

# Sermon on the Mount - Part 10

by David Servant

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*Jesus emphasizes the importance of truth, honesty, and justice, and corrects the false practices of the scribes and Pharisees.*

**Duration:** 28:30

**Scripture:** Proverbs 25:21-22, Matthew 5:20-44, Romans 12:17-21

**Topics:** "Christian Ethics", "Righteous Living"

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## Description

This sermon delves into Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, focusing on how he raised the bar for righteousness, corrected false teachings of the scribes and Pharisees, and emphasized the importance of truthfulness and justice. Jesus addresses the misinterpretation of 'an eye for an eye' principle, highlighting the need for righteous judgment and the avoidance of personal revenge. The sermon also discusses the application of 'do not resist evil' in everyday interactions, emphasizing kindness, tolerance, and love towards others.

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## Transcript

Well, it's another lovely morning in Galilee, along the Sea of Galilee in Israel. And I'm so glad you joined me as we work our way through the Sermon on the Mount, not very far from where Jesus gave the original Sermon on the Mount. Of course, it's not so important as to where he gave these words.

What's most important is that we listen to what he said and do what he said. And so that's the whole motive of our meeting together here. Right now we're in Matthew chapter five, and we're going to begin reading in just a moment in verse number 33.

Remember, just to set the stage a little bit here, Jesus has raised the bar considerably. He's told his disciples who gathered to listen to him that day, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. And of course, that was like dropping a bomb because the Pharisees, the scribes were the spiritual leaders.

No doubt Christ's disciples had looked up to those men all their lives, thinking these are the ones who are the closest to God. These are the guys we ought to be following their example, and now Christ says they're all going to hell. And if you don't do better than they are, you're going to go to hell too.

So with that in mind, there's no doubt that everyone would have been questioning exactly what do you mean by that, Jesus? How can my righteousness possibly exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? And so Christ addresses many different cases where the scribes and Pharisees were falling so short. And so keep that in mind as we read this, because as Jesus says, you have heard it was said, and he often quotes verbatim from the Old Testament, but often he quotes a perversion of how the Pharisees interpreted what God said. And then he says, but I say to you, in every case he's correcting false teaching.

And it might be a little bit strong to say it this way, but maybe not too strong. Jesus' audience that day, it's almost like they are people that have just been delivered out of a cult. And again, that's pretty strong, I know.

But they've been listening to false, perverted teaching all their lives. And so you see that all that Christ is doing here is correcting their wrong thinking, which has been passed down to them by the scribes and by the Pharisees. So in a sense, it's like they've come out of a cult.

It's like they've just been delivered, and now he's helping them to understand. I might just add right there, that's why it's so important for ministers of the gospel, teachers and preachers, we have to do a lot of correction because there's so much false teaching out there. Well, that's the primary tool the devil uses to get people tripped up.

The devil is the father of lies. That's his main means of keeping people in his grasp, is deception. And if he can get people to believe his lies, they don't believe the truth.

And so true teachers of God's word are going to correct what they see is wrong in people's thinking. All right. So here we go.

Jesus now raises the bar one more time, and we'll see very clearly how he's completely blasting the practices of the Pharisees and scribes. Verse number 33 of Matthew 5, again, you have heard that the ancients were told, quote, you shall not make false vows, but shall fulfill your vows to the Lord. All right.

Now that's all in capital letters in my version of the Bible, indicating to me it's a direct verbatim quote from the Old Testament, and it is. Now who said that? God said that. It wasn't Moses' idea.

It was God's idea. And we can say it this way. Who said that? Jesus said that, the same person who's giving us the Sermon on the Mount.

He's quoting himself when he says, you have heard the ancients were told. And so he's not going to suddenly say something that contradicts what he himself said 1,300 years earlier, is he? That wouldn't make sense. God never changes.

Here's a fundamental moral principle. Fundamental morality does not change. Right and wrong do not change.

So when he says, verse 34, but I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven for it is the throne of God, or by the earth for it is the footstool of his feet, or by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great king, nor shall you make an oath by your head for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be yes, yes, or no, no, and anything beyond this, these, is of evil. So don't think that he's saying now, I'm contradicting what I said under the old covenant that you should never make a vow.

No. In fact, if we say yes, yes to someone or no, no to someone, that's a vow. We're making a promise.

A vow is nothing more than a promise. Salvation begins with a vow when you vow to God that you are repenting and turning from your sins and you're going to follow Christ. So there's nothing wrong with a vow any more than there's anything wrong with a promise.

What Christ is condemning here is not the making of vows. Making of vows is very good when those vows and promises are in line with the word of God. What he's condemning here is adding an oath, swearing by something, in order to try to convince people that you're telling the truth this time, and that's exactly what the Pharisees were doing.

They had this elaborate system and rules that went with their system of when you had to keep your vow and when you could break your vow, and it all depended on what you swore by. It's humorous, although it's also sad. If we look, for example, into Matthew 23, it's almost an entire chapter where Jesus is condemning the practices of the scribes and the Pharisees.

Now listen to their practice. There's no doubt about what we're saying because it's in the Bible. Matthew 23 and verse 16, woe to you blind guides who say, now here's what they taught, whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated.

See, so the Pharisees believed. If you would say, I swear by the temple that I will do such and such, you didn't have to keep your word. It was okay to lie, but if you said, I swear by the gold of the temple that I will do such and such, oh, well then you had to keep your promise.

Then they had this elaborate system. You fools and blind men, which is more important, the gold or the temple that sanctified the gold? Here he's just criticizing them for their mixed up thinking about their priorities. What's more important, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold? Then they also said, verse 18, whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering upon it, he is obligated.

You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering? Therefore, he who swears, swears both by the altar and by everything on it. He who swears by the temple, swears by both the temple and by him who dwells within it. Whoever swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by him who sits upon it.

You see, and so there you can see, you get a little insight into this elaborate system of lying that the scribes and Pharisees practiced and taught. In other words, what we just read in Matthew 23, this is the kind of stuff that people were hearing in the synagogues. These guys were up there preaching this to their congregations, and Jesus' disciples had been listening to this kind of teaching all their life, and so Christ corrects it.

He says, don't be like the scribes and Pharisees. Those guys are going to hell. They're liars.

Of course, we know the Bible says all liars will have their part in the lake of fire. God's people, the disciples of Christ, are truth speakers. This is not something new.

Thou shalt not bear false witness is a pretty big commandment under the old covenant. God desires truth in the innermost being, the Old Testament says. You see, so God has always wanted people to speak the truth, be truthful and honest.

Jesus is not saying anything new. He's simply exposing the false practices of the scribes and Pharisees. Now, when I was a kid, we had this practice that if we told somebody something, made them a promise, like we told one of our friends, I'll buy you an ice cream cone, and they'd get all excited.

Oh, hey, thanks. If we had our fingers crossed, then we'd say, ah-ha, had my fingers crossed. That somehow, because our fingers were crossed when we made that vow, that exempted us from having to keep our promise.

It was like a rule among kids. I've told that around the world in many countries in which I've taught to a certain amount. They always laugh.

I ask them, do you do that in your country too? Most countries in the world, children believe that if their fingers are crossed when they say something, that exempts them from having to keep their word. It's a universal thing. I don't know who thought of this in the first place.

I don't know how it has spread from country to country, but it exists all over the world. Very few places I've been where they haven't told me, yeah, kids do that in our country as well. Okay.

All right. So Jesus says, let your yes be yes, your no be no. For that reason, many Christians are opposed to swearing on the Bible.

I can understand their objection to that. You understand that the spirit of the law here is simply this. If you have to swear to someone by something in your oath, I swear, like when I was a kid we'd say, cross my heart, hope to die, stick a pin through my eye.

That's how we convinced them, this time I'm telling the truth. What we're really admitting is most times you can't trust me. Most times I'm a liar, but now I'm going to try to persuade you that this time you can trust me and so I'm going to give you this big impressive oath.

Cross my heart, hope to die, stick a pin through my eye. We used to add in my neighborhood and eat a cow pie. We were really good on the oath thing.

And so when you have to make an oath, what you're saying is normally you can't trust me, normally I'm a liar, but this time I'm going to try to persuade you. And so Jesus says, forget the oath, forget the vow thing, the swearing thing, just make your promises. Yes or no.

Now does that mean it's wrong for a Christian in court to put his hand upon the Bible and say, I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God. Well, again, it's the law of the land. You're supposed to do that and you're doing it in a sense to obey the law of the land.

Jesus is talking about everyday practice here. But again, you can see the courts know people are liars and we're going to try to get people to tell the truth maybe by having them swear in the Bible. Well, if a person will only tell the truth when they swear in the Bible, I wouldn't trust them when they swear in the Bible either.

Would you? No. And so they actually have an alternate oath for Christians in court where they just say, I will tell the truth. And they don't require them to lay the hand upon the Bible and to make this swearing of an oath.

And so that's an option that you have if you have to go to court and testify as a Christian, if your conscience will not allow you to, in light of what Christ said here. Again, I don't think it's that big of an issue one time in court and so forth, but hey, maybe it's a chance for you to testify before everyone in that court. I don't need to swear in the Bible and I object to that because I always tell the truth, but make sure you always tell the truth.

And sometimes we can tell the truth and tell a lie because we only tell part of the truth and we know we're deceiving people. Again, keeping the letter law, ignoring the spirit, telling the truth, but actually deceiving people because we're leaving out information that really should be there. Okay.

Hey, stick with us. We'll be right back after this short segment away. See you in one minute.

The first time Christian pilgrim to old Jerusalem is often expecting to see things just as Jesus saw them when he walked on these roads 2000 years ago. But they're often disappointed to discover that this is a city that's been destroyed and rebuilt so many times that the street level in Jesus' day compared to the street level today, he walked about 30 to 50 feet below where we're walking these days. The wall I'm sitting on now is not the wall that Jesus would have seen 2000 years ago.

That wall was destroyed a long time ago. This wall is about 500 years old and it was built by a Turkish gentleman by the name of Solomon the Magnificent. So it's still nice to follow the old wall around the old city.

It does follow the general course of the wall in Jesus' day, but it's not actually the real wall that Jesus would have seen in his day. Okay, welcome back and let's continue our journey through the Sermon on the Mount. We're here in Matthew chapter five and now we're going to begin reading in verse number 38.

Boy, I just can't emphasize enough how important it is to have the foundation in your heart that we've already laid because a problem we have in interpreting some of these words is we don't consider everything Christ said before them. We don't understand the context. It's very important to understand the context of how so much of what he said here is correcting the false teaching of the scribes and Pharisees.

I think a lot of damage has been done by folks reading the Sermon on the Mount and saying, oh look, Jesus is changing everything because he quotes from the Bible and then he says, but I say to you. And so now everything's different now and we've got a new whole set of laws of morality to follow. No, we don't.

No, we don't. Jesus correcting false teaching. He's not correcting his own teaching.

And again, consider all of the Old Testament to be Christ's own teaching, just as much as you consider his Sermon on the Mount to be his own teaching. He inspired the prophets. He gave the law of Moses.

When God the Father was writing with his finger into those stones of Moses, the 10 Commandments, Jesus was not whispering to an angel at that point in time. Boy, that's a little bit harsh there. When I get down to the earth in about 1300 years or so, I'm going to soften that one because I think I don't agree with what the Father is saying there.

No, no, no. Jesus said, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. Jesus was in full 100% agreement with everything the Father said and did throughout all eternity.

And so the law of Moses is the law of the Father, is the law of Jesus as well. So that's important as we interpret this next section of the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus talks about an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. This one has been majorly misinterpreted.

Verse number 38, read with me if you would, please, of Matthew 5. You have heard that it was said, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth. Well, that is in capital letters in my version of the Bible, indicating to me it is a verbatim quote from the Old Testament, which I've researched it, and in fact, it is. You find that not just once in the law of Moses, but several times in the law of Moses where God himself actually said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.

But that's not all he said. And we're going to consider the context of when he said that. Jesus says, but I say to you, now, he's not going to correct himself.

What he said, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, how he said it, when he said it, for what situation it applied, it still applied. He's not correcting himself. He's correcting a false practice or application of the scribes and Pharisees.

But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil, but whoever slaps you on the cheek, return to him the other also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever shall force you to go one mile, go with him too.

Now, notice he conspicuously did not say, no, no, but I say to you, if someone knocks out your tooth, let them knock out another tooth. And if he pokes out your eye, oh, turn to him the other eye and say, oh, would you please poke this one out too? No, no. You see, he's not correcting himself.

He's correcting the false practice of the scribes and Pharisees. Now here's what happened. When God gave that commandment, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, you can study it for yourself in the several places you find it in the law of Moses.

It's always in the case of God instructing judges how to judge righteously. And when a case is brought before them in court, and of course, court cases are important cases. You don't go to court for minor little infractions.

You go to court for big things that require a repayment and for real justice to be done. God said, if a guy comes into your courtroom and the two men come in and one man has had his tooth knocked out by another man, and you examine all the evidence and so forth so you can judge righteously, and sure enough, yeah, this guy has knocked out this other man's tooth, and this man who's had his tooth knocked out is guiltless and all, well, then you decree the punishment. It should be fair.

This man knocked out a tooth, and fair recompense, he should have one of his teeth knocked out. If he poked out an eye of his fellow Israelite here, and the guy has a legitimate case against this other man who poked out his eye, his eye should be poked out as well. That's justice.

An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. But God instituted a court system in Israel for a number of reasons, but one of the most important reasons was this, so that justice could be done, so that people wouldn't take justice into their own hands, which is called what? Revenge. Because under the old covenant, God said, don't take your own revenge.

Revenge is mine, and I will repay, saith the Lord. And when people take justice into their own hands, it results in injustice, because in their passion, they go beyond what would be fair. And as the one Chinese proverb says, he who takes his own revenge should dig two graves.

The grave for the guy he's going to get revenge, and then his own grave, because his friends are going to get revenge on him. It's a never-ending cycle. And so when it goes before a judge who's impartial, or a jury that's impartial, that examines all the evidence, that has no bias and so forth, who's unprejudiced, then he can render justice beyond what you could on your own.

And so courts are good, because God is a God of justice. And that means that courts are always good. And the reason God set up courts under the old covenant is because he wants there to be justice.

He wants there to be eyes for eyes and teeth for teeth. But here's what happened. The scribes and Pharisees took those words, an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, ignored what God said about justice and revenge, ignored what God said of the context of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, ignored what he said that was only applicable to judges, and they took justice into their own hands.

And if someone slapped them on the cheek, what would a Pharisee do? He'd say, the Bible says an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, and whack. I'll slap you right back, because the Bible says that's what I should do. No, that's not what the Bible says you should do.

The Bible says what you should do, and this is the old covenant. If your enemy is thirsty, give him a drink. If he's hungry, feed him, because in so doing, you will heap burning coals on his head.

I'm quoting you directly from Proverbs. The law of Moses says, if you see your enemy's donkey struggling under its load, what should you do? You should relieve your enemy's donkey of its burden. And so, under the old covenant, you find the principle, love your enemies.

You find the principle of, be tolerant. You find the principle of, turn the other cheek. Listen, in these minor, everyday annoyances and infractions of life, the things you shouldn't be going to court for, but the big things, the poking out of the eye, my goodness.

You don't say, okay, poke out my other eye, buddy. Are you kidding me? If a guy comes to you, and he shoots you in the arm, you don't say, oh, oh, oh, here's my other shoulder, now fire away there, too, or oh, hey, here, take a knife and stab me in the stomach. That's not what Christ is endorsing here, you see.

Using these same scriptures, do not resist him who is evil, Christians have come up with ideas of that we should never be involved in any kind of self-defense. Someone comes and knocks at your door and says, are your wife and children home, because I'd like to kill them all? You're supposed to say, come on in. Jesus said, don't resist him who is evil.

You see, that's nonsense, that's utter nonsense. When Christ is saying, do not resist him who is evil, the same Christ who said, don't resist him who is evil, is the same Christ who told the children of Israel, I'm in Israel right now as I'm saying this, he told them to come into this land and kill everybody. There is such a thing as just war according to the Bible.

Christ is not changing that. Again, I'm not going to make a commentary on what wars are just these days and what wars are not just, but certainly if evil people want to harm righteous people, righteous people should resist those evil people. If they don't, they're stupid.

If they're saying it, that's what Christ had to do, they're very stupid, because the same Christ who said this is the same Christ who said this entire Bible. It's all there. Take it within its context.

Take it within its context. Don't ignore the entire Bible. If you shouldn't resist evil people across the board, then listen, why do you lock your car doors when you get out of your car and you park somewhere? Are you afraid someone will break in and maybe steal your car? Well, you shouldn't do that.

You're resisting evil people. Well then, let me ask you another question. Why do you keep your money in the bank? Why don't you just put it out on the kitchen table in a clear jar, because you don't want to resist him who is evil and maybe someone would like to steal your money.

So you don't want to make it harder on him, do you? Why do you lock the doors of your house? Don't resist him who is evil. Then you should put a sign out in front of your house, welcome thieves. Free money.

You don't want to resist them. If you're not going to resist evil, then how come you appreciate policemen? When a policeman comes by, you should shake your fist and say, well, you're not obeying Jesus, because Jesus says we shouldn't resist those who are evil, and you're resisting those who are evil. We shouldn't pay our taxes then, because our taxes go to resist evil.

That's one of the major purposes our taxes go to, resist evil. You should be exposed to jails and prisons. You should be out in front of every prison and jail you can every day that you have free time picketing and say, let these people free, because Jesus said we should not resist him who is evil.

You've got all these evil people locked up. Can you see it? I'm giving absurd examples so you can see in these very obvious examples how absurd that is. How absurd that is.

Well now, take it to the more subtle things and see how equally absurd the interpretation of these words is. Christ is talking about dealing with the people that you deal with in life every day who are insensitive, who are uncaring. He says, be good, be kind to those who despitefully use you.

Don't be like the Pharisees. They have a zero tolerance policy for anybody that rubs them the wrong way. If a Roman soldier says to you, go with me one mile, man, here's an opportunity to show the love of God.

Go with him two miles, because that second mile you'll have a captive audience of a man who's going to wonder, what's different about this person who's so cheerful and willing to help me? Most people I tell to carry my bag of mail complain the entire way, but here's someone who's totally different. You see? We're supposed to be like God, and that's exactly what the Lord Jesus goes on to say as we keep on reading here in Matthew 5. In these minor, in fact, if somebody wants to sue you for your shirt, that's pretty small. Give him your coat as well, okay? Shame him.

That's an Old Testament principle, pour burning coals upon his head, okay? Well, we're out of time. Thanks so much for joining me. Until next time, keep following Jesus with all your heart.

God bless you. Hey, there's a whole lot more happening through the ministry of Heaven's Family than just this teaching broadcast. Heaven's Family consists of three divisions.

The first of which is Shepherd Serve, and through the ministry of Shepherd Serve, we are literally equipping thousands of hungry pastors around the world with vital biblical truth every single year. We do

that in two ways. First of all, by pastor's conferences.

They're happening almost every single month somewhere in the world. And secondly, through the translation and publication and distribution of a 500-page equipping manual called The Disciple-Making Minister. Pastors are just loving this book because it's full of information that helps equip them to be more fruitful for the Lord Jesus Christ.

That in a nutshell is the ministry of Shepherd Serve. The second division of Heaven's Family is known as Orphan's Tier, and through the ministry of Orphan's Tier, we are meeting the very pressing needs of over 1,000 Christian orphans in over six different developing nations through a sponsorship program that is absolutely wonderful. For just \$20 a month, you can provide food, clothing, shelter, school fees, and Christian nurture for a little follower of Christ somewhere in the world.

Hey, why don't you check out orphanstier.org? There's probably someone waiting there just for you. The third and the final division of Heaven's Family is known as I Was Hungry, obviously taken from the words of Jesus in Matthew chapter 25, where he warned about the future judgment of the sheep and of the goats. Through the ministry of I Was Hungry, we are meeting the very pressing needs of Christ followers around this world in very poor nations.

We're helping widows, orphans, lepers, refugees, victims of disasters. You can read all of our current projects at IWasHungry.org. You can make a real difference. If you'd like to get involved in all three of the divisions of Heaven's Family, you can invest in what is called the Heaven's Family Mutual Fund.

It's a great idea. You can read about it at all three of our websites. Thanks so much.

God bless you.

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