With so many warnings, this is not a subject to take lightly! But how can we spot such "wolves" when they appear so disarming (like sheep)?

Thanks to Jesus and the Word of God...] **II. WE CAN IDENTIFY FALSE PROPHETS**

A. BY EXAMINING THE FRUIT OF THEIR LIFE...

1. We can know them by their "fruit" - Matthew 7:16-20

a. What is truly in their heart will eventually come out

b. For from the heart proceeds any sin that may be there

- cf. Mark 7:21-23

2. Thus false teachers and false prophets are often betrayed...

a. By their greediness (e.g., as manifested by their lavish lifestyles)

b. By their immorality (e.g., as manifested by adulterous relationships)

c. By their lust for power (e.g., as manifested by religious empires)

-- Given time, the true character of many false prophets will be exposed by the fruit of their life!

B. BY EXAMINING THE FRUIT OF THEIR TEACHING...

1. Taking notice of their methods

a. Working secretly - cf. 2 Peter 2:1

1) Their ministries (especially finances) will be shrouded
in secrecy

2) Rather than being open to one and all - cf. 2 Corinthians 8:20-21

b. Appealing to covetousness - cf. 2 Peter 2:3

1) They draw people with an appeal to what people often
covet (such as health and wealth)

2) Rather than preparing people for what Christians can
expect - cf. Acts 14:23; 2 Timothy 3:12

c. Using deceptive words - cf. 2 Timothy 3:13; 2 Peter 2:3

1) Twisting the scriptures to support their message (just
as Satan did in trying to tempt Jesus)

2) Rather handling the word of God rightly - 2 Timothy 2:14-16

2. Taking notice of their doctrine

a. How they twist and pervert the scriptures - cf. Galatians 1:8-9

1) Their gospel may start out right, but becomes twisted
along the way

2) Their teaching often expressed in the terms of man, not
Scripture

b. How they teach that which is clearly contrary to the
scriptures - cf. Deuteronomy 13:1-4

1) Even if they appear able to perform signs and wonders!

2) The final test is how their teaching compares to the
word of God and that of His apostles - cf. 1 John 4:1; 1 John 4:6

CONCLUSION

1. It is not necessary to judge the hearts of those who claim to speak
for God...

a. We need only to be "fruit-inspectors" b. The fruit of their life and teaching will become apparent
soon

enough

-- This is how we can "Watch Out For Wolves!"

2. Of course, this presumes that our knowledge of God's word is sufficient...

a. To know what to look for in the life of a false prophet

b. To know what to listen for in the teaching of a false prophet

-- Otherwise we will be no different than Israel, of whom God said:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge..." - Hosea 4:6 Are you equipped to identify a wolf in sheep's clothing if you saw one?

Outline: Matthew 7:21-23

Outline: Matthew 7:21-23 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW" Who Will Enter The Kingdom Of Heaven? (Matthew 7:21-23)

INTRODUCTION

1. Most people believe they will go to heaven when they die...
 - a. Their hope is fostered by the comforting words of many preachers, priests, and rabbis
 - b. Their hope is based upon the idea that heaven is for all believers, or for those whose good works outweigh the bad
2. But are such hopes well-founded?
 - a. Will most people go to heaven when they die?
 - b. Is salvation based upon good works? Is it based upon faith only?
3. In His sermon on the mount, Jesus gave some ominous warnings...
 - a. Few, not many, would be saved - Matthew 7:13-14
 - b. Many religious people, including some believers in Jesus, will learn that they too will be lost! - Matthew 7:21-23
4. With Matthew 7:21-23 as the spring board for our study, I wish to address the question: "Who will enter the kingdom of heaven?"

[Before considering this question, perhaps this is good opportunity to answer another one first...] I. WHAT IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

A. THE TERM "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"...

1. Is synonymous with the "kingdom of God" - cf. Matthew 4:17 with Mark 1:14-15
 2. Refers to God's kingship, or rule, from heaven
- The kingdom of heaven is focused in the Person of Jesus Christ, and is especially manifested where He rules in the hearts of men - Luke 17:20-21

B. IN BRIEF, THE "KINGDOM OF HEAVEN"...

1. Is spiritual in nature - John 18:36; Romans 14:17
2. It began when all authority (rule) was given to Jesus - Matthew 28 : 18; Acts 2:36; Ephesians 1:20-23
3. Today, it includes the Lord's church on earth (for those who submit to the Will of Christ are added to the kingdom) - Colossians 1:13; Revelation 1:9
4. In the future, it will involve the "new heavens and new earth," where we will be with God and Jesus for eternity!
- Matthew 13:40-43; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation 21:1 to Revelation 22:5
-- The kingdom of heaven was "inaugurated" on the Day of Pentecost, and will be "culminated" when Jesus returns to deliver it back to God - cf. 1 Corinthians 15:23-28

C. THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IN OUR TEXT...

1. Appears to have the future aspect of the kingdom in view
 - a. Note that Jesus says "in that day..." - Matthew 7:22
 - b. An apparent reference to the day of judgment - cf. 2 Timothy 1 : 12,18; 4:8
2. Thus Jesus is talking about who will enter the kingdom in its future aspect
 - a. Of which He spoke on other occasions - Matthew 25:31-34
 - b. Of which Peter wrote in 2 Peter 1:10-11

[What a wonderful blessing, to have an abundant entrance into "the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ"! But this leads me back to our text (Matthew 7:21-23), and to the main question of our study...] II. WHO WILL ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN?

A. NOT EVERYONE WHO PROFESSES JESUS...

1. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven"

2. There are some who teach that as long as one believes in Jesus, they will be saved

a. That salvation is by "faith only"

b. Even though the only time "faith only" is found in the Scriptures, it says: "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only." - James 2:24

3. But there is such a thing as "an unsaved believer"...

a. The demons believe, but are not saved - James 2:19

b. There were some who believed in Jesus, but were not saved
- John 12:42-43

c. Jesus described a true disciple as one who not only believes in Him, but does what He says - John 8:30-32

-- Let no one think that just because they "believe" in Jesus, they have a free ticket into heaven!

B. NOT EVERYONE WHO DOES MANY GOOD WORKS...

1. "Many will say to Me in that day, `Lord, Lord, have we not..." - Matthew 7:22

2. Here were people who not only believed in Jesus, but believed they had:

a. Prophesied in His name!

b. Cast out demons in His Name!

c. Done many wonders in His Name!

-- I.e., they thought they had been empowered to do such wonderful works!

3. Such good works certainly did not earn their way to heaven

a. Indeed, salvation is by grace, not meritorious works - cf.

Titus 3:3-7

b. Good works had not saved Cornelius, he still needed to be told what to do to be saved - Acts 10:1-5; Acts 11:14

4. Indeed, sometimes what we may think is a good work is without any authority...

a. Jesus condemns these as those "who practice lawlessness"

- Matthew 7:23

b. Literally, those who act without authority

1) It was not that they did something condemned by Jesus

2) It was that they did things for which they had no authority!

-- We might be very religious, and do many things in the name of Jesus, yet He might still say: "I never knew you; depart from Me..."

[Who then will be saved?]

C. ONLY THOSE WHO DO THE FATHER'S WILL...

1. As Jesus said, "...he who does the will of My Father in heaven." - Matthew 7:21

a. Here is the dividing line: those who DO the Father's will!

b. As James would write later, it is the "doer of the work" who is blessed in what he does - cf. James 1:22-25

2. Is this legalism?

a. No! Legalism is salvation by perfect law-keeping, believing that one earns salvation by the merit of what they have

done

b. Salvation by grace does not preclude the necessity of obedience

1) We simply need to recognize that our obedience does not earn or merit salvation

2) When all is said and done, we are still unworthy! - cf.

Luke 17:10

3. The Father's will, while it offers salvation by grace, does

require obedience!

a. Only those who obey from the heart will be delivered from

sin - Romans 6:17-18

b. Christ is the author of salvation to all who obey Him

- Hebrews 5:9

c. Christ will come in judgment against those who obey not the

gospel - 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9

CONCLUSION

1. Who will enter the kingdom of heaven?

a. Not those who profess to believe, but do not obey

b. Not those who think they are doing many religious things, but

without authority

c. Only those who do the Father's will!

2. This is why we must take an earlier statement in Jesus' sermon so

seriously...

a. "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness..." - Matthew 6 :

33

b. We must make the finding of God's will and rule the number one

priority in our life!

3. What is the Father's will? It begins with...

a. Repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ - Acts 20:21

b. Confessing Jesus as Lord - Romans 10:10

c. Being baptized into Christ for the remission of sins - Acts 2:38

-- Followed by a life of faithful service to Christ, confessing our

sins along the way - Revelation 2:10; 1 John 1:9 Are you doing the Father's will?

Outline: Matthew 7:24-27

Outline: Matthew 7:24-27 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

Building To Withstand The Storms (Matthew 7:24-27)

INTRODUCTION

1. 1998 was quite a year for natural disasters in the state of Florida...
 - a. There were killer tornadoes, devastating fires, destructive hurricanes
 - b. Impacting the lives of many people
2. Such disasters proved to reveal much about contractors...
 - a. We learned that some builders were unscrupulous
 - b. Failing to build according to code, many homes and buildings were destroyed
3. Jesus made a parallel between storms and buildings at the end of His sermon - Matthew 7:24-27
 - a. As He sought to encourage people to act upon His sayings
 - b. Contrasting the difference between those who were doers and not just listeners
4. In this lesson, I wish to address the following questions...
 - a. What do the "houses" of the wise and foolish builders represent?
 - b. What "storms" is Jesus talking about?
 - c. How can we "build" so as to be able to withstand the storms?

[Let's begin by identifying the "houses"; I suggest that...] I. THE HOUSES REPRESENT OUR LIVES

A. EACH OF US IS BUILDING A "LIFE"...

1. A life that will eventually face the vicissitudes of life
2. A life that will respond to the many ups and downs that come

our way

B. WE ARE BUILDING THESE "LIVES" UPON A FOUNDATION...

1. The foundation is whatever teaching, doctrine, or philosophy

to which we subscribe

2. It may be a philosophy or doctrine adopted from others, or

developed ourselves

[We cannot escape the fact that we are "builders." The question is

whether we will be wise or foolish builders. The tests that will

determine are called "storms"...] II. THE STORMS ARE THINGS WHICH THREATEN OUR WELL-BEING

A. THIS MAY INVOLVE LITERAL STORMS...

1. Such as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, etc.

2. Which may take away all we own, perhaps even our loved ones

3. How we respond to such tragedies will reveal the quality of

our "building"

a. Will we be emotionally devastated?

b. Will we be able to stand strong, willing to continue on

without despair?

B. IT MAY ALSO INVOLVE FIGURATIVE STORMS...

1. Such as illness, loss of loved ones, financial setbacks

2. Which may take away our health, family, possessions

3. Again, how we respond to such tragedies will reveal the

quality of our "building"

a. Will we be emotionally devastated?

b. Will we be able to stand strong, willing to continue on

without despair?

C. THEN THERE IS THE FINAL "STORM" OF LIFE...

1. That of death and the final day of Judgment - cf. Hebrews 9:27;

Romans 2:4-6

2. Which will be the truest test of our "building" (i.e., character) - cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10-11

3. The Lord will describe the kind of "builder" (or servant) we have been

a. E.g., "Well done, good and faithful servant..." - Matthew 25:21

b. E.g., "You wicked and lazy servant..." - Matthew 25:26

[The longer we live, the more "storms" we are likely to face; and there is the final "storm" that none can escape! How can we be sure to build our lives so as to withstand the storms?] III. OBEYING JESUS IS THE KEY TO WITHSTANDING THE STORMS

A. BEING A "HEARER" ONLY IS NOT SUFFICIENT...

1. Such is foolishness, building on a shaky foundation that will not stand the test of storms - Matthew 7:26-27

2. As James wrote, one is deceiving only themselves - James 1:22-24

3. Like the unscrupulous contractor, the storm will reveal the true quality of one's character

4. As Moses said, "...your sin will find you out." - Numbers 32:23

B. WE MUST "DO" WHAT JESUS SAYS...

1. Those who "do" what Jesus said will be those to withstand the storms - Matthew 7:24-25

2. Because their lives (houses) are built upon the "rock" (a solid foundation)

3. As James went on to write, it is the doer who is blessed in what he does - James 1:25

C. HOW THE SAYINGS OF JESUS HELP US WITHSTAND THE STORMS...

1. His saying regarding where to lay up treasure - Matthew 6:19-21

a. In which we are told to lay up treasure in heaven, not on earth

b. If we heed His words, our hearts will not be distraught if

earthly treasures are stolen or lost

2. His saying regarding what to seek first - Matthew 6:33

a. Calling upon all to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness

b. By heeding His words, we need not have anxiety for the future

3. Indeed, His sayings provide the basis for a solid foundation in which to build a life...

a. That will avoid being misled by false prophets - Matthew 7:15-20

b. That will stay on the straight and narrow way that leads to life - Matthew 7:13-14

c. That will fulfill the Law and the Prophets - Matthew 7:12

d. That will receive what good gifts God desires to give His children - Matthew 7:7-11

e. That will not be judged by some inconsistent standard - Matthew 7:1-6

f. Where the necessities of life are provided for - Matthew 6:30-34

g. Free from materialism and anxiety - Matthew 6:22-29

h. With treasure that cannot rust or be stolen - Matthew 6:19-21

i. With acts of righteousness that are well-pleasing to God - Matthew 6:1-18

j. With righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees - Matthew 5:20-48

CONCLUSION

1. Yes, this is a life that can truly withstand the storms!

a. Whether it be the literal or figurative storms of every day life

b. Or the storm of the Day of Wrath and Judgment that is yet to come

2. What kind of foundation are you building your house (life) upon?

a. Heed what Jesus is saying, and your life will be solid

b. Be listeners only, and your life will be as shaky as sand!

Just as Jesus is the Rock-solid foundation of the church (1 Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-6), so let Him be the Rock-solid foundation of your life!

Outline: Matthew 7:28-29

Outline: Matthew 7:28-29 "THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW"

He Taught As One Having Authority (Matthew 7:28-29)

INTRODUCTION

1. During His earthly ministry, Jesus astonished the people with His teaching...

- a. He astonished them in the synagogues - Mark 1:21-22; Mark 6:2
- b. They were astonished by His sermon on the mount - Matthew 7:28-29

2. What impressed the people was that "He taught as one having authority"

- a. Unlike the scribes, who simply interpreted the Law
- b. Jesus spoke as One had the right to make the law!

1) E.g., "But I say to you...But I tell you..." - Matthew 5:22; Matthew 5:28; Matthew 5:32, 34,39,44

2) E.g., "Take heed...You shall not be...Do not..." - Matthew 6:1-2; Matthew 6:5, 8,19,25

3. The question might be raised, "Did Jesus have the authority to speak this way?"

- a. He may have taught with authority, but was it His to do so?
- b. Should we, who read that which He taught, give heed to obey what He said?

4. At a time when many do not heed the words of Jesus...

- a. Not only those in the world
- b. But, sadly, even many who profess Him to be Lord

...the authority of Jesus needs to be recognized and followed by all,

but especially by those who claim to be His disciples [In this study, we shall review the authority that Jesus has, beginning

with...] I. THE INHERENT RIGHT OF JESUS' AUTHORITY

A. BY VIRTUE OF BEING THE CREATOR...

1. All things were made through Him - John 1:1-3; Hebrews 1:2
 2. All things were made by Him and for Him - Colossians 1:16
- As Creator, Jesus has the authority to expect and demand whatever He desires of His creation

B. BY VIRTUE OF BEING THE HEIR...

1. As prophesied, Jesus would be given all things - Psalms 2:8
 2. As the Son, Jesus has been appointed heir of all things
- Hebrews 1:2
- As the Heir, Jesus has authority over that which has been given Him

C. BY VIRTUE OF BEING THE REDEEMER...

1. Jesus has redeemed us from our sins - 1 Peter 1:18-19
 2. This He has done with His own blood - Ephesians 1:7; Acts 20:28
- As our Redeemer, He certainly has authority over those who have been purchased by His blood!

[As Creator, Heir, and Redeemer, Jesus has both the inherent right and the earned right to speak with authority. Dare we living today not

recognize such authority? Consider others who gave voice to...] II. THE RECOGNITION OF JESUS' AUTHORITY

A. HE WAS WORSHIPPED BY ANGELS...

1. When He came into the world - Hebrews 1:6
 2. As He sat on the throne of God - Revelation 5:11-12
- Angels deemed Him worthy to receive power (authority)

B. HE WAS RECOGNIZED BY DEMONS...

1. They acknowledged He had the authority to destroy them - Mark 1 : 23-24
2. They obeyed His rebuke - Mark 1:25-26

-- Demons, even when possessing power of their own, could not resist His authority

C. HE WAS PRAISED BY THE REDEEMED...

1. Those before the throne and the Lamb ascribed salvation to God and the Lamb - Revelation 7:9-10

2. Even as John praised Him for having authority over the kings of the earth - Revelation 1:5

-- If we are among the redeemed, should we not also recognize His authority?

[Finally, let's note...] III. THE EXTENT OF JESUS' AUTHORITY

A. HE HAS ALL AUTHORITY IN HEAVEN AND ON EARTH...

1. As announced by Him prior to His ascension - Matthew 28:18

2. As received when He ascended to sit at God's right hand - Ephesians 1:20-22; 1 Peter 3:22

3. Including ruling over the kings of the earth as King of kings and Lord of lords - Revelation 1:5; 1 Timothy 6:14-15

B. HE IS HEAD OVER THE CHURCH...

1. He is the head of the body, the church - Colossians 1:18

2. Even as He is the savior of the body - Ephesians 5:23

3. As the Head, He has delegated His authority to His apostles

a. Promising His Spirit to guide them into all the truth - Jn

16:12-13

b. Commanding them to teach others to observe all that He commanded - Matthew 28:20

c. Proclaiming that whoever receives them, receives Him - Jn

13:20

CONCLUSION

1. As revealed in the New Testament, Jesus clearly has all authority...

a. Which must be confessed in order to be saved - Romans 10:9; Php_2:9-11

b. Which will be confessed at the Judgment - Romans 14:10-12

2. The key issue, then, is what we do in light of this authority...

a. Will we listen to Jesus and heed Him who speaks with such authority?

b. Will we as His church allow His apostles to lead and guide us through the authority delegated to them?

Those willing to accept Jesus as Lord, will do what He says (cf. Luke 6:46);

as prophesied by David, they will freely volunteer in the day of

His power (Psalms 110:1-3). May we all honor and accept the authority of Jesus Christ!

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