

The Sermon on The Mount

The Gospel of Matthew was written before AD 100 and there is some debate about whether or not it was written before or after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70 (Blomberg 1992, 40). The book is technically anonymous but most of the evidence and traditions point to the apostle Matthew, one of the twelve, as the author. Most scholars believe that the author of Matthew used the gospel of Mark as a source, this may cause some to wonder about Matthew's authorship. Why would one of the twelve use a document written by someone who was not one? Experts explain it this way:

It is often alleged that the apostle Matthew would scarcely have consulted, much less extensively relied on, canonical Mark, written by one who was not even a follower of Jesus during most of his ministry. But early church tradition regularly associates Mark with Peter. If Matthew recognized Mark's Gospel as in some sense reflecting Peter's "memoirs," he would have had many reasons to consult and follow it: Peter was one of the inner core of three disciples who experienced certain things Matthew did not (Blomberg 1992, 43–44).

Therefore, even though there is evidence that Matthew used Mark as a source, we can still hold the long-standing belief that the apostle Matthew is the author of the gospel.

Chapter 5 of the Gospel of Matthew occurs after a couple significant events. Just a few verses back into the end of chapter 4, Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee and stopped to call his first four disciples: Andrew, Simon (Peter), James, and John. Jesus calls them to follow him and declares that he will make them "fishers of men." These four men immediately drop everything to follow him (4:18-22). Next, we see a broad and general overview of Jesus preaching and healing throughout Galilee (4:23). Then we hear that his fame is spreading that crowds of people from "Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan" were gathering to hear from him (4:24-25).

The Gospel of Matthew declares Jesus as the new Moses, and the Sermon on the Mount acts as His inauguration speech or the presentation of the new law similar to what we see in Exodus (and Leviticus). He is presenting the new requirements for the new covenant. He is presenting the new laws for the new kingdom. But He doesn't change the laws or even make them easier to follow, if anything He makes it harder. The new requirements go deeper than the old ones. Jesus shows that being a part of the new kingdom isn't just about what you do, it's about where your heart is at. This is seen clearly when Jesus makes His "You have heard it said... but I tell you..." statements. For example: "*You have heard the commandment that says, 'You must not commit adultery.' But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*" (Mt 5:27–28). The second commandment is a lot harder to follow than the first.

Scot McKnight writes, "The Sermon on the Mount is the moral portrait of Jesus' own people" (McKnight 2013, 1). Unfortunately, he also points out that throughout history the church fails to match up to

this portrait, and christians today are no exception. McKnight quotes Pinchas Lipide who said, “the history of the Sermon on the Mount can largely be described in terms of an attempt to domesticate everything in it that is shocking, demanding, and uncompromising, and render it harmless” (McKnight 2013, 1).

Before we begin, we must take into consideration McKnight’s piece of advice before he begins his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. He writes, “The safest way to read and preach this Sermon is to recognize clearly discernible topics about discipleship that move one to another” (McKnight 2013, 17).

From here we enter into the famous Sermon on The Mount. But let us look at it not as a preacher presenting a moral sermon, but as a ruler presenting the guidelines of how life will work in his kingdom, without watering it down.

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The Beatitudes and Salt and Light

Core Scripture: Matthew 5:3-16 (NLT)

“3 God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

4 God blesses those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

5 God blesses those who are humble,
for they will inherit the whole earth.

6 God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice,
for they will be satisfied.

7 God blesses those who are merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

8 God blesses those whose hearts are pure,
for they will see God.

9 God blesses those who work for peace,
for they will be called the children of God.

10 God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right,
for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

11 “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. 12 Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

14 “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

Key Ideas and Words:

The Greek word for “blessed” used here is μακάριος (*makarios*), it is a Greek adjective and in this case is being used to describe the subject as being *happy* or *of good fortune*. It might seem odd that Jesus would call someone who is “poor in spirit” blessed, happy, or fortunate.

“More than a fundamental attitude of a person, this appeal is that of an option that is as radical as it is paradoxical. First of all, Jesus is making an appeal to happiness... This is much more than contentment; it is an interior joy that becomes external, elation translated into shouts, songs, acclamations. The explanation is that

God will be the source of this beatitude.—Secondly, the new faith implies a reversal of all human values” (Spicq, Ernest, and Spicq 1996, 437-38).

Those who are blessed are *“those who are ‘to be congratulated’ because of God’s response to their behavior or situation”* (Blomberg 1992, 97).

Questions to Wrestle With:

- Who is blessed?
- How are they blessed?
- Why are they blessed?
- Who blesses them?
- When does their blessing come?
- What is their role?

Watch:

[The Beatitudes Meaning in the Bible | Watch an Explainer Video \(bibleproject.com\)](#)

[The Beatitudes in the Bible | Watch a Video Commentary \(bibleproject.com\)](#)

Quotes from Commentaries and Word Studies:

“Ancient writers and speakers would sometimes bracket a section of material by beginning and ending with the same phrase. These blessings involve the gift of the kingdom (5:3, 10). Many Jewish people believed that the kingdom would be ushered in only by a great war and force of arms; Jesus promises it for the “poor in spirit,” the “humble” or “meek” (5:5), the peacemakers (5:9)” (Keener 2014, 55).

“In light of the countercultural perspectives enunciated in the Beatitudes, it would be easy to assume that Jesus was calling his followers to a separatistic or quasimonastic life-style. Here Jesus proclaims precisely the opposite. Christians must permeate society as agents of redemption. Of the numerous things to which salt could refer in antiquity, its use as a preservative in food was probably its most basic function. Jesus thus calls his disciples to arrest corruption and prevent moral decay in their world” (Blomberg 1992, 102).

“Light, like salt, affects its environment by being distinctive. The disciple who is visibly different from other men will have an effect on them. But the aim of his good works is not to parade his own virtue, but to direct attention to the God who inspired them. By so doing the disciple will give light to all (cf. Phil. 2:15). Jesus is pre-eminently the light of the world (John 8:12), as Isaiah had prophesied of the Servant (Isa. 42:6; 49:6), but this role passed to his disciples... A secret disciple is no more use in the world than one who has lost his distinctiveness (v. 13)” (France, Tasker, and Morris 1994, 118).

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Someone who is “poor in spirit” is someone who has a “spiritual poverty, a desirable disposition for those wishing to live under God’s reign.” (Snow and Ermakov 2019, 91). But this does not seem like something to be condoned. Fortunately, this can be explained:

“Not those who are spiritually poor; that is, lacking in faith or love, but those who have a humble spirit and thus depend on God (Matt. 5:3)... That God has “chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to possess the kingdom” was regarded as a well-established fact (James 2:5 REB)” (Brand, Draper, and England 2003).

Essentially, Jesus is saying “Blessed are those who are humble and rely on me, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”

The Greek word for “mourn” is *πενθέω (pentheo)* which refers to mourning, grieving, and lamenting or even to feel *guilt*. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, identifies the type of mourning referred to in this verse, weeping for the sins of the world. *“Those who claim to experiences all it’s joys without tears mistake the nature of the kingdom” (Gaebelain 1984, 133)*. The people mourning here are those mourning over the broken state of the world. These people receive the blessing of comfort.

Those who mourn are blessed because they are “comforted.” The Greek word behind *comforted* is *παράκλησις (paraklesis)*, which means to exhort, encourage, or comfort. What is it that is encouraging and comforting these people? The coming of the kingdom of God. This is what encourages them; knowing that someday all the things they weep over will disappear. This is their comfort; remembering that all the evil they mourn over will be wiped away.

Jesus says to the mournful, “You are blessed because you find your comfort in the coming kingdom.”

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.”

The Greek word behind “meek” is *πραῦς (praus)* which has two main English translations, *meek* is one of them, but the most common is *gentle*.

“A ‘meek’ person is not the ‘wallflower’ we often think of when we use the word but one who is humble, gentle, and not aggressive” (Blomberg 1992, 99).

In Greek *will inherit* is a futuristic phrase, meaning it is something that has not happen already, nor is it something happening right now, but something that will happen someday. The term *inherit* implies some kind of ownership that is given to you by the original owner. The Greek term is *κληρονομέω (kleronomeo)* and means “to take possession of” and in this passage it is an active verb, meaning it is something that this blessed person will *do*. But it is not referring to the planet earth and physical land of the globe.

In the Bible, the word *inherit* almost always refers to the Promised Land (in the Old Testament) or the Kingdom of Heaven (in the New Testament) and the renewal of all things (Gaebelain 1984, 133–34).

“Christian hope does not look forward to inhabiting a particular country but to ruling with Christ over all the globe and ultimately to enjoying an entirely re-created earth and heavens” (Blomberg 1992, 99).

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.”

In Greek, hunger and thirst are πεινάω (*peinao*) and διψάω (*dipsao*). Both πεινάω and διψάω are active verbs, meaning that the subject (people) is actively participating in this activity. In Greek, *righteousness* is translated from the word δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosyne*), and has two main English equivalents; *righteousness* and *justice*. This implies a two-fold longing for these people. First, they see that “*the ultimate satisfaction [is in] a relationship with God unclouded by disobedience*” (France, Tasker, and Morris 1994, 115). Second, their hope is in “*God [and his] promises that his purposes will be accomplished and that his justice will eventually reign*” (Blomberg 1992, 100).

Jesus declares these people blessed because they will be *satisfied*. The Greek word here is χορτάζω (*chortazo*) and its systemic range includes *satisfied*, *filled*, and *fed*.

“These people hunger and thirst, not only that they may be righteous (i.e., that they may wholly do God’s will from the heart), but that justice may be done everywhere. All unrighteousness grieves them and makes them homesick for the new heaven and earth—the home of righteousness... Satisfied with neither personal righteousness alone nor social justice alone, they cry for both: in short, they long for the advent of the messianic kingdom. What they taste now whets their appetites for more. Ultimately they will be satisfied... without qualification only when the kingdom is consummated...” (Gaebelein 1984, 134).

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”

The Greek word behind *merciful* is ἐλεήμων (*eleemon*) and its semantic range also includes *compassionate*.

“The fundamental equation in the Gospel of Matthew, ethically, is this: moral = merciful. When I think of moral I often think of a certain grim seriousness—of dispassion rather than compassion, of coolness rather than warmth, of contraction rather than extension. And this thinking is sometimes correct, as we will see. But the morality of Matthew’s Jesus is predominantly the morality of extension, of width, of forgiving. The gospel merciful are the understanding, the under-standing, those who put themselves under others to support them, to serve them, to be sensitive to them” (Bruner 1987, 146).

“Being a merciful, forgiving, or loving person is not a condition for God’s grace, but it is a necessary consequence. Only this conclusion makes sense of the fifth Beatitude” (Bruner 1987, 147).

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”

The Greek word translated *pure* here is καθαρός (*katharos*), which also refers to being *clean* and *innocent*.

The meaning of καθαρός, providing a few different sets of terms, “*clean, pure, unsoiled*” are followed by “*clean from guilt, guiltless, innocent*” and “*sincere, upright, virtuous, void of evil*” and finally “*clean ceremonially and morally*” (Mounce 2006, 1177).

In simpler terms it is a person who “*loves God with all his heart (Deut. 6:5), with an undivided loyalty, and whose inward nature corresponds with his outward profession*” (France, Tasker, and Morris 1994, 116).

“The reality or prospect of being in the presence of God himself. This is the desire and goal of God’s people, to be present with him for eternity, holy people with their holy God... As Immanuel, the purity of God is manifested on earth... The holiness of God is manifested ‘by the integrity of being... identified wholly and

unreservedly with the purpose of God in compassion and redemption for His lost and dying world'... ” (Snow and Ermakov 2019, 93).

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”

The Greek term for *peacemakers* is εἰρηνοποιός (*eirenopoios*) and only appears once in the entire New Testament, and even though it is being used as a noun in this sentence, it is actually an adjective.

“[P]eacemakers” focus on interpersonal relationships. Those who work for shālôm (wholeness and harmony rather than strife and discord in all aspects of life) and who reconcile others to God and each other will “be called sons of God.” Others will identify them as God’s true ambassadors, as those who are being conformed to his likeness” (Blomberg 1992, 100).

“God is the supreme peacemaker (cf. Eph. 2:14–18; Col. 1:20) and this quality marks disciples out as his sons, for the son shares the characteristics of the father” (France, Tasker, and Morris 1994, 116).

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

“Righteousness here refers to the moral responsibility placed on believers by the gospel in which we reflect the reign of God in mercy, purity, and peacemaking. The world, however, has little place for such things, and those who suggest otherwise are easily rebuffed or, worse yet, persecuted” (Snow and Ermakov 2019, 93).

“For theirs is the kingdom of heaven echoes v. 3, thus rounding off the series, and marking it as one composite whole, not a list of optional additions. This God-like character, in its entirety, should be progressively seen in all true disciples, because only where it is found is the kingdom of heaven, God’s control, really effective” (France, Tasker, and Morris 1994, 116).

“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”

This verse is a collective blessing combined with a sort of warning for the entire list of blessed people above. Jesus warns that they will be *reviled*, in Greek it is ὀνειδίζω (*oneidizo*) which means *mocked*. These people will be made fun of and ostracized by the world because of their differing values. The Greek term translated *persecute* here is διώκω (*dioko*) which often refers to the act of being *hunted*. These people will become the prey of people who feel threatened by their belief and dedication to Christ. Finally, these people will be ψεύδομαι (*pseudomai*) or *lied* about. Those who wish them ill will not be able to find any real reason to have them punished, so they will make up things to get them in trouble.

“‘Because of me’ provides another key qualification. As in v. 10, the only persecution that is blessed is that which stems from allegiance to Jesus and living in conformity with his standards” (Blomberg 1992, 101).

“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven...”

The Greek word used here for *rejoice* is χαίρω (*chairo*) which means both *rejoice* and *be glad*, but this word is not the one used here for *be glad*. Instead, the Greek uses the word ἀγαλλιάω (*agalliao*) which means to *exult*. This is a call to be content in suffering and to praise God both for it and in the midst of it.

Why would someone be glad and praise God while they are being persecuted? Jesus said, *for your reward is great in heaven.*

“not in the sense of an earned payment... but of a freely given recompense, out of all proportion to the service... In heaven means not so much ‘after death’ as ‘with God’” (France, Tasker, and Morris 1994, 117).

“...for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

“Jesus offers a poignant reminder that the great men and women of Old Testament times often suffered a similar fate. The prophet Jeremiah provides the classic example. The same is true of Christian history. When we suffer, we must avoid the trap of thinking that we are the only ones who have ever experienced such problems” (Blomberg 1992, 101).

When we read the Old Testament, it is very clear that the prophets are διώκω (hunted). Mounce specifies this word’s use in this context as *“to pursue with malignity”* (Mounce 2006, 1126). This statement is supposed to act as two things: a warning and a comfort. First, it warns against the martyr mentality. You are not the only one to ever experience this, you are not special or entitled in this way. Second it encourages the one who is under persecution, reminding them that they are not alone and there are those who know what they go through and pray for them both on earth and in heaven.

Suggested Main Points

This passage shows us what it means to be a kingdom person. It describes one type of person, and this person is the salt and light of the earth. The rest of the Sermon on the Mount is giving more specific descriptions of how to be this type of person. This acts as an introduction to the sermon.

- The Kingdom Person’s Soul (their character)
- The Kingdom Person’s Role (here on earth)
- The Kingdom Person’s Goal (heavenly blessings)

Application

13 “You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

14 “You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. 15 No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

Jesus names these people the salt and light of the earth, the one’s will both bring in the kingdom of heaven and gain honor when that kingdom comes. Jesus himself displayed all of these qualities. He was humble in spirit and did not seek the honor that he as God himself deserved. He wept over Jerusalem in her sin, brokenness, and blindness. He called those around him to repentance and purity that was greater than the outward purity of the religious leaders. He was moved to compassion by those who were hurting and entered their space in order to provide healing. His dedication to the Father and His mission was so evident that people in the streets cried out “Son of David.” He brought a message that was meant for all, not just the elite who

would lord it over others. And He was persecuted for the sake of all this, even unto death. But Jesus also displays the blessing and reward. Paul says in Romans 8:17 that we are “fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.”

Paul’s care for the churches reflects Jesus’ care for people. Paul wept, prayed for and rejoiced with them. He loved and wrote letters to churches he had never even been to. He encouraged and built up for the sake of compassion, and admonished and rebuked for the sake of righteousness. Paul too was persecuted; he was beaten, imprisoned, and put to death all for the sake of Christ. You could not look at Paul and not see salt and light. He preserved the earth and illuminated its evil. He held back the decay and shed hope in the darkness.

We are under the same call to display the Beatitudes and be the salt and light of the world. A man or woman who knows they are not perfect, who weeps when they witness violence and evil on the news, who puts the needs of others first even when they are running late, who seeks to be righteous (at home, at work and at school). Someone who is moved by compassion for the people around them (the homeless man outside the store, the single mom trying to get groceries, or even the grumpy store clerk). Someone who seeks God in every day of their life, asking “Father, what would you have me do in this situation?” Someone who tries to reconcile a disagreement between family members, coworkers, or friends. Someone who seeks to do what is right even if it means being left out, losing a job, or being ostracized by family. Someone who is salt and light.

Teaching About the Law

Core Scripture: Matthew 5:17-20 (NLT)

17 “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. 18 I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. 19 So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

20 “But I warn you—unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!”

Key Ideas:

The contrast between the prophets and the law. The prophets often condemned the people for following the letter of the law and not the spirit of the law, fasting and tithing but not caring for the poor or leading with justice.

Jesus is calling the people to see the law the way the prophets see the law. He is not dismissing the law and calling people to live only by kindness and love, he is calling people to live by the spirit of the law, being righteous and just.

Think about the book of Micah - “*What can we bring to the LORD? Should we bring him burnt offerings? Should we bow before God Most High with offerings of yearling calves? 7 Should we offer him thousands of rams and ten thousand rivers of olive oil? Should we sacrifice our firstborn children to pay for our sins? 8 No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.*” Tyndale House Publishers, Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Mic 6:6–8.

Verses 6 and 7 lay out several options that were approved according to the law. But they are repentance type acts, covering for sins they have committed. What sins are they covering? Probably not being just, merciful, humble, and walking in God’s ways. God doesn’t just want them to sacrifice for their sins, he wants them to stop sinning.

Look also at Isaiah 58 for similar reasons. “*Shout with the voice of a trumpet blast. Shout aloud! Don’t be timid. Tell my people Israel of their sins! 2 Yet they act so pious! They come to the Temple every day and seem delighted to learn all about me. They act like a righteous nation that would never abandon the laws of its God. They ask me to take action on their behalf, pretending they want to be near me. 3 ‘We have fasted before you!’ they say. ‘Why aren’t you impressed? We have been very hard on ourselves, and you don’t even notice it!’ ‘I will tell you why!’ I respond. ‘It’s because you are fasting to please yourselves. Even while you fast, you keep oppressing your workers. 4 What good is fasting when you keep on fighting and quarreling? This kind of fasting will never get you anywhere with me. 5 You humble yourselves by going through the motions of penance, bowing your heads like reeds bending in the wind. You dress in burlap and cover yourselves with ashes. Is this*

what you call fasting? Do you really think this will please the LORD? 6 “No, this is the kind of fasting I want: Free those who are wrongly imprisoned; lighten the burden of those who work for you. Let the oppressed go free, and remove the chains that bind people. 7 Share your food with the hungry, and give shelter to the homeless. Give clothes to those who need them, and do not hide from relatives who need your help. 8 “Then your salvation will come like the dawn, and your wounds will quickly heal. Your godliness will lead you forward, and the glory of the LORD will protect you from behind. 9 Then when you call, the LORD will answer. ‘Yes, I am here,’ he will quickly reply. “Remove the heavy yoke of oppression. Stop pointing your finger and spreading vicious rumors! 10 Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon. 11 The LORD will guide you continually, giving you water when you are dry and restoring your strength. You will be like a well-watered garden, like an ever-flowing spring. 12 Some of you will rebuild the deserted ruins of your cities. Then you will be known as a builder of walls and a restorer of homes. 13 “Keep the Sabbath day holy. Don’t pursue your own interests on that day, but enjoy the Sabbath and speak of it with delight as the LORD’s holy day. Honor the Sabbath in everything you do on that day, and don’t follow your own desires or talk idly. 14 Then the LORD will be your delight. I will give you great honor and satisfy you with the inheritance I promised to your ancestor Jacob. I, the LORD, have spoken!”

(Tyndale House Publishers, Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2015), Is 58:1–14.)

Questions to Wrestle With:

- What are the misconceptions about Jesus and the OT law?
- What is the real connection between Jesus and the law?
- What does Jesus expect of us when it comes to the law?
- What does Jesus mean by the writings of the prophets?
- How do we follow the writings of the prophets like we would the law?
- What does following the law look like for modern Christians?
- Do “ignore” and “teach” imply that it is intentional?
- What if you disobey a commandment unintentionally?
- How do we live more righteously than those who were seen as the most righteous people alive?

Watch:

[What Is Righteousness? \(And How You Do It\) | BibleProject Video](#)

[The Purpose of the Old Testament's Law of Moses in the Bible \(bibleproject.com\)](#)

[What Does Matthew 5:17 Mean? \(Jesus Came to Fulfill the Law\) \(bibleproject.com\)](#)

[The Meaning of Matthew 5:17-20 | Watch a Video Commentary \(bibleproject.com\)](#)

Quotes from Commentaries:

(Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: World Biblical Commentary*, 1993)

“This passage is placed here for a very important reason. The ethical teachings of Jesus that follows in this sermon, as well as later in the Gospel, has such a radical character and goes so much against what was the commonly accepted understanding of the commands of the Torah that it is necessary at the outset to indicate Jesus’ full and unswerving loyalty to the law. Only when this is set clearly before the listeners and readers will they be in a position to understand correctly Jesus teaching about the righteousness of the kingdom... Jesus’ corrections of the mistaken understanding involve the presentation of the true meaning of the Torah, not its cancellation as might at first seem to be the case” (Hagner 1993, 103).

“Here it is fair to assume that Jesus’ sovereign interpretation of the law was so out of step with the traditional interpretation (e.g., the Pharisees) that it seemed to many that Jesus was going against the law” (Hagner 1993, 104).

This statement is placed at the beginning of Jesus' teachings because of how radical much of the rest of his teaching is going to be. He wants people to know that he is not against the law. He specifically states, *“Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets.”* Because he knows it is likely (and does indeed happen) that people will misunderstand him.

“As the Messiah, Jesus has come to bring both the law and the prophets to their intended fulfillment. Jesus’ view of law as valid until the end of time means that the fulfillment he brings is in true continuity with the past, a fulfillment toward which the law and the prophets pointed. God’s purposes have a unity; yet a new stage in his purposes has been reached. Jesus alone and not the Pharisees can interpret the Torah finally and authoritatively... he alone is in a position to penetrate to the intended meaning of the Torah” (Hagner 1993, 110).

(Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 1992)

“From the point of view of his own followers there was also a problem. He taught them that salvation is all of grace; people do not merit salvation by their own good works. What then was the place of the commands that Scripture conveys so clearly? It was important for Matthew’s readers (as well as for the Jews and the disciples at the time of Jesus) that Jesus’ attitude to law be made plain, and in this section of the Sermon Matthew includes important teaching about the law. He shows that Jesus affirmed its continuing validity and that he came to fulfill it” (Morris 1992, 107).

“To fulfill has been understood in three main ways: 1) it may mean that he will do the things laid down in Scripture. 2) It may mean that he would bring out the full meaning of Scripture. 3) It may mean that in his life and teaching he would Scripture to its completion. Each points to an aspect of the truth, and Jesus may well have meant that would fulfill Scripture in more ways than one” (Morris 1992, 108).

(John Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary*, 1992, 241-242)

“Jesus emphatically affirms the last validity of “the Law” (the entire Hebrew Scriptures) as the revealed will of God for his people until the end of the age brings in the consummation of all that God has purposed.” (Wilkins 2004, 229).

“The Old Testament endures forever as a revelation of God’s will for humans throughout history until all is “accomplished.” While some elements of scripture will be accomplished in Jesus’ ministry, the Old Testament

remains a valid principle. For example, the teaching of death and the shedding of blood to atone for sin is no longer is no longer expressed through the temple sacrifices, but rather has been “fulfilled/accomplished” once for all in Christ’s atonement on the cross (cf. Heb 9:11-14). Thus this commandment from the Old Testament is no longer legally binding as a practice. Nevertheless, the Old Testament principle for penalty and payment for sin remains valid and needs to be taught and understood as God’s will” (Wilkins 1992, 229).

Suggested Main Points:

- Jesus fulfills the Old Testament
 - Jesus fully explains (teaching)
 - Jesus fully lives out (actions)
 - Jesus fully answers (promises and prophecies)
- Christians and the Mosaic Law
- Christians and the Ancient Prophets

Suggested Application:

Living out the Law and the Prophets the Jesus way.

Teaching About Anger

Core Scripture: Matthew 5:21–26 (NLT)

21 “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ 22 But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

23 “So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, 24 leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

25 “When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. 26 And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.”

Key Ideas:

This is the first teaching that Jesus presents to his followers after his introduction (the Beatitudes and being Salt and Light) and his disclaimer about the Law and the Prophets. Just as Moses presented the Laws of God to the people at the birth of the old kingdom and the old covenant, so now Jesus presents commandments as this new kingdom and new covenant emerge from the old.

This is the first command of Jesus’ “new” Law and it is twofold: Watch your temper, and do your best to have a right relationship with your fellow humans. Jesus speaks here of anger, reconciliation, and the court. We should not take this statement out of the context of the whole of Scripture, so below are presented a few other passages (NLT) on these topics to keep in mind as we investigate the meanings of Jesus’ teachings.

- *“People with understanding control their anger; a hot temper shows great foolishness.”* (Proverbs 14:29)
- *“Fools vent their anger, but the wise quietly hold it back.”* (Proverbs 29:11)
- *“Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the LORD.”* (Romans 12:19)
- *“And “don’t sin by letting anger control you.” Don’t let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 for anger gives a foothold to the devil.”* (Ephesians 4:26–27)
- *“Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. 32 Instead, be kind to each other; tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”* (Ephesians 4:31–32)
- *“If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out the offense. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back. 16 But if you are unsuccessful, take one or two others with you and go back again, so that everything you say may be confirmed by two or three witnesses. 17*

If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won't accept the church's decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.” (Matthew 18:15–17)

- *Jesus replied, “‘You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ 40 The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37–40)*

All of this must be taken into consideration when preaching what Jesus says about anger in Matthew 5. One other thing must also be kept in mind: over 500 of the occurrences of anger in the Bible are God's righteous anger. Anger is not always bad, we must simply be careful not to sin in our anger.

What we see here is the beginning of how we are to live the righteous lives Jesus calls his followers to in 5:17-20. This is the first step to loving God and loving others, which is what the Law and prophets are all about.

Questions to Wrestle With:

- What does Jesus mean when he says we are “subject to judgment” when we are angry with someone?
- Does this mean we should not get angry?
- Are all of these things as bad as murder?
- What does he mean by “cursing” someone?
- Are there times when anger is justified?
- What does it mean to be right with others in order to be right with God?
- We do not go to the Temple or make sacrifices today. What does it look like for us to be reconciled to a person before we offer a sacrifice to God?

Watch:

[Wisdom in Old Testament Laws | Murder, Adultery, and Divorce \(bibleproject.com\)](#)

[Sermon on the Mount Commentary \(Part 14\) | Murder \(bibleproject.com\)](#)

Quotes from Commentaries:

(John Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary*, 1992)

“Jesus begins with the 6th commandment of the Decalogue, “You shall not murder” (Ex. 20:13, Deut. 5:17). Although Hebrew possesses seven words for killing, the verb used in Exodus 20:13 makes “murder” (rasah) a more accurate rendering than “kill.” It denotes premeditation and deliberateness. This does not apply to killing animals (Gen. 9:3), defending one's home (Ex. 22:2), accidental killings (Deut. 19:5), the execution of murderers by the state (Gen 9:6), or involvement in one's nation in certain types of war. It does apply, however, to self murder (i.e. suicide), accessory to murder (2 Sam. 12:9), or those who have responsibility to punish known murderers but fail to do so (1 Kings 21:19).” (Wilkins 1992, 241-242)

“Jesus, declarative statement, “But I tell you,” introduces three ways that a person's life is removed besides the physical act of murder. In each case, punishment is due... Jesus here gets to the source of murder, which is anger (1 John 3:15)... When we are inappropriately angry with people, we attempt to take their identity and value as God's creature away from them, the ultimate form of which is the physical act of murder. The

righteousness expected of God's subjects is not only in avoiding murder but in eliminating anger from our relationships." (Wilkins 1992, 242)

"Jesus illustrates his declarative statement of the seriousness of anger and identity theft by focusing on the antidote, which is reconciliation with "your brother" (5:23-24) and "your adversary" (5:25-26)... Reconciliation is the responsibility of the one who has wronged someone else... The expression "offering your gift at the altar" assumes a sacrifice is being given at the temple at Jerusalem. To leave immediately indicates the importance of reconciliation, because Jesus' audience was from Galilee and the effort to attend the temple sacrifice was significant." (Wilkins 1992, 243)

"Unreconciled anger is the inner equivalency of murder, which is impossible to repay. To leave problems unreconciled is to allow the sin that has been created to continue to destroy relationships between people." (Wilkins 1992, 244)

"Fulfilling the law's command "Do not murder" is not accomplished simply by avoiding legal homicide. Jesus reveals that the intent of the law is to nurture relationships. Jesus' disciples must have a daily urgency about maintaining the healthy life of their relationships, both with other disciples and with nondisciples. Anything we do that strips away the personal distinctiveness of a brother or sister is sin, and it is our responsibility to become reconciled." (Wilkins 1992, 244)

(Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 1992)

"But I say to you sets Jesus emphatically over against this view. He, being what and who he is, can issue directives that rank with the honored law. It is not correct to say that he replaces the law with his own commands, for in no case does he relax a provision of the law. Rather, he shows that, rightly understood, the law goes much further than his hearers had reckoned. For them it was enough not to put somebody to death; for Jesus that was just the beginning. He goes to the cause of murder and includes being angry in the scope of the command." (Morris 1992, 114)

"Jesus is depicting a man in the solemn act of sacrifice. The present tense pictures the worshiper as in the act of offering. And right there, at the altar, he remembers. 'Something' is a very general expression; the brother is thought of as having a legitimate complaint against the worshiper. Interestingly, it is not the anger of the person Jesus is addressing of which he speaks, but anger provoked by that person. It is not enough to control one's temper (though that's important); one must not arouse other people's anger" (Morris 1992, 115-116)

(Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: World Biblical Commentary*, 1993)

The words "*shall be liable to judgment*" occur not only right after the discussion of Murder that was pulled out of Exodus, but also two more times in the passage. They "*are linked with the sanhedrin and the Gehenna of fire [fires of hell]. It is difficult to solve this exegetical puzzle regarding whether the four references are essentially synonymous or or the last two are meant to involve higher penalties... and whether we move through three different courts, the local, the sanhedrin, and the divine. Jeremias, however, is probably correct when he argues that the passage simply contains 'three expressions of the death penalty in a kind of crescendo.'* This, however, is a rhetorical device and the differences have no literal significance." (Hagner 1993, 115)

This was done to emphasize the fact that that harbored anger is the root of murder, and that abusing your fellow human being in other ways is just sinful. Jesus makes the punishment “crescendo” because he is trying to the severity of the sin across to his listeners.

“According to Jesus, anger alone—what may perhaps be described as murdering your brother in your heart—is a violation of God’s law and puts a person in danger of judgment... The radical character of Jesus’ teaching apparently allows for no exception... For Jesus the inner attitude is thus of supreme importance... And even as that inner attitude expresses itself in apparently trivial acts of unkindness, such as referring to one’s brother as a ‘Fool,’ one shows that, according to God’s standards of righteousness, one has already begun down the wrong path and is already worthy of condemnation.” (Hagner 1993, 116)

“By his explanation of ‘thou shalt not murder,’ Jesus penetrates to the spirit of the commandment. Since the spring of a person’s conduct is the heart, or inner person, the transforming power of the kingdom must be especially experienced there. Anger and insults spoken from anger are evil and corrupting, and they therefore call forth God’s judgment, just as the act of murder itself does... Thus the recipient of the grace of the kingdom is one who initiates and seeks reconciliation, both with members of the community of faith and with adversaries.” (Hagner 1993, 117)

Suggested Main Points:

- The Law They Saw
 - “You have heard it said...”
 - Do not murder
 - How those in Israel obeyed the letter of the law
- The Law Jesus Saw
 - “But I say to you...”
 - Explain what an antithesis is
 - Do not hold anger in your heart or act out of anger
- It’s About the Heart
 - Your anger
 - The anger of others
 - Reconciliation

Suggested Application:

What relationships in your life need to be reconciled?

Who are you harboring anger against that you need to forgive?

Do you ever lose your temper and act out anger?

When we feel distant from God we should check our hearts for resentment and anger.

Teaching About Marriage

Core Scripture: Matthew 5:27-37 (NLT)

27 “You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 So if your eye—even your good eye—causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. 30 And if your hand—even your stronger hand—causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

31 “You have heard the law that says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.’ 32 But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been **unfaithful**, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

33 “You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.’ 34 But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. 35 And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. 36 Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. 37 Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.”

Key Ideas:

In order to fully understand this passage we must look at a few other passages in the Bible about marriage. Take into consideration these passages when digging into this topic:

Genesis 2:18-25 “18 Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” 19 Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.”

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” Genesis 2:18–25.

Ephesians 5:22-33 “22 Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the

church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” Ephesians 5:22–33.

Colossians 3:18-19 “18 Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. 19 Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.” Col 3:18–19.

Questions to Wrestle With:

- Are the rules equally applied to women?
- This definition of lust seems like hyperbole – do you think Jesus is serious?
- What happens if we fail all the time at this?
- What does this mean for Christians struggling with pornography?
- How do we articulate clarity for those escaping abusive situations?
- Does the “unfaithfulness” include the inner idolatry in verse 28?
- Is this saying that anyone whose partner is unfaithful should/has the right to leave them?
- Where is there room for grace and reconciliation?

Watch:

[Wisdom in Old Testament Laws | Murder, Adultery, and Divorce \(bibleproject.com\)](https://www.bibleproject.com/Wisdom-in-Old-Testament-Laws-Murder-Adultery-and-Divorce)

Quotes From Commentaries:

(John Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary*, 1992)

“Adultery in the Old testament involved sexual intercourse with mutual consent between a man, married or unmarried, and the wife of another man. The term and the penalty (death) applied equally to both the man and the woman (Lev.20,10;cf.Deut.22,22). A betrothed woman was counted in this context as a wife (Deut.22,23-2,1).” (Wilkins 1992, 244)

“Adultery was considered one of the most serious offenses because it broke the relationship that was a reflection of God and his people. Adultery was often used to describe the way in which the people of Israel went after gods other than Yahweh (cf.Ezek.16,32;Hos.4,13b).” (Wilkins 1992, 244)

“The Old Testament strongly denounces all extra marital sexual relationships, condemning the male offender even more strongly than the female (cf.Hos.4,14).” (Wilkins 1992, 244)

“Jesus' pronouncement reaffirms the Old Testament commitment to the unity of the marriage bond and takes it to its deepest intended meaning... It is not enough only to maintain physical purity. The purity of marriage includes exclusive devotion to one another with every aspect of their lives, and this commitment

excludes wanting another person or giving oneself in any way to another person. Looking lustfully at another woman breaks the bond of oneness that a man has with his wife.” (Wilkins 1992, 244-245)

“Oneness with a wife means that her husband gives himself to her, and her alone. When a man even looks with desire at another woman, he has rejected his wife and given himself to another. Lust originates in the heart (15,19), which is the core of a person's identity and will. Adultery, therefore, is not only physical sexual intercourse but also mentally engaging in such an act of unfaithfulness.” (Wilkins 1992, 245)

“Jesus illustrates the seriousness of lust destroying the marriage bond through two graphic examples, “If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away” (5,29), and “if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away” (5,30). Most people being right-handed, the right side often stood for the more powerful or important side. The eye is the medium through which the temptation first comes to stimulate the lust, and the hand represents the instrument by which the lust is physically committed. So Jesus uses hyperbole (deliberate exaggeration) for the sake of emphasizing the seriousness of single-hearted devotion single-eyed and single-handed commitment to one’s spouse.” (Wilkins 1992, 245)

“God instituted a regulation [about divorce] through Moses that was designed to do three things, (1) protect the sanctity of marriage from “indecency” defiling the marital relationship; (2) protect the woman from a husband who might simply send her away without any cause, (3) document her status as a legitimately divorced woman so that she was not thought to be a harlot or a runaway adulteress.” (Wilkins 1992, 246)

“By Jesus' time, the essence of the sanctity of marriage was being lost among those interpreting and debating the Mosaic regulation, especially the meaning of “indecency” in Deuteronomy 24:1. The discussion assumed that divorce was necessary and legal. The more conservative school of Shammai allowed divorce only for reasons of unchastity. The more liberal school of Hillel stated that the Mosaic stipulation of “indecency” allowed a man to divorce his wife “even if she spoiled a dish for him” (n.Git.9:10). Later rabbis declared that divorce was required when adultery was committed (m. Sota 5:1, m Yeban.2:8), because adultery produced a state of impurity that, as a matter of legal fact, dissolved the marriage.” (Wilkins 1992, 246)

“Even though God sees marriage as permanent, sometimes the marriage bond has been violated to such a degree that a spouse has already torn apart the marriage union, namely, when a person has committed porneia, which the NIV appropriately renders “marital unfaithfulness.” Since “adultery” has already been specified by another word (noicheuo;5:27-28), porneia must be something less specific than sexual infidelity but, following the Mosaic intention more than something frivolous. Porneia includes any sinful activity that intentionally divides the marital relationship. Jesus states unequivocally the sacredness of the marital relationship but allows divorce to protect the non offending partner and to protect the institution of marriage from being a vulgar sham.” (Wilkins 1992, 246-247)

This marital unfaithfulness includes things like abuse because it violates what the marriage bond was designed to be.

(Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 1992)

“Just as with the command not to murder, Jesus is concerned with the inner state that leads to action and does not simply prohibit the outward deed.” (Morris 1992, 117)

“In the ancient world generally it was held that a married man could have sexual adventures as long as they did not involve a married woman (which would mean violating the rights of her husband). A woman, however, was expected to have no such relations; she should be chaste before marriage and faithful after it. The command Jesus cites makes no distinction; people of both sexes were to remain faithful. Specifically he speaks of the man as the adulterer (v.32; 19:9).” (Morris 1992, 117-118).

Essentially it was a view that men could not commit adultery, only women, which is why Jesus emphasizes the role of the man here in these verses. He wanted to be sure everyone understood that man in fact could and did commit adultery. All of these rules apply to women also, but Jesus didn't emphasize this because women were held accountable for their actions.

“Jesus calls on people to appreciate the true meaning and solemnity of marriage. We should bear in mind that he is laying down great principles that should guide conduct; he is not making laws or giving a precise list of occasions when divorce might take place.” (Morris 1992, 120)

“Among the Jews a man was not held to have committed adultery by engaging in sexual acts outside marriage unless his partner was herself a married woman. But Jesus does not distinguish between the man and the woman: either may commit adultery. It seems to have been a Christian idea that a man could commit adultery; others regarded sexual adventures as a normal part of life for a man. Jesus lays down the highest standard for both sexes. Divorce might happen, but it was not meant to be. Marriage is for life.” (Morris 1992, 122)

(Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: World Biblical Commentary*, 1993)

“To look deliberately at a woman lustfully, ie. desiring or imagining a sexual relationship with her, is to commit to commit adultery in one's heart and thus to violate the deepest intention of the law as now revealed by Jesus.” (Hagner 1993, 120)

Suggested Main Points:

- Equality is sin responsibility between the two genders
- Jesus concern for the underprivileged women of his time
- The sanctity of marriage
- The sanctity of marriage *before* you are married
- Breaking the marriage bond in ways that aren't sexual

Suggested Application:

How do we stay truly faithful to our spouses and future spouses in our secular world?

Teaching About Enemies

Core Scripture: Matthew 5:38-48 (NLT)

Revenge

38 “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. 40 If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. 41 If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. 42 Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

Love for Enemies

43 “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy. 44 But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! 45 In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. 46 If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. 47 If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. 48 But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.”

Key Ideas:

Questions to Wrestle With:

- Does this mean we should let people abuse and take advantage of us?
- What does this mean for the justice system?
- Is what Jesus lays out here actually feasible?
- What does it mean that God sends sun and rain on the just and unjust alike? Is this literal or figurative?
- What does “eye for an eye” and “tooth for a tooth” mean? Is it literal or figurative?
- What does this say about people who say, “I don’t need God, I’m a good person.” ?
- Does Jesus mean for us to lend things to untrustworthy people?
- What does he mean when he says that “we should be perfect”?

Watch:

[The Bible Project Series on the Sermon on the Mount](#)

Quotes from Commentaries:

(John Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary*, 1992)

“In some ancient societies punishment was handed out without regard for individual cases, and often the penalty far exceeded the crime. The law of retaliation was established as a check to inappropriate punishment. If a person harmed the eye of another person, the eye of the offender was to be given as equal punishment. Most commentators doubt that it was intended to be applied literally in every case, but it was a graphic metaphor to

establish equivalence of loss in a given circumstance. The law was intended as an equalizer of justice.”
(Wilkins 1992, 248)

“Where governing authorities were responsible to administer justice, God’s people were then liberated from the need to exact personal retribution and were able to pursue a higher ethical standard, they were able to love and serve one another.” (Wilkins 1992, 248-249)

“However, in the turbulent world of Jesus’ day, when Jews were under the rule of the Roman occupying forces, it was easy to lose sight of this higher purpose and begin to use the law of retaliation to justify personal revenge. The common person was at the mercy of the Romans everywhere—on the street, in the court, in the presence of the military occupying forces, and in the every day world of financial need. Jewish leaders had little or no power to execute justice to protect their people. Those who were hurt wanted to strike back, especially when there was no apparent justice to protect them, so personal retaliation through violent resistance was a burning issue among the Jews.” (Wilkins 1992, 249)

“Jesus then uses four illustrations from the every day life of his disciples under oppression to emphasize how they can serve those who offend them. Their ultimate goal is to seek “an opportunity for the enemy to be converted to the truth of God’s Kingdom:” (Wilkins 1992, 249-250)

- 1) *The first scene appears to be in an arena where the disciple is insulted publicly, “If someone strikes you on the right cheek...”(5:39). It is not so much the hurt as the insult that is here in mind, because it was a symbolic way of affronting a person’s dignity and honor (cf.m.B. Qan.8:6). Crude military personnel were known to demean subjugated people in this way. To turn the other cheek indicates that Jesus’ disciples are so secure in themselves that they do not need to retaliate with more evil than the evil done to them (cf.Rom.12:19-21;I Thess.5:15). By turning the other cheek they place themselves in a position of greater indignity and vulnerability, but this provides opportunity to serve the offender, as the next two scenes illustrated. (Wilkins 1992, 249-250)*

This is actually a lesser of two theories on this subject. Most scholars agree that when a soldier was about to slap someone on the cheek, Jesus was instructing the person who was about to receive the slap would turn their face and offer the other cheek. This turning forced the soldier to either punch the person full in the face identifying them as their equal, or choose not to hit them. This would actually be a difficult decision for the soldier as hitting them full in the face and identifying them as their equal invites them to fight back. This removes all indignity from the event.

- 2) *The second scene shifts to a legal setting: “And if someone wants to sue you...” (5:40). A disciple is being taken to court in an attempt to sue for his tunic. The simple clothing of a person in the first century was a loin-cloth, covered by one or more body-length tunic(s), the outer cloak, a girdle acting as a belt, a head covering, and sandals. The “tunic” (chiton) was the basic garment, a long-sleeved inner robe similar to a night shirt that a person wore next to the skin. Jesus instructs his disciples that if someone tries to sue for their tunic, they should let him have their “cloak” (Liraalion) as well. The cloak was the outer robe (cf.27:35) which was an indispensable piece of clothing. When it was given as a pledge, it had to be returned before sun-set since it was used by the poor for a sleeping cover (Ex. 22:16-7;Deut. 24:1);Ezek. 18:7; Amos 2:8.). Jesus makes a startling demand of his disciples. They must reverse the dynamic. Instead of defending*

themselves or seeking retaliation, they must give to this person who is so unfairly attempting to take their most basic necessities. (Wilkins 1992, 249-250)

- 3) *The third illustration draws military scene: "if someone forces you to go one mile.." (5:41). In ancient practice, governmental or military personnel could requisition the help of Local civilians for official business. Officers of the Persian royal postal system could force a civilian to carry official correspondence, and Roman military personnel could organize bands of unpaid laborers from the common people to construct roads, fortifications, and public buildings. They could requisition individuals on the spot to help an operation. The most familiar New Testament scene is that Simon of Cyrene, forced by the Roman guards to carry Jesus's cross (27,32;Mark 15:21). Jesus tells his disciples that when they're commandeered to go "one mile" (milion),they should two." (Wilkins 1992, 249-250)*

"The next statement of the anti thesis, "hate your enemies," is not found explicitly in the Old Testament. In fact, Moses directed the people to assist an enemy in need (Ex.23:4-5). But as much as love of neighbors was at the heart of the Old Testament teaching, God's hatred of evil was also a central theme of the Old Testament." (Wilkins 1992, 252)

"Later groups within Israel took this further by identifying "neighbor" exclusively with those within their Jewish community and the "evil doer" as Gentiles or those outside of their community and therefore Gods and their enemies." (Wilkins 1992, 252)

"But Jesus takes the competing attitudes of love for neighbor and hate for enemy and brings them together in away that undoubtedly stuns his audience but is actually what God intended from the beginning: "But I tell you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (5:44). God does hate evil, but his intent is to bring reconciliation. As such, the old saying is true, "God loves the sinner but hates the sin. "That is what drives Jesus' saying about the requirement to love one's enemies. It is a radical saying in that it goes contrary to what was occurring in many quarters in Israel, but it actually preserves the love God has for all humans. All of God's creatures are his own, and he loves them and desires that all will come to repentance." (Wilkins 1992, 252)

(Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Pillar New Testament Commentary, 1992*)

"Jesus instructs his followers to eschew hitting back in all its forms; we should even go the "second mile" in doing more than the enemy asks. This is a radically new approach to the question of grievances. Jesus is, of course, still dealing with great principles, not laying down rules. We must not think that he held that his followers should never right wrongs, for example, nor that he felt that they must give to every beggar who approaches them. Were this so, all Christians would live under tyranny and in a state of destitution. But the principles that we are to refrain from asserting our rights and that we should put the needs of others before our own run through all of life and mark the difference between the servant God and the world link" (Morris 1992, 126)

"Again the emphatic formula is used to introduce striking teaching. "Do not resist the evil person" does not mean that we should let evil triumph throughout our communities. Jesus is referring to private retaliation, not to public order ,and he is instructing his followers not to be intent on getting their own back when someone wrongs them." (Morris 1992, 126-127)

“This section is of fundamental importance for an understanding of the Christian ideal of love. We all love our friends, but love of our enemies is quite another matter. But the followers of Jesus are not to take their standards from the communities in which they live. The God they serve is a loving God, and therefore they are to be loving people. Jesus points out that they must learn from God's love. God's good gifts, the sunshine and the rain, are given to all alike, the bad as well as the good. Those who serve God should show a similar generous attitude to enemies as well as to friends,” (Morris 1992, 129)

“Jesus ends this part of his discourse with a future normally understood as a command: You shall be (for this construction on v.21). This is surely correct: there is a command here. But may we not also see something of a promise? Jesus puts his command in such away that disciples may look for divine help as they press toward God's goal for them. His therefore relates this future to what has gone before: because of the importance of showing in their lives that they are doing more than is required of people in general, more than the tax collectors or the Gentiles do, more than they themselves do when they greet one another, they must look for perfection. You is emphatic. Jesus is not saying what the Gentiles ought to be or the Jews who do not follow him. He is referring to his followers; they must be perfect. That their standard is to be the highest possible (“no limit to your goodness,” REB) is shown by the words that follow: even as your heavenly Father is perfect, When Matthew uses the adjective heavenly it always refers to God (he has the word 7 times out of its 9 New Testament occurrences). In this he contrasts with Luke, houses it of the heavenly host (Luke2:13) and of the heavenly vision (Acts26:19). Matthew thus employs the term to stress the difference between God and others, just as Father brings out his nearness and his love. To set this kind of perfection before his followers means that Jesus saw them as always having something for which to strive. No matter how far along the path of Christiann service we are, there is still something to aim for. There is a whole heartedness about being Christian; all that we have and all that we are must be taken up into the service of the Father.” (Morris 1992, 133-134)

(Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: World Biblical Commentary*, 1993)

“This final antithesis is climactic in its emphasis on loving one's enemies and in its concluding call to the perfection of the Father. The practice of love is the most fundamental element of the Christian ethic. Here the call to love is extended even to one's enemies. There is thus a summarizing aspect to this antithesis that includes all the ethical teachings of the preceding antithesis.” (Hagner 1993, 133)

“The love he [Jesus] describes, of course, is not an emotion but volitional acts for the benefit and well-being of others, even those we may dislike. In this love that knows no boundaries, the disciples are to reflect the generosity of God, who sends blessings upon both the righteous and the unrighteous and who has brought the kingdom to the unworthy.” (Hagner 1993, 136)

Suggested Main Points:

- Generosity
- Retaliation
- Showing love even when we don't feel it

Suggested Application:

Living with the mercy and love of God toward everyone, even those who may try to abuse us.

Teaching About Good Deeds

Core Scripture: Matthew 6:1-18

1 “Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. 2 When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. 3 But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. 4 Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

5 “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. 6 But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

7 “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. 8 Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him!

9 Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. 10 May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today the food we need, 12 and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. 13 And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

14 “If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. 15 But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

16 “And when you fast, don’t make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. 17 But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. 18 Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.”

Key Ideas:

Do not focus on the Lord’s prayer.

Focus on the tension with “do your good deeds before men so that they glorify the Father”

Matthew 5:16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

Questions to Wrestle With:

- How can we balance this with 5:16?
- What does he mean by “your Father will reward you?”
- What does he mean by “do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing?”

- Is this feasible?
- Is this about arrogance or actually secrecy?

Watch:

[The Bible Project Series on the Sermon on the Mount](#)

Quotes from Commentaries:

(John Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary*, 1992)

“Public religious practices can be carried out primarily to be seen by people. Because of this possibility, Jesus lodges criticism against the Jewish religious leaders of his day. Although they are not mentioned by name, the “teachers of the law and the Pharisees” are the most likely objects of this censure (cf. 5:20). They are the most public and influential religious figures among the common people, so Jesus denounces them for their faulty example. They perform religious acts in the public arena in order to receive the respect of their peers and admiration of the common people (see 6:2, 5, 16, 18)” (Wilkins 1992, 270)

*“If Jesus’ disciples fall into the same attention-seeking display of public piety, “you will have no reward from your Father in heaven” (6:1). The term for “reward” is *nistbos*, which can indicate payment of “wages” (20:8) or, as here, the recompense of a person’s good deeds with a good prize. It is an affirmative recognition and recompense by God for the praiseworthy moral quality of a disciple’s acts of righteousness (6:1-2; cf. 5:12).” (Wilkins 1992, 270-271)*

“But Jesus warns his disciples that obedience in the public arena does not guarantee a reward from God, because motive is more important than simple activity. Jesus goes on to demonstrate this by three examples of Jewish piety—giving to the needy (6:2-4), praying (6:5-15), and fasting (6:16-18). These acts of piety are valuable in the process of developing personal righteousness, and God will reward the disciple who practices them sincerely before him. But they can also be practiced “hypocritically”—that is, for the acclaim of people and the approval of the religious establishment. In such cases, there will be no reward from God (cf. 6:2, 5, 16).” (Wilkins 1992, 271).

“The reward that Jesus promises follows the central message of the SM—the righteousness of the kingdom of heaven. Those who perform them out of the fullness of a heart transformed by God’s righteousness will be rewarded with inner growth in kingdom righteousness in this life, and final perfection in the afterlife.” (Wilkins 1992, 271)

“The truly spiritual person recognized the plight of the needy and attended responsibly to their care. But Jesus says, “Do not announce it with trumpets” (6:2). Some suggest a literal trumpet is in mind, either to call the people to fasts with accompanying alms giving or to signal an especially large gift being given. Or perhaps this denotes the sound of coins being tossed into the trumpet-shaped money chests in the temple used for collecting alms (nr.Se qual. 2:1). But more likely Jesus is drawing on a vivid piece of typical irony—those who seem to be the most humanitarian often want the most human glory and will make it known that they have been magnanimous in their concern for the poor in our day the same metaphor is well known as a person who wants to “toot his own horn.”” (Wilkins 1992, 272)

“Jesus calls the persons engaged in this perilous self-promotion hypocrites. The term “hypocrite” (hypokrnes) was originally used for actors on a Greek stage who put on various masks to play different roles. Jesus here censures the religious leaders, especially the Pharisees, for a particular form of hypocrisy, performing external acts of righteousness that mask, even from themselves, their own inner corruption (cf.23:25-26). Their hypocrisy is doing right things for the wrong reasons. They perform external religious acts of piety in order [to] be “honored” (doxazo, or “glorified”) by people and the religious establishment. The tragic irony is that they will “receive in full” the reward of public and professional acclaim for their pious activities, but they will receive no reward from God. Unless prompted by the right motives, religious activities, including doing good deeds to others, are of no real spiritual value and receive no commendation from God. It does matter greatly why we do what we do.” (Wilkins 1992, 272)

“The pretentious prayer of hypocrites (6:5-6). As with giving to the needy (6:2), prayer can be perverted from a true act of piety into an act of hypocrisy when the external act masks an inner corrupt motive. As a set time of prayer arrived, pious Jews would stop what they were doing and pray. This could be done discreetly, or it could be done with pretentious display. Some people were sure to find themselves in a place where they would be noticed, such as the synagogue or on a street corner. In those cases, the inner motivation for offering public prayer was public recognition and acclaim of their piety which has no value with God. This kind of hypocritical prayer receives the same reward as hypocritical almsgiving: acclaim from people.” (Wilkins 1992, 273)

“Jesus returns to his condemnation of the hypocritical practices of the religious leaders, especially the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, now concentrating on fasting, the third pillar of Jewish piety (see comments on 6:1-2). Since the religious leaders fasted in order to get recognition from people, that is all the reward that they will receive. “Acts of righteousness,” such as fasting, are of no value if not done with the right motives.” (Wilkins 1992, 280)

“So why do we do what we do? Keeping these forces in balance is critical for our discipleship, because going too far in any direction will distort our motivation. Since motivation is personal and internal, motives are a quick gauge of a person's heart. I once had a friend tell me that his primary motivation as a pastor is the rewards that he will receive from God at the end of this life. I've always considered that a bit unbalanced, especially when I consider the other motivating forces that are at our disposal. The following may be a way of developing an appropriate balance.” (Wilkins 1992, 284)

“A second, and consequent, motive is love in response to God's love for us (5:43-47; cf. IJohn 4:7-21). To have experienced real love from God will move us mightily to love him and to love others. We might then be motivated by the desire to emulate Jesus, as a disciple will become like his or her Master (10:24-25; 2Cor. 3:18).” (Wilkins 1992, 284)

(Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 1992)

“Take care renders a verb that has the meaning “turn (your mind) to” and thus “give careful attention to,” “concentrate on.” Jesus is inviting his hearers to concentrate on the central thing when they perform any act of righteousness. This word may be used in any one of a variety of ways, but here it refers to any good deed that a person may do as part of his service of God (Jesus goes on to illustrate with the examples almsgiving, prayer, and fasting). The believer must always keep in mind that the act is righteous only if it is what it purports to be—the service of God.” (Morris 1992, 136)

“When instead it [the good or religious deed] is done as a means of enhancing the reputation of the doer of the deed, then it is no longer a simple act of divine service. It is thus important that the aim should never be that people may observe it. Occasions may arise when publicity is unavoidable, but the deed must never be done in order to be made public. If it is so done, then there is no reward (see on 5:12) with your Father who is in heaven (see on 5:16). Why should there be? The deed was done in order to secure a reputation, not in order to serve God. Already the doer has secured his reward. He aimed at reputation. He got it. He has no right to expect the further benefit of divine approval.” (Morris 1992, 136)

“God sees what is given and will take action, rewarding the donor. This does not mean that good deeds should be done with a view to obtaining a reward; that would mean that the deeds would no longer be good. It is a way of saying that in the end justice will be done. In our anxiety to make sure that we do not serve God for what we can get out of it we must not go to the other extreme and think of God as not caring what we do, or if he does, as not doing anything about it. God notices what his children do and responds to it. We should bear in mind the nature of the reward. To respond to love is to obtain a wonderful reward even if the reward cannot be quantified in any way nor regarded as merited. But it is very real.” (Morris 1992, 138-139)

(Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: World Biblical Commentary*, 1993)

“The deeds of righteousness performed by Christians will of course be seen by others. According to 5:16, followers of Jesus should “let their light shine before others, so that they may see your good works.” Although this may seem at first to be a contradiction, 5:16 goes on to say “that they might glorify your Father who is in heaven.” Which is a bold contrast to the desire of the hypocrites that “they may be glorified by others” (6:2). Only deeds done for God’s glory will receive an eschatological reward.” (Hagner 1993, 140-141)

Suggested Main Points:

- Good deeds as worship
- Real worship
- Religious actions for God not for ourselves
- The Reward from the Father (tie it back to the beatitudes and how our reward is the kingdom of heaven)

Suggested Application:

We should do good and religious works for the benefit of others, for the growth of heart, and for the glory of God.

Teaching about Money and Possessions

Core Scripture: Matthew 6:19-34

19 “Don’t store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. 21 Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

22 “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. 23 But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

24 “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

25 “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life—whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? 26 Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? 27 Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

28 “And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, 29 yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. 30 And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

31 “So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ 32 These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. 33 Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

34 “So don’t worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Key Ideas:

Questions to Wrestle With:

- What does this mean for wealthy Christians?
- How does the eye being the lamp of the body fit into this theme?
- What does it look like to have money as the master of your life?
- What does this mean for those who do go without?
- Is this “prosperity gospel” theology?
- How can we live in the present instead of the future?

Watch:

[The Bible Project Series on the Sermon on the Mount](#)

Quotes from Commentaries:

(John Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary*, 1992)

“The Key saying of this section is Jesus' famous imperative, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness" (6:33). It continues the overall priority and teaching of the SM.” (Wilkins 1992, 292)

“On the one hand, Jesus warns against the everyday concerns about wealth (6:19-24) and worry (6:25-34), which can rob disciples of the kingdom's priority in their personal lives. On the other hand, he teaches how his disciples can properly live with the priority of the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness, including their ideals, vision, priorities, and security.” (Wilkins 1992, 292)

“Jesus' disciples will encounter a number of everyday concerns that have the potential to deter them from undivided loyalty to the kingdom and its righteousness. The first one he discusses is wealth... Two treasures of the heart (6:19-21). Material wealth was important to the people of Israel since it was often seen as a sign of God's blessing and the reward for obedience to him.” (Wilkins 1992, 292)

The accumulation of wealth for its own sake is deceptive, because one can find in material treasure a false sense of security or an inaccurate assessment of one's spirituality. So Jesus says, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth."... But those things that some people value are subject to the destructive effects of life in a fallen world, "where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal." The moth was commonly recognized as a destroyer of the most basic materials of life. The finest garments could be destroyed by a little devouring insect. The term "rust" is a general term for "consuming," which points not only to a destructive action on metals but also a deterioration of a more wide ranging nature... The kind of "thief" Jesus has in mind here robs from the rich to serve himself. Moth, rust, and thieves represent those forces that cause earthly treasures to diminish in value and finally be destroyed.” (Wilkins 1992, 293)

“But the contrast of "treasures on earth" with "treasures in heaven" more importantly implies a contrast of values. Jesus goes beyond good works to focus on the heart, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." The "heart" represents the core of a person's being, the real inner person, the causative source of a person's spiritual, emotional, and psychological life. What a person values is driven by the nature of a person's heart (see 5:8,28).” (Wilkins 1992, 293-294)

“There was a close connection between the heart and the eye in Jewish literature. By using the symmetry in this passage, the "good" eye can either mean a "generous" eye, a person who is ready to give away one's wealth, or it can mean "single" in the sense of singleness of purpose or undivided loyalty. The latter is more in line with the preceding and following sayings. Since the heart is the true repository of treasure, Jesus now indicates that when the eye focuses on something of value, it becomes the conduit that fills the heart with what has been focused upon. If the eye is good, it is the conduit that allows the heart to be filled with the light of God's treasure.” (Wilkins 1992, 294-295)

“But there is also an evil eye: "But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness." The word "bad" here connotes moral evil. The "evil eye" in the ancient world is one that enviously covets what belongs to another it is a greedy or a varicious eye. This expression occurs similarly in 20:15, where the literal expression "evil eye" indicates envy(cf. NIV "envious"). The parallelism here indicates once again singleness of vision, but it is an evil vision. If a disciple's eyes are fixed on earthly treasures as her or his value, personal significance,

and earthly security, then the heart will likewise be full of darkness. "When we focus on something evil, the eye becomes the conduit by which evil fills the inner person." (Wilkins 1992, 295)

"The metaphors on choosing between masters culminate in the saying, "You cannot serve both God and Money." There can be no divided loyalties with God." (Wilkins 1992, 296)

"Greed and covetousness are favorite snares of the evil one, so commands and warnings against greed and covetousness are common in the Old Testament, in Judaism, and in the early church. Ultimately, there is only one choice—service, love, and devotion to God or to Satan. Loving God is not merely a matter of the emotions but of serving and giving oneself to him completely—heart, soul, mind, and strength." (Wilkins 1992, 296)

"Worry is inappropriate or wrong when it is misdirected, is in wrong proportion, or indicates a lack of trust in God. It is this latter sense that Jesus addresses here." (Wilkins 1992, 297)

Jesus is speaking to people familiar with life's daily struggles. Much of their daily routine was spent trying to get enough supplies for day-to-day existence. The poor especially did not have extensive supplies, so that the question of what one would eat tomorrow was a real one, especially with the vagaries of seasonal famine, fire, or flood. Thus, Jesus is forcing even the poorest among them to agree that they must focus on the more important issues of life. For the poor this is a radical challenge, because if they become unconcerned about supplying each day's food and clothing, their families could be in immediate trouble. Jesus calls for them to live in the immediate challenge of daily trusting God's care in everyday situations." (Wilkins 1992, 297)

"The idol of materialism. There are several reasons why people accumulate "treasure" on earth. 1) Security. We want to know that we are taken care of, so what brings us the greatest security of life and soul is to have material security 2) Personal worth, esteem, and value. Material possessions and wealth often indicate that people are successful in what they have done with their lives. We feel good about ourselves if we dress, drive, dine, and decorate well. 3) Power. With wealth and material success, we believe that we can have and get and be what we want. Wealth gives us control over our own fate and over other people. 4) Independence. With wealth I can be my own "god" and not rely on anyone else. 5) Pleasure. With wealth we can indulge our every fantasy, whether it is the exotic vacation, the luxurious wedding, the finest dining, or the most decadent home." (Wilkins 1992, 303)

(Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 1992)

"Jesus draws attention to what people prize above all else. Some put their emphasis on treasures here and now to the exclusion of eternal values; Jesus points out that that means putting all one's emphasis on what may well be lost. He instructs his followers not to lay up their treasures on this earth because treasures located here are liable to loss. He is not, of course, saying that they must not go about their daily work with due care, or that they must not run their businesses profitably. It is worldly-mindedness to which he is objecting, the concentration on prosperity in this world to the neglect of all else. Jesus is saying that his followers must have a right sense of values and not see earthly success, however that be understood, as the aim of all their labor (a temptation to which the rich are especially vulnerable, but which also may afflict the poor; it is the attitude to possessions that is important, not their amount)." (Morris 1992, 152)

"By contrast, there are riches that cannot be lost in such ways. Jesus speaks first of the place where they may be laid up, namely in heaven, and then points out that the various factors he has spoken of as doing away with

earthly riches do not apply there. In heaven neither moth nor rust is at work, and there are no thieves to break in or steal. The treasures in heaven are described in language that exactly negates what is predicated of earthly treasures.” (Morris 1992, 153)

“Jesus points out that the place we choose for our treasures tells something about ourselves. He does not describe treasure in any way, but clearly it means here that which one prizes most, that which one values above all else. The place where we choose to store up what we value most shows what our values are deep down.” (Morris 1992, 153)

“The climax of this saying is concerned with the spiritual rather than the physical meaning of vision; the light that is in you is surely not the light that strikes the eye. We might call it the brightness of goodness within. Perhaps we should think of something like “the eye of the soul”; just as a healthy physical eye means illumination for the bodily functions, so a healthy eye of the soul means enlightened living. Jesus is talking about the enlightenment that comes to the person who lives close to God. When that light is darkness there is disaster! Jesus is supposing that where there should be light in a person there is in fact darkness, a perversion at the very heart and center of the person's life, a complete lack of vision.” (Morris 1992, 155)

“Even the poorest must agree that, important as are food and clothing, they are not the most important things of all. There is more to life than food; there is more to the body than its clothing. This attitude removes people from preoccupation with their own worldly success; it discourages the wealthy and the comfortable from concentrating on their own success and the poor and uncomfortable from concentrating on their own misery. We belong together, whatever our worldly goods, and this encourages the idea of sharing.” (Morris 1992, 157)

“The plain statement that there is trouble each day, however, is important. A shallow thinker might gather from the previous words about trust that the believer will have a smooth path through life. That is not what Jesus is saying. All people have trouble, believers among them. But he is making it clear that there is all the difference in the world between facing the problems we will certainly meet with firm faith in our heavenly Father and facing them with anxiety.” (Morris 1992, 163)

(Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: World Biblical Commentary*, 1993)

“The issue in view in these passages is not wealth primarily, but an absolute and unqualified discipleship. Wealth, it happens, is only the most conspicuous example of that which can distract from true discipleship. Only the rarest of individuals can possess much of this world's wealth without becoming enslaved to it and without letting it cut the nerve of true discipleship. For this reason, the NT contains a very strong polemic against wealth (e.g., 1 Tim 6:6-10; Heb 13:5). Most important is where one's heart lies, i.e., what controls one's interests, energy, and commitment. There is no absolute requirement here for poverty. But the individual disciple must be sensitive to that point at which wealth and possessions are not compatible with authentic discipleship. Jesus asks for uncompromising commitment to God's will and purposes. This is what it means to store up treasures in heaven. The person who stores up treasures on earth “is not rich toward God” (Luke 12:21) and is in the end “a fool.” The person who is distracted from unqualified discipleship because of a covetous eye exists in a deep darkness and is to be pitied. The nature of discipleship is such that it allows no such divided loyalties. If one chooses to follow Jesus, the commitment and service entitled are absolute. It is impossible to be a partially committed or part-time disciple; it is impossible to serve two masters, whether one of them be wealth or anything else, when the other master is meant to be God. This view of the rigorously single-minded nature of

discipleship is in keeping with the view of discipleship elsewhere in the Gospel (e.g., 10:34-39; 16:24-26).”
(Hagner 1993, 160)

“The key to avoiding anxiety is to make the kingdom one’s priority (v 33). The disciples have a “heavenly Father” who knows of their ongoing needs and who will supply them. If he takes care of his creation, he will surely take care of those who participate in his kingdom. The passage does not mean, however, that food, drink, clothing, and other such necessities will come to the disciple automatically without work or foresight. It addresses only the problem of anxiety about these things. The answer to this anxiety and all such debilitating anxiety is to be found in an absolute allegiance to the kingdom and the righteousness that is the natural expression of that kingdom. Thus it is not simply God’s sovereign care that can be trusted but more importantly his special fatherly love and grace, which are the basis of the kingdom. The teaching of Jesus on this subject probably had in mind the itinerant ministry of the disciples who first widely proclaimed the kingdom of God. To them, it would have had special relevance. And with some modification it has ongoing relevance to the established Church. For Christians of every age, anxiety is incompatible with a lifestyle focused on God’s kingdom. Indeed, anxiety and worry need not govern the disciple who has known the grace of the kingdom.”
(Hagner 1993, 167)

Suggested Main Points:

- A fully dedicated heart
- A worry free heart

Suggested Application:

How can we fully dedicate and trust our lives to God?

Judgment and The Golden Rule

Core Scripture: Matthew 7:1-6, 12

1 “Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. 2 For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

3 “And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? 4 How can you think of saying to your friend, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? 5 Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

6 “Don’t waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don’t throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

...

12 “Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

Key Ideas:

This passage consists of three main ideas: 1) Do not be a hypocrite and judge others when you yourself are not perfect. 2) Do not try to correct those who will not receive your correction. 3) Treat everyone with the same kindness and respect that you want to be treated with.

Remember for verses 1 and 2 that when people see how you judge others, they will be just as ruthless when you mess up. But if you are compassionate, merciful, and forgiving towards others, they will be more inclined to do the same for you.

Verse 6 highlights the fact that we often have wisdom and constructive criticism to offer our fellow believers, but sometimes it is not the right time to give it. Some people are also just the wrong people to offer criticism or correction to. Some people have pride issues that cause them to be unable to accept criticism, we must learn to identify these people. Offering “pearls” of wisdom to those who will refuse or abuse it will end poorly for both them and you.

Questions to Wrestle With:

- Is there a difference between judging and correcting?
- Does the log vs the speck imply that your own is worse than the other person’s?
- What does verse 6 really mean?
- How should we view the Golden Rule in light of the previous instructions?

Watch:

[The Bible Project Series on the Sermon on the Mount](#)

Quotes from Commentaries:

(John Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary*, 1992)

“Jesus warns his disciples against setting themselves over others and making a pronouncement of their guilt before God. We should be careful in making these kinds of judgments, because we too will be judged for committing a sin worse than that which we are accusing.” (Wilkins 1992, 308)

“We can understand the rationale behind the warning if we recognize that it reiterates earlier principles of the SM. The warning about judging is the reverse of the positive blessing Jesus advocated in the fifth beatitude: ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall be shown mercy’ (5:7)... True disciples, who have been impacted by the mercy of God in the arrival of the kingdom of heaven, will exhibit mercy towards one another, not judgment. Because the disciples have received forgiveness, they will forgive one another.” (Wilkins 1992, 308-309)

“At fault is the person who makes himself and his way of doing things and his opinions the absolute standard. He or she has usurped the place of God because only God can judge in this way.” (Wilkins 1992, 309)

This is why it seems that Jesus is saying the sin of the one who judges is greater than the sin of the other, because they are putting themselves in the place of God. The “plank” or “log” that brings down the person who judges is their own arrogance, hypocrisy, and judgemental attitude.

“A mark of the discipleship community is the responsibility that disciples have to help each other remove the ‘speck’ of sin from each others lives (cf. 18:15-20), but it must come from a humble and self-examined life that has removed the plank of self-righteous judgment (cf. Gal. 6:1-5). Then restoration can occur with the right attitude.” (Wilkins 1992, 310)

“Jesus next addresses a problem at the opposite extreme of judging hypocritically: naive acceptance. He calls for appropriate discernment of right and wrong or good and bad.” (Wilkins 1992, 310)

“Jesus’ disciples may find it difficult to be at the same time both merciful and forgiving, yet wisely discerning, to give other disciples the benefit of the doubt, yet be on guard for those who would harm the community; to judge no one, yet to be wisely observant to see the true character of people and deal with them accordingly. But through the divine enablement that is supplied by God as Jesus’ disciples pray, they can avoid the extremes of 7:1-5 and 7:6.” (Wilkins 1992, 311-312)

(Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 1992)

“Disciples are not to be judgemental, but that does not mean they are to lack discernment.” (Morris 1992, 168)

“Things of value and beauty will not only not be appreciated by pigs, but they will also be abused. What is precious is not to be given to people who have no appreciation of it... it is possible that the pigs also turn on those who then the pearls and tear them to pieces.” (Morris 1992, 169)

(Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: World Biblical Commentary*, 1993)

“This passage concerns relationships in the community of faith and may be regarded as one expression of the ethic of love that is the summary of the law and the prophets (see 7:12;22:39-40). Although the disciples cannot

avoid making judgements (cf. 18:15-18), their judgements are to be made charitably and not censoriously. Judgment of faults is to begin with oneself, and one is to be as scrupulous in this self-judgment as one is generous and tolerant in this judgment of others. For the same standard of judgment that we apply to others will in turn be applied to us. The hypocrite ignores the significant failures in his or her own life while becoming preoccupied with the slighter failures of others. Such a person violates the love commandment.” (Hagner 1993, 170)

“It is from this saying [the Golden Rule] and that of [Matthew] 22:37-40 that love became the dominant and summarizing theme of the Christian ethic. To act in this manner, in constant deeds of love, is to bring to expression that to which the law and the prophets pointed. That is, a world where only good is done to others involves by definition eschatological fulfillment, a return to the paradise of the Garden of Eden. To do good to others is to mirror the activity of the Father (7:11), which of course finds its supreme manifestation in the eschatological fulfillment brought by the Son. If the ethics of the kingdom of God anticipate the coming future in the present, then this is especially true of the ethic of the golden rule, which is the distillation of kingdom ethics. If this teaching of Jesus were to be lived out in the world, the whole system of evil would be dramatically shaken. Even if it were to be manifested seriously in the Church, its impact would be incalculable. In this sublime command, so simple and so deep, we encounter a challenge central to the purposes of God and therefore one that is also eschatological in tone. No other teaching is so readily identified with Jesus; no other teaching is so central to the righteousness of the kingdom and the practice of discipleship.” (Hagner 1993, 177)

Suggested Main Points:

- Avoid Hypocritical Judgment (you will be judged with your own level of judgment)
- Be Wise With Your Advice (criticism given to the wrong people at the wrong time will only cause pain)
- Treat Others With Kindness (bring to every relationship as much or more than you hope to receive)

Suggested Application:

Wisdom in our day to day relationships and interactions with others.

Seeking God

Core Scripture: Matthew 7:7-11

7 “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

9 “Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? 11 If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”

Key Ideas:

Other verses that touch this topic:

“Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” (Ephesians 3:20–21)

“He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?” (Romans 8:32)

“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. 12 Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. 13 You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.” (Jeremiah 29:11–13)

Questions to Wrestle With:

- What about when we don’t get what we pray for?
- What do the statements about the stone and snake mean?
- What about when it doesn’t feel like what we have been given is good?

Watch:

[The Bible Project Series on the Sermon on the Mount](#)

Quotes from Commentaries:

(John Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary*, 1992)

“In these verses, he [Jesus] focuses on the source of the disciples’ stability as they learn to live a true kingdom life in this fallen world.” (Wilkins 1992, 311)

“Although some see the present imperatives ‘ask, seek, knock’ as practically equivalent, it seems better to suggest that Jesus is indicating a rising scale of intensity in one’s prayers and points to the persistent manner of life lived before the Father. ‘Ask’ indicates coming to God with humility and consciousness of need, as a child fittingly comes to her father. ‘Seek’ links one’s prayer with responsible activity in pursuing God’s will, as when a

person prays for a job and at the same time checks out leads. 'Knock' includes perseverance in one's asking and seeking, as when the disciple perseveres in praying for his unbelieving family's salvation and speaks and lives the gospel throughout his lifetime. Jesus' disciples are to ask the Father continually as a manner of life, to be constantly responsible in pursuing God's will, and to maintain an unremitting determination in expecting the Father to answer." (Wilkins 1992, 312)

"Jesus clarifies the open ended teaching on the certainty of the answer to the disciples' prayers by demonstrating that the Father will answer with what he knows is good for his children... Staple food in a Jewish daily diet included bread and fish. A responsible father would not be mean and trick his children with stones that resemble bread, nor would he be hurtful by tricking them with snakes that resemble fish. So if a responsible father will supply his children precisely what they need on a daily basis, the heavenly Father, who is absolutely trustworthy, will always give to the disciples what they really need." (Wilkins 1992, 312-313)

(Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 1992)

"Here he [Jesus] is simply making emphatically the central point, that prayer to a loving Father is effective. The point is not that human persistence wins out in the end, but that the heavenly Father who loves his children will certainly answer their prayer." (Morris 1992, 169)

"Seek is an interesting word in this connection. It can scarcely mean that the praying person does not know where to find what he is looking for; if that were so he would not be praying. The fact that he is asking the Father shows that he knows that what he seeks is within the gift of God. Perhaps the meaning is that the praying person does not know exactly what he should be praying for, but he knows the Father will not lead him astray. There is also the thought of prayer with a greater intensity than would be implied when the person is doing no more than asking. And as he seeks the good gift from God, he is to know that he will find." (Morris 1992, 169-170)

(Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: World Biblical Commentary*, 1993)

"Jesus here invites his disciples to rely upon the faithfulness of their heavenly Father. The threefold invitation and promise of v. 7, emphasized in v. 8, have as their main point that the disciples may confidently trust God. Much more than parents, who reliably provide their children with what they need, will their heavenly Father provide the disciples with that for which they ask. The unlimited scope of the passage need to entail the expectation that every request will be answered positively; it points rather to the basic principle of God's comprehensive and faithful care of the disciple. The 'good things' cover certainly the ongoing deeds of the disciples, but in the larger context of the Gospel, they suggest also the blessings of the kingdom. This passage focuses on the answering, providing Father. It is he who provides the material blessings of the present age as well as the transcendent blessings connected with the coming kingdom of God." (Hagner 1993, 175)

Suggested Main Points:

- All you must do is seek (How do we ask, seek, and knock?)
- Those who seek will always find (God always listens to prayers, God always shows himself to those who seek him, God always opens doors in our lives)
- God always gives what is good (our definition of good looks different from God's because he sees the bigger picture)

Suggested Application:

Learning how to ask, seek, and knock with confidence and humility in our everyday prayers and pursuits.

The Kingdom of Heaven

Core Scripture: Matthew 7: 13-27

13 “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. 14 But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

15 “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. 16 You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. 18 A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. 19 So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. 20 Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

21 “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. 22 On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ 23 But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

24 “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. 25 Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. 26 But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. 27 When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

Key Ideas:

Questions to Wrestle With:

- What is the narrow gate?
- How do we know if someone is a false prophet or teacher?
- How can we recognize good and bad fruit in people’s lives?
- How do we make sure we truly do the Father’s will and not simply call him “Lord”?
- What does it look like to build your “house” on the rock?

Watch:

[The Bible Project Series on the Sermon on the Mount](#)

Quotes from Commentaries:

(John Wilkins, *Matthew: The NIV Application Commentary*, 1992)

“The broad gate and road is inviting, offering plenty of room for those who would follow cultural and pious norms... The terms ‘wide’ and ‘broad’ are spatial, but they evoke a sense of ease and comfort. One can enter

and travel comfortably and unmolested on the roomy road. However, the comfort is deceiving, because it ends in 'destruction' (apoleia), a common word for eternal punishment." (Wilkins 1992, 321)

"The narrow gate and road are much more restrictive, because it is limited to Jesus and his manner of discipleship. His is the minority way insofar as few will dare abandon the popular opinion of people and the religious establishment. The terms 'small' and 'narrow' are also spatial, but they balance the metaphor by evoking images of difficulty. This is especially the case in the latter word, which can indicate trouble and affliction... Those traveling this narrow road will experience difficulty, especially because the challenge of Jesus' way of discipleship will prompt oppression, even persecution, from those of the majority way." (Wilkins 1992, 322)

"Jesus calls his disciples to evaluate carefully any prophets who come into their community, not only to look at their message to see if it is consistent with the narrow way advocated by Jesus in the SM, but also to look at their works and lives to see if they are consistent with the kingdom life of righteousness he has advocated in the SM. 'Do people pick grapes from thorn thornbushes, or figs from thistles?' Grapes and figs were staple diet in Palestine, and thornbushes and thistles were hurtful weeds. The latter choke off nutrients from the soil from other plants and are harmful also to humans because of their sharp thorns. A harmful weed cannot produce healthful fruit. Without the moving of God in their lives, false prophets cannot speak God's message and cannot display the kingdom righteousness he produces." (Wilkins 1992, 323-324)

"The false disciple who calls on Jesus as 'Lord, Lord' has said more than he knows, but those reading the account in Matthew's community will catch the full significance. An oral confession of Jesus as Lord can mask an unrepentant heart, so Jesus says that entrance to the kingdom of heaven is reserved for those who do 'the will of my Father in heaven' (7:21)... This does not mean simply to obey the Old Testament law as God's will. The will of the Father means obedience to the call of the kingdom of heaven that will result in the true righteousness." (Wilkins 1992, 325)

Jesus never emphasizes the external as being the highest sign of authenticity. He demands our inward allegiance to God's will, which will produce the fruit of a changed life." (Wilkins 1992, 325)

"The wise person shows that he or she has carefully viewed the the shifting sands of life's teaching and understands that Jesus is the only secure truth of life (cf. 1 Cor 3:10-11). The wise person thinks ahead to when there will be storms and sacrifices and build his or her life on the rock of Jesus' words. The choice is no less stark in our own day. Wise men and women build their lives on Jesus, regardless of the cultural or religious weather." (Wilkins 1992, 327)

(Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew: Pillar New Testament Commentary*, 1992)

"Jesus makes it clear that there are two ways in life, and two ways only, that are set before all people; it is thus important that the right choice be made." (Morris 1992, 174)

"Jesus speaks of religious leaders who put on a harmless front to deceive their followers but whose real interest is their own profit. Sheep they may appear to be, but their inward character indicates that they will always be wolves who try to further their own interests at the expense of those of the flock." (Morris 1992, 176-177)

“How can followers of Jesus recognize such people? From their fruits; their fruits will in the end betray them. The word ‘fruit’... refers in the first instance to the edible product of certain trees, but it is also used figuratively of a variety of produce. Here the thought is that it is not the outward appearance that is important (wolves may be dressed up to look like sheep), but the things the false prophets do, the produce of their manner of thought and life. If the disciples take note of what these false prophets do and refuse to be charmed by their false words, they will recognize them for what they are.” (Morris 1992, 177)

(Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13: World Biblical Commentary*, 1993)

“Jesus here invites his disciples to travel upon the way he has outlined in the high ethical teaching of the preceding material. The narrow gate and the confined path of the disciples are quite the opposite of the broad path and wide gate chosen by the masses. The ends of the two ways are also radically opposite, as was already well known from this frequently used metaphor. But the way taught by Jesus, upon which the disciples are invited to travel, is inestimably superior despite the various demands it puts upon its travelers. If it is a rigorous way, it is unmistakable also a way of grace. The disciples are not to worry that they are the minority, the few over against the many. It is not the point of the passage to speculate over the number who are saved or lost. The concern is the challenge afforded by discipleship. But the disciples are not to worry that their path involves the rigors of discipleship as well as the experience of suffering, sacrifice, and persecution. For they, by the grace of God, have found the way to life; they are the privileged.” (Hagner 1993, 180)

Suggested Main Points:

- Earthly Minority as Kingdom Majority
- Protect the Kingdom from Untruths
- Offer More Than Lip Service

Suggested Application:

Choosing the foundation of Christ's words.

Reference List

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