

Sermon on the Mount - Part 5

by David Servant

David Servant explores the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing the importance of obedience, free will, and the fulfillment of the law.

Duration: 28:30

Scripture: Matthew 5:18

Topics: "Kingdom Living", "Christian Obedience"

Description

This sermon focuses on Jesus' teachings in the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing the importance of upholding the Law and the Prophets, fulfilling God's commandments, and surpassing the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. It highlights the significance of obedience, teaching others to follow God's commandments, and the necessity of grace leading to good works for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven.

Transcript

Welcome to our program. Appreciate your joining us so much. Here I am in the beautiful region of the Sea of Galilee.

The sun's been up for about an hour now. We're getting out here to look at the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus spoke about 2,000 years ago, not very far from where I'm sitting right now. And it's a lovely, lovely place, a beautiful setting to give an outdoor sermon.

I'm surprised that we haven't paid more attention to what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount because, you know, first of all, who he was. God spoke to us in many portions and in many ways, the writer of Hebrews said, through the prophets. And we have the writings of Moses and people like Isaiah and Jeremiah and so forth.

But here in the Sermon on the Mount, this is not just a prophet speaking. This is Jesus Christ, the Son of God. I mean, he's the one who made these rocks that I'm sitting on right now.

He's the one who made these mountains. He's the one who formed the Sea of Galilee. And he came down and spoke to a privileged group of hungry people about 2,000 years ago.

And we're so blessed to have his words recorded for us that we might look at them and evaluate our lives in light of what he said. And so I'm so glad that you're joining us in this series and I'm trusting that the Holy

Spirit is gonna work through the words of Christ to continue the good work that God has begun in you. So we're currently in Matthew chapter 5. We've finished the Beatitudes.

We've looked at what Jesus said in verses 13 through verse 16 about being the salt of the earth and being the light of the world. We've gone into great detail over the last four broadcasts looking at these first 16 verses, all right? So we're averaging about four verses of broadcast so far. It will get faster, I can assure you.

But nevertheless, if you've missed those broadcasts, I encourage you to get the DVD of the broadcast and catch up with the rest of us. So today we're gonna begin reading what is a very important transition point in this sermon. The introduction is just about over and now Jesus is gonna prepare us for the body of the sermon.

You know, normally when you go to a school to learn how to do public speaking, they'll tell you that your speech usually consists of three parts, the introduction, the body, and the conclusion. And they'll tell you things like in the introduction, you tell them what you're gonna tell them. In the body of your message, you tell them what you told them you were gonna tell them.

And then in the conclusion, you once again tell them what you just told them in a summarized fashion. And that's kind of what Jesus did. Remember, I told you one of the major themes, and there are several, but one of the major themes in this Sermon on the Mount is how you can know for certain that you are going to heaven.

And Jesus has already told us who are the blessed people. He said the blessed people are characterized by this, and this, and this, and this, and this. And so everybody who reads the sermon can then evaluate themselves, am I among the blessed? I've already said this over and over again, but it bears repetition.

If you're among the blessed, the reason you're blessed primarily is because one day you're gonna go to heaven, and you're gonna see God, and you're gonna live with him for eternity in his kingdom. You see, this earth, this current life is not all that God has prepared for us. In fact, really, in one sense, in one major sense, this life is nothing more than a test to see who qualifies for the kingdom of eternity.

You see, God, you know, initially, in eternity past, wanted in his heart a family of sons who loved him. And of course, without free will, there's no such concept as love. Robots cannot love each other.

Puppets cannot love each other. You know, only people who have free will are capable of expressing love or hatred, for that matter. And so if God's going to have an eternal family who loves him, he has to create, not robots, but free moral agents.

He has to then influence them, you know, to a limited degree, to see if they're going to do what he says and prove their love for him by their obedience. Remember, Jesus said, If you love me, you will keep my commandments. It depends upon us.

So God must place us in an environment, a testing environment, to see what we'll do. You know, he did that with Adam and Eve. People have asked at times, if God didn't want Adam and Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, why did he place it in the garden? And why did he let the devil into the garden? It doesn't seem like God was consistent there.

He didn't want them to eat from that tree, but yet he put the tree there himself. And he let the devil tempt them to eat the tree. Tell them a lie.

Why? Well, the simple answer is because God was testing them to see what they would do as free moral agents. And God is testing us all. Now, we know scripture tells us that all of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Why everybody sins and rebels, it's a mystery. It's the mystery of iniquity, Paul calls it. But yet God is merciful, God is gracious, and he gives us, generally speaking, a lifetime in which to yield to his many influences that he's, you know, sending upon us to bring us to repentance, so that we can be forgiven of our sins and recreated as his children, and then continue and prove our faithfulness as we obey him and do his will.

All right, well, that's, you know, a short explanation of a very, very big topic. And so here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is telling us what he wants us to do, how he wants us to live. This is a sermon about holiness, and really how holiness relates to being qualified to gain eternal life, to live forever with God.

A lot of people think, well, that sounds to me like salvation by works. That is salvation unto works. Salvation has to be by grace if you're a sinner.

Let's not make any mistake about that. If you're a sinner and you deserve to go to hell, if you're going to be saved, there has to be God's grace involved. But God's grace is not saying to us, okay, I forgive you, keep on sinning.

God's grace is saying to us, I'm waiting, I'm waiting, I'm giving you an opportunity. I died for your sins, making it possible for your sins to be forgiven on the cross. And I've got a wonderful plan for you, but I'm waiting, I'm waiting, I'm influencing you as best I can, but I'm not going to force you, I'm not going to make you into a robot.

And so how has God tried to influence us? Well, of course he's tried to influence us through the spoken word, but there are many, many, many other influences that God is using. He's using the creation. You take a look around here, and this beautiful creation.

I mean, who made these mountains? I mean, who designed these flowers right here in front of me and these rocks? I mean, God's handiwork is everywhere. You look in the mirror, you can see God's handiwork. And so God is speaking to us all the time, saying, I'm here, seek me, I'm here, I'm all powerful, I'm all wise, you need to get to know me.

He's also speaking to us in our conscience. Everybody, no matter where you're born on this earth, you have a sense of what is right and what is wrong. And when you do what's wrong, your heart condemns you.

Now, people harden their hearts over a process of years and years, to where their hearts become harder and harder, and they shut God out. But that doesn't mean God doesn't keep on trying. And then God also speaks to us through calamities.

There's so much suffering in this world, natural disasters and tragedies and sicknesses and so forth. And from a theological perspective, you just cannot take God out of that equation. I'm not saying God starts wars and so forth, but what I'm saying is that, you know, there's a lot of suffering on this earth, but if we

believe what Jesus said, there's going to be a lot more suffering to come after this life.

And so could it be that through these temporal sufferings, God is trying to get people's attention and warn us that he is a God of wrath, that there is a judgment to come, that there are consequences for our sins. And so in those calamities of life, sometimes people soften their hearts towards God. But unfortunately, sometimes people harden their hearts towards God.

You know, I'm sitting out here this morning in the Galilee sun, and as we've been filming, the sun's getting higher in the sky, and it's getting warmer and warmer. Well, you know, you can respond to the sun in different ways. They say the same sun that melts wax will harden clay.

And isn't that true? The same sun. It's the difference of the material. Wax melts.

Clay hardens. And so we want our hearts to be like wax under the influence of God. Then fourthly, and not the least of which, God tries to reach us through his word.

And in this Sermon on the Mount, you know, really there's so much content here that helps us to understand what is necessary to be among the blessed, what is necessary to be a person who's on the way to eternal life and God's kingdom. And so that's why we're studying it. There couldn't be anything more important.

And you're making a great decision by reading along with us here. So we come to this very, very pivotal point in the sermon, the end of the introduction. But he sets us up here in the next four verses for what is to come.

Listen closely. Jesus said in verse 17, do not think, all right? So here's something we're not supposed to think. Do not think, he said, that I came to abolish.

Who? What? The law or the prophets. Now, what's that? Well, the law would be the first five books of the Bible, the Pentateuch, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. What are the prophets? Well, you know, all the major prophets, Isaiah, Jeremiah, and so forth, the minor prophets, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and not to omit David, who was a prophet and who wrote so many of the Psalms and so forth.

So the majority of what we have in the Old Testament, Jesus says, don't think I came to abolish that. And that, my dear friends, is why, as Christians, we have copies of not just the New Testament but of the whole Bible because Jesus did not abolish the Old Testament. It's still obviously relevant.

In fact, you know, if you just know a little bit about the Old Testament, it contains prophetic utterances by prophets that have yet to come to pass, that speak of yet another return of the Messiah on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem, for example, of His thousand-year reign from Jerusalem. So it's still important to study the Old Testament. Not only that, but of course, the moral foundations of human relations and our very existence are founded in the Old Testament law and the prophets.

We know what's right and what's wrong. And what is wrong is always wrong. What is right is always right, essentially speaking, when it comes to just basic moral principles.

Those same laws, in a sense, are written in everybody's hearts and their conscience. So don't think I came to abolish the law and the prophets. Now look what he says to counteract that thought.

I didn't come to abolish but to fulfill. So that bears a little bit of explanation. Not I'm going to abolish, but I'm going to fulfill.

That's a beautiful English word, fulfill the law and the prophets. Fulfill is an English word that comes from two other English words, you know, full and fill. It literally means to fill to the full.

And so imagine a glass of water that's half full and imagine Jesus coming and filling it up all the way. And so in a sense, he's saying, you have some of the revelation of God in the law and the prophets, but there's more to come and I came to give you more. And he gave us more in the Sermon on the Mount.

In fact, he gave us more even later on in the epistles. He said to his disciples, there's lots of things I want to tell you now. You're not ready.

I'll tell you later when the Holy Spirit comes. Okay, we're going to take a short break. We'll be right back after this little side trip.

Hope you enjoy the journey. Well, according to archeologists, these stairs that I'm walking down right now are at least 2,000 years old. And if that is true, then there's little doubt that Jesus himself would have walked up these stairs on the night in which he was betrayed.

Right across the Kidron Valley is the Garden of Gethsemane, and right behind me is the place of the high priest Caiaphas' house. And so the Roman soldiers would have led Jesus, whoa, these are slippery from all the pilgrims walking up and down. Jesus would have been led across the Kidron Valley and right up these stairs right to Caiaphas' house where he was detained overnight.

This is the region where Peter would have denied the Lord three times. And when the cock crowed, Peter wept bitterly because of his remorse. Praise God, Jesus forgave him and restored him in the end and used him greatly in ministry.

Alrighty, welcome back. We'll continue now in Matthew chapter 5, verse number 17. Jesus told us, Don't think I came to abolish the law of the prophets, but I came not to abolish, but to fulfill them.

And at the end of our last segment, I was talking about how that word fulfill so beautifully describes exactly what Jesus did. Imagine a half empty glass, you know, a glass half full of water. Jesus said, I didn't come to abolish it.

We're not going to throw all that out. No, no, we're going to fill it to the full. So imagine him filling up that cup all the way to the top.

In other words, there's things that I want to reveal to you that haven't been revealed in the law of the prophets. Well, that's obvious. If you read what Jesus said, he gave us a lot of new information.

And in fact, even went beyond his earthly ministry after he ascended to heaven. Remember, he had told his disciples, there's lots of things I want to tell you. You're not ready to receive it yet, but when the Holy Spirit comes, he will lead you and guide you into all the truth.

And so we have to study the epistles if we want that cup to be completely full. Now, why did Jesus say that? Why did he say, don't think I came to abolish the law of the prophets? Why would he tell those people that day who gathered on the mountainside in Galilee that he wasn't going to do that? Well, I can only think that he had a purpose in doing that. And that's because there were people who thought that he

was going to abolish the law of the prophets.

Why did they think that? Well, I don't know, but I have a theory. I think it's founded upon exactly what Jesus says in the rest of the sermon. He contradicts and corrects the false teaching of the scribes and Pharisees so often in this sermon that we're going to be studying in more detail.

And in other places, when he spoke in his ministry, I suspect that people thought to themselves, what this guy is teaching is so different than what we've been taught all our lives. You know, this must be totally new. He's throwing out everything in the past.

At the very end of this sermon, in the end of chapter 7, the scripture says that the crowds who listened to him that day were astonished because he was teaching with authority and not as their scribes. That is, what he was saying was not what the scribes were saying. And as we study through this whole sermon, you'll see that again and again.

I'll point it out to you when we come to those places where it's just so obvious that what Jesus is saying is in complete contradiction to what these people have been hearing all their lives from the rulers of the synagogues and the scribes and the Pharisees. So he's saying, no, no, no, no. If you think I'm abolishing all that because what I'm saying is so different than what you've been hearing, no, no, you've got it all wrong.

What you've been hearing all your lives is a perversion of God's Word, and I'm going to fill it up to the full. In fact, maybe a better illustration would be if you can imagine a half-filled glass of water that contained the true and proper and right teaching of the Old Testament. Imagine the scribes and Pharisees pouring it out slowly, diminishing the value of it because they're taking away from what God really meant.

And so let's imagine now it's really a fourthful because the scribes and Pharisees have poured out about half. So now he's got a fourthful. He says, I'm going to fill it to the full.

I'm going to fill it back up to where it should have been and take it even beyond that to where it's right up to where you know what God wants you to know. So that's very important. And in the rest of this sermon, we'll see how so much of what Christ says is a contradiction to the scribes and Pharisees.

He'll be filling up to full what God wants his true followers to know. Then look at verse number 18. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass away from the law until all is accomplished.

Alright, so he's setting a date that we can be certain that the law and the prophets are still going to be relevant and valid. That date is until heaven and earth pass away. Well, that hasn't happened yet.

I'm sitting on the earth right now. It's the same earth that I'm sitting on when Jesus was here. And so heaven and earth have not passed away.

One day heaven and earth will pass away. We knew that. There'll be a new heaven, new earth.

But at least until then, the law and the prophets will be relevant. Now, that is not to say that we're not under a new covenant. That is not to say that we're required as New Testament believers to obey all the commandments of the law of Moses.

And I'll talk about this more later on. But the Bible makes it clear that there is the law of Moses. And secondly, that there is the law of Christ.

And of course, there's lots of overlap between the law of Moses and the law of Christ. Thou shalt not steal is one of the commandments of the Old Covenant. And that's still valid under the New Covenant.

Thou shalt not steal. So we're not entirely throwing out our obligation to keep the Old Covenant law. But Jesus said, Go make disciples, teach them to obey all that I have commanded you.

And so there you see that it's important that we'll follow Christ's commandments. And Christ focused on what was important. And He did inaugurate a new covenant.

But keep in mind, the people who heard Him that day were all living under the Old Covenant. The law of Moses was fully in effect at that point in time. They were obligated to keep every part of it.

Now, part of the problem was that the example that the scribes and Pharisees were setting before them they were focusing on the minor aspects of the law. That is, you know, making sure you do your sacrifices properly. Making sure that you tithe.

Jesus said, You guys are straining at the gnats and you're swallowing the camels. That is, you're making primary things secondary things and you're making secondary things primary things. Right? And so that was part of the problem.

That still happens today in Christian circles. People focus on things that are really minor by comparison to what is really of major importance. Nevertheless, I still want to reiterate that it's so important that the entire Old Testament is still relevant.

Of course, as New Covenant believers we need to always look at the Old Testament through the lens of the New Covenant. And that's why, for example, when we read about the sacrificial animals under the Old Covenant we don't think to ourselves, Oh, I need to go to the temple and sacrifice some animals to obey God. No.

First of all, there is no temple to go sacrifice animals. But beyond even that, we know that from reading the New Testament that all those animal sacrifices serve to prefigure what Christ would do for us on His cross. He was our Passover.

He was the final sacrifice. The blood of bulls and goats cannot take away sin. OK? So we always interpret the Old through the New because that's the full revelation of God.

But the most important thing to understand at this point is that it's still relevant and that it's still worthy of our study. And certainly that was entirely true of the people who heard Him that day. They were obligated to keep the entire Old Covenant law.

Jesus says, Not one stroke or letter shall pass away until all is accomplished. And so that implies that there are still things to be accomplished. That would indicate the prophetic nature of the Law and the Prophets.

All right. Then, listen to verse number 19. This is astounding.

Whoever... Now, that's a big, all-encompassing term. Whoever... Didn't it say, OK, whoever among the Jews? No, no. Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments and so teaches others shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whoever keeps and teaches them he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. And so what he's saying is not only are the Law and the Prophets not being abolished, not only are they relevant until heaven and earth pass away, but your status in heaven, literally, is determined by how well you keep and teach the commandments, even to the least of the commandments. And that's still true.

Again, we're obligated to keep the Law of Christ, which includes all of His commandments that He gave us. But the principle is true for us, just as it was true for the people back in that day that heard Him say it the first time, your status in heaven. If you're going to be great in heaven, it's going to be because you kept the commandments of Christ and because you taught others to keep His commandments.

Amen. If you want to be least, well then, annul some of His commandments, which indicates to us a couple of things. Number one, that there are greater and lesser commandments.

And don't let anyone tell you anything differently. Some people say, well, you know, we're all sinners, and so we're all equally guilty before God. No, sir.

No, sir. No, sir. You know, there's major and minor sins, and there's things you can do to God that are more grievous than other things.

And yes, we're all sinners, but we're not all equally guilty before God because there are lesser and greater commandments. Christ said that Himself. And so we want to, of course, focus on the greater commandments.

And that also tells us that because we're going to be judged by how well we keep and teach the commandments, that's what we ought to focus on. You know, Solomon said that at the close of his book of Ecclesiastes. He said, you know, when you sum everything up, and you consider everything there is to consider, he says there's one thing that remains.

He says, you know, obey God and keep His commandments because God's going to bring every act to judgment, whether it was good or evil. And so this life is primarily a preparation for the next life. Keep His commandments.

Now, we're also to be teaching others to keep His commandments. That doesn't mean that we're all teachers in the sense that we have a ministry of teaching. But we're also to be teaching others in the sense that we're teaching others by our example of our lives of obedience, and then also in our interpersonal relationships we're teaching others.

We're admonishing brothers and sisters in Christ to keep the commandments. And we're all supposed to be involved in making of disciples. So that's something you do on a one-to-one basis.

So if you want to be great in God's eyes, then keep His commandments and teach them to others. And that's what Jesus said. There are different degrees of responsibility, authority, and reward in Heaven.

Right? Because God is perfectly just. He's going to reward us according to our works. Some people, you know, people always talk about, well, you know, the thief on the cross, he'll get the same reward that all

the rest of us do.

Well, that's true only in one sense. Yes, he gets into the Kingdom. Today you'll be with me in Paradise, the Lord said to him.

But it's not true in the sense of you'll have the same responsibility, authority, and reward in Heaven in the fullest sense. Remember, Jesus taught us that. He said to one, you've been faithful over small things, I'll put you in charge of many.

He put one man in charge of ten cities, one man in charge of five cities, and so on. And so that's a principle that cannot be ignored. And then finally, Jesus says, for I say to you in verse 20, unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

And so not only am I not abolishing the Old Covenant, the Law and Prophets, not only is it going to be in force until Heaven and Earth pass away, not only is your spiritual status determined by how well you keep and teach the commandments, but fourthly, if you don't do a better job than the scribes and Pharisees are doing, you don't even enter the Kingdom of Heaven. That sounds like salvation by works, doesn't it? Well, it's not. It's salvation by grace that leads to obedience and good works, okay? And in our next program, we'll talk about that in great detail because this is a very pivotal verse for the rest of this series.

Alright, thank you so much for joining me. I'll see you next time. Keep following Jesus with all your heart and may 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 pastors 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.

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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. I Was Hungry.

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