

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

An Introductory Message

Scripture Reading: Matthew 5:1-12.

Intro: Today I am beginning a series of messages on the Sermon on the Mount as we find it in Matthew, chapter 5, 6, and 7. It is also found in a more abbreviated form in Luke 6:20-49. From the circumstances described in connection with each of these passages, it appears that they were delivered at different times, *but both Matthew and Luke make it very clear that when the Lord spoke these words, He was speaking to His disciples*. Therefore, what we call, *the Sermon on the Mount*, was not intended for the people of the world generally, but only for those who had experienced the transforming power of Christ in their hearts. In other words, it is a message for Christians, those who are truly Christians.

One of the mistakes that many people make is that they will take the teachings of Scripture and try to live by them even though they have not been saved. *In order to live like a Christian, you must first of all be a Christian*. And no one can rightly claim to be a Christian who is not personally trusting Jesus Christ as his or her Savior. We must have divine life before we can live godly lives. This is a truth that is too often neglected by people in their handling of Scripture. Until a person is saved, he is dead, alienated from God, without spiritual life. But when he is saved, then he has eternal life, and by God's grace can live according to the Word of God. *It is difficult enough for a child of God to live the Christian life, but for a person who has not been born again, it is an utter impossibility!*

What I am saying is that there is a great difference between people who profess to be Christians simply because they go to church, or are a member of some church, or even those who seek to live a life with high moral standards. You can profess to be a Christian without really possessing eternal life. I trust that we all understand this. A true Christian is one who is trusting in Christ as his Savior, and thus has life eternal.

There have been differing ideas among expositors as to those for whom our Lord's message "on the Mount" was intended. Since it is generally agreed that Matthew was written for the Jews, some think that it was given to apply to the time when the Lord will be reigning upon the earth. But there is no suggestion of any such postponement in what our Lord said. In fact, His concluding words at the end of chapter 7 suggest an immediate

application of His teaching. These were teachings which the disciples were to live by, and were to teach to others.

So I look upon “the Sermon on the Mount” as having present importance for all of us. It may be that it will have a special emphasis during the Kingdom Age, but the NT epistles clearly support what our Lord was teaching when He was here on earth. Holy living is of the same character regardless of the time in which the people of God are living, so this is a message which has great meaning for us. It will only be our great loss if we neglect it.

But now let us turn to our text.

I. THE SETTING OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT..

This, according to Matthew, was shortly after the beginning of our Lord’s public ministry. The Lord had been baptized, tempted by the Devil, had moved from Nazareth to Capernaum, and had started to call the men who were to be His apostles. You see all of this at the end of Matthew 3 and the first 22 verses of chapter 4.

In these verses we learn from verse 12 that the Lord did not begin His ministry until John the Baptist had been cast into prison, signifying that his ministry was coming to an end.

This is when our Lord moved from Nazareth to Capernaum which was to be His headquarters throughout His ministry until He went to Jerusalem shortly before His death.

His purpose in going to Capernaum was that it was predicted that He would. (See the quotation from Isa. 9:1-2.) But if we look for a reason beyond that, *i.e.*, why He would make such a move, several suggestions have been made:

- 1) It was the area from which several of our Lord’s disciples came.
- 2) It was an area where there were many Gentiles, and so it would have been a place which was relatively free “from that intense bigotry which even to this day characterizes all places where Jews in large numbers dwell nearly alone” (JFB, V, 21).
- 3) The expression in Isa. 9:1, “Galilee of the Gentiles” meant that the area “made it ‘the frontier’ between the Holy Land and the external world” (*Ibid.*).

So we see that from early in His ministry there were indications of the Lord’s intention to minister to Gentiles as well as to the Jews.

Selected verses from Matt. 4-7 (3)

Then continuing with Matt. 4:23 and going down through the first verse of chapter 5, we read the following. (Read Matt. 4:23-5:1.)

In verse 16 of chapter 4 we see what happened in the lands of Zebulun and Naphtali, or what was to happen, as a result of our Lord's ministry. (Read Matt. 4:16.)

This is followed with a statement about our Lord's preaching. The "light" was obviously the Gospel, the Gospel of Christ, and in verse 17 of Matt. 5 we see the Lord's appeal in His preaching: "Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Then going down to verse 23 we see that priority in our Lord's ministry was given to "teaching" and "preaching," both before "healing."

But then, as we go into chapter 5 we see the although our Lord was followed by "great multitudes of people" from many different areas (see Matt. 4:25), the Lord left them, went up into a mountain, and there "he opened his mouth , and taught them." That is, He taught His disciples.

And so what we have in chapters 5, 6, and 7 is the teaching and preaching of our Lord, which, by the way, is the longest "sermon" given by our Lord which is recorded in the four Gospels.

The Gospel records leave no doubt but that our Lord in His public ministry was a Teacher and a Preacher, *an expository Teacher and Preacher!*

Then it was that the Lord began to teach His disciples the great truths which follow in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. The Apostle Paul was emphasizing the importance of preaching when he wrote in 1 Cor. 1,

17 For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect.

18 For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God (1 Cor. 1: 17-18).

And then he followed those words with these three verses later:

21 For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.

22 For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom:

23 But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks foolishness;

24 But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks,
Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:21-24).

Back in 1959 when Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones published his two volumes on the Sermon on the Mount, he lamented two things in particular about the work of the Lord in those days:

- 1) The lack of expository preaching. This is preaching where the preacher takes a passage of Scripture and carefully explains what it means, verse by verse.
- 2) The superficiality of the church in evangelism. And in this he was thinking about the methods that evangelists used to get decisions out of people. There was also in those days a lot of superficiality in the messages preached by evangelists.

What would Dr. Lloyd-Jones say if he were alive today? Things have not gotten better; they have gotten worse, much worse!

The situation in the local church today makes it that much more important that we take a sermon like our Lord gave to His disciple “on the mount,” and examine it carefully, word by word. These are the words of the Lord Jesus. All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, but none could possibly be more important than the words of our Lord. As it was in our Lord’s day, it is only as the Word of God is taught and preached that people today who are sitting in darkness will be able to see the great light of the Gospel and of all of the truth of God’s Word.

Now, in the light of what we are going to be doing each Sunday morning for many weeks to come, ***I have one request to make of you, and one suggestion.***

First, in preparation for this series of messages, let me ask you to set aside time each week to read through these three chapters. Our studies together will mean much more to you if your heart is full of the truth that we find in these verses. Second, the suggestion is this: a few years ago the Sermon on the Mount was our memory assignment for the first of the year. Many of you probably have that memory book somewhere among your belongings. You might want to get that out and work on memorizing these three chapters in Matthew again. Books are available for those of you who do not have one. I sincerely hope that all of you will do the reading, and that many of you will commit these chapters to memory.

Now, before we go any farther, let me survey these chapters for you. There is no perfect outline although there are many good outlines. The one I am going to give you is my own. You can probably come up with one better than mine, but I am going to use mine in the messages that I

will be bringing, and so that is why I want to give it to you now.

Let me emphasize that this sermon was delivered to the disciples, and so it is meant for all of us who know the Lord. It was not given to the world; it was given to the disciples. It contains truth for Christians. Only true Christians can live as our Lord was teaching we should live when He gave this message. It was so important that the disciples learn to live the life of a child of God before then went out to teach it and preach it to others. And that is why it is so important for me, and for you. The world will see the truth when the truth is proclaimed by the Lord's people who are seeking by God's grace to live the kind of a life that is described in these verses. We are not here just to learn a lot of facts about the Bible. We are here to learn the truth, and then to live the truth. And we can only do either one of these with the Holy Spirit as our Teacher and our Power.

And so let us in the moments that remain to us in this service, turn our thoughts to:

II. A SURVEY OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

I hope that going through this today will be a help to you in your reading of this great Sermon. I will give this survey to you in outline form with a key verse, or key verses for each section. And I have divided the three chapters into five parts. So you will have five headings to the three chapters if you would like to write these down.

Roman numeral "I." is:

I. The Character of a Christian (Matt. 5:1-16).

Mr. Spafford read these verses to us in our Scripture reading. The Lord presented His description of what we all are to be like in these verses. The first part consists of what we call Beatitudes, beginning with the word, "Blessed." And then these are followed with our Lord telling His disciples, and telling us, that we are both "salt" and "light."

These verses are the foundation of the whole message. I hope you will memorize the whole message, but, if you can't do all of it, **be sure to memorize these first sixteen verses.**

Now I told you that I would give you a key verse, or key verses for each section. The key verse for this section is verse 16. (Read.) It is your life which is your light. And it is my life that is my light. As we manifest the

characteristics that our Lord mentioned in these verses, together they make up our light. And this is what is to shine forth from our lives. This is where we all must begin.

We will see as we examine these characteristics that these are qualities of life which the world is not interested in. In fact, most of them, if not all are scorned. But they have a real appeal to those of us who really know the Lord. But more about this in the days to come.

The second point in our outlines is:

II. The Christian and the Word of God (Matt. 5:17-48).

The first part of this message tells us *what* we are to be; this part tells us where we learn about how we are to live. It is God's Word which is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path, as the Psalmist said in Psa. 119: 105. We wouldn't know anything the way we need to know it if we did not have the Bible. And so we will see what the Lord had to say in this passage about the Word that He has given to us.

The key verse: Matt. 5:48. (Read.) You see, the verses I have picked as key verses are the verses in which we have the practical exhortations having to do with each section of the message. You and I will make no progress in sanctification (which is perfection) unless we know the truth that our Bibles give to us.

All right, we are ready for Roman number "III."

III. The Personal Life of the Christian (Matt. 6:1-34).

The Lord was speaking to all of the disciples, but each was to make the application to himself. And we must do the same. There is a strong personal emphasis in this part of the sermon.

In verses 1- 3 our Lord spoke of how they did their alms. In verses 4-15, about how they should pray. In verses 16-18, about how they should fast. You see, all of this is very, very personal. And the Lord continued in this way throughout the chapter. We all need to do these things. No one else can do them for us. If we don't do them, they are left undone as far as we are concerned. How important it is to read all of the practical exhortations of Scripture in the same personal way.

The key verse: Matt. 6:33.

Now we come to Number IV.

IV. Some Special Instructions for the Christian (Matt. 7:1-12).

These obviously were to meet special conditions and needs which would come up in the disciples' relationships with other people—both saved and unsaved. The Lord began with criticism, went on to speak of what to do when their message was rejected, then spoke again of prayer, and concluded with what has to be *the key verse* of this section: Matt. 7:12.

This verse is often cited by people are not Christians as the Golden Rule of life, but it is not possible for anyone but a true child of God to live consistently in this way.

The last section of the sermon emphasizes:

V. The Christian's Need for Assurance (Matt. 7:13-29).

Even professing Christians can be deceived about their relationship with the Lord. The Apostle Peter encouraged believers to “make their calling and election sure” (2 Pet. 1:10). And the Apostle Paul said this to the Corinthian church:

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates? (2 Cor. 13:5).

And what about a key verse? In this case there are two, and they come at the beginning of the section: Matt. 7:13-14.

Concl: I hope that surveying this message given by our Lord so long ago will be used by the Holy Spirit to whet your appetite for the things that are to come. This message had to do with the sanctification of those early disciples. We know how slowly they learned the lessons that are set out in this sermon given by our Lord. And we are the same way, slow to learn the truth, and probably even slower in applying the truth to our lives.

None of us is fully sanctified, and we won't be as long as we live on this earth. And so we all need to be growing continually. We all need to become more like our Lord. And the Sermon on the Mount was designed by our Lord for that same purpose. If we want a perfect example of the truth that our Lord gave in these three chapter, that Example will be found in our Lord Himself. But while the Lord is our Example, He is more than that for each one of us. *He is our very life.* And it is only as we trust Him

Selected verses from Matt. 4-7 (8)

to make us what He wants us to be, and to live His life through us, that we will ever be able to attain the godly life that is so wonderfully set before us in our Lord's words in His Sermon on the Mount.

I ask your prayers for me as I prepare the messages in the weeks to come, and pray that I may profit along with you in becoming more like our blessed and wonderful Lord Jesus Christ. If you have any questions about the truth I have covered today, I hope you will feel free to talk to me about them.