

AN OLD SERMON: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

You're about to hear a sermon that was put together in Matthew that we know as **Jesus' sermon on the mount**.

The opening statement—the Beatitudes are the essence of the message. All the rest radiates from that foundation. The rest of the sermon expands on those points, explains, contains the details of the beatitudes: In this one sermon, Jesus laid out the heart, the wonder and the challenge of our Spiritual journey and being in a right relationship with God and the world.

BLESSED.

Blessed is not winning the lottery, nor having a comfortable life.
Blessed is not being in control or getting what you want.
Those things are but shallow distractions to what is truly important and essential.

Blessed.
Blessed is an opening connection with God.
Blessed is sensing where we really are in the world, with ourselves, with each other and with God.
Blessed is a tender, elusive grasp of what is beyond us, bigger than us.
Blessed is a broken heart that pours out.
Blessed is freedom, it is transcending and it is the kiss of agape love.
Blessed is an active invitation to receive the breath of God.
Blessed is sensing deep down inside that it will be alright.

This sermon will be presented as spoken by Jesus, in the first person.
Blessed are those who know their heart is impoverished, for they will understand God's way.

Blessed are those who mourn / who are broken hearted, for they will be comforted.

Blessed are those don't claim or control more than is their's to possess, for they will discover earth's bounty.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for doing what is gracious and good, for they will be filled.

Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

Blessed are those who don't lie to themselves, to others and to God, for they will see God..... They will see God all around them.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for people will know that they have God's spiritual DNA.

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for they will understand the way of Christ.

Blessed are YOU when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

You are the salt of the earth. This message / the Good news is persevered through you. Keep and proclaim this message.

If you don't, God will not be near to you and all will suffer.

You are the light of the world for everyone to see. Be and live the way of God because people are watching. Keep living for God; don't let your witness fade.

Don't think I've come to end the reasons for the laws or the wisdom of the prophets. I have not come to abolish but to fulfill.

The laws and the prophets' advice are intended to direct you to live well and to be in God's favour. Breaking and ignoring the commandments will send you in a destructive direction that is away from God.

Follow them and teach them and you will dwell in the centre of God's will. Your own insight and opinions are not good enough.

For example,

You've always known the law against murder, and I hope you don't simply follow it because you are afraid of the judgment—the punishment.

The intent / the purpose is more than to implant fear.

I say to you that if you are angry with your brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment, and if you insult someone, you will be liable to your peers; and if you say, "You fool" you will be liable to total rejection and isolation.

And, don't think being a good church goer or sacrificial giving will cancel the effects of broken relationships.

First be reconciled with your brother and sister who has something against you, and then give to the church.

Come to terms quickly with your accuser or your accuser may grow impatient with you and use the courts, and the court system will make you pay all you owe.

You have heard that it was said, "you shall not commit adultery."

But, I say there is more to it than just the penalty from being caught.

Your devotions and passions are what form you.

If you lust with your eyes then you've already committed adultery in your heart. It is better to change your habits and to stop seeing then to lose your whole body and be in the damnation.

And, if your reach causes you to sin, then it is better to lose a hand than lose your life.

>Jesus' next axiom can't be contemporized; therefore, we need to understand the culture of those days.

Two thousand years ago, women were considered property, and men could send a wife away and get another. The woman was left desperately homeless with no hope of supporting herself.

In the pursuit of a higher standard, the Jewish law required men to at least give them a certificate of divorce.... to help make it easier for another man to take her in.

Yet, most of the time, she would have to go to another out of necessity and NOT because of love, and the other man knew that,... and so the cycle of abuse and being treated as property continued.

Jesus sought to clarify what a true higher standard is by saying to the man, "You do not have the power or authority to get rid of your wife, unless she has already chosen another man by her actions."

If you just dump her then she is forced to sell her body to another man for the sake of food and shelter,... and that is ugly and adultery.

And,..... to discourage men from accepting such an unjust system, Jesus warned that taking in/marrying such a woman is adultery, too.

He wasn't intending to punish the victim, but to stop an ugly, brutal system. He wanted all people to be treated with justice and compassion.

Continuing:

Again, you have been told for ages that you should not make false promises to God, but instead live out what you vow to do.

But,.... I say to you, don't connect your claims, opinions or promises to any other authority except to your own integrity.

It doesn't matter if 90% of the people agree with you.... or if Wikipedia declares agreement with you.

And, don't swear on your mother's grave or to other good names, and don't pull God into your claims.

Let your word be yours. Let your "Yes be Yes" or your No be no.

Anything more than that is deception.

You have heard that it was said, An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,... that justice is but a balancing act.

But, I say to you, Do not attack an evildoer, but do stand firm.

If anyone strikes you, don't be intimidated, but instead demand to be treated with respect. Don't succumb to the evil action by doing evil, and don't run away.

If someone wants to sue for your coat, then embarrass that person in the public domain by giving that person all your clothes.

And, if someone forces you to go one mile, then let them know that they are not in control..... go another mile for your own sake.

Many problems can be avoided if you give to everyone who begs from you and if you don't refuse those who want to borrow from you.

Moreover, you have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But, ... I say to you, Love your enemies.... LOVE your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that people will know that you are peacemakers—God's children.

The world is not tilted against you or for you. Life happens, and if you only love those who love you, what have you gained or learned.

Even greedy people live that way.

And, if you are only friendly to those you know, then how are you any different than everyone else. Even strangers can be friendly.

Engage in / live God's way, and nothing less.

Beware of showing off how righteously you live in order to get approval. God does not appreciate such arrogant displays... because they are lies and they make others feel less.

So, give and help others discreetly, don't be like the hypocrites who get buildings named after them or broadcast their generosity.

They are merely buying admiration. They do not understand the beauty of a gift.... which is completely letting go of the item or money with no strings attached.

Giving away is the nature of God, and God will know when you are not truly walking with God.

And likewise when you pray, don't pretend and avoid lofty "religious cliches" for the sake of impressing people... or God.

Prayer is personal and from the heart.

Prayer is an honest heart to heart chat with God.

If it helps, pray privately. Prayer is very personal. Be true to yourself and God will receive that with open arms... because God already knows what is in your heart.

Here is but a simple example:

Our loving, protecting nurturer who is the perfect parent, who is ever present and transcendent... you are holy indeed, and worthy of devotion.

May your way unfold here and now.

May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us, just for today, our daily needs.

And, forgive us our shortcomings and sins, as we forgive those who have hurt and sinned against us.

And, do not let us be tempted, and keep us from deception and those who deceive.

We submit to you; we love you. Amen.

And note, if you forgive others their trespasses against you, then God will also forgive you.

You are not God, and you are not the keeper of justice.
If you don't forgive, then you are usurping God, and God will not tolerate that.

And, whenever you fast, do not make a big deal of it. Don't try to get sympathy for your fasting / your self discipline.

If you do, then you will not learn or gain a thing.

When you fast, make the purpose and focus on trying to better connect with God by clearing out distractions. Make it personal, and God will respond in kind.

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal.

Putting your trust and hope in financial security will make you mean, paranoid and afraid.

Invest in / trust in God and you will be free and live without fear.

For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Your eyes are the indicator and influence for your whole body.

Be careful what you look at. Be careful what movies, TV shows or others things you watch.

Your eye will direct and influence your whole life.

When you no longer see things clearly, when you only see what is dark, then you really are in deep trouble.

No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other.

What is consuming your time, energy and focus?

You cannot serve God and wealth.

Okay,..... I know this must all feel overwhelming—too big a challenge to grasp.

However, it likely feels that way because you're trying to play by your rules; you're limiting your understanding to what you think you can control.

You're not realizing the scope and depth of God's love and power.

Life is not as simple as a financial statement.

Therefore I tell you, do NOT worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear.

Is not life more than food and the body more than obsessing about appearances?

Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor have bank accounts, and yet your loving God feeds them.

Are you not of more value than they?

And, can any of you ... by worrying... add a single hour to your span of life? Do you really think you are in control... or that God is so weak and uncaring?

Why do you worry about possessions, such as clothing?

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toll nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory did not look as fine a lily in a field.

But if God so clothes the plants of the field, which are alive today and soon buried under snow, will God not much more clothe / take care of you—you of little faith?

Therefore, do not worry, saying, “What will we eat? Or “What will we drink?” or “What will we have?” or “Where will we live?”

For it is those who do not know God who strive for all those things; and indeed your loving God knows that you need all those things.

Instead, strive first to live the way of God / to be in God’s delight, and all these things will come your way,.... as well.

SO, DO NOT worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.

Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For when you engage in condemnation and belittling then you will be trapped in a legalistic balance sheet, and you will never win at that game.

Why do you dwell on the speck / the little faults in others, yet don’t even do the honest introspection to discover your own glaring faults?

You hypocrite, first deal with your own huge issues that control you.... so that you can then be able to help others grow, too.

And, be careful about those who claim to have the answers / who profess to be more holy. Don’t throw your pearls before swine to be trampled. Put your trust / your spiritual well being in God’s hands.

All in the context of what I’ve been saying:

Ask, and it will be given you; search and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

Is there anyone among you who, if your child ask for a piece of bread, will give a stone?

Or, if the child asks for a hamburger, will give a snake?

If you then, who really struggle with being in God’s way, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your loving and caring God who is more than able give good things to those who ask.

And, remember this:

In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the teachings of the prophets.

Realize that most people don’t get it, that they are not living God’s way.

The way of destruction has been beaten down and it is very wide and easy to follow. God's way is but a narrow path because few choose to take it.

Do beware of false prophets. They sure sound appealing, and their message may be seductive, but measure them by who they are and how they live, and not by their promises.

A good harvest does not come from weeds.

Those deceivers will have to account for their lies.

You'll know them by the results of their lives.

Not everyone who says to me, "Lord, Lord" will be a part of God's eternal beauty, but only the one who does the will of our loving God.

Some will make bold claims of being loyal to me, but I will declare to them, "I never knew you; go away from me, you deceivers."

Therefore, Everyone then who hears these words of mine and act on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.

The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on rock.

And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand.

The rain fell, and the floods came and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell..... and Great was its fall.

When Jesus was finished saying these things, the people were astounded at what he had said,.....for he taught them as one having authority.