

THE GOSPEL OF
MATTHEW
SERIES



Life
in the
Kingdom

The Sermon on the Mount

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Calvary

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Life *in the* Kingdom

The Sermon on the Mount

MATTHEW 3–7

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What does it mean to be an authentic follower of Jesus Christ?

WE LIVE IN A CULTURE where it is not difficult to say we are Christians. But what difference does this make in our lives? And what should we think when we hear those around us say that Jesus is an exceptional teacher, but that there are many ways to God?

In this guide, we are going to focus on the teaching of Jesus in His Sermon on the Mount, perhaps the greatest sermon ever preached, as presented in the Gospel of Matthew. We will also consider the preceding context.

As we study His teaching, we are going to learn who Jesus is. He is King Jesus, the sinless Son of God, the long-awaited Messiah, Immanuel (God with us), and our Savior who “will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

His call to “Follow Me” is urgent and uncompromising. Living as authentic followers of Jesus has a direct impact on our daily lives, which is the result of a personal relationship with Him.

Let’s sit together at the feet of Jesus and listen to some of the best known words of the Bible. While they are familiar, they are also some of the most misunderstood. Listen to Jesus, reflect on His words, and examine your life.

I am praying you will experience God’s transforming power as you place your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ and follow Him. ■



Dr. John H. Munro
SENIOR PASTOR, CALVARY CHURCH



Preparing the Way — A Message of Repentance

MATTHEW 3:1-12

IN MATTHEW 3, WE MEET A FASCINATING CHARACTER — John the Baptist. Before this man was born, it was prophesied that he would be “great before the Lord” (Luke 1:15), and filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother’s womb. Jesus said, “Truly I say to you among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist” (Matthew 11:11).

Before the arrival of a dignitary such as the emperor or governor or king, the way would be prepared. John the Baptist comes to prepare the nation

spiritually to receive the coming Messiah. Four hundred years of silence had passed since the prophet Malachi had spoken. Now God speaks through His messenger, John the Baptist, this strange man who wears strange clothes, eats strange food, and lives in a strange place. What is God saying?

Repent!

Repentance involves a turning from ourselves, our agenda, and our sin to God and His grace. For those more comfortable with a user-friendly gospel, repentance may sound like an old-fashioned concept, but it's a very important word in Scripture (Acts 2:38, 17:30, 20:21, 26:20, and 2 Peter 3:9).

The Kingdom of Heaven

Why is John the Baptist preaching repentance? The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand; it's time to prepare for the arrival of the Messiah King, our Lord Jesus Christ. All of us have sinned. Therefore each one of us must repent and confess our sins. This personal confession of your sins is essential, acknowledging your sinfulness, your rebellion, and your waywardness.

Baptism by John in the River Jordan was the outward sign of the personal confession of sin. John is preparing the way. John explains, "But He who is coming after me... will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (v 11).

Repentance must be genuine

We must "bear fruit in keeping with repentance" (v 8). This repentance is not merely reciting a prayer or completing a ritual but also a radical change with visible evidence in our lives. In fact, authentic followers of Jesus are to live in daily repentance, characterized by humility and obedience.

If there is no genuine repentance, and no good fruit produced, the tree "is cut down and thrown into the fire" (v 10). John uses graphic language to explain that those who do not repent of their sins will experience the fire of God and eternal destruction. God is holy and opposed to sin; only through redemption in Christ can we be reconciled with Him.

With the coming of Jesus, the Kingdom of God is near. Have you repented of your sins? Are you living a life of daily repentance? Is your heart prepared for the Kingdom? ■



The Baptism of Jesus

MATTHEW 3:13-17

AFTER 30 YEARS OF RELATIVE OBSCURITY in the insignificant town of Nazareth in Galilee, Jesus comes from Galilee to the River Jordan to be baptized by John.

The anointing of the Messiah

What an amazing scene! We see the Trinity: one God who eternally exists in three distinct Persons. The heavens are opened, and the Holy Spirit descends like a dove on Jesus. And God the Father declares, “This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased” (v 17).

The Holy Spirit coming down on Jesus is the anointing of the Messiah for His kingly service. “Behold My servant, whom I uphold, My chosen, in whom My soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations” (Isaiah 42:1).

Identifying with sinners

Our Savior identifies with the sinners He comes to save. John preaches repentance, but Jesus has no sins to confess. Jesus is the sinless Savior! So John questions why Jesus comes to him to be baptized. Jesus answers, “It is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness” (v 15).

The baptism of Jesus by John is a visible display of the dedicated obedience and surrender of Jesus to His Father’s will. The sinless Savior is taking His place among the sinners He has come to save. In His baptism, Jesus is demonstrating that He will fulfill His role in God’s plan of salvation. He has come to live a perfect life, die on the cross as the perfect Lamb of God, and rise again to conquer sin and death.

The symbol of baptism

Followers of Jesus recognize baptism as an important symbol of our identification with Jesus Christ and the Body of Christ. At the moment of conversion, every authentic believer in Jesus Christ receives the Spirit of God. That Holy Spirit baptism is symbolized by our water baptism. When you are baptized, you are declaring that you have died with Christ, been buried with Christ, and have been raised with Christ to walk in newness of life. The old has gone, and the new has come. You are united with Christ (Romans 6:3–4).

Baptism is also a command of Scripture. Prior to His ascension, our Lord Jesus commands His disciples to make disciples of all nations, “baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19). Water baptism doesn’t save us. It doesn’t cleanse us of our sins. But it is the sign and seal—the outward uniform—that we are saved by God’s grace. It is the outward, visible sign of the Spirit of God’s inner work in our hearts.

God the Father is well pleased with His Son. And God, our Father, is well pleased when those who follow His Son obey Him and surrender to His will. Have you surrendered to God’s will in every area of your life? ■



A Unique, Sinless Savior

MATTHEW 4:1-11

IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD, the Holy Spirit leads Jesus “into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil” (v 1). The temptation lasted 40 days and 40 nights, during which the Lord fasted.

The encounter

Why is this encounter important? If Jesus is going to fulfill His mission and save us from our sins, He must be sinless. In this passage, we see the sinlessness of the Son of God—Immanuel: God with us (Matthew 1:23). Jesus is truly God and truly man. There is none like Him, nor will there ever be anyone like Him.

Our enemy is described as “the devil” (v 1), “the tempter” (v 3), and “Satan” (v 10), which means “our adversary.” He is the deceiver. He is also “the accuser of the brothers” (Revelation 12:7–10), specializing in slander, division, and accusations. Using King Herod, Satan had tried to kill the infant Jesus. Now he tries to prevent Him from fulfilling His mission.

Adam and Jesus

We must understand the significant contrast between Adam and Jesus. Created perfect by God, Adam was able not to sin. But in the Garden of Eden, Adam chose to sin, and as a result, we all have sinful natures. As the all-powerful Son of God, fully God and fully man, Jesus was able not to sin and did not sin. Our Savior “in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

Dealing with temptation

Notice the Lord’s strategy in dealing with the devil’s temptation. It is a strategy available to all of us. Our Lord repeatedly quotes the Word of God to resist the testing and temptation, “It is written... again it is written... for it is written.” Jesus knew, obeyed, and submitted to the Holy Scriptures.

Know the Word. Study the Word. Memorize the Word. Obey the Word. And you will be equipped to stand firm against the devil and overcome that temptation (Ephesians 6:13–14 and James 4:6–7). Everything contrary to the Word of God is to be resisted!

Our Lord Jesus is the spotless, sinless Lamb of God, appointed and uniquely qualified from all eternity to accomplish God’s plan of salvation. On our own, we are no match against the enemy. But our victory has been won by our Lord Jesus. He has defeated Satan and the powers of darkness and sin. And when we succumb to temptation, praise God, there is forgiveness in Christ. So stand strong in Him and trust Him with all of your heart. ■

*“Therefore take up
the whole armor
of God”*

EPHESIANS 6:13



Follow the Master

MATTHEW 4:12-25

WE GAIN A BETTER UNDERSTANDING of what it means to be an authentic follower of Jesus—to be a disciple of Jesus—as we see Jesus begin His public ministry and call His 12 disciples.

Who can be a follower of Jesus? Jesus is reaching out to all kinds of people from all sorts of places (vv 18, 25). No one is excluded (v 15). In the sight of God, we are all equal and unfit to be in the Kingdom of Heaven. But all who repent and believe in the Gospel are welcomed.

And who does King Jesus select to be His first four disciples? After the announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand, the calling of four

insignificant fishermen seems anticlimactic! But this is how God works — calling ordinary people to follow Him. Jesus calls us where we are in our daily lives, whether you are a fisherman, tax collector, nurse, auto mechanic, or business person.

The call of Jesus is “Follow Me.” This call is personal. It’s not just a call to the cause of Christ or the teaching of Christ or the example of Christ—it is to the Person of Christ. Authentic discipleship is following Jesus in a continuous and personal relationship. The Christian life begins with repenting and trusting in Jesus as your personal Savior and Lord. This begins a supernatural transformation in our hearts and lives.

Followers of Jesus are committed. When Jesus calls the disciples, they immediately follow Him (vv 20, 22). This is the obedience of faith. Following Jesus is the opposite of a life of self-determination and self-absorption. Jesus does not give His followers the guarantee of material benefits. You follow King Jesus on His terms, not yours. Anything or anyone claiming a higher affection or allegiance or authority in your life is to be rejected.

Authentic followers learn from Jesus. The challenge of discipleship is not just to follow Jesus but to learn from Jesus. The disciples were sometimes slow learners, occasionally afraid, doubtful, and argumentative. In other words, they were quite like you and me! But to learn, you must spend time with Jesus. You must daily be in His Word, in prayer, and frequently with other followers who will help you learn and grow. To stop learning is to stagnate. Disciples who are learning are growing!

Authentic followers of Jesus are called to serve. Discipleship is not an end in itself. Jesus uses our skills, training, resources, and education for His glory, “I will make you fishers of men” (v 19). You may enjoy Christian fellowship and studying the Scriptures, but if these pursuits do not result in you serving Jesus and others, there is a problem. We follow Jesus, and we learn about Jesus so that we may serve Jesus and others.

Do you hear the call of Jesus on your life? Are you truly following Jesus, or are you still following your own desires, plans, and priorities? ■



The Blessings of the Kingdom

MATTHEW 5:1-12

JESUS IS NOW SPEAKING TO HIS DISCIPLES on the mountain, and He is speaking to His followers today. In Matthew, the Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes. Jesus focuses not on the external—*what we do*—but instead on *who we are*. Jesus is first concerned with our hearts.

How these Beatitudes are evidenced in our lives will be different based on our individual personalities and backgrounds. But similar to the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5, these attitudes and characteristics are produced by the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit—Christ living in you.

In each verse, Jesus is not talking about being “blessed” in the sense of being rewarded by circumstances that will make you feel happy. Rather, “blessed” (*makarios* in Greek) refers to the inner joy that comes from following Jesus in a life of faith, a life of grace, and a life of obedience. Irrespective of your health, bank balance, education, or personal circumstances, you can be blessed by God and rest in your unbreakable relationship with Him. Let’s look at each of the qualities (the attitudes) of those following Jesus (living in the Kingdom).

Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (v 3).

Jesus is not referring to material poverty but spiritual poverty. This means realizing you are poor in a spiritual sense. If you are poor in spirit, you are repentant. You acknowledge your sinfulness and recognize the inadequacy of self-reliance and pride. You know there is nothing that commends us to God. It is by the grace of God that you receive the riches of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted (v 4).

The context is not mourning for the loss of a loved one, but rather mourning over our sin. Instead of being distracted by our frivolous and superficial society, you take your sin seriously. The Psalmist said, “My eyes shed streams of tears, because people do not keep Your law” (Psalm 119:136). When you spend time on your knees before God, reflecting on your life and mourning the sin and evil in the world, you will receive the comfort of your Heavenly Father.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth (v 5).

Don’t confuse meekness with weakness. Jesus was the strongest of men, but He was meek (Matthew 11:29). This is strength under control. We are naturally rebellious and try to control our lives. Those who are meek are submissive. Our Lord Jesus did the will of the Father.

Do you always want to be in control? Do you find it difficult to submit to authority? This is a lack of meekness. Yet to those who are meek, there is a tremendous promise: “They shall inherit the earth,” referring to when followers of Christ will reign with Christ during the Millennial Kingdom.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied (v 6).

What is your goal in life? Putting yourself at the center of your world rather than God is a fatal mistake. If your personal happiness is your goal, you can be certain that you will never achieve it for any length of time. As followers of Jesus, we seek to do God's will and follow His commands. This "righteousness" refers to doing the right thing before God, loving righteousness and hating sin.

Do you have this desire for God and His righteousness? For those who do, being satisfied is the blessing! As you seek God, He will be found of you, and you will find true satisfaction. Not in your personal happiness or ambitions or the things of this world, but you will drink of the living water that Christ gives and will never thirst again.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy (v 7).

One of the wonderful attributes of God is that He is merciful. God is the source of mercy. We who are broken by sin are totally dependent upon the mercy of God. In the Gospel, we see Jesus reaching out in mercy to save us as we are unable to save ourselves. That is compassion in action!

We who have received the mercy of God must be merciful to others. Jesus said, "I desire mercy and not sacrifice" (Matthew 9:13). When were you last compassionate to someone? Sometimes we can be harsh, rather legalistic, and self-focused. Show mercy to the poor, the broken, the hurting around you.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (v 8).

What do you think about? What do you look at? What do you read? What do you talk about? We live in a filthy, sleazy world. What comes out of the mouth is a reflection of the heart. We are defiled by sin, but God demands purity. "Who will ascend the hill of the Lord? And who will stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart" (Psalm 24:3-4). Where do we get that spiritual cleansing? "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

Notice the tremendous promise to those who are pure in heart. They will see God. "Pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord"

(Hebrews 12:14). And just think of our future; in the New Jerusalem, we will “see His face” (Revelation 22:4).

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God (v 9).

We who have been justified by faith have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). We now show that we are sons of God by being agents of peace. Not only are we to do all we can to live peaceably with all, but we can also bring together those who are separated and hostile to each other. This does not mean that we don’t speak the truth. But we are to be peacemakers, not troublemakers in our homes, family relationships, at school, at work, and in society.

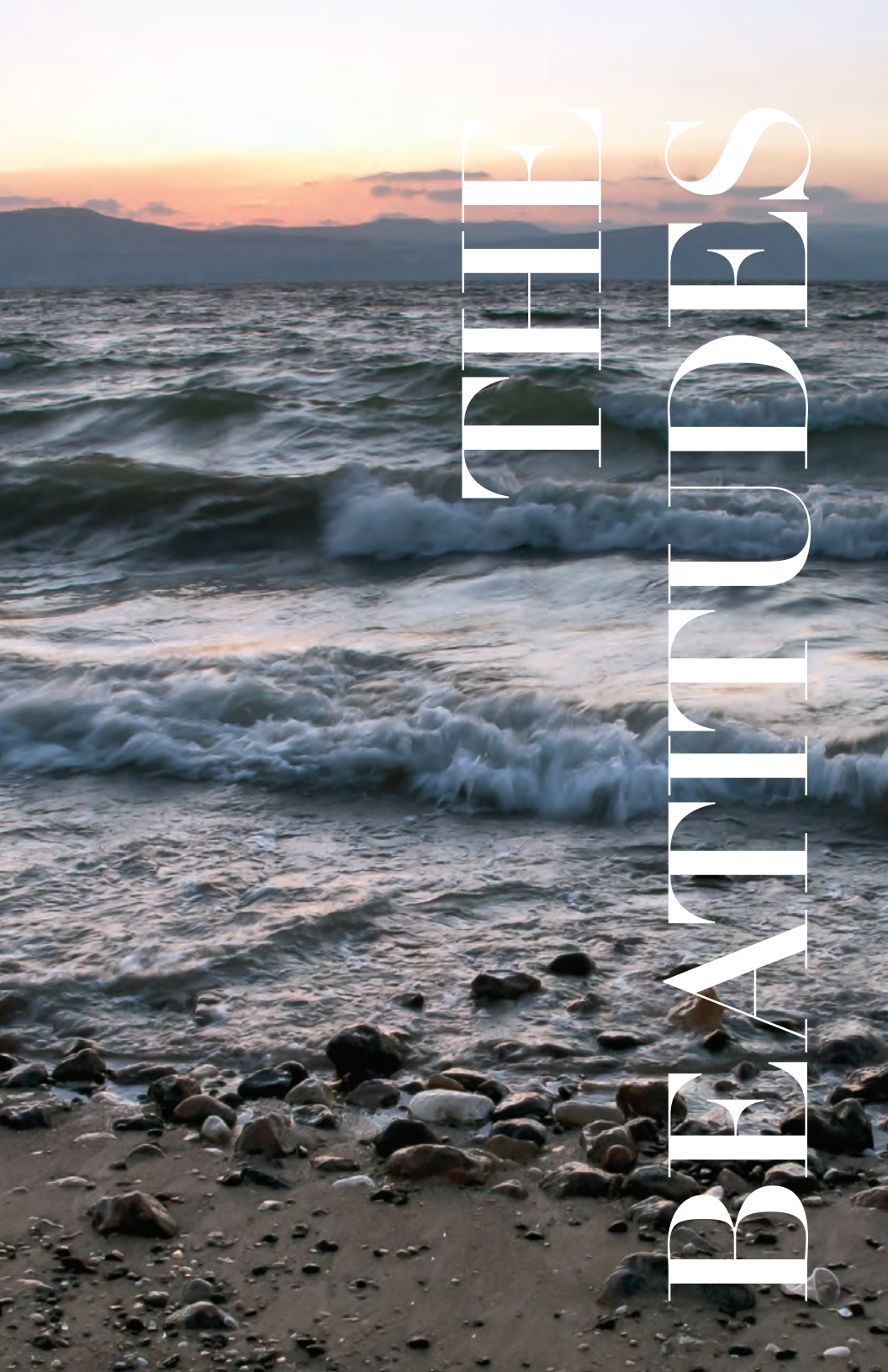
Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you (vv 10–12).

Persecution and suffering are expected for followers of Jesus. Our Lord Himself was persecuted—crucified on a cross. Living out these Beatitudes will bring misunderstanding, hostility, and even persecution. Throughout the world, many of our brothers and sisters are actively persecuted in ways that few of us can understand. But this persecution and suffering may also mean being fired or diminished at work, having friendships ended or experiencing social rejection because of your stand for Jesus. Don’t sink to the compromise of our unbelieving world. Be strong and courageous. Jesus doesn’t say what this great reward in heaven will be, but it is all of God’s grace as we seek to follow Jesus.

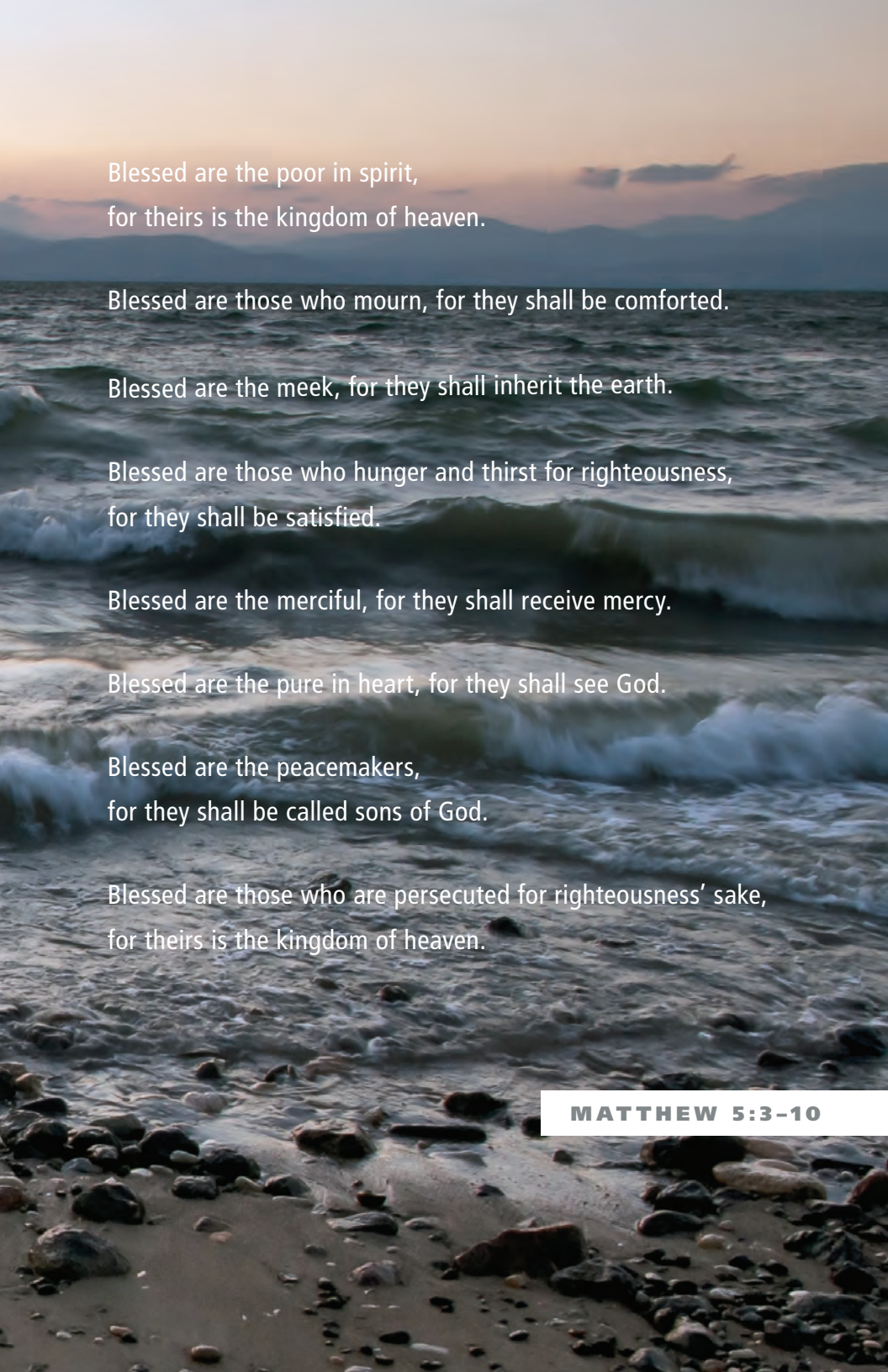
*“Rejoice and be glad,
for your reward is
great in heaven”*

MATTHEW 5:12

Do you see these kingdom characteristics and values evidenced in your life? The more you follow our Lord Jesus, the more you listen to Him, the more you commune with Him, the more these attitudes and traits will be present in your life. ■



THE S B E A T T I C U D S



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

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

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

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

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

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

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

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

MATTHEW 5:3-10



Salt and Light

MATTHEW 5:13-16

HAVING FIRST SET OUT THE CHARACTER AND VALUES of Kingdom living, Jesus now sets out how we are to relate to those who are not in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Followers of Jesus live in two worlds, which are diametrically opposed. We are not to be *of the world* (John 15:19). We are *of the Kingdom of Heaven* (Matthew 5:3, 10). But Jesus sends us *into the world* to be and make authentic followers of Jesus (Matthew 28:18–20, John 17:18). Being in the world, but not of the world, creates tensions and temptations for us.

How should we live?

Some Christ-followers conclude that because the world is evil and people are sinful, they should isolate themselves from the world. Others don't set out to live isolated lives, but they become so busy with their family and church life that in practice, they isolate themselves from the unbelieving culture.

Other professing followers of Jesus Christ get on very well with unbelievers because they are just like the unbelieving culture. Instead of being a light on a hill, they are like the world. They attract people by being like the world, copying the world, mimicking the world, and reflecting the world!

Neither isolation nor assimilation is what Christ commands. To His followers, Jesus says, "You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world" (vv 13, 14). Jesus is reminding us of our identity and purpose. These are not options—we must impact our world for Jesus.

Why salt and light?

In the first century, salt was used as a preservative to prevent decay. Once salt loses its saltiness, it is useless. Jesus is teaching that

His followers are different from unbelievers. Salt also creates thirst and makes food tasty (v 13). Authentic followers of Jesus create a spiritual thirst in the people around them. As we develop relationships with others, they see Jesus in our lives. This may ignite a spiritual thirst for Jesus. They may say, "What do you have that I don't?"

We live in a world of increasing darkness. Jesus came as the "light of the world" (John 8:12). Now He calls us to be light. The whole point of light is to be used to dispel the darkness; we are to "shine before others" (v 16). This means we are to live openly and visibly as followers of Jesus. People are to see our light—yes, even in a hostile culture! How do we primarily do this? Our "good works" (v 16) are to be meek, merciful, and pure in heart. We are loving, kind, and helpful to those who do not believe—even to our enemies!

Jesus calls us to go into the culture with His truth and love. Go and make a difference in your world, displaying and proclaiming the Lord Jesus! ■

*"So then, as we
have opportunity;
let us do good
to everyone"*

GALATIANS 6:10



The Heart of the Law

MATTHEW 5:17-20

IN THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, Jesus teaches us what it means in our daily lives to follow Him. During this teaching, Jesus summarizes His relationship to the Mosaic Law—that is, the Old Testament law, including the Ten Commandments. What is Jesus teaching us? Is Jesus giving us a new law and abandoning the old? How should we think of these traditional “rules” as we follow Him?

Avoid the two extremes

The legalist measures spirituality by how strictly the laws are observed. This is the way of religion: Do this. Don't do that. Some legalists even believe that

observing the Law is the way of salvation, a view that is contrary to Scripture. But even those who believe in salvation by grace through faith in Christ can still be legalistic—always trying to put people right and being primarily concerned with the externals and the letter of the law.

Then there are people who want to be totally free of all laws. They want to do what they like. Their sin doesn't seem to bother them at all. They get false comfort by saying, "Jesus loves me whatever I do." They think God's laws are suggestions, not commandments.

Understand how Jesus fulfills and interprets the Law

Jesus says that He comes not "to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them" (v 17). But what does this mean? Jesus certainly "fulfilled" the Law by living in perfect obedience to the Law of God. Also, all of the Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament find their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. But there is more. Now that Jesus has come, the Law is seen in a different light. The Law is still the Word of God and will continue to be taught. Jesus teaches it not as the Law of Moses (not as the old covenant) but as fulfilled and interpreted in and by Himself.

God never intended our relationship with Him to be a matter of fulfilling His laws through the discipline and determination of our wills. God seeks a love relationship with us, not just an outward legalistic observance of His Law. Jesus interprets the Law by dealing not only with the external action but with the internal and personal love of our hearts. Those who are obsessed with checking boxes and the literal observance of the Law are missing the point.

How can all this be accomplished? All of us come short in our power. But by receiving Jesus as our Savior and Lord, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit living in us to live a life that glorifies God (Romans 8:4). ■

“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit”

ROMANS 8:5



Living by the Law of Christ

MATTHEW 5:21-48

NOW JESUS PRESENTS SEVEN EXAMPLES as the authoritative interpreter of the Law noting, *“You have heard that it was said—but I say to you.”* Each case is related to our daily lives. Notice how Jesus goes beyond the outward observance (the focus of the scribes and Pharisees—the legalists) to address the motives of our heart.

Anger

“You shall not murder” is one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:13). Murder is an attack on the sovereignty of God, who gives life and takes life. Here Jesus reinterprets this commandment and brings it to fulfillment.

*“Let every
person be quick
to hear, slow
to speak, slow
to anger.”*

JAMES 1:19

He goes beyond the outward observance. Not only must you refrain from killing someone, if you have anger in your heart, if you insult your brother by calling him an idiot, stupid, or a “fool,” you will be liable to the “hell of fire” (v 22). Jesus is saying that murder is not just an action but an attitude.

The importance of treating people with love, respect, and mercy is fundamental to the teaching of Jesus. When you are angry with your brother (when you treat him with contempt), you need to resolve it as quickly as possible. It is not

just the outward action of murder, but how you treat others in every area of your life.

Sexual purity

Marriage is an exclusive, permanent, and holy covenant between one man and one woman. The seventh commandment is given to protect the sanctity of this union and the family. Adultery is a violation of trust in the most profound sense. Before there is an act of adultery, there is always adultery of the heart (v 28). You know the difference between looking and having “lustful intent.”

Radical action is required. Jesus is not saying that you should literally tear out your eye or cut off your hand. But He is teaching that this immorality should be treated seriously and decisively. The theological word for this radical action is **mortification**—putting to death the sin in your life (Colossians 3:5). Hate the sin in your life. Thirst for righteousness. Be decisive. Take action. The wages of sin is death. “For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell” (v 30).

*“Put to death
therefore what
is earthly in
you sexual
immorality;
impurity;
passion, evil
desire, and
covetousness,
which is
idolatry.”*

COLOSSIANS 3:5

Fidelity

On the subject of marriage, the scribes and Pharisees were focusing on the procedure related to the Old Testament certificate of divorce. We aren't to look for a legal loophole so we can get a divorce and marry someone else. If we separate what God has joined, Jesus is telling us we are ultimately committing adultery. Marriage is meant to be for life. Jesus is teaching fidelity, not license.

Even where there has been infidelity, Scripture never commands divorce. But where the holy covenant of marriage has been violated—and there has been no biblical repentance and reconciliation is not achieved—a divorce may be permitted.

Honesty

The scribes and Pharisees had also adopted an elaborate approach to oaths and vows. Jesus says, "Do not take an oath at all" (v 34). "And do not take an oath by your head" (v 36). Jesus does not come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but He does abolish this vain tradition of the elders. What's the point? Just tell the truth. "Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil" (v 37). A simple yes or no is sufficient. Followers of Jesus tell the truth, not lies.

*“Let the words of
my mouth and
the meditation
of my heart be
acceptable in your
sight, O Lord,
my rock and my
redeemer.”*

PSALM 19:14

Love your enemies

Under the Mosaic Law, the accepted practice of managing wrongs was “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (Exodus 21:23–25). But Jesus is now saying that we are not to seek retribution in our relationships. Instead, we are to exhibit non-retaliation. He gives four examples: turning the other cheek, not insisting on your legal rights, going the extra mile, and being generous with our resources. This is radical teaching, calling for us to display Christ's love through our interactions rather than prioritizing ourselves.

And Jesus continues! It is easy to love those who love us (vv 46–47), but followers of Jesus are called to more. Not only are we to love our neighbor and not to hate our enemy, but we are also to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us (vv 43–44). This requires the love of God in our hearts and the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives. When we love our enemy, we are reflecting the very character of God Himself. God loves each one of us—yes, even when we were His enemies, dead in our sin. Hate in all its forms, including racism and prejudice, has no place in the Kingdom of Heaven.

A radical life

This is radical, counter-cultural living that can never be achieved in our own strength or power. We all fail in following the Lord's teaching. This is why Christ came to save us, forgive our sins, deliver us, and give us the gift of His Spirit.

This is Christ's call on us, who are His followers. This is the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. This is living by the Law of Christ. ■

*“There is
therefore now no
condemnation for
those who are in
Christ Jesus. For
the law of the
Spirit of life has set
you free in Christ
Jesus from the law
of sin and death.”*

ROMANS 8:1–2



Avoiding Hypocrisy

MATTHEW 6:1-8

WE HAVE SEEN THAT THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES (the legalists) were concerned with the externals—the outward observances, and strict interpretations of rules and regulations. But throughout Jesus’ teaching, this legalism is exposed. We understand that God sees our hearts and our motives. Those following Jesus and living in the Kingdom are called to be authentic and display God’s love.

Acting the part

In Greek, the word “hypocrite” was first used to describe someone who acted in a drama. Then the term began to be used in the negative sense of

an insincere person, one who is playing a part and concealing his real character.

“Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’” (Mark 7:6–7). This is the height of hypocrisy—saying one thing and doing another. Hypocrites love people to think well of them, and they rarely admit their hypocrisy or even see themselves as hypocrites. They may deceive others but tragically end up being self-deceived.

Giving, praying, and fasting

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven” (v 1). This is the basic principle for the three warnings against religious hypocrisy, which Jesus gives in relation to giving, praying, and fasting.

If you practice your righteousness to impress other people, understand that you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. The Pharisees “loved the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God” (John 12:43). Hypocrites love an audience, but God is not impressed. Don’t seek the approval of others, but desire the praise of your Heavenly Father who “sees in secret” (v 4). ■

“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

COLOSSIANS 3:17



Praying the Lord's Way

MATTHEW 6:9-18

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO PRAY? Prayer is a vital part of being an authentic follower of Jesus Christ. But most of us find it challenging to have a consistent prayer life. Jesus previously exposed hypocrisy in prayer (vv 5–8), but now He teaches us how to pray. In this passage, often referred to as “The Lord’s Prayer,” He gives us a model and a pattern to follow.

Our Lord commands us to pray. “And when you pray” (vv 5–6). “Pray then like this” (v 9). You will be spiritually strengthened and others blessed when you pray. If you don’t pray, you will not see God answer your prayers! “Praying at all times in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18) is an essential part of standing strong in the Lord. Satan hates it when we pray.

How do we begin?

We pray to “our Father in heaven.” Through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we become part of the family of God (John 1:12–13). The Almighty God of the universe, the eternal God, is your heavenly Father. What an incredible privilege! Just as a child comes to an earthly father who loves her and is welcomed with open arms, so we come as children to our loving Father who is heaven.

Prayer is to be God-centered

We don’t begin prayer with our needs. Our priority in prayer is the glory of God. We come to Him in reverence and humility, and as followers of Jesus, we seek the Kingdom of God. We pray for His will to be done. Remember, God is not a genie in a bottle who is there to do your will, grant your requests, and extend your personal kingdom. God, not you, is sovereign.

Pray for material provision

God wants us to express our requests to Him even though “your Father knows what you need before you ask Him” (v 8). God wants you to live each day in dependence on Him. Everything we have comes from God. Pour out your requests for material provisions to the Lord. He will always provide strength for today and hope for tomorrow.


Pray for forgiveness

Every day we sin. Every day we need to come and ask our heavenly Father for forgiveness. The blood of Jesus cleanses us from every sin and all unrighteousness. The more we understand and experience this forgiveness, the more we forgive others (Ephesians 4:32).

Pray for protection

Certainly, we do not want to fall into temptation, and we want to be kept far away from anything that may cause us to sin. We have a cunning enemy who wants to stop us from following Jesus. So we pray that God will not lead us into temptation and will deliver us from the evil one. Live humbly and ask for God’s protection and guidance. ■

THE LORD'S PRAYER



Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

Your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread,

and forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

MATTHEW 6:9-13



Treasure and Trust

MATTHEW 6:19-34

EVENTS IN OUR VOLATILE AND UNPREDICTABLE WORLD remind us that we don't have control of our lives. Jesus now turns to two central issues that challenge where our priorities lie.

Where is your treasure?

We are either laying up “treasures for ourselves on earth” or “laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven.” In life, what are you trying to achieve? Are you trusting in your resources, your money, your savings, and your capacity to control your future? Or are you trusting God?

Scripture exhorts us to work hard to have material resources to take care of our families and give to those in need. But following Jesus transforms our view of work and money. “Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need” (Ephesians 4:28).

Jesus encourages us to see things with an eternal, God-centered perspective. There is no security in this life. Things on this earth are subject to devaluation, decay, theft, and the state of the economy. But treasure in heaven will always last. Our true riches are in the future. No one or nothing can take them away. The point is to be single-minded in seeking first the Kingdom of God.

Where is your trust?

Then Jesus gives us a challenging command, “Do not be anxious about your life” (v 25). How is this possible? In our troubled world, there are many reasons to be anxious. Jesus is not advocating irresponsible living or an undisciplined life. But nothing is to distract us from following Jesus. And when your trust is in God, there is no need to be anxious.

Your heavenly Father knows and provides for your needs (vv 26, 28–33). Jesus gives examples of the birds and the flowers. If God takes care of the birds and the flowers, how much more will He take care of you?

Not trusting your heavenly Father results in anxiety and is a pointless exercise (v 27). And being anxious about tomorrow will only rob you of today’s joy and strength (v 34). Trust God daily for His strength, provision, wisdom, and grace. And be secure in knowing that the future belongs not to you, but God.

Neither our money nor the anxieties of life must distract us from following Jesus in a life of total commitment. Hear Jesus today, “Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (v 33). Follow Jesus in a life of trusting Him with your treasure and anxieties. Experience true joy and peace as your heavenly Father takes care of all your needs. ■

*“But seek first
the kingdom
of God and his
righteousness,
and all these
things will be
added to you”*

MATTHEW 6:33



Don't Judge, Be Discerning

MATTHEW 7:1-6

ALL OF US HAVE PROBABLY BEEN on the receiving end of judgment. Do you know people like this? They are always looking down on others and loving to criticize. Gravitating to the negative rather than the positive. Their judgment is harsh, critical, and self-righteous. Don't be like this!

Don't be judgmental

Who are you to set yourself up as a judge of others? Are you the authority? Why do your views matter more than others? Don't look at others as inferior to yourself. Being judgmental destroys relationships and is harmful to our testimony as followers of Jesus.

Jesus is not saying that we should abandon our critical faculties. Each day we make decisions and judgments about what is right and wrong. In these circumstances, can someone say, “Judge not, that you be not judged” (v 1)? Does this verse condemn every discerning choice? No, making necessary value judgments is not being judgmental (John 7:24).

All of us are accountable to God

The Lord is the ultimate judge. When we are judgmental, we are presuming that we know everything about the person. We do not know the motives of others. And we often make incorrect presumptions. Remember the Beatitude: if you are merciful, you shall receive mercy (Matthew 5:7).

To illustrate, Jesus presents an extreme and perhaps humorous example. A brother oblivious to a log in his eye approaches another brother to remove a tiny splinter from his eye. How ridiculous! This is hypocrisy! If your goal is to help your brother, first look to yourself. Then approach your brother in a spirit of humility and gentleness.

Use discernment

Jesus then makes a seemingly unrelated statement about dogs and pigs (v 6). What are we to make of this? While we are not to be judgmental, we are to be discerning. Why would you take holy things (valuable and beautiful) and throw them to dogs and pigs?

Jesus may be referring to the Gospel—the pearl of great price, in Matthew 13:45–46. The Gospel is a message for the whole world, but as we live our Christian life, we are to be discerning. Some people have heard the Gospel message and not only reject it but are offensive and insulting. There is a time to leave such people and move on (Acts 18:6).

As followers of Jesus, we have the opportunity to point people to our Lord Jesus Christ and demonstrate His grace and compassion. All of us deserve the eternal judgment of God, but our Lord Jesus came into this world not to condemn us but to save us (John 3:17). Trust Christ and be saved and display His grace to the world! ■

*“If any of you
lacks wisdom,
let him ask God”*

JAMES 1:5



Ask, Seek, and Knock

MATTHEW 7:7-12

JESUS HAS TAUGHT US HOW TO PRAY. Now He elaborates on the subject of prayer—so it must be essential!

When you see prayer not as a chore or a duty but as an amazing privilege, your prayer life will be transformed. And Jesus emphasizes here that God wants to bless us when we pray.

Persistence in prayer

Ask, seek, and knock! Our faith is demonstrated through our persistence in prayer. We are to ask, seek, and knock continually. Notice the rising

intensity. If you don't keep asking, you won't be given. If you don't keep seeking, you will not find. If you don't keep knocking, the door will not be opened. Don't give up! James writes, "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2).

Ask for good things

God is our Father, and He loves to give us "good things" (v 11). Are you humbly asking for good things—to seek first His kingdom, for His will, and His guidance? "You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions" (James 4:3). Ask, seek, and knock for good things. And expect God to answer!

The Golden Rule

The way you treat others impacts your prayer life. How can you pray sincerely, humbly, and in faith if you mistreat other people? One of the beautiful ways we display Christ is by doing to others as we wish others would do to us. If you want people to be kind to you, be kind. If you want friends, be friendly. If you're going to be encouraged, you must encourage others.

"This," says Jesus, "is the Law and the Prophets" (v 12). What do the Law and the Prophets say? To love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and to love your neighbor as yourself (Mark 12:29–31).

In our troubled world, we have an opportunity to treat others as we wish they would treat us. This is what it means to live the life of the Kingdom and follow Christ. Keep asking, seeking, and knocking for God's grace to be poured upon you. ■

*“Whatever you
wish that others
would do to you,
do also to them”*

MATTHEW 7:12



Two Ways, Two Destinations

MATTHEW 7:13-29

NOW THE TONE CHANGES as we approach the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. We must remember that this sermon is more than ethical instruction. King Jesus is calling us to make the most crucial decision of our lives—to repent, to believe in the Gospel, and to follow Him.

In our world today, we repeatedly hear that there are many ways to God. Or that it doesn't matter what you believe as long as you are sincere. But this is not what Jesus teaches.

Enter by the narrow gate. Jesus describes two gates: one is narrow, and the other is wide. The narrow gate is the way of repentance, the way of grace,

the way of faith in Jesus Christ. This is the way of salvation. The other gate is very wide. No effort is required to enter it. You simply drift into it and enjoy the company of the many who are on the easy way. But it leads to destruction. There is no middle way, no third option. Do you think you can follow Jesus and still love the world? Jesus has said, “No one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24). You are either in the Kingdom of God or you are not. You are either heading for heaven or hell.

Beware of false prophets. Jesus describes false prophets as “ravenous wolves” (v 15). Throughout Scripture, there are warnings against false teachers who claim to be sent by God, but who preach their own revelations, dreams, or false gospels which suit the current culture (Jeremiah 5:30–31, 2 Timothy 4). Don’t allow anyone to draw you away from the truth of the Gospel. Are they preaching one way of salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ? You will know a tree by its fruit.

Don’t be self-deceived. All in the Christian community are not authentic followers of Jesus. On the Day of Judgment, there will be many who call Jesus “Lord, Lord” (v 21). They point to all their religious activities, but there is no true relationship with the Lord Jesus. They hear Jesus say, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness” (v 23). There is a significant difference between merely professing the name of Jesus and genuinely possessing eternal life by following Jesus in a life of repentance and obedience.

Build your house on the Rock. Jesus ends with a compelling parable of two men and two houses that explains the difference between authentic faith and a hollow faith. Both men hear the same teaching of Jesus. Both build houses. The wise man hears and obeys the teaching of Jesus for a strong foundation on rock. The foolish man hears but does not obey and builds on sand. When the storms come, the difference is exposed, and the house built on sand collapses.

You don’t simply stumble through the narrow gate. You don’t just happen to build a house with a strong foundation. There must be a deliberate decision of faith in the Lord Jesus and obedience to His Word. Our Lord Jesus paid the price for your sins on the cross and rose again. He conquered death and bore the judgment of God, which you deserve, and will take you to life everlasting. Have you trusted Christ as your personal Savior? Are you following Him? ■

DO YOU KNOW JESUS CHRIST?



AT THE END OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT, the crowds are astonished, “for He was teaching them as one who had authority” (Matthew 7:28–29). But Jesus is not calling merely for astonishment—He is calling for a decision.

Follow me.

Have you answered the call of Jesus? Without a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus, you will not enter the Kingdom of God. Without Jesus, you are drifting on the broad way, building your life upon sand. Today, repent of your sins and place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Do you identify yourself as a follower of Jesus? Is there any difference in your life? While we are saved by faith alone, in Christ alone—authentic faith is marked by obedience and change. We are now new creations in Christ.

“Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” Matthew 4:17

“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” John 3:16

“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12

“Jesus said to him, ‘I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.’” John 14:6

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.” 2 Corinthians 5:17

Do you have questions about Jesus Christ?

Would you like to talk with a pastor or have someone pray with you or for you? Contact us at theverdict@calvarychurch.com. ■



THE VERDICT

WITH PASTOR JOHN H. MUNRO

"Where the Gospel is preached, the lives of men and women and boys and girls are transformed. Through His death and resurrection, Christ gives us peace with God, present power for living, and future hope for eternal life."

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The Verdict is a daily and weekly radio program featuring the passionate expository Bible teaching of Pastor John H. Munro.



John H. Munro

Born and raised in Scotland, John graduated from the University of Edinburgh and practiced law in Scotland before God called him to full-time ministry. He and his wife, Gudny, moved to Texas, where he attended Dallas Theological Seminary.

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Each day on The Verdict, listeners are challenged to turn to the Bible and render a "verdict" as they consider their personal response to the truth of God's Word. John Munro presents a clear examination of Scripture, offering insight and application for all backgrounds, from those unfamiliar with the Gospel to mature believers following Christ.

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FOR THE WORD OF GOD AND FOR THE TESTIMONY OF JESUS CHRIST

REVELATION 1:9

