

THE LORD'S MESSAGE FOR DISCIPLES

Matthew 5-7 - Introduction

Intro: It was just five years ago that I brought a series of messages on the Sermon on the Mount. Since then many of you have joined our fellowship, and I feel sure that those of you who were present at that time will feel that going over these three wonderful chapters again will not be a waste of your time. The Apostle Peter who undoubtedly was present when the Lord delivered this message to His disciples, has told us that the repetition of truth is a responsibility of those who teach the Word. This does not mean the repetition of the same messages, but the repetition of the truth. For those of you who may not remember just what the Apostle Peter had to say on this point, let me call your attention to the first chapter of his second epistle.

Peter had started to speak of the importance of growing in their lives as Christians, and then he added these words which you will find in 2 Peter 1, verses 12-15:

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth.

13 Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;

14 Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

15 Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance.

Notice that he was not writing to those who were babes in Christ, but to mature believers. He said that they were “established in the present truth.” So he was not telling them anything that they had not heard before, but truth that they knew very well. We learn the truth of God by hearing it over and over and over again. And yet we never tire of hearing the truth of the Bible, regardless of how many times we have heard it. There is always more to learn about every truth, and just the repetition of truth we know always brings fresh blessing.

From the Gospel records, especially in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, we have indications that the Lord often repeated the truth which He had taught before. Just before the Lord was arrested, He told His disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit and the ministry that He would have with them. And He said this:

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26 But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you (John 14:26).

Having read the first part of chapter 5, let me call your attention first to:

I. THE SETTING IN WHICH THE MESSAGE WAS GIVEN.

It is given in verses 1 and 2 of Matthew 5. (Read.)

We see in the Gospels that great crowds usually followed the Lord Jesus. Some were hoping to be healed. Others were attracted by His miracles, and followed Him hoping to see Him perform a miracle. Then there were those, perhaps a smaller group in each case, who loved His teaching. But in this case, our Lord went up into a mountain, or high hill, where He could be alone with His disciples.

We don't know exactly when it was that our Lord gave this message, but from Matthew's Gospel it would appear that it was early in His public ministry. Although in Luke's account his version of this message is given in chapter 6. Perhaps, as I was saying earlier, the Lord may have given this teaching more than once, even more than the Gospels indicate. But Matthew makes it very clear that our Lord on this occasion wanted to get away from "the multitudes" so that He could spend some time ministering to His disciples by themselves. So I am inclined to think that when the disciples are mentioned here, it means *the twelve*, those who eventually were called *apostles*. And this would make this message a part of what A. B. Bruce had in mind when he wrote his book, *The Training of the Twelve*.

There were times when the Lord ministered to the multitudes to such a degree that neither He nor His disciples had time to eat. But this was one of those special occasions when He wanted to be alone with the twelve because He has some things that He wanted to teach them. How honored the twelve were that He would save them, first of all, but then that He would spend the time that He did just with them was certainly one of the greatest of all honors that the twelve received. Just think about that for a moment.

We had another instance of this in the message I brought two weeks ago

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about Zacchaeus. Think how you would have felt if you had been here on earth when the Lord was here, and to have Him say to you, calling you by your name and saying, “Today I must abide at your house.”

And yet you and I can consider our gathering together today in the same light. It is not by chance that any of us are here today. The Lord has brought us together because He wants to be with us, and because He wants to teach us. Although we can't see Him physically, yet He is here with us. And He has brought us together to teach us.

But perhaps you have already had time with the Lord this morning. As you read the Word, what was it that He impressed upon your heart? Did He convict you of some sin? Did He call your attention to some promise in His Word which you especially needed? Did He open your heart to some truth which you had not paid much attention to before? And what did you have to say to Him? In our gatherings as well as in our family times in the Word, as well as in those times when we are alone with the Lord, we need to make these applications to ourselves. We need to read these chapters like we were with the disciples on that day, and He was saying these things to us as well as to the twelve. That is why it is recorded in the Scriptures. It is meant for us as well as for them. There might be in these chapters some things which are different from those days when so many wonderful miracles were being performed, but, basically, these chapters hold some very important lessons for all of us who know the Lord.

Now I want to briefly survey this wonderful message with you today so that we can all have a broad overview of what the Lord had to say, and then in the weeks to come, the Lord willing, we will look more at the details of what He had to say. And so having seen the setting of this wonderful message, let us turn now to:

II. THE MAIN THEMES OF OUR LORD'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

I would really like to take the time today to read all three of these chapters in Matthew's Gospel. That probably would be more profitable for you and for me as well than for you to listen to what I have to say about these chapters. I will be reading many of these verses as we look at the main themes of this sermon, but my purpose today is not to get the details, but to become acquainted with this sermon as a whole message. I want you to

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see what it was that the Lord was seeking to get into the hearts of His disciples, and what He obviously wants to get into our hearts, what He wants to get us thinking about and what He wants us to be pursuing as His brothers and sisters in the family of God. I hope you will make a note of these themes so that you can look for them other places in the Bible as you read the Word from day to day.

The first theme is one that ought to be of special interest to us all. It is:

A. Happiness (Matt. 5:2-12).

The Lord wants us to be a happy people. He wants us to know the meaning of true happiness. He wants us to realize that we are going to face many difficult situations and many different trials, but that through the all it is very possible to be happy. Happiness for people in the world depends upon the right conditions, favorable circumstances, and the absence of troubles of any kind. But as you read through these beatitudes you can see that the Lord clearly indicated that it is possible to be truly happy when things are not going our way. We see from what the Lord says that happiness really depends upon what is going on *in* us, and not in what is going on *around* us in our circumstances. The Lord even included those times when we may be persecuted because we know the Lord. As we go through our trials, let us remember these good words from our Lord and also word like we find in John 15:11:

11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

The second theme of this sermon is:

B. Our relationship with the world (Matt. 5:13-16).

We are inclined to think of the world in a defensive way, and that needs to be of concern to us. We are to keep ourselves “unspotted from the world” (Jas. 1:27). James called this a part of “pure religion.” But along with this we need to remember as the Lord said in these verses that the world is to get great benefit from us; in fact, the greatest possible benefit. Why? Because we are “the salt of the earth,” and we are “the light of the world.” But we must not lose our saltiness, nor are we to let our lights be dim. We are to live in such a way that the people of the world will actually glorify our “Father Who is in heaven.” We are to live holy lives so that others will want to follow in our footsteps.

More about that later. But now let us look at a third theme:

C. The importance of obeying the Lord (Matt. 5:17-48).

The Lord has always been concerned about the spirit of the Law as well as the letter of the Law. The scribes and Pharisees emphasized the letter of the Law, and they were a bunch of hypocrites. But this is where we often fail. The Lord does not just want us to obey outwardly what He has told us to do, or not to do, but we are to obey from the heart. See 5:20. We are to obey the Lord because we love the Lord, as our Lord said in John 14:15. And the Lord's words here do not apply just to the ten commandments, but to all of the commandments of Scripture. We need to be more than just hearers of the Word, as important as that is, but we need to be doers. Cf. Jas. 1:22.

A fourth theme in our Lord's Sermon on the Mount had to do with what I will call:

D. Our spiritual exercises (Matt. 6:1-18).

After speaking to His disciples about their relationship with the Word, then He went on to speak of their fellowship with the Father. And He spoke of almsgiving, prayer, forgiveness, and fasting. In all of these our chief concern needs to be that our heavenly Father is pleased with what we are doing. We do all of these to please the Lord, and not to receive the applause and approval of men. One by one the Lord was dealing with the major problems in the lives of His people. But none is greater than what the Lord spoke about here. I am looking forward to getting back to this section, but don't wait for me to get here if there are problems in your life with regard to what the Lord spoke about in these verses.

E. Money (Matt. 6:19-24).

This is what most people live for. We are bombarded with ads about how to make a million. Gambling has become a legal mania now, and also a national disgrace. We didn't bring any money with us when we came into this world, and we are not going to take a penny with us when we go. People seek their security in money, but not in God. It is money and the desire to get it that keeps countless numbers of people from paying any attention to God and to His Word. Our Lord said that we can't serve God and money.

And then a theme which is closely related to money, and that is:

F. Faith (Matt. 6:25-34).

With all that we have, it has not given anyone peace of mind. There is no sin in providing for our families, but no one can cover every possible emergency. We are the people of God must learn not to worry, but to cast all of our care upon the Lord. Worry never did away with any problem, but trusting God is what brings peace and joy into lives which otherwise would be full of care.

In chapter 7 it seems that our Lord was speaking to His disciples first about:

G. Relationships with people (Matt. 7:1-12).

We all need to be careful about critical hypocrisy, criticizing a brother for a problem he has when we have a greater problem ourselves which we have not taken care of. Verse 6 shows a lack of judgment, or discernment. And after another wonderful section on prayer we come to the concluding verse (12) in this section, the so-called Golden Rule.

Finally in the last verses the Lord expressed his concern about the greatest of all subjects:

H. Salvation, and the assurance of it (Matt. 7:13-23).

Concl: Here the Lord stressed with His disciples the importance of applying the truth. And we note in the last two verses of the chapter that although the Lord was ministering especially to His disciples, other people were listening to what He said. They were astonished at His teaching, and recognized that it was different from what they usually heard in their synagogues, but no evidence that made any change in their lives.

The danger with all of us is that we will read the Word, or hear it taught, and do both of these with great personal satisfaction and joy, but it goes no farther. There must be the hearing of the Word, but by God's grace it needs to be applied to every detail of our lives.