

Attitudes

by Joseph Carroll

The sermon emphasizes the importance of attitudes, particularly humility, in responding to people's needs and dealing with persecution.

Duration: 40:02

Scripture: Matthew 5:3

Topics: "Christian Life", "Attitudes", "Relationships"

Description

Joseph Carroll emphasizes the significance of attitudes in our relationships with God, others, and ourselves, drawing from the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. He explains that right attitudes lead to right actions, while wrong attitudes, often stemming from ignorance or self-will, can disrupt fellowship in the church and family. Carroll highlights the importance of humility and the need to respond to others' needs rather than their conditions, using examples from scripture to illustrate how Jesus exemplified this principle. He encourages believers to adopt a triumphant attitude, even in persecution, and to embody love and compassion towards all, including enemies. The sermon concludes with a call for self-reflection and a commitment to embodying Christ-like attitudes in daily life.

Transcript

Last week, you will remember, we touched very briefly on attitudes. And tonight we will continue that study, attitudes. We have seen in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount that he deals primarily with attitudes.

If the attitude is right, then the actions are right. If the attitude is wrong, the words and the actions will be wrong. We have seen that in the two areas where the devil trips us up most consistently, in the fellowship or in the church and in the family, it is because of wrong attitudes.

Wrong attitudes. These wrong attitudes can be because of ignorance, when we do not know what our place is in the church, or when we do not know what our place is in the family. Wrong attitudes, because of ignorance.

But very often it is not because of ignorance, but because of self-will, the desire for self-satisfaction. And therefore we must realize that each of us sustains a three-fold relationship. We have a relationship to God, we have a relationship to others, and we have a relationship to ourselves.

And when it comes to the matter of relationships or attitudes, our relationship to God can be summed up in one word, we are his servants, the servants of God. When it comes to our relationship to others in the matter of attitudes, again we have the same word, we are the servants of others. The Apostle Paul could say to the Corinthians, ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.

Godward, a servant. Toward others, a servant. Toward ourselves, humility.

Humility. We will never have a true attitude unless we are humble in spirit. Now let us turn again to that Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5, and see just how our Lord deals with attitudes.

Matthew 5, reading from verse 3. And I want you to follow very closely this evening, because we are going to conclude with a most important study, which will reveal a very important principle. But let's begin here with the Sermon on the Mount. Verse 3 of chapter 5, Gospel of Matthew.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now what is this? It's an attitude. It's an attitude toward oneself, poor in spirit.

Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. What causes the mourning? It's an attitude. Mourning is an attitude.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. What is meekness? An attitude toward oneself. It's an attitude.

Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. What is this hunger and thirst? It's an attitude. It's an attitude.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. No need to come in. It's an attitude.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. What is that? It's an attitude. Pure in heart.

A desire, a longing to be pure in heart. Blessed are the peacemakers. No need to come in.

For they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Ah, Brother Carroll, no attitude.

Just a moment now, let's keep reading. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say, All men revile against you falsely for my sake. Now, if what we have read in the previous verses is accepted and lived by as principles, you are going to suffer persecution.

They that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. Now, our Lord reveals to us in verse 12 what our attitude is to be when we're persecuted. What is it? Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven.

That's your attitude toward persecution. Hallelujah, I'm being persecuted. So what have you got? Not poor me, but privileged me.

It's an attitude toward persecution. Hallelujah. You don't look as if you're thinking hallelujah.

I don't know what your attitude is, but this is the word of God. A triumphant attitude toward persecution. When you are being reviled and when you are being persecuted and when all sorts of slander is being broadcast against you, what are you to do? Rejoice and be exceedingly glad.

No reward here, great is your reward in heaven. An attitude toward persecution. Not for one moment does the Lord tell you to defend yourself.

If the Lord is your shepherd, he's quite capable of looking after the wolves. Now, if you want to defend yourself when you're persecuted and you are slandered, well, you can go right ahead and the Lord will let you defend yourself. You'd be much wiser to let him do it.

Never defend yourself, my brother, my sister. All you have to do is set the joy bells ringing, rejoice and be glad, no, exceedingly glad. Great is your reward in heaven.

Why? Because you are numbered amongst the great ones. You're numbered amongst the prophets. You see? You are receiving the same treatment that the prophets received.

What a glorious company to be numbered with. Hallelujah for persecution. Not an amen in the congregation.

You see, it's attitudes that he's dealing with. It's attitudes that he's dealing with. Then in verse 19, we have this, Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven.

But whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Now, what is this? It's an attitude toward the word of God. It's an attitude toward God's word.

You dare not, under any circumstances, dilute this word or take away from it. The man who preaches this word and does not believe that it is the inherent word of God, I believe is in great danger. I believe that.

Because I believe what this book says. Then in verse 21, You've heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou should not kill, and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment.

It's an attitude. It's an attitude. That produces anger.

So, the Lord does not deal with the act primarily. He deals with the attitude. He looks at the attitude.

Then in verse 27, You've heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou should not commit adultery. But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. What is the condition of his heart? His heart is adulterous.

It's an adulterous attitude. He may never commit the act, but he is an adulterer in the Lord's sight. And so we find as we go through this tremendous passage that our Lord is dealing primarily with attitudes.

Then in verse 33, Again you have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths and so on. Now what is he dealing with here? He's dealing with an attitude toward speech. An attitude toward speech.

And on down the line, again and again we find this attitude coming. And this, from verse 43, you've heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you.

Now how many of us obey this verse? There it is. What is it? It's an attitude towards your enemy. It's an attitude.

Well, am I to have this attitude toward the Russians? Love your enemies. Yes. What about the North Koreans? Yes.

What about the Chinese? Yes. Enemies. Very real enemies.

Who to love. It's what the Lord says, that's what he means. And when people curse you, you are to bless them.

You can't be passive or neutral. When they curse you, you bless. Do we do that? Do good to them that hate you.

It's an attitude, isn't it? Do good to them that hate you. An attitude of love toward those who are our enemies, those who curse us, and those who despitely use us, we are to pray for them. Attitudes.

That you may be the children of your Father which is in heaven, for he maketh his Son to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? Do not even the publicans the same. In other words, how do you differ from anybody else if you do not behave differently because of a different attitude? Then he comes to chapter 6. And what does he deal with? He deals again with attitudes.

What is your attitude towards our giving? What is your attitude toward prayer? What is your attitude toward fasting? What is your attitude, in verse 19, toward your treasure on earth? Attitudes, attitudes, attitudes. We all know about almsgiving. It's to be done in secret.

It's under the Lord. Prayer, secret, is under the Lord. Fasting, secret, is under the Lord.

Almsgiving or treasure on earth, verse 19, lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Now, what is he saying? The disposition of your treasure will be determined by the attitude of your heart. Simple. If your heart is right, your treasure will be in the right place.

If your heart is wrong, your treasure will be in the wrong place, you see. It's an attitude of heart towards your treasure. Where your heart is, there will your treasure be also.

And then this tremendous word in chapter 7, this matter of not being censorious in our attitude toward those who have need, obvious need, because unless our attitude is one of loving and compassionate concern toward them, then we cannot assist that brother who has this mote in his eye, a little splinter. We must not have a constant, carping, critical spirit toward others. It's our attitude.

The attitude is all important. Now, having looked very briefly at our Lord's obvious teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, let us consider very carefully a basic and extremely important principle in aesthetics. The important thing is whether or not you respond to the condition of a person or a circumstance or whether you respond to the need.

That's the key. Do you respond to the condition or do you respond to the need? For example, John 3.16. For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God so loved the world that he gave.

All right, God looked down upon the world and what did he see? What was the condition of sinful man? Sinful, rebellious, self-willed, an enemy of God, that's the condition of sinful man. The carnal mind is enmity against God for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. That's the condition of man.

God does not respond to man's condition, he responds to his need. It's very important we understand that. What is his need? His need is redemption.

If he responds to his condition, he blocks him out. But the response of God is that of self-renunciation and sacrifice. Please underline that.

If you don't get that, you're not even going to begin to understand what discipleship is all about. God's response to man's need is self-renunciation and sacrifice, the giving of his son. And not only the giving of his son to suffer as he walked the streets of the earth that he made, but to suffer the death of the cross.

And even more than that, to bear our sin in his own body on the tree. Now in the light of that, how can we refuse ever to forgive anybody? Or ever to have a wrong attitude toward anybody. When do you have a wrong attitude toward a person when you respond to their condition, not their need? For example, in Matthew chapter 26, Matthew chapter 26, verse 47, where we have the basest and most despicable of all betrayals.

And while he had spake, Lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came in with him a great multitude with swords and staves from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he. Hold him fast.

And forthwith he came to Jesus and said, Hail, Master, and kissed him. And Jesus said unto him, Friend, Judas, the one who was entrusted with the bag, the one who was the treasurer, the one who had walked with his Lord, with thee, Lord, and observed the compassion and the love of Christ for all men, betraying him with a kiss, what is his condition? His condition is indescribable. What is his need? If ever he needed a friend, he needed a friend right then.

Jesus said to him, Friend. He said, Friend. What is he responding to? He's responding to his need.

And his need is indescribable. He needs a friend, and quickly. Jesus said, Friend.

Do you respond to the condition, or do you respond to the need? If he would respond to his condition, what we say he deserves, you know what he could have done to Judas. But he didn't. Because this is not the divine method.

One of our members asked a very good question last Saturday morning. They said, now, just a moment, if the Lord always responds to a need, how come he spoke to the Pharisees as he did? Hypocrites, whited sepulchres, and so on. Well, he was responding to their need.

What was their need? Shock treatment. Shock treatment. Not the slightest use trying to reason with a Pharisee.

Shock treatment. And they got it. And some of them responded to it.

We read in the Acts, a great company of priests were obedient to the faith. It's a beautiful word. A great company of the priests were saved.

I was complimented, I don't get many compliments, but I was complimented quite recently by a dear sister who said, the first time I met her in this city, she came to me with a need, and I said to her, you're in no shape to help. Or she came to me because she wanted to help another person. And I said, you're in no shape to help anybody.

You need something yourself. Well, she didn't expect that answer. And it was the truth.

She had a great need herself. And when she had the need met, she was able to help the other person. You must never quench the Spirit when the Spirit gives you a word which would seem to be harsh.

That's quenching the Spirit. That's putting out the fire of the Spirit. Never put out the fire of the Spirit.

The fire may not be there next time. That's very important. I recall on one occasion having dinner with a doctor and his wife, who were rather given to social standing.

Another couple, or two other couples, seven of us all told. And we were all eating a delightful dinner, and the conversation was bright and convivial and friendly, when suddenly Mrs. Devenish turned to the doctor and said, have you ever been born again? I think everybody dropped their forks and knives. Where did that come from? And he spluttered and his wife put her cup down, and we all looked red in the face.

And he said, I haven't. I've never forgotten that. It was the Spirit of God.

That's where it came from. It came from the Lord. Right in the midst of company that he really wanted to be somebody with.

And she said, have you ever been born again? Or when were you born again? And then he said, I haven't. You see, it was shock treatment. And that's what he needed, and that's what he got.

And that's what the Lord gave the Pharisees. He startled them. And sometimes we need startling.

It's the only thing that works. Our Lord spoke to the need of the Pharisee, not his condition. So you find it as we go through the Scriptures.

Zacchaeus. We all know about Zacchaeus. The hated little man.

The tax gatherer. The lackey of the hated Roman Empire. Gathering their taxes and plundering the people at the same time.

Hated. Despised. Rejected by society.

And there up in the tree he sees the Lord and the Lord sees him. Remember what the Lord said to him? He said, come down, I want to dine with you today. That's a tremendous word.

What did Zacchaeus need? What was his need? His need was social acceptance. Nobody would look at him. Nobody would touch him.

Nobody would converse with him. He's a leper. He's a social leper.

So he said, I want to have lunch with you today, Zacchaeus. That's tremendous. That's tremendous.

Do you speak to the person's need? Do you respond to the person's need? Or do you respond to their condition? And do you pass on your response to their condition with your critical words to somebody else and spread the poison of your own evil heart? I wonder what the Lord thinks of that. You know what he thinks of it. So do I. Despicable.

Not worthy of one who names the name of Christ. There's another beautiful passage in Luke chapter 7. Luke chapter 7, verse 36. And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him.

And he went into the Pharisee's house and sat down to meet. And behold, a woman in the city which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meet in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment and stood at his feet behind him weeping and began to wash his feet with tears and did wipe them with the hairs of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him, for she is a sinner.

And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he said, Master, say on. There was a certain creditor which had two debtors.

The one owed 500 pence and the other 50. And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him most? Simon answered and said, I suppose that he to whom he forgave most.

And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged. And he turned to the woman and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house. Thou gavest me no water for my feet, but she hath washed my feet with tears.

And wiped them with the hairs of her head. Thou gavest me no kiss, but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint, but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins which are many are forgiven. What is he doing? Is he responding to her condition? Not at all. He is not a Pharisee.

Are you? Are you a Pharisee? That awful woman, that terrible man, that awful woman and that terrible man may need you desperately. And the love of Christ in you, if it's there. If it's there.

The Pharisees had truth, but that's all they had. They had an atmosphere of superiority about them. We are superior.

I thank God that I am not a despot. Don't you ever thank God that you're not as somebody else. Just thank God for his grace that saved a wretched sinner like you.

Once you begin to think that you are superior, in God's sight, to any person on the face of this earth, you have a wrong attitude. Wrong attitude. What did you have to say in where you would be born and how you would be born and to which family and what nation? I've said before and I'll say again that God must be very fond of the colored peoples of the earth because he makes quite a lot of them.

So he must be fond of them. Eight hundred million Chinese? He must like the Chinese. Five hundred million Indians? He must be very fond of the Indians.

Of course he is. He loves sinners. He loves them.

So should we. This woman was a sinful woman. And so he responded to her need.

Not her condition. He said your sins are forgiven. What was her need? Her need was the forgiveness of her sins.

The forgiveness of her sins. Then the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians chapter 12. 2 Corinthians chapter 12.

Paul lays down a tremendous truth for us all to emulate. Verse 15. And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you, though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

Underline that verse. He says I will very gladly spend and be spent for you. He doesn't say I will spend and be sent to you.

He says I'll very gladly spend and be spent for you. Even though the more labor I bestow upon you, the less you love me. The more I show my love on you, the less response I get in return.

What is he doing? He's responding to the need of the Corinthians, not their condition. He really could have told them off. That's his attitude.

The Corinthians were difficult people. The more he loved them, the less they loved him. The more he did for them, the more they kept criticizing him.

He said it doesn't mean a thing. I'll very gladly spend and be spent for you. These are terrible truths.

This is Christianity in action. Now are we this in the church and are we this in the family? Are we? In the marketplace, in the school, in the place of business. Last week we touched very briefly on Stephen.

We all know the prayer that he offered when he was stoned. Did he respond to the condition of those that stoned him? Not at all. He said lay not this sin to their charge.

He's responding to their need. He's responding to their need. And we know the perfect example, of course, is our Lord himself.

On the cross, the spittle of evil men on his cheeks. The wicked thorns crushed into his brow. The nails in his hands and his feet.

What did he say? Father, forgive them. They know not what they do. Did he respond to their condition? No.

He responded to their need. That's a right attitude. Your attitude is determined by your response to the need of the person, not their condition.

Shall we pray? Dear Father, this is a word that condemns us and we would trust thee by the operation of thy grace to convert us to a right attitude. When we are faced with those situations which demand self-renunciation and sacrifice, the unthankful, unloving, rebellious child, the unresponsive, hateful enemy, our Lord, we have much to learn and we ask that thou will give us a teachable spirit. Let us not go lightly

from this place tonight with meaningless chatter about meaningless subjects.

These are solemn words, Lord, we know it. And where there has been that unloving attitude and unloving speech, then Lord, give us grace to confess our sin and to turn from it. We believe, our Father, if we accepted even half of this truth and lived by it, we would have a revival.

We know so much, but we are so very poor in our appropriation of truth that could transform us into the image of Christ. So, Lord, be merciful to us and give us grace unto repentance and a walk that pleases thee. And this we pray in Jesus' name.

Amen.

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