

With the King in His Kingdom

by G.W. North

G.W. North's sermon explores the profound implications of discipleship as taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing the call to perfection and the necessity of living consistently with His teachings.

Scripture: Matthew 5:48, Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Righteousness", "Discipleship"

Description

G.W. North emphasizes the significance of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, delivered to His disciples, as a transformative moment that redefines the law of God. Unlike Moses, who presented the law on stone tablets, Jesus embodies the law, blending human and divine natures, and calls His followers to a higher standard of righteousness. He encourages them to strive for perfection, not as a burden but as a reflection of their relationship with the Father. North highlights the importance of consistency in discipleship, illustrating how the disciples often faltered in their commitment, yet Jesus remained a steadfast example. Ultimately, the sermon underscores that true discipleship is about living in alignment with Christ's teachings and embodying His spirit in everyday life.

Transcript

Matthew records that the so-called 'sermon on the mount' was spoken to the disciples. This glorious message might as truly be called 'a set piece', for it was when He was set on the mountain that His disciples came unto Him. He took up His position quite deliberately, knowing that what was to follow would most certainly be compared with what Moses did. and said many centuries before. That was an absolutely unforgettable occasion, for it lay at the foundation of the race; those two tablets of stone were the rock of righteousness upon which the nation of Israel was built, and now Jesus sat immovable upon a mountain to deliver the law anew. Both differences and similarities abound in this new presentation of the law of God to men. Each of these is very important and none more so than the fact that the disciples were not commanded to await Christ's emergence from cloud and fire like some demigod with two tables of stone in His hands, but were called up into His presence as into the presence of a king in His kingdom. Instead of two tablets of stone in Moses' hands they saw two natures, human and divine, blended in one person who expounded to them the nature of the Rock of righteousness upon which they must be built. They listened to the way He handled the old law and marvelled at its newness flowing out of His mouth -- 'Moses said' -- 'I say unto you' -- He exceeded Moses by far; He went beyond him altogether and set the standard higher, made the punishment of defectors greater and the rewards of obedience richer. There was no mistaking Him, He commenced with blessing and exhorted them to perfection -- 'Blessed are ye -- be ye therefore

perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect' -- nothing less -- that is His set position. Praise God they were not worshipping a calf of gold down at the bottom of the mountain, or they might not have heard Him.

Let us particularly notice that He did not say 'be ye perfect as I am perfect', but 'be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect'. That was His own position; right at the beginning He was a disciple Himself and He remained a disciple to the end, learning, following, obeying all the time while walking in fellowship with His Father and God. 'He was led as a lamb to the slaughter and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb so He opened not His mouth'. What an example of discipleship! He is our Master and Lord and His authority lay in that, although He spoke to men as to disciples with plenty of faults, He was the Disciple without fault. Our devotion to Him grows partly from our gratitude to Him for being the example He was. So exceedingly great was He and so penetrating His interpretations and applications of God's laws that for ever after none of those early disciples could speak of Moses' law as being other than comparatively weak; they realised that he, with his law, was unable to give life. They saw that in an amazing way whenever Jesus spoke He put His own life into words; the things He said were literally His Spirit and His life. Therefore, except when the occasion demanded, they never spoke of the law of Moses but of the law of Christ. More than that, they said we are to fulfil it in ourselves, so that the things we say and do should be spirit and life to others also.

Let every man know that it is impossible to be in this world among men without our lives affecting others. Whether we are aware of it or not, every man's spirit and life comes out in words and deeds and attitudes in the everyday. John was very aware of this when he said, 'that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you'; although we may not be as explicit as he, or write a book or make any attempt to communicate what we believe to others, we must realise that it is impossible to live and not declare something by living. The Lord knew this and for this reason made disciples and especially apostles, that in them He may exemplify and emphasise what He meant. Mark puts it this way, 'He goeth up into a mountain and calleth unto Him whom He would: and they came unto Him, and He ordained twelve that they should be with Him and that He might send them forth'. These men had to come to Him and be with Him long before He sent them out to minister. If they were to go and preach and work in His name they had first to live like Him and learn from Him, and for that they had to live with Him. He did not wish their lips to declare one thing and their lives to declare another; consistency is a virtue of God, 'I am the Lord I change not'.

Reading the Gospels we could easily conclude that, despite their many commendable points, if there is one virtue all the disciples lacked it was consistency; led by Judas, they all felt that Mary should not have anointed Jesus with the spikenard and said so; likewise they all vowed they would lay down their lives for the Lord's sake and failed to do so at that time. Disciples should feel that all the world's choicest possessions and riches as well as all their love and powers should be poured upon Jesus, nor begrudge Him anything, but it seems those men at that time really did not think so. By their words in Simon's house they appeared to be most virtuous, but it may be said entirely without criticism or rancour, that by their actions they revealed that they were far from it. By their words in the guest-chamber also they gave the impression, even the assurance, that they would die with their Lord, but events proved otherwise; they lacked inner consistency; perhaps we all should have been the same had it been us instead of them. Outwardly they may have been adjudged true and faithful followers and could make the claim 'we have left all and followed thee', but inwardly they were moving from very mixed motives indeed, as their question reveals, 'what shall we have therefore?' What a sad ending to such a commendable beginning -- they had their eye on rewards rather than on Him.

God is faithful and encourages like faithfulness in all His people by offering rewards for loyalty and endurance. Moses, true leader that he was, endured hardship as seeing Him who is invisible and had respect unto the recompense of the reward: Jesus Himself endured the cross for the joy that was set before Him. God does offer certain incentives to all disciples for patient endurance, but these must not be a man's reason for discipleship lest they be thought by some as wages or even bribes. Should this happen the whole purposes of God thereby would be circumvented and nullified. Discipleship must always be envisaged in John's terms -- 'as an only begotten with a father', and in accordance with Jesus' teaching, 'I am an unprofitable servant'. The man who walks thus will always be impressed with a sense of privilege and duty befitting the honour conferred upon him.

In one of the frequent clashes which occurred between the Lord Jesus and the Pharisees, He so identified Himself with His disciples that they must have rejoiced in heart at what they heard. They were passing through cornfields and as they went they plucked some of the ears of corn, rubbed them in their hands till the grains fell out and then they ate them. They were hungry, but it was the sabbath day and it was considered by the Pharisees that the disciples had broken the law. They were therefore accused of sin and Jesus was also condemned with them because He condoned their conduct. They must at first have wondered how He would handle the situation, but finally realised that they need not have been over-concerned, for their Champion not only gave the perfect answer to the Pharisees, but also assured their own hearts of His loyalty to them under all circumstances. 'The sabbath was made for man and not man for the sabbath: therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath'. By calling Himself the Son of man He totally identified and allied Himself with His disciples on an issue and at a time when they vitally needed it, and what is more He claimed that the sabbath was made for Him as well as for them and every man. He was Lord of their days and nights as well as of their lives; this Son of man was Lord of everything that was made for man. They who were sons of men were mother and sister and brother to Him; it was incredible; was this what discipleship meant? It was, and it still means that today.

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