

Sermon on the Mount

by W.F. Anderson

W.F. Anderson's sermon explores the transformative teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, emphasizing the call for disciples to embody a countercultural lifestyle rooted in righteousness and community.

Duration: 45:03

Scripture: Matthew 5:3-12, Matthew 5:17, Matthew 10:1, James 1:22

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Kingdom Living"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of not only listening to the word of God but also obeying it. He compares those who listen but do not act to someone who looks in a mirror and forgets their own reflection. The preacher highlights the significance of studying and understanding the perfect law that gives freedom, and continuously applying it to one's life. He explains that by following God's laws, we can experience blessings in our actions. The sermon also references various teachings of Jesus, such as the law of ministry and the law of kingdom growth, to illustrate the importance of living according to God's commands.

Transcript

Right back there, so why don't you all just move down. Now of course it's good to see you again and be back where the weather's a little warmer. I don't think Jimmy ever forgave me for moving to Minnesota, but I'm delighted to see you all again this morning.

What I originally planned to do, and you can't believe it, and just just the stress of doing it put me in a state of fibrillation again, so I'm just realizing I can no longer do the kinds of things I'd like to do. And I just thought we'd play it by ear today, see how I do, and not only physically, but as far as teaching is concerned, is that a good person to listen to. And maybe tonight we'll talk about having a study tomorrow night if you're interested, see how this goes.

It may not generate any interest, you may say, no that's enough, we don't want to hear any more. And that's fine, you won't hurt my feelings, I'll go home crying, but that's all right, don't worry about that. But we'll play it by ear today and see how things go.

What I'd like to do is begin with the Sermon on the Mount this morning, in Matthew chapter 5. I'll switch if you've already done something with the Sermon on the Mount recently, but if you haven't, I'd like to begin with Matthew chapter 5. Verse 1 says, Now when he saw the crowds, and it's the close of chapter 4, the

last verse says, Large crowds from Galilee, the capitalists, the ten cities across the river Jordan, Jerusalem, Judea, and the region across the Jordan followed him. So they had large crowds following him. Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down.

His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, etc. And we'll hopefully get time to look at some of those Beatitudes this morning. Matthew, as you know, is, and if I'm saying stuff you already know, is a Christian.

So Matthew is a philosopher, and Matthew, who has chosen to build his doctrine, and there's enough biographies and stuff that I can get down to it, there are a population of 40 million who don't have a biography. Nobody would write biographies about an individual's birth. But they didn't know about each one until they were 12, and then 16 months of 1930.

Who learns about a biography that way? You should not biography. You don't know what a biography is. All you have is a record of the teaching that they've made.

They put you in that position. That is the biography of God. Matthew's doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shows that they've built this account of the 30 Martyrs of Jesus around five great teaching blocks that Jesus gave to the New Testament.

And the first of those five teaching blocks is here, in chapter 5, verse 7, where we know that the Son will not. I want to say that that's the law of the Bible. How Jesus, what Jesus' disciples are, and how they live, what they do.

The second of the teaching blocks in that, occurs in chapter 1, it's just behind this line, occurs in chapter 10. And it's the law of ministry. Jesus is sending his disciples out, and he's telling them how they are to conduct their ministry.

And when you come to chapter 13, you have another great block of teaching. And I would call that the law of kingdom growth. How the kingdom of God grows.

You have the sowing of the seed, etc., and the growth of the seed, the mustard seed, all the rest of it, yeast in the dough. How the kingdom of God grows. The laws of growth in the kingdom of God, in chapter 13.

And when you come to chapter 18, you have what I would call the law of relationship in the kingdom of God. He takes up primary subjects of servanthood, where the disciples are grasping after power and prominence, and Jesus teaches them the law of servanthood, and the law of forgiveness. Because if we are going to be what God wants us to be, we have to learn to forgive each other.

And I would say to forgive ourselves. But forgiveness is key in that chapter. And then comes chapter 24 and 25, the last great building block of teaching the gospel of Matthew, that has to do with the return of the king.

And our Lord talks about his second advent. Those are the five great teaching blocks around which Matthew builds his gospel. John, as you remember, builds his gospel around the seven great miracles of Jesus.

But what Matthew does, Matthew is the great teaching gospel, and he presents Jesus, the Messiah, teaching in those five great blocks of material. And Matthew, as you know, is the Jewish gospel. You have more quotes from the Old Testament than the gospel of Matthew, but he is the great thing to show that who this person Jesus is, and what he did, fulfills what the Old Testament said about the Messiah.

Why is the gospel of the Jews to the Jews? Remember, often it's what the Jews are to the Jews. But it's obvious the evangelism of the people of Israel in the first century, that was the gospel of Matthew. So we come to this first of the building blocks, the Sermon on the Mount, and we have to ask what is the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount before we have a look at it.

And again, you're going to get all kinds of answers to that. There are people who feel that the Sermon on the Mount is a form of the Old Testament. You have to go back to whatever it says, it's a form of the Mount.

And it's good for us. But there are also people who think by inspiration of God. And it's profitable.

So even if you feel the Sermon on the Mount is not good for the Jews, it's good for you and your family. Question from the audience That is, he is forming a new society of his followers that is going to be different from any other group in first century society. They are going to be distinct in ways that really matter.

They are going to live differently as a group. And this Sermon on the Mount is not spoken to individuals. It's spoken to his disciples.

It's as they create this Christian community, this community of followers of Jesus. And together they live the way Jesus says his disciples are supposed to live. But they are going to be salt and light.

Some of that is missing from this Sermon. Salt and light in the world. But he's forming a new community.

We are not, in the Sermon on the Mount, individual disciples of Jesus living there all over the city. We do that. But we form a community that together has a lifestyle that is markedly different from the lifestyle of the society around us.

And I say community because we need the Sermon to do that. All these professors are in the world, this new world, that Jesus is talking about when he talks about his disciples. And so the Church ought to be, and I'm just talking about the followers of Jesus now in the Church, the Church ought to be a community of people whose lives reflect this new relationship to God in Jesus.

Right? But we ought to be different. But we ought to be different in ways we might be deficient. We ought to be different in faith if we're in town.

And when we read the Sermon on the Mount, it's quite obvious that if in any way we live there, we are going to be quite different in ways that we become. I hope we get a chance to look at some of that this morning. But when he begins this Sermon on the Mount, Jesus talks about who we are.

The kind of people his disciples are. Before he talks about how his disciples should live. Now when you look at the Beatitudes and then his statements, you are the salt of the earth, you are the light of the world.

Those are not exhortations. He's not saying be that. He's saying you are that.

And in the Beatitudes, he's not saying become that. Because you are that, you are blessed. And it's what we are that Jesus begins with and then moves on to what we do.

So, we as a group of disciples of Jesus are a counterculture to our society of life. And that's true in B.B.C. I don't believe that we're going to be a counterculture to the society of life. And our purpose then is not to blend in with our society.

But to be so different and so attractive that people see, they'll either hate us or love us. They'll want what we are in Jesus. Or they won't be able to stand one or the other.

And the negative response will not be because we are abrasive. It will be because we are so different. And when you go through the Sermon on the Mount, or take any of the instructions of Paul and his business, for example, if we literally carry them out, you can see how we would be different from our society around us.

And I think that's the purpose of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, is to create this kind of counterculture. Let me talk briefly about what I think are some of the key ideas in the Sermon on the Mount, and then we'll move on to look at some of the specific passages. First in chapter 5 verse 17, Jesus said, Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets.

I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. And Jesus fulfills the Old Testament. How does he fulfill it? One, he does what the Old Testament says the Messiah must do.

You can look at it prophetically, that what the prophet said about the Messiah, Jesus does. And so he fulfills the Old Testament. But, you can look at it through the exact same way that I'm doing it.

If he impersonates the law, fulfills everything the law has commanded, and set us free, you can also see this word fulfilled in the way in which he uses, he talks about the law in this chapter. You have heard it was said in the Old Testament, about I am the Lord. Now he's not contradicting the law, he's showing it's real meaning.

He's getting past the surface meaning of the law, the surface in the sense that we look at it, and showing what God had in mind. There's no construction to the Old Testament. And he fills out the meaning of the law.

And you can see that all through here. In this fifth chapter, in verse 27, you have heard it was said, do not commit adultery, but I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Now he gets that from the command.

He's not contradicting the command, don't commit adultery. Any more than in verse 21, you have heard that was said to the people long ago, do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.

Where do you get that? That's already implied. If we have the heart to please God, that's implied in the commandment, do not murder. If you sit down and think, I am not to commit murder.

What leads to murder? Anger, desire for revenge, hatred. If I am not to commit murder, then I am not to hate. I have to give in to the anger.

That's already implied. Even if God doesn't spell it out, people who have a heart for God are going to be thinking that way. If we are only interested in an external keeping of a commandment, we won't think that way.

But if we really have a heart for God, we are going to look at those commands, what are the implications of those commands? And that's what Jesus is doing. So in his teaching, he fulfills the law, he fills it full of its real meaning. He goes beyond the surface, digs into it.

Said, think about it. This is what God is saying to you. Not only don't commit murder, don't hate.

Don't commit adultery, don't lust. Second idea is that our righteousness must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees in verse 20 of this chapter. I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

I don't think he's speaking of judicial righteousness here. Let me make this clear to you, and I don't think you're allowed to be wrong, but I don't think he's talking about judicial righteousness. He's saying God is greater than righteousness, and Jesus is greater than righteousness, and Christ himself, he himself is our righteousness.

I don't think that's what he's saying here. So that's a greater righteousness than the Pharisees. He says what he's talking about all through this sermon is how people live.

What does the righteousness of the Pharisees tell one to do in service of the law? That they shall not murder, and they didn't murder, and they were satisfied with that. But if Jesus' teaching is correct, they didn't keep the law because they hated it. They could say, I have not committed adultery.

If you remember in Jesus' story, the Pharisees were tax collectors, and they were tax collectors because they did not pay other men off. This other idiot was a tax collector, not like him. And on that superficial level, and I don't mean to minimize the surface meaning of the commandment, that's what they were content with.

I haven't committed adultery. I haven't committed murder. That was their righteousness.

Jesus said the true keeping of the law is not to lust, not to hate, and your righteousness must exceed that of the righteousness that was described in Pharisees in that sense. You penetrate beyond the surface obvious meaning of the commandment to the implications that lie under it, and those attitudes of lust and hatred are the things you begin to do. You see that? So, in that way, the righteous deeds of the disciples exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees.

Now, if Jesus means our righteousness has to exceed their righteousness in the same way that their righteousness is, I give up. How are you going to do any more than the Pharisees did? His meticulous observance, not only of the law, but of all the traditions that had grown up around it. No, our righteousness is greater because it goes beyond the surface meaning of the scriptures and penetrates to the implications and begins to change what is internal, not just what is external.

So, we are not satisfied with not killing or not committing adultery. We want the internal attitudes change, and in that sense our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees. Okay, any questions? Please interrupt me if I'm not clear, if my thinking is muddled and you can't figure out what I'm talking about.

Maybe I don't know either, but ask me and we'll see what we can do with it, okay? So, the righteousness of the disciples of Jesus must exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. And I want to say two other things here. I want to say that Jesus was more of a commander than he was a commander.

I'm not a commander entirely. It was my obvious willful transgression. I don't care what the commandment says, I'm going to do what I want to do.

I don't care what the Bible says, I'm going to do what I want to do. That's one obvious way. Another obvious way that Jesus knows how to do what he's going to do is by elevating tradition over man.

They had centuries of tradition that had grown up around the law, and those traditions became more important than the commandments themselves. And that's always a stage where our traditions become more important than God's, the teaching of the law, the teaching of the will of God, isn't it? For example, it's very clear that the mark that Jesus has on his right hand is not made of paper, it's made of wood, it's made of wood. That's what makes Jesus a good commander, isn't it? So, it's very possible to say that our distinctive has to do with church order.

That may distinguish us from other Christians, which isn't our goal. We ought to be distinct from our society in that we serve God's commandments. And it is possible to put our traditions in our down-sending, it's possible to put our traditions above the instruction of Jesus to live on, but all of you have thought of this, haven't you? I know I have, where, because I didn't dot my I's properly, or cross my T's properly.

What I experience, I don't think, is Christian law. It even seems if I go wrong, which I'm not, that if I go wrong, I shouldn't correct what he's wrong. You don't shoot people in the foot when they're in the same place, you go to them in the wild, try to help them.

Perhaps some of us are wrong and right, but it's going wrong, it's going wrong, but too often when people cross what is really traditional, what is a shulkum, and it's possible for us as a company of God's people to put our traditions above the commandments of Jesus. And in that way, we too can transgress the law. And then, as I just said, the Pharisees transgressed the law by not penetrating into it in the purpose of the Bible, so that they were content with trying to ascertain its meaning, without digging deeper into its implications and meaning.

Those are some of the ways in which we transgress the law. And then some of you may be uncomfortable with the idea that it's possible that it's in the name of God to do what I don't do, and that I, Christian, who comes to this point in the book of all that is really important, which is that the only way to raise it up to the level of the law is through Paul's recitation of what he did in Rome in the book of the law. That is, Paul is trying to meet the teaching of Jesus that we can be made righteous before God by the opening of the law.

And what we do have in Rome is the ability to meet that teaching to show that the law cannot justify us, nor can we condemn the law. And Paul's thinking in that context reveals that we are sinners in need of Jesus Christ, of being saved by grace, and he opposes grace and law to those who are trying to be justified by the law. Is that clear? So when Paul talks about the law as just condemning, showing us our sin, it's because of what he's trying to meet.

All right? Are you with me so far? When you go to the Old Testament, you find a hundred people like the Promised, Jeremiah, other prophets, rejoicing in the law. Now, if the law only condemns us, how can you

rejoice in it? But they did. The whole 119 psalms is a peal of praise to the law, and how wonderful it is, and how great it is.

And if you are not trying to be justified before God by the law, you realize that the Old Testament says that forgiveness and justification come through the mercy of God. It's not anything we can achieve or do. Then the law can be a delight.

All right? That's how it is. The law in the Old Testament did not only have the function of showing people their sin. It had the function of setting boundaries around the relationship between yourself and And boundaries are necessary in any healthy relationship.

There's only a couple of these relationships that can be solved. And so there's a light in those boundaries because they make the relationship not good. That's true in marriage.

You have boundaries around the marriage. You made certain vows when you were married. Those vows are boundaries to protect the relationship.

And you delight in those boundaries because they strengthen that relationship. They keep it. All right? And for people with a heart for God in the Old Testament, the law is delightful.

Not only did the rabbis add a tool. That became a burden they couldn't bear, he said, in the Book of Acts. But the law itself was a delight to people who knew God.

Am I clear? That the law condemns those who try to be justified by keeping it. It does not condemn those who are justified on the basis of God's grace and mercy. It guides them.

It nurtures and strengthens their relationship with God. I'm not sure I'm clear. I think I know what I'm talking about.

Are you clear? Whether you agree with me or not. Is what I'm saying clear? That's what I'm after. All right.

Now look at James chapter 1. James chapter 1. And that will begin at verse 22. Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

By the way, you notice that the New Testament is full of commands. For God's people. It's full of law.

Those are law. Those are commands. Full of commands.

Do what it says. There's a command. Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror and after looking at himself goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.

A man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues to do this. You see that man who looks intently into the perfect law? He's not content with just, all right, there's what it says. He looks intently.

He's doing thinking about what it says. And it's implication for his own life. The man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard but doing it, he will be blessed in what he does.

Now, back in that 25th verse, how does James describe the law? How does he describe it? That's a question, folks. The answer is right. It's perfect.

How else does he describe it? What does he say about it? The perfect law of freedom. You ever think about that? The perfect law of freedom. The law gives us freedom.

Oh, how does it do that? I don't know if I could use PTHS. It's called orthodoxy. It talks about setting up the Torah.

And when you set up the Torah, you decide you are going to throw out the Torah when you think that you need to throw the Torah out. You have to throw the Torah out. You have to follow the laws of the Torah in a way.

That's right. And how does that follow the law of the Torah? How does he explain it? He explains it. If you want to explain the Torah that you want to learn, you have to explain the Torah that you want to learn.

If you don't want to explain it, you should decide you are not going to accept a new law that I don't like. Whatever you should feel The only way to have the freedom to feel the pain of a crime is to follow the laws of the real world. You are free not to follow them, but in taking that freedom you surrender the freedom to feel the pain of a crime.

Okay? If you want a relationship with God, you are free to violate the laws of God, but by doing so you surrender the freedom of a relationship with God. Same in marriage. You are free to violate the laws, your marriage vows, you're free to do that, but in doing so you are not free.

It's one or the other. So it's the laws of God that make the growing relationship with God possible. They give me the freedom to grow in God, and I may choose to throw those laws out.

I may want that freedom. But if I do, I am no longer free to grow in God. So it's the perfect law that gives freedom, and there is no freer place to be than in relationship with God.

Unless you confuse God with an idol, there is no freer place than in relationship with God. It's free as a bird. That's why Jesus said that his yoke is easy, and his burden is light.

And in that relationship he sets us free. Free to be what we were created for. And it's only by following the instructions of God that we are free to be what we were created for.

So when Jesus gives these commands in the Sermon on the Mount, he's not imposing a burden on us, he is setting us free to be his disciples. Is that clear? So for someone who wants to be a disciple of Jesus, these laws are not restricted in the galling sense. They are freeing.

They enable us to be what we really want to be, which is a disciple of Jesus. Any questions about that? How I see that thing? All right. Coming back to chapter 5, where he begins with Beatitudes, Jesus, as I've indicated, first of all, talks about who his disciples are, and then he talks about what they do.

Notice, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn. He's not exhorting us to do that.

This is what his disciples are. And then when you jump down to the passage I want to take at the next hour, in verse 13, you are the salt of the earth. In verse 14, you are the light of the world.

He didn't tell his disciples to become that. By virtue of being his disciples, that's what we are. So he begins with what we are, and then he moves on to how we are to live.

Okay? So let's come to how he starts here with these Beatitudes. This is what we are. We are blessed.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. And we need to talk, first of all, about the word blessed. Some translations give that as happy.

I'm not happy with that translation, because happiness depends on certain things in life. And I don't fit when Jesus says blessed. He's talking about anything that depends on the circumstance in life.

This is a divine communication. His disciples are blessed. And it has nothing to do with what goes on in our normal everyday life, things that happen to us and don't happen to us.

That's not the idea of the word blessed. It's a difficult word to get hold of. One translator, one commentator wants to say, congratulations! They are to be congratulated, the disciples of Jesus.

The idea of the word in the Old Testament, the scholars tell us, is to be enriched by God. Not material, necessarily. But the blessed are those who are enriched by God.

God communicates genuine virtue. So it means to be blessed. So when Jesus is saying blessed are, he's not saying happy.

But God has communicated a richness. And that richness, largely, as I understand these Beatitudes, is in the future. It's true, we are in the kingdom now.

But the kingdom is still to come. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven. They will be, note the future, they will be comforted.

They will inherit the earth. His disciples have not inherited the earth. They will be filled.

And in these statements, Jesus is saying a day will come when to the disciples of Jesus, all of this is going to be fulfilled. And when you think of that, what it's going to be like with those eternal riches, no wonder Jesus says of his disciples, you have been enriched, blessed. Now, if you read characteristics of those who are blessed, nobody in our society is going to say those people are blessed.

But in God's society, they are. And they will one day inherit all that God has for them. When you look around you, that sounds unbelievable.

But there it is, it's believable. It will happen. We've been waiting 2,000 years for it to happen, but it will happen.

And all that Jesus has promised in these blessings will happen. But what are the characteristics of people who are blessed? Let's begin with those. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Now, Luke, in his account simply says, blessed are the poor. But he can't mean blessed are the materially poor. Because everything here has to do with the spiritual life.

Now, the spiritually poor and the materially poor were often the same in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament... That's one word for poor. The other word for poor is destitute.

He doesn't have enough to get by on. He can't make it. And that's the word Jesus uses here.

Blessed are those who are destitute. I'm saying that in the Old Testament, those who are destitute... And the word moved in that direction in the Old Testament. Because the poor in the Old Testament, the materially poor, were usually poor because they had been oppressed by people in power.

They were not poor because they were lackadaisical about work. The Book of Proverbs says a great deal to say about people who are too lazy to work. And none of it is true.

Getting poor because you're lazy is not to be blessed in the Old Testament or the New Testament. Those who won't work in the New Testament, Paul says, shouldn't eat. That is, Christians shouldn't feed people who refuse to work within the Christian community.

But the poor in the Old Testament became poor because of corruption in the courts. Usually that's how they became poor. Their neighbor.

After all, remember, every family had a plot of ground in the Old Testament. That land was divided up, tribe by tribe, family by family, in the end it was known as a community. And that land, even if it was sold in the year of Jupiter, it was still a community.

And God set up those laws so that every family was to be treated as a community. And those who became rich. If a person became poor, what did he decide to do? God hadn't given him the land.

He had to make a decision later. And that was done through corrupt law courts. The neighbor coveted the land, and he bribed the judge.

And the judgment of a verdict against you that involves surrendering the land to this neighbor who played against you, and you lost everything. It was an agricultural community. And if you did not believe, you had nothing.

And then it became poor that way. And when they had no means of survival, they could be driven to die. And so the materially poor and the spiritually impoverished were on their knees.

They had no one's chance of dying. They had to rise up. But here, it's those who are destitute in spirit, that there is the inner awareness.

I am poverty-stricken. I have nothing to offer God. There's nothing in my hand that I can bring.

My hands are empty. And that means God can fill that with me. He's going to fill me.

I'm going to make it full. And it's in my pride. I think I have something.

I am something to myself. My hands are closed. You don't even recognize me.

You don't even know me.

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