

The Content of the Sermon on the Mount - Part 2

by Dick Woodward

The Sermon on the Mount is a teaching that challenges believers to look inward, look around, and look up in order to become part of the solution and part of the answer for others.

Duration: 25:37

Scripture: Matthew 5:3-12

Topics: "Discipleship"

Description

In this video, the speaker provides an overview of the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing the importance of understanding its context and content. The Sermon on the Mount is seen as a core teaching of Jesus Christ, addressing both personal and relational issues. The speaker highlights the eight beatitudes, which encourage self-reflection and the cultivation of godly attitudes. Additionally, the speaker emphasizes the need for empathy and putting oneself in the shoes of others, regardless of their social or cultural background. Overall, the video encourages viewers to apply the teachings of Jesus in their lives and make a positive impact on others.

Transcript

Welcome to our second lesson in the Sermon on the Mount, where we are studying the core, or the heart, of the teachings of Jesus Christ. Our teacher continues by giving us an overview of the context and the content of Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7, and we will look at Jesus' teaching for His disciples. First, for the problems they will face in themselves and then in others.

Now, here is our teacher. After telling us about the multitudes of people with all their problems, and how Jesus was addressing those problems and healing these people from every kind of sickness, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual, any and every kind of disease you could possibly imagine. Mark tells us that He went up the slopes above the Sea of Galilee there, the way it slopes up from the sea, up to a higher elevation.

He invited certain disciples to join Him there, and then Mark does not give us the teaching of Matthew 5, 6, and 7, the Sermon on the Mount. Mark tells us that as a result of what Jesus did there, He appointed twelve to be with Him, and then He sent them out to preach. Then, Mark gives us the names of the twelve apostles.

Now, Matthew is the one who gives us the full account of what happened there. He, too, describes the multitudes with all of their problems. Then He tells us in verse 1 of chapter 5, Now, when Jesus saw these crowds and all the problems they represented, He went up on a mountainside, sat down, and His disciples came to Him.

Mark tells us that they came by personal invitation, and He began to teach them. And then Matthew begins to give us the clear details of the teaching that Jesus gave there on the mountaintop. At the end of this teaching, beginning at verse 13 of Matthew chapter 7, we saw in our last study, Jesus ended this retreat with an invitation.

The invitation went something like this, Are you one of the many, or are you one of the few? Are you one of the false, or are you one of the true? Are you one of those who say, or are you one of those who do? What an awesome invitation it was. When you understand the context of this great teaching, you are faced with a decision and a question from Jesus. Are you part of the problem, or are you part of the solution? It may be your presence in a church that says at least you want to be a part of the solution, part of the answer.

That divides the world into two categories. Those who are part of the problem, and those who are part of the solution. We hope all the people who are in churches are to some degree or another part of the solution.

And the problems do exist out there in the people who do not know Christ, or know about the gospel of Jesus Christ. But the way this teaching ended showed us that that is not necessarily true. Jesus says there are many who think they are part of the answer, but Jesus will say to them, I don't know you, depart from me, you evildoer.

The teaching begins with the challenge, where are you? Are you still at the bottom of the hill? Are you only part of the problem? Are you only another person with questions so that you look like a big question mark? Or are you on the mountaintop with Jesus, being trained, being taught to be part of the solution? And the teaching ends with this challenge. If you say you're on the mountaintop with Jesus, perhaps we will put it this way. If you are in the church of Jesus Christ, and you are professing to be part of a solution, part of his answer, then the challenge is, what kind of solution are you? What kind of answer are you? What kind of a disciple are you? Are you one of the many who thinks there's an easy way? Or are you one of the few who knows that there is no such thing as an easy way? Are you one of the false, as in the parable of the wheat and the weeds? Are you one of the weeds? Or are you one of the true? In that parable of the wheat and the weeds, are you the wheat? And then finally, the invitation was, are you one of those who say, or are you one of those who do? And that is the context of the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount.

Now let's overview the content. What is the content of the Sermon on the Mount? What did Jesus really teach when he taught that first retreat? In my first message, I explained what I meant when I called this the first Christian retreat. I explained how a retreat is a time when believers get a way to refresh themselves spiritually.

And I will use the word retreat often when describing the Sermon on the Mount. In the spiritual sense, a retreat is when you pull back from the hectic pace of life to find solitude and a time for prayer and contemplation. So that is what I mean in these teachings when I talk about the Sermon on the Mount as being the first Christian retreat.

Even though we call it the Sermon on the Mount, it's not really a sermon as we will see. It was a teaching. He, speaking of Christ, opened his mouth and taught them.

That is the way it begins. It ends by saying that the multitudes that could still see what was going on, perhaps some of them were even within earshot of what was being taught, that they marveled that he taught with such authority and not like the scribes. It was teaching.

It begins and ends with that description of what took place there. It was teaching. The first thing Jesus teaches has to do with attitudes.

We call them the beatitudes or the beautiful attitudes. There are eight of them and they go like this. He opened his mouth and taught them saying, 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 filled.

Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called sons of God.

And then blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Jesus began his teaching at that first retreat where he was recruiting solutions and answers. Those disciples who would become his apostles.

He began that teaching by talking about attitudes. I once heard a preacher ask this question over the radio. Are you crossed up, messed up, switched up, twisted up? Do you need a checkup from the neck up? I think that was an excellent question and an excellent sermon.

He told us if we would write in to get his book that his book would give us a checkup from the neck up. Jesus seems to feel that if we're going to be his solution, his answer, we need to begin by having a checkup from the neck up. Attitudes.

How important attitudes are. Later on in this teaching Jesus is going to say you can have a body filled with light or you can have a body filled with darkness. In other words, you can be supremely happy or you can be supremely unhappy and depressed.

The difference is this one thing. How do you see things? He puts it this way. The lamp of the body is the eye.

If the eye is single or whole or healthy, the whole body is full of light. But if the eye is defective, the whole body is full of darkness. And when the darkness that is within you is just darkness, how dark it can be.

What he is really saying is that the difference between happiness and unhappiness is this question. How do you see things? What's your perception of life, of God, yourself? The eye is used symbolically in the scriptures for mindset or outlook. The question is, how are you seeing things? That could make the difference between light and darkness, happiness and unhappiness.

What does it mean when you ask the question, how do you see things? Well, largely we're talking about attitudes. They say in older age, some people have hardening of the arteries and some people have hardening of the attitudes. They become bitter, unhappy, and sour and negative, and they're really not

much fun to be around.

You might know some people like that. Attitudes can be so very important, and that is the way Jesus begins his teaching. Scholars who study this teaching called the Sermon on the Mount tell us if you examine the context in which this teaching is given, you will soon see the crises involved in becoming a Christian.

And what is the crises involved in becoming a Christian? Many people answer that in many different ways. John's gospel puts the emphasis upon believing. If you believe, he says, you will have eternal life.

And so he tells us who Jesus is, what faith is, and especially what this eternal life is. That's the way that John presents it. But Matthew is presenting it another way.

Matthew presents Jesus as a king who has a kingdom. A kingdom is a realm over which a king rules or reigns. Matthew seems to be telling us Jesus was a king.

And as a king, as the king of kings and the Lord of lords, he was recruiting subjects for his kingdom. The big issue you face at the beginning of the gospel of Matthew, and especially at the beginning of this retreat is, are you willing to be one of his subjects? Are you willing, not because of what is in it for you, but because of what is in it for the king? Many come to this whole issue of becoming Christians in terms of, what's in it for me? Does that mean I get to go to heaven when I die? Does that mean I will have happiness here in this life? Does that mean I will have the best of both worlds? What's in it for me? When we put ourselves at the center of our experience, we will process that whole Christian experience in terms of what we get out of it. It'll be more about me, not God.

Matthew does not approach it that way. Right up front, Matthew presents the crises involved in becoming a Christian this way. Are you part of the problem? Or are you part of the solution? Are you part of the answer? Or are you just another question mark? Are you willing to be part of his solution? Are you willing to be part of his answer? Are you willing to be an agent through whom he works out his solutions and his answers to the great problems in this world? So we see here, in the context in which this teaching is given, the crises involved in becoming a true Christian, a follower of Jesus Christ.

And then, in these beautiful attitudes, we have an overview of the character involved in being a true Christian. If you're going to be his solution and his answer, it's going to be something you are, by his grace. Later he will tell us that if you have these beautiful attitudes in your life, you are the salt of the earth.

You are the light of the world. Notice he is not saying, you will have this salt and you will go down off the mountain and sprinkle it around among these people who have all these problems. And he's certainly not saying, you have the light and you can go down now and flash it around in places where it's dark so that other people can find their way.

He's not saying that. He's saying, listen, it is something you are. You are salt.

You are light. These beautiful attitudes, some scholars tell us, are the Sermon on the Mount. They are the teaching.

All the rest of chapters 5, 6, and 7 is application. So it is very important that we see in these eight beautiful attitudes the character involved in being Christian, the character involved in being the salt of the earth, in being the light of the world, in being a solution, in being an answer of Jesus Christ. After Jesus gives the

Beatitudes, in the opinion of some scholars, the application to the teaching of the Beatitudes begins with four illustrations found in verses 13 through 16.

You are the salt of the earth. You are the light of the world. You are a city built on a hill that cannot be hidden.

You are a lamp on a lampstand, a candle on a candlestick. Some scholars tell us that in these four illustrations and in all the rest of the Sermon on the Mount, which is application from this point on, you see a challenge involved when this Christian character impacts a pagan culture. So there are three things you see when you consider the context of this teaching and then get into the content of this teaching.

First, the crises involved in becoming a follower of Christ. Are you part of the problem, or are you part of the solution? Then, the character involved in being Christian, the Beatitudes. And finally, as the application begins at the Beatitudes, it is worked out throughout the rest of the teaching, and what you are seeing is the challenge involved when Christian character impacts a pagan lost culture.

That's a good overview of the content of this teaching we call the Sermon on the Mount. Another way of overviewing the content of this teaching, and we are giving you the big picture in this study, would be to say this, the Beatitudes will cause us to look inward at ourselves. There are eight Beatitudes in all, and we will study each of them.

And you will discover when we study these beautiful attitudes, they will make you look inward and see, if by the grace of God, if you have this attitude in your life. So the Beatitudes force us to look inward. In the rest of Matthew 5, which is the long part of this teaching, from Matthew 5, 13, all the way out to verse 48, you will be challenged to look around, because that large section of Matthew 5, all has to do with relationships.

It is application, and Jesus seems to be saying that here is the way you work out all these attitudes in relationships, in relationship to your brother, in a relationship to your wife, in relationship to what he calls your adversary or your enemy, in relationship to women, or you might say the opposite sex. Jesus teaches us clearly that it is all about relationships. By the time you get through considering what Jesus says about relationships, you will realize he is challenging you to look around.

The Beatitudes challenge us to look inward, and then the rest of chapter 5 challenges us to look around and apply the Beatitudes to our relationships. When you get through seeing what he says your relationships are supposed to be, you will be ready for chapter 6, because chapter 6 tells us to look up. You will realize by the time you get to the end of chapter 5 that you need to look up, because what Jesus tells us to do in Matthew 5 is simply impossible unless God helps us.

In chapter 6, he talks first of all about spiritual disciplines, like fasting and giving and praying. Jesus' great teaching about prayer is in the first part of chapter 6. In the second part of chapter 6, Jesus talks about values, God's values, heavenly values, spiritual values. And he says, look up until you see the values of God.

Frankly, everything that Jesus says in the content of this teaching called the Sermon on the Mount, we must see in light of the context in which the teaching was given. Never forget, you are up on the side of the mountain, pretty far up, probably three-fourths of the way to the top, and you are looking down at the multitudes of people with all of those problems. And everything Jesus teaches, when he says, look inward,

when he says, look around, when he says, look up, is all for the benefit of those people at the bottom of the hill.

Jesus seems to be saying, you see those people down there? One of the reasons why they are so unhappy and so lost is because they do not have the right attitudes. If by the grace of God you have the right attitudes, you can go down there and not only tell them through preaching, but show them through living what the right attitudes are and how they work so much better than the attitudes that have been keeping these people down. Then Jesus tells us to look down the mountain.

Now you see those people? Some of them are your brothers. Some of them are your adversaries. And some are your enemies.

Some of them are your wives and families. Some of them are people of the opposite sex that you may be having problems with. Now look down the mountain.

Look at all those people with all their problems. What I want you to do is to have the right attitude so you can go down there and demonstrate these attitudes to the relationships you have with all those people in such a way that you will be the light of the world for them. You will be the salt of the earth for them.

You will be like a city built on a hill that cannot be hid for them, a beacon for them, and like a candle on a candlestick, all for their benefit. By the time you get to the end of Matthew 6, Jesus has told you to look in, He's told you to look around, and He's told you to look up. He said to look up until you have these spiritual disciplines, until you have these spiritual values.

Then at the beginning of chapter 7, notice this. At the very beginning, He's bringing the whole teaching to a verdict. And He is saying to make a commitment to look in.

He gives this great illustration about having a plank of wood stuck in your eye, a board of lumber. And you're going around with this plank of lumber stuck in your eye, and you feel that your mission and purpose in life is to find every little speck of sawdust in the eyes of other people. Jesus had a sense of humor.

He says, you hypocrite. And then He asks two questions. Why are you doing this ridiculous thing? And how can you hope to be effective? Of course, this teaching is to first get that plank out of our eye, and then we'll be able to see clearly to help those people who have specks of sawdust in their eyes.

What He's really doing there at the beginning of chapter 7 is telling us to make the commitment to look in. Get the log out of our eye. Get ourselves right with God first.

Then we can help to be part of the solution and part of the answer for other people. In the next part of Matthew 7, Jesus says to make the commitment to look up, really look up with all of your heart. Ask and seek and knock.

And He means this continuously. Continuously ask and continuously seek, since seeking is intense asking. And then He says to continuously knock, since knocking is intense seeking.

And then He has this great promise. If you have the commitment to look up and continuously ask, persevere in your asking and seeking and knocking, you will find and you will receive, and it will open up for you. And then in His famous teaching called the Golden Rule, verse 12 of Matthew 7, He says, So in

everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.

There in that great teaching of the Golden Rule, before they go down off that mountaintop and the retreat is over, Jesus is saying to them, now, make the commitment to look around. He gives us the greatest teaching for looking around and building relationships that the world has ever been given. What He is saying in so many words is, look down the mountain.

You see those people down there? The first thing you have to do is put yourself in their place. Are you rich? Some are poor. Are you healthy? Many are sick.

If you are a white man and you see a black man down there, put yourself in the black man's place and ask this question, If I were a black man, what would I want a white disciple of Jesus to do? When you get the answer to that, Jesus said, do it. That sums up the whole teaching of the Bible. It may be that you could put yourself in the place of a person of the opposite sex.

Say, if you were a woman, what would you want a man who is a disciple of Jesus Christ to do? When you know the answer to that, do it. It may be that you see poor people down there, the disadvantaged people, and maybe you are not disadvantaged. You are a disciple of Jesus, and you are one of the advantaged, one of the blessed materially and spiritually.

Now, if you are one of the disadvantaged, one of the poor, what would you want this wealthy disciple, this individual who is blessed materially and spiritually, what would you want that disciple of Jesus Christ to do? When you get the answer to that, do that. He is teaching the golden rule of relations, the golden rule of international relations, the golden rule of looking around. He is saying to make the commitment to look around and apply these attitudes.

Then Jesus gives this awesome invitation. Are you one of the many or one of the few? Are you one of the false or one of the true? Are you one of those who say or one of those who actually do the things I am teaching you here on this mountaintop? That is an overview of the content of the Sermon on the Mount. That is what Jesus taught at what we have been calling the first Christian retreat.

Having seen the context of this teaching and an overview of the content of this teaching, I would like for us in our next study to begin with the first beatitude and one by one look at these eight beautiful attitudes. Then we will go verse by verse through the rest of Matthew's chapter 5, all of Matthew's 6, all of Matthew's 7, studying the context and the content of the Sermon on the Mount, which, in the opinion of so many, is the greatest teaching Jesus Christ has ever given. This teaching can make you and me part of His solution, part of His answer to the problems that are being experienced by billions of people all around the world, but only if we are willing to apply these teachings to our lives.

I encourage you to plan on being with us for each lesson as we study the teachings of Jesus Christ. Thank you for joining us in this very special series of lessons on the Sermon on the Mount. Now that we have seen an overview of the context and the content of the Sermon on the Mount, it will better help us understand the teachings of Jesus Christ.

It is our prayer that these lessons will strengthen your faith so that you might be a true follower of Jesus Christ, one who is making an eternal difference in the lives of others. Until next time, may the love of Jesus Christ encourage you and give you peace.

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