

Sermon On the Mount



Lesson 1

Introduction

1. Count the number of verses containing the sermon (Matthew chapters 5 to 7). How does the length of this sermon compare to books such as Colossians, Philippians, James, and I & II Thessalonians?
2. What is said about the ministry of Jesus immediately prior to the sermon (Matt. 4:23-25)?
3. Read the sermon as follows in preparation for Sunday's lesson:
 - a) Thursday Matthew 5:1-16 Beatitudes and Similitudes
 - b) Friday Matthew 5:17-48
 - c) Saturday Matthew 6:1-34
 - d) Sunday morning Matthew 7:1-29
4. Develop or find an outline for all three chapters.
5. Who heard the sermon (Matthew 7:28, 5:1)? What was the reaction?
6. Do you believe this sermon was typical of the teaching of Jesus? Find at least three other references to Jesus teaching. Note the subject(s) of His lessons (if one is given).

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Lessons 2 - 4

Beatitudes and Similitudes

1) Beatitudes – Matthew 5:3-12

- a) Define blessed.
- b) List the eight beatitudes with their corresponding reward (be prepared to discuss if there are more than eight):
 - i)
 - ii)
 - iii)
 - iv)
 - v)
 - vi)
 - vii)
 - viii)
- c) Do you notice any pattern regarding the rewards?
- d) List the three beatitudes you find the most difficult to understand and be prepared to discuss why:
- e) Consider that the Sermon on the Mount emphasizes character more than doctrine, what a person should be more than what he or she should do, and the inward man more than the external. If this is the case, why might Jesus have begun with the beatitudes?

2) First Beatitude – Matthew 5:3 Poor in Spirit

- a) Literally, poor in spirit could imply spiritual poverty. But the poor in spirit are said to receive the kingdom of heaven, a great spiritual blessing. Consider the possibility that poor in spirit describes an attitude more than a state of being. If so, what attitude(s) is being expressed when one is poor in spirit?

- b) Read Isaiah 6:3-5, Luke 5:8 and 18:13-14. How do the statements of Isaiah, Peter and the tax collector indicate that they were poor in spirit?
- c) D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones defined poor in spirit as *“a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and self-reliance. It means a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God.”* He further described it as *“this tremendous awareness of our utter nothingness as we come face to face with God.”*
- d) How is it that the poor in spirit are to receive the kingdom of heaven?

3) **Second Beatitude – Matthew 5:4** **Those Who Mourn**

- a) Similar to the first, this beatitude is puzzling in that it ascribes a reward (comfort) that seems to the opposite of what we are to be (mournful). But as before, consider mourning as being an attitude rather than a continuous state of being. Consider a spiritual explanation: over what should we mourn?
- b) Read Psalm 51:11-12 and Romans 7:23-24. Do the statements of David and Paul contain the mourning intended in Matthew 5:4?
- c) Read II Corinthians 7:9-11. Compare the godly sorrow mentioned here to the mourning of Matthew 5:4. Are they the same? Is there an indication that not all kinds of mourning will lead to comfort?
- d) Consider the spiritual definitions offered for poor in spirit and mourning. How does the first lead to the second?
- e) In what way will the mournful of Matthew 5:4 be comforted?

4) **Third Beatitude – Matthew 5:5** **Meek**

- a) The difficulty with this beatitude is properly understanding the definition of meek. Unfortunately, it has the connotation of weakness or passivity, which is hardly the Biblical meaning.
- b) Prepare your own definition of meekness after considering the following:
 - i) Moses is described as the meekest of men (Numbers 12:3 ASV).
 - ii) Jesus describes Himself as meek (or gentle) in Matthew 11:29 (cf. II Cor. 10:1).
 - iii) Used in Paul’s description of his conduct among the Thessalonians (I Thess. 2:6-8).
 - iv) The attitudes and qualities listed along with meekness (gentleness) in Colossians 3:12-13 and Ephesians 4:2.

- c) Given the character of the men listed under b) above, would a meek individual be easily frightened? Timid? Lazy? Unconcerned? Uninvolved? Weak? A Compromiser?
- d) D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones said of meekness, it *“is compatible with great strength. Meekness is compatible with great authority and power. The meek man is one who may so believe in standing for the truth that he will die for it if necessary.”* He goes on to say that it is *“essentially a true view of oneself, expressing itself in attitude and conduct with respect to others.”*
- e) In what way would meekness follow poor in spirit and mourning?

5) Fourth Beatitude – Matthew 5:6 Those Who Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

- a) It is possible to make too much of the progression of thought from one beatitude to the next. But it does appear that the first three center more on the inward man and the next five deal more specifically with our relationship with God and/or our fellow man. This beatitude certainly focuses our mind on God.
- b) What is said will happen to the individual that truly hungers and thirsts for righteousness? What are the implications of this promise for those who ignorant of the gospel of Christ?
- c) What is necessary for a man to be righteous (II Cor. 5:20-21, Romans 5:1-2)? Without God’s mercy could we ever become righteous? What indicates that we must continue to hunger and thirst throughout our life?
- d) Note the attitude of David in Psalms 63:1.

6) Fifth Beatitude – Matthew 5:7 Merciful

- a) We noted that the Sermon on the Mount is more about what kind of person we must be than what we must do, but this beatitude emphasizes both. We must be merciful if we expect God to be merciful to us.
- b) In your own words describe how God has been merciful to us.
- c) What was the lesson of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37 note especially vs. 37).
- d) What should we learn from Matthew 18:21-22?
- e) Specifically, how can we demonstrate mercy toward others?

7) Sixth Beatitude – Matthew 5:8 Pure in Heart

- a) Note the promise before focusing on the requirement: We shall see God! Consider how wonderful a promise this is to the truly poor in spirit, to those who mourn their sins and are meek. But we must be pure in heart.
- b) Consider two possible ideas behind this purity: sincerity of purpose or a cleansing.
- c) What did Jesus say was the source of evil thoughts, murders, etc (Matthew 15:18-20)?
- d) How do we keep the heart pure according to Philippians 4:8? What does this imply about our daily lives?
- e) Consider a similar promise made in I John 3:1-3. When will we see God? What are we to do in preparation?

8) Seventh Beatitude – Matthew 5:9 Peacemakers

- a) Note the appropriateness of what peacemakers will be called: sons of God. God is the ultimate peacemaker.
- b) Would this beatitude have been surprising to those disciples who expected a worldly kingdom ushered in by a conquering Messiah?
- c) What traits are essential in a peacemaker?
- d) What kind of peace should these peacemakers spread (John 14:27, Romans 5:1, Ephesians 2:13-17)?
- e) What should be the peacemakers attitude toward others (Romans 12:18)?

9) Eighth Beatitudes – Matthew 5:10-12 Persecuted

- a) Note the reward here is the same as the first beatitude, the kingdom of heaven.
- b) The promise is for those who are persecuted for what? What else is said in regard to the cause of this persecution in verse 11?
- c) What is said about this type of suffering in Acts 5:41 and Philippians 1:28-29?
- d) What benefit can come from this kind of persecution (James 1:2-4, II Cor. 4:17)?

10) Similitudes – Matthew 5:13-16

- a) This section presents a transition from a description of the character required of Christians to the teachings of Jesus regarding how a Christian must conduct himself in the world. Is it possible for a Christian to please God by removing himself totally from the world? What did Paul say on this matter?

- b) What is the use of salt in the days of Jesus? How then were Christians to be salt?

- c) Reconcile the message that Christians are to cause their light to be seen with the teaching of Matthew 6:1-4 that we are to hide our good works.

- d) Read I Peter 2:12. What opportunity do we have to influence the world through our example? What result is mentioned here that was also mentioned in Matthew 5:16

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Lessons 5 and 6

Law and Murder, Adultery, Marriage, and Oaths

- 1) **Christ and the Law – Matthew 5:17-20**
 - a) What is the distinction between the Law and the Prophets? Together what would they have comprised?
 - b) What was the relationship of Jesus to the law? Based on Romans 10:4 and Colossians 2:13-14, what may Jesus have meant by *“till all is fulfilled”*?
 - c) What is a jot or a tittle? Why did Jesus use them in vs. 18?
 - d) Imagine the effect on Jesus’ audience as He told them they had to be more righteous than the Pharisees. Why would many have considered this challenge impossible?
 - e) Consider the following passages and explain what was flawed about the righteousness of the Pharisees:
 - i) Matthew 23:23-28
 - ii) Luke 18:9-14
 - iii) Romans 10:2-3
 - f) We have noted that the Sermon on the Mount stresses the heart and the inward character that a member of the kingdom must possess. Before considering what Jesus has to say about murder and other subjects in Matthew 5:21-48, read the

following and decide whether the old law was a law of the heart or only a ceremonial law:

- i) Deuteronomy 6:5
 - ii) Leviticus 19:17-18
 - iii) Exodus 20:17
- g) Much of the structure of Matthew 5:21-48 comes from the statements of Jesus about what they had heard was “*said of old*” or “*said to those of old*” or simply “*said*” followed by a “*But I say to you*”. We will need to decide to what He was referring. Two possibilities:
- i) These statements refer to the old law and in this sermon Jesus begins to teach a new law supplanting the old.
 - (1) Do the statements appear to be quotes from the old law? (for example, is there an Old Testament passage saying you shall not murder?)
 - (2) How do you reconcile Jesus teaching new commandments with the statement He made in vs. 17-18?
 - ii) These statements refer to the manner in which the Pharisees applied and used the old law. In other words, Jesus is not changing the old law at this point but criticizing the narrow, ceremonial and hypocritical applications of the Pharisees.
 - (1) Note how differently Jesus referred to the Old Testament in these passages: Matthew 4:5, 7, 10; 11:10; 12:17; 15:7-9.
 - (2) For each “*But I say to you*”, Jesus must be stressing a truth that they should already have understood from the old law.
 - (3) For each statement of Jesus explain how the old law could have implied what Jesus had to say.

2) Murder and Proper Relations – Matthew 5:21-26

- a) What beatitudes are missing for a person who commits the sins of vs. 22?
- b) Do we sometimes apply the commandment regarding “You fool!” in a Pharisaic fashion?
- c) What beatitude(s) would motivate a person to be reconciled with his brother before bringing a gift to the altar?

- d) Jesus' statement in vs. 25, 26 has the appearance of simply being practical advice, but that does not fit the context well. If we assume that we have wronged our adversary and their case is just, then Jesus' command is for us to act as the meek would in such circumstances.

3) Adultery – Matthew 5:27-30

- a) Could vs. 27 be a quote from the Old Testament. If so, where?

- b) If the Pharisees misused vs. 27, what might they have taught in their false righteousness?

- c) What commandment in the Old Testament would also have it clear that lust is a sin? What beatitudes would prohibit it?

- d) How important is obedience according to vs. 29-30?

4) Divorce – Matthew 5:31-32

- a) Does vs. 31 seem to refer to a technical behavior required by the Pharisees? Is the answer of Jesus much broader than technical applications of law? Read Matthew 19:3-9. Why was divorce allowed for more than one reason?

- b) What beatitudes in particular would be applicable to questions regarding divorce (regardless of the specific law God gives concerning it)?

5) Oaths – Matthew 5:33-37

- a) Based on the details of how they were swearing (vs. 34-36), do you get the impression that the Pharisees had created many rules regarding oaths? Read Matthew 23:16-22.

- b) Which beatitude would motivate someone to avoid oaths and simply tell the truth?

- c) In terms of civil oaths (e.g. swearing in of a witness), is it possible for us to miss the point of this passage in an effort to be technically correct?

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Lesson 7

Attitude toward Enemies

- 1) Read Deut. 19:16-21. What beneficial result should have come this commandment?
- 2) Given the flaws of the Pharisees and scribes, how might they have abused the commandment quoted in vs. 38?
- 3) Before concentrating on the actions commanded in vs. 39-42, determine in your mind what principle(s) Jesus is trying to teach.
- 4) For each of the verses below, list the beatitude character traits that would be demonstrated by the required action:
 - a) vs. 39
 - b) vs. 40
 - c) vs. 41
 - d) vs. 42
- 5) Consider the following passages: Romans 12:17-21 and Hebrews 10:30.
- 6) How would the Pharisees and others have defined neighbor and enemy as used in vs. 43?

- 7) Did the Old Testament scriptures teach that you should hate your enemy? Be careful not to give a quick answer. Read Exodus 23:4-5 and Psalms 139:20-22 and consider examples that might lead to an affirmative or negative answer.

- 8) What five commandments are given in vs. 44? Imagine the shock they produced in Jesus' audience.

- 9) Regardless of your answer in question 7, was Jesus teaching something that was radically different than what was practiced and believed before?

- 10) What beatitude character traits would be applied in obeying vs. 44?

- 11) Could there be a connection between vs. 46-47 and vs. 20? What would have been the Pharisee's attitude and behavior toward his enemy? Would he have felt righteous?

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Lesson 8

Good Works in Secret (Matthew 6:1-8)

Introduction

In His “Sermon on the Mount”, Jesus taught His disciples to have a righteousness which exceeded that of the Pharisees (**Matt. 5:20**). In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus specifically discusses 3 acts of righteousness:

Almsgiving (Charitable deeds)

Prayer

Fasting

The Basic Principle Governing Acts of Righteousness (v.1)

What is the scope of verse 1? Does it refer to almsgiving (charitable deeds) alone, or **all** acts of righteousness?:

Some manuscripts, upon which the KJV and NKJV are based, have the Greek word **eleemosunen** translated “**alms**”, or “**charitable deeds**”, which would make this verse refer specifically to almsgiving, or charitable deeds. On the other hand, older manuscripts, upon which the ASV and NASV are based, have the Greek word **dikaiosunen** translated “**righteousness**”, which would make verse one speaking in general terms, establishing a basic principle to be applied to ALL acts of righteousness

Textual support seems strongest for **dikaiosunen** (we will discuss this in class), making verse 1 an introductory statement concerning all righteous acts.

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- 1) Assuming that verse 1 applies to ALL acts of righteousness, what is the basic principle and thesis concerning the practice of righteous acts? (Matt 6:1)
 - 2) Are we to completely avoid acts of righteousness in public (e.g. almsgiving, praying, fasting)? (Matt 5:16)
 - 3) What should be the motive for our acts of righteousness?

- 4) What is our reward when we do acts of righteousness for the purpose of being seen by men? (Matt. 6:2, 5, 16)

Charity That Pleases God (Matt. 6:1-4)

- 1) What does almsgiving mean?
- 2) Are there people in need of our charity today? Is the situation different today?
- 3) Is it our responsibility to help those in need? (Matt 6:19-24, Gal 2:10, 6:10)
- 4) What was the problem with the way the hypocrites gave alms?
- 5) What reward did the hypocrites receive, if any?
- 6) Does Jesus condemn all public giving? (Acts 2:44-45, 4:34-37)
- 7) What do you think Jesus meant by “not letting your left hand know what your right hand is doing”?

Prayer that pleases God (Matt 6:5-8)

- 1) What was the problem with the way the hypocrites prayed? What was their reward?
- 2) What should our motive be when praying? What is our reward when praying properly?
- 3) Is Jesus condemning all public prayer? (Matt 11:25, John 11:41, Acts 27:35)
- 4) Can the mere reciting of memorized prayers be vain repetition?
- 5) Is persistence in prayer vain repetition? (Luke 11:5-10; 18:1-7)
- 6) Jesus says God knows what we need even before we ask. Why then pray even once?

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Lesson 9

Prayer and Fasting (Matthew 6:9-18)

The Pattern for Prayer (vs. 9-15)

- 1) Verses 9-15 are commonly referred to as “The Lord’s Prayer” Is it an appropriate designation (explain your answer)?
- 2) Did Jesus pray this prayer? If your answer is no, is there a prayer of His that is recorded?
- 3) Is the “Lord’s Prayer” meant to be memorized and recited at every occasion, sort of like a “prayer of prayers”? If not, how may we use “the Lord’s Prayer” in our prayers?

“Our Father in heaven”

- 1) What do the words “Our Father” indicate about our relationship with God?
- 2) Who has the privilege to say “Our Father in heaven”?

“Hallowed be Your name”

- 3) What does the word name refer to?
- 4) What does it mean to hallow the name of God?

“Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven”

- 5) Is it appropriate today to pray “Your kingdom come? Why or why not?
- 6) How may we pray for the kingdom?
- 7) Define the kingdom. Does the kingdom have any borders?
- 8) To what extent is God’s will done in heaven?

“Give us this day our daily bread”

- 9) Does Jesus refer to spiritual (i.e. bread of heaven) or physical bread?
- 10) How long is the duration of the request?
- 11) What does this plea indicate about our dependence on God?
- 12) Are there matters too small to bring to our father in prayer? (Phil. 4:6, 1 Pet. 5:7)

“And forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors”

- 13) What is meant by the word “debt”?
- 14) Is our forgiving others a condition to be met in getting forgiveness from God? (

“And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us from the evil one”

- 15) Does God tempt man?
 - a) If “yes”, how do you explain James 1:13?
 - b) If “no”, what is the meaning of “... do not lead us into temptation”? (cf. Psalm 141)
- 16) We can overcome Satan by the power of God. Do we have any responsibility in the matter? (James 4:7)

Fasting (vs. 16-18)

- 1) What is fasting?
- 2) What was the problem with the way the hypocrites fasted?
- 3) Has the Lord commanded fasting as a religious rite?
- 4) If a man fasts today does he sin in doing so?
- 5) On what occasions might a man want to fast?

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Lesson 10 Treasures in Heaven & Worries (Matthew 6:19-34)

Treasures in Heaven (vs. 19-24)

- 1) What is the heart of the issue in verses 19-21
- 2) What may earthly treasures consist of today?
- 3) What happens to earthly treasures? (James 5:1-3)
 - a) Can we take them with us when we leave this earth? (1 Tim 6:7)
 - b) What can we learn from Solomon about the nature of wealth? (Prov. 23:5)
 - c) Read Psalms 49:6-10
- 4) With what did Paul say he would be content? (1 Tim 6:8)
- 5) With what should we be content? (Hebrew 13:5)
- 6) Does Jesus condemn riches? Explain.
- 7) What do you think verses 22-23 are meant to illustrate/teach?
- 8) What does Mammon mean?
- 9) Why can't one serve both God and Mammon?

Do Not Worry (vs. 25-34)

- 10) What may our excessive anxiety over the necessities of life indicate?

- 11) Why should we not excessively worry about these things?

- 12) How can Jesus' illustrations about the birds be an encouragement to us?

- 13) How can Jesus' illustrations about the lilies be an encouragement to us?

- 14) Do we have any responsibility to clothe and feed ourselves? (2 Thess. 3:10)

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Lesson 11

Judging

- 1) Matthew 7:1 is a frequently misunderstood or misused passage. It is used sometimes to justify an attitude of acceptance toward behavior that God condemns. To recognize what the passage does not teach, read the following verses and note the kind of judgment that is required:
 - a) I Corinthians 5:11-12
 - b) John 7:24
 - c) I John 4:1-2
- 2) What further teaching in Matthew 7:2-6 indicates that we must exercise some form of judgment?
- 3) Given that the passages above teach that we must exercise judgment, what was Jesus condemning in Matthew 7:1? Try to be specific and use the context of the Sermon on the Mount.
- 4) Explain the warning in Matthew 7:2 in terms of how other people may judge us based on our judgment.
- 5) In what sense might God judge us based on the manner of our judgment toward others?
- 6) Note the humor that Jesus uses in Matthew 7:4. What danger would result from such a ridiculous circumstance?

- 7) What accusation does Jesus make in vs. 5? Could this be helpful in determining the behavior He has condemned in vs. 1?
- 8) Based on vs. 5, what ultimately is our responsibility toward our brother?
- 9) Is it at all possible to obey vs. 6 without making some kind of judgment?
- 10) Read Acts 13:45-46 and Acts 18:5-6. Was Paul applying the principle of vs. 6? What allowed him to be so confident that he was doing the right thing?

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Lesson 12

Persistence in Prayer

1) Prayer – Matthew 7:7-11

- a) In vs. 7, what three things does Jesus tell us to do? What results should we expect?

- b) Consider all that we have studied to this point from the Sermon on the Mount. Are there reasons why we would particularly need this exhortation to look to God for things we cannot provide on our own?

- c) A similar exhortation to persistence in prayer is found in Luke 18:1-8.
 - i) According to vs. 1 why did Jesus speak this parable?

 - ii) What was His challenging question in vs. 8?

 - iii) Are vs. 1 and 8 pertinent to our study of Matthew 7:7-11. If so, how?

- d) Whom does Jesus have in mind when He says you (vs. 7) and everyone (vs. 8)?

- e) Does the promise of vs. 8 mean we will receive exactly what we ask for? Why or why not? (cf. James 4:3).

- f) What do vs. 9 and vs. 10 indicate about the kind of response we should expect from God when we pray?

- g) In regard to the subject(s) of our requests of God answer the following:
 - i) Note the promises made in Matthew 5:4, 6. What might this imply about the subject of our requests?
 - ii) For what three specific things are we told to pray in the Lord's model prayer? Besides Matthew 7:7-8 what else in this sermon indicates that God will answer these three requests.

- h) Read James 1:17. What good things does the Father give to those who ask him?

2) Golden Rule – Matthew 7:12

- a) Read Leviticus 19:18. Was the principle of Matthew 7:12 taught in the Old Testament?

- b) Read Romans 13:9-10. Use vs. 10 to explain what is meant in Matthew 7:12 by “this is the law and prophets”.

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Lesson 13

The Narrow Choice

1) The Narrow Way – Matthew 7:13-23

- a) This last section of Matthew 7, from vs. 13 to the end of the chapter, is about making a choice. Jesus stresses the urgency of making the right decision, and the ease with which individuals mistakenly believe that they have made the right decision. In studying this section, remember that the decision is not one that focuses on doctrinal matters (though they are important) but rather one that concerns the kind of person we will be. We are right back where we started this study. If we are to gain the kingdom of heaven, we must be poor in spirit. If we are to see God, we must be pure in heart. If we are to obtain mercy, we must be merciful. The decision, Jesus is saying, is ours and few will respond.
- b) How is the way to life described and how many will find it?
- c) How are false prophets to be judged? How do they appear to men? Could this be reference to the Pharisees and scribes? Could it have a broader application?
- d) What happens to an unfruitful tree?
- e) Using Matthew 7:21-23 answer the following:
 - i) List other references to the kingdom of heaven found in this sermon:
 - ii) According to vs. 21, who will enter the kingdom of heaven? Who will not?
 - iii) Did the individuals in vs. 22 perform good works in the name of the Lord? Why then were they not saved? (Use other teachings from this sermon to explain your answer).

iv) Despite the apparent good works, what did Jesus say they had practiced? Find other references to the law to explain what He meant.

2) Build on the Rock – Matthew 7:24-29

- a) This famous illustration is a continuation of Jesus' theme of the need to make a decision.
- b) According to vs. 24, a wise man is one who does what in life?
- c) This wise man is said to be like what kind of builder?
- d) A foolish builder builds in what manner? What is the result? This illustrates what kind of life?
- e) What was the reaction to Jesus' sermon? Why?