

## The Sermon on the Mount...

From the Gospel of Matthew

*It has been said that the Sermon on the Mount is a presentation of Christian discipleship that can be wrought in the soul of an individual only by the power of God. When we look at these gracious words of Jesus (which He taught His disciples), that are recorded below from the Gospel of Matthew, we are reminded of what it is to be a true disciple of Christ...*

Verses to study...

### *The Beatitudes*

**5** And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:  
<sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
<sup>4</sup> Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.  
<sup>5</sup> Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.  
<sup>6</sup> Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.  
<sup>7</sup> Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.  
<sup>8</sup> Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.  
<sup>9</sup> Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.  
<sup>10</sup> Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.  
<sup>11</sup> “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

### *The Similitudes*

<sup>13</sup> “You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.  
<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

### *Jesus Fulfills the Law*

<sup>17</sup> “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. <sup>18</sup> For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. <sup>19</sup> Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

## ***Murder***

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, ‘Raca!’ shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, ‘You fool!’ shall be in danger of hell fire. <sup>23</sup> Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. <sup>26</sup> Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last penny.

## ***Adultery***

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

## ***Divorce***

<sup>31</sup> “Furthermore it has been said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.

## ***Oaths***

<sup>33</sup> “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.’ <sup>34</sup> But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God’s throne; <sup>35</sup> nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. <sup>36</sup> Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup> But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.

## ***Retaliation***

<sup>38</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ <sup>39</sup> But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. <sup>40</sup> If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. <sup>41</sup> And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. <sup>42</sup> Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

## ***Love***

<sup>43</sup> “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ <sup>44</sup> But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup> Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

## ***Charitable Deeds***

**6** “Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. <sup>2</sup> Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>3</sup> But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, <sup>4</sup> that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

## ***Prayer***

<sup>5</sup> “And when you pray, you shall not be like the hypocrites. For they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the corners of the streets, that they may be seen by men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>6</sup> But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. <sup>7</sup> And when you pray, do not use vain repetitions as the heathen do. For they think that they will be heard for their many words.

<sup>8</sup> “Therefore do not be like them. For your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him. <sup>9</sup> In this manner, therefore, pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
<sup>10</sup> Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
<sup>11</sup> Give us this day our daily bread.  
<sup>12</sup> And forgive us our debts,  
As we forgive our debtors.  
<sup>13</sup> And do not lead us into temptation,  
But deliver us from the evil one.  
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

<sup>14</sup> “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. <sup>15</sup> But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

## ***Fasting***

<sup>16</sup> “Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. <sup>17</sup> But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, <sup>18</sup> so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.

## ***Wealth***

<sup>19</sup> “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. <sup>21</sup> For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

<sup>22</sup> “The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. <sup>23</sup> But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

<sup>24</sup> “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.

<sup>25</sup> “Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? <sup>26</sup> Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? <sup>27</sup> Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

<sup>28</sup> “So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; <sup>29</sup> and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. <sup>30</sup> Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

<sup>31</sup> “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ <sup>32</sup> For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. <sup>33</sup> But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. <sup>34</sup> Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

## ***Judging***

**7** “Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup> For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. <sup>3</sup> And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? <sup>4</sup> Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? <sup>5</sup> Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

<sup>6</sup> “Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces.

## ***“Ask, and It Will Be Given”***

<sup>7</sup> “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. <sup>9</sup> Or what man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? <sup>10</sup> Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent? <sup>11</sup> If you then, being 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!

## ***Golden Rule***

<sup>12</sup> Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

## ***Two Ways of Life***

<sup>13</sup> “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. <sup>14</sup> Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

## ***False and True Teaching***

<sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. <sup>16</sup> You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. <sup>19</sup> Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

## ***True Way into the Kingdom***

<sup>21</sup> “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. <sup>22</sup> Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ <sup>23</sup> And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’

## ***Parable of the Two Builders***

<sup>24</sup> “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: <sup>25</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

<sup>26</sup> “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: <sup>27</sup> and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

## ***Response to the Sermon***

<sup>28</sup> And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, <sup>29</sup> for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

## A Commentary... excerpted from: [www.miketaylor.org.uk/xian/different.html](http://www.miketaylor.org.uk/xian/different.html).

The Sermon on the Mount, Jesus's largest and clearest body of teaching is utterly at odds to the way the world around us thinks. At every turn, it is packed with instructions that we're tempted to write off as hopelessly naive and unrealistic:

- Blessed are the meek.
- Do not worry.
- Do not store up treasure on earth.
- Love your enemies.
- Be perfect as your Father is perfect.

Jesus makes impossible demands on us. So it would only be natural if our response in the end was something like the following: Yes, this teaching is very good and enlightened, and everyone can learn something from Jesus' words; but you can't realistically expect people in the 21st century to live like that.

If we're tempted to think like along those lines, then the final words of the Sermon on the Mount should cure us:

*“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.*

*“But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” Matthew 7:24-27*

This is another of those passages whose impact is so blunted by overfamiliarity that we need to consciously step back to recognise what's being said.

The important point with this parable is that when Jesus describes the builders as “wise” and “foolish”, he doesn't mean “high-IQ” and “low-IQ”; the words carry moral connotations as well as intellectual. This parable is to do with wisdom, not intelligence.

What's the difference? It difference could be explained by saying that an intelligent person might be someone who understands medical reports showing that smoking is bad for your health; but a wise person is one who actually stops smoking.

Wisdom is not to do with what you think, or what you believe; it's about what you *do*.

## A New Identity...

How can we do all this difficult stuff? How can we love our enemies when our natural reaction is to hate them? How can we store up treasures in heaven when our instinct is to gather treasure on earth? And how can we ever be perfect as our father is perfect?

The key is that **what we do flows from who we are**. When God wants to change our behaviour, he first transforms our identity. This is right at the crux of what being a Christian is. You can't get there by changing your behavior, because the changes to Jesus demands are simply contrary to the human nature; but God gives us a *new* nature!

The New Testament writers use very vivid imagery in talking about this:

- “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” - 2 Corinthians 5:17.
- “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me” - Galatians 2:20.
- “You were dead [... but God] made us alive with Christ.” - Ephesians 2:1-5, Colossians 2:13.
- “No one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.” - John 3:3.

We tend not to make much of the phrase “born again”, because it's been rather commandeered by certain right-wing American movements. But, as with many parts of the Sermon on the Mount, if we can leave behind our preconceptions on the idea, and see it with fresh eyes, it's truly startling: as clear a picture as you could wish for of a completely fresh start. No wonder Nicodemus was so shocked by the idea that he replied, “How can a man be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!”

It shouldn't surprise us that the metaphors in these bible passages are mixed: the writers and speakers, including Jesus, are trying to describe something that's completely outside of normal human experience, a transformation that starts at the roots and works its way up; or, if you prefer, that starts at the core and works its way outwards.

## **A New Spirit...**

When God gets hold of us and changes us, we are *different* from how we were before. Something concrete and specific has happened, which is why Paul writes that “Those who belong to Christ Jesus *have crucified* [past tense] the sinful nature with its passions and desires.” - Galatians 5:24.

It may not always be immediately apparent to others, because the change that God works in us starts in the centre and percolates outwards; but it's real and fundamental from the start. And it affects how we live in lots of ways.

The book of Numbers, chapter 14, tells the story of how two of the twelve Israelite scouts who had gone into Canaan to spy out the land returned with a positive report. While the other ten were full of fear of the inhabitants, Joshua and Caleb were more enthusiastic about the land that God had promised to give them. God's response is fascinating. He says of those who were full of fear that “not one of them will ever see the land I promised on oath to their forefathers”; but he goes on to say:

*“But because my servant Caleb has a different spirit and follows me wholeheartedly, I will bring him into the land he went to, and his descendants will inherit it.”* Numbers 14:24

There's something very resonant about that phrase “a different spirit”. Caleb was living in the midst of his worldly companions, but actually being a fundamentally different kind of person - one full of power from God himself.

If we want to be like the wise builder who build his house on the sand - if we want to take seriously Jesus' words in the Sermon on the Mount, and to live by them - then we need that “different spirit”.

Above commentary excerpted from: [www.miketaylor.org.uk/xian/different.html](http://www.miketaylor.org.uk/xian/different.html).