

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: POWER OVER PRIDE

IN God's New Humanity

Matthew 5, 6 & 7

Introduction:

1. **The context of the sermon**
 - (1) **The occasion.**--Immediately following a night of prayer and the selection of the twelve apostles (Matt. 4:23-25; Luke 6:12-19).
 - (2) **The place.**--On a mountainside in Galilee (Mt. 5:1; Luke 6:12 & 17).
 - (3) **The hearers.**--Primarily the twelve, then a great multitude (Mt. 4:23-25; Luke 6:17-19).

2. **The purpose of the Sermon.**--(the most common views)
 - (1) A perfectionist ideal for a new society (Tolstoy's view; literalistic, absolutist, legalistic- Christian law)
 - (2) A set of principles not to be applied literally, but to teach us to change our attitudes (our "mind-set") in order that we may learn to love (figurative, spiritualized interpretation).
 - (3) An impossible ideal driving people to despair so that they will come to the cross for forgiveness (serving the same purpose as the moral law of the Old Testament).
 - (4) An ideal for born-again Christians- a guide to Christian living based on spiritual principles *after* one has experienced the new birth. It shows what kind of people God has a right to expect His people, His new humanity, to become (II Cor. 5:17).

3. **The manner of the sermon.**-- It has been described by Professor A.M. Hunter as "poetical, pictorial and proverbial."

4. **The embodiment of the sermon.**-- Jesus Christ Himself.

5. **The main points of the sermon.**--
 - (1) Jesus describes the superior character of God's new humanity (5:3-16).
 - (2) Jesus illustrates the superior nature of God's new humanity (5:17-48).
 - (3) Jesus emphasizes the inward and spiritual nature of the worship of God's new humanity (6:1-18).
 - (4) Jesus summarizes the priorities and values of God's new humanity (6:19-34).
 - (5) Jesus requires the application of the principle of spiritual discernment to God's new humanity (7:1-12)

(6) Jesus contrasts God's new humanity with others (7:13-27)

6. **Parallel passages.**-- Mainly in Luke 6:17-49 and some verses in Luke 11 and 12.

I. Jesus describes the superior character of God's new humanity (5:3-16; cf. Lk. 6:20-26)

Introduction.--

1. The meaning of "blessed" = "happy," "to be congratulated," with an element of "ought-ness" (ought to be happy, blessed, congratulated)
2. The method = paradoxical statements
3. The divisions.--
 - (1) What they are in themselves - their inward qualities or characteristics (5:3-6, 8)
 - (2) What they are in their relationships with others - their outward qualities or characteristics (5:7, 9-12)
 - (3) What they are in the world - their responsibilities and influence (5:13-16)

A. What they are in themselves (Their inward qualities or characteristics) (5:3-6, 8; cf. Lk. 6:20-21, 24-25)

God's new humanity is:

1. Humble.--

- (1) The pronouncement: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (cf. Lk. 6:20, 24; Is. 57:15)
Illustration: Like the publican in Lk. 18:13.
- (2) The promise: "because the kingdom of God belongs to them." Only the humble can enter God's kingdom. (Cf. Mat. 7:13-14, etc.) Luke (6:20) uses the emphatic pronoun: "yours is the kingdom of God."

2. Repentant.--

- (1) The pronouncement: "Blessed are those who mourn" (Cf. Lk. 6:21b and 25b and Is. 61:2-4 which Jesus quotes in Luke 4:18-19); especially the kind of mourning which accompanies repentance. It is an expression of grief over one's true spiritual condition.
- (2) The promise: "because they will be comforted." The Comforter is the Holy Spirit - John 14 & 16. (Cf. Rev. 7:17, 21:3-4, 22:3-5) Example: Peter (Matt. 26:75 & parallels in Mk. 14:75 & Lk. 22:62; cf. Jn. 21:15-18)

3. Disciplined.--

- (1) The pronouncement: "Blessed are the meek." Meekness is not weakness.
- (2) The promise: "because they will inherit the earth." (Quoted from Ps. 37:11; see also Ps. 25:12-13; 37:9, 22, 29, 34; Mt. 25:34-36.) They will inherit all that is due them as children of God (Rom. 8:16-23; I Peter 1:3-4). Is this only future or is there a present

application?

4. Zealous.--

- (1) The pronouncement: "Blessed are those who are hungering and thirsting for righteousness" (Cf. 6:33 and Lk. 6:21 and 25). They have good spiritual appetites. They are zealous for the things of God (heavenly treasure 6:19-20).
- (2) The promise: "because they will be filled and satisfied." They will receive what they long for - the righteousness of God.

Four possible meanings of righteousness:

- a. **Forensic righteousness**.-- We are declared righteous ("not guilty") because we have accepted Christ's death for us and have met God's conditions of repentance and faith. A judicial term.
- b. **Imputed righteousness**.-- God imputes Christ's righteousness to us. He deposits it to our account. A banking term.
- c. **Vital righteousness**.-- The practice of right living. A practical term.
- d. **Relational righteousness**.-- The basis of all the others resulting from a close relationship with a righteous, holy God. It is a relational, psychological, spiritual term.

5. Devoted.--

- (1) The pronouncement: "Blessed are those who are pure in heart." (Cf. Mt. 6:22-23; Lk. 11:34-36; Mt. 15:18-20; 23:25-28; Ps. 24:3-5; Lk. 11:24-26; Phil. 4:8) "Pure" = "unadulterated"
- (2) The promise: "because they will see God." They will have clear spiritual vision. Only those who are cleansed, those who are devoted to Him alone, can ever really "see" (understand) God. (Cf. John 3:3 & 5)

- B. What they are in their relationships with others.-- Their outward qualities or characteristics. (5:7, 9-12)

God's new humanity is:

1. Compassionate (Forgiving).--

- (1) The pronouncement: "Blessed are the merciful." (Cf. Micah 6:8; Hosea 1:6 and 2:23. See also I Pet. 2:10; Lk. 10:29-37; Mt. 18:23-35; 25:31-46; James 2:13)
- (2) The promise: "because they will have mercy shown to them." (Literally, "they will be mercied.") (cf. Mt. 7:1-2 & 12)

2. Reconciling.--

- (1) The pronouncement.—“Blessed are the peacemakers.” (Cf. II Cor. 5:17-20; Mt. 5:21-26 and 43-45)
 - (2) The promise.—“because they will be called sons of God.” Reconciliation is so much a characteristic of God that those who are engaged in such a ministry give evidence that they are sons of their heavenly Father.
3. Patient (happy, content) in the face of persecution.--
- (1) The pronouncement.—“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake.” (Cf. Vs. 11; Lk. 6:22 & 26; I Pet. 3:13-17 & 4:12-16) Illustration: the word “patience” in Greek: *hupomone* = to remain under (the load, implied).
 - (2) The promise.—“because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.” (Just as it does to the humble - vs. 3. This beatitude is so radically paradoxical that Jesus enlarges and comments on it in vss. 11-12 and makes it more personal by putting it in the second person.

- C. What they are in the world.-- Their responsibilities and influence - to be salt and light. (5:13-16)
1. As salt-- They are to give good taste to life, to cleanse (as a wound), to preserve (as meat), to create thirst, and to lose themselves in the lives of others.
 2. As light-- They are to reveal things as they really are, to overcome darkness, to reflect the glory of God and never to call attention to themselves.
 3. The qualities of salt and light represent qualities of being- of essential nature- from which the qualities described in the beatitudes come, or grow.

II. Jesus illustrates the superior nature of God’s new humanity-- (5:17-48)

Introduction--

1. Jesus established the validity of the Old Testament Law (5:17-19)-- The O.T. Law was of three kinds: the civil law, the ceremonial law and the moral law. It is this third kind which Jesus says has eternal value.
2. Jesus taught that God’s standard of righteousness in relationships with others is much higher than that of a literal interpretation of the Law (5:20).
3. In the following verses Jesus refers to six passages in the O.T. Law dealing with the subjects of murder (Ex. 20:13; Dt. 5:17), adultery (Ex. 20:14; Dt. 5:18), divorce (Dt. 24:1-4), swearing and oaths (Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Dt. 23:21), retaliation (Ex. 21:24; Lev. 24:20; Dt. 19:21),

and loving one's neighbor (Lev. 19:18). (On loving one's enemy see Prov. 25:21-22).

4. In each case Jesus used the following pattern (sometimes the last element is implied rather than expressed):
 - (1) He quotes from the O.T. Law.
 - (2) He re-interprets the negative meaning based on His own authority as one who knows the mind of God - "I myself, I say to you . . ."
 - (3) He gives the positive meaning of the negative commandment showing that its true meaning is fulfilled and true righteousness is demonstrated when it is put into practice.

- A. By the personal relationships of God's new humanity with those people who oppose them (Mt. 5:21-26 and 38-47).
 1. Regarding murder and reconciliation (5:21-26)
 - (1) Quotation from the O.T. - The sixth commandment (5:21; Ex. 20:13; Dt. 5:17)
 - (2) Re-interpretation of the meaning of the negative commandment (5:22). It is not enough simply to refrain from the overt act of murder. Such a person is not really righteous. We must not even *want* to murder. The negative meaning prohibits any attitude which might lead to murder - any attitude which does not promote love and peace and harmony.

 - (3) The positive meaning of the negative commandment:
 - a. Take positive action to be reconciled with *anyone* who might be or become an enemy or an object of your anger. This is even more important than public worship (5:23-24)!
 - b. Take positive action to be reconciled with anyone who is expressing his anger against you (5:25-26)! This is the way you demonstrate that you have received God's kind of righteousness.

 2. Regarding retaliation and returning good for evil (5:38-42). (We take these verses next because they build on the thought of 5:21-26.)
 - (1) Quotation from the O.T. - The law of retaliation (5:38) See Ex. 21:24 & Dt. 19:21 with Lev. 24:20. The O.T. law was an improvement on the unlimited retaliation practiced by people following the natural impulses of their sinful human nature.
 - (2) The re-interpretation of the negative command: "Do not resist one who is evil." This does NOT mean "allow an evil person to do with you as he wishes without any

response at all.” Jesus was not that kind of pacifist sitting with arms folded, doing nothing in the face of evil (5:39a).

- (3) The positive meaning of the negative command: “Return good for evil.” (5:39b-42; cf. Lk. 6:29-30; Rom. 12:17-21; Prov. 20:22, 24:29). Jesus taught that we should make a positive response to every negative action!
- a. If anyone hits you on one cheek, offer the other also (5:39).
 - b. If anyone takes your coat, let him have your shirt also (5:40).
 - c. If anyone forces you to carry his burden one mile, offer to carry it for another mile (5:41).
 - d. If anyone begs from you or wants to borrow from you, do not refuse him (5:42).

In each case the teaching is: Demonstrate calvary love - sacrificing your own rights for the sake of the one who opposes you. Take him by surprise! Don't react - ACT!!! Return only good for evil and so make him/her ashamed (cf. Rom. 12:17-21). This is the way you demonstrate that you have received God's kind of righteousness and have become a new person, filled with the love of God!

3. Regarding love for one's enemies (5:43-47)

- (1) Quotation from the O.T. (5:43) The law of love for one's neighbor is found in Lev. 19:18. The derived law of hatred for one's enemies is *not* found in the Bible but was part of Jewish tradition.
- (2) Reinterpretation of the negative command: Jesus does not discuss this because the negative command (hate your enemy) is false and has no validity.
- (3) The positive meaning: Just the opposite of Jewish tradition! Jesus calls on us to **love** our enemies (5:44a) See also Prov. 25:21-22 which is quoted by Paul in Rom. 12:20. Since *love* is a nebulous term Jesus details what He means:
 - a. Bless those who curse you (5:44b).
 - b. Do good to those who hate you (5:44c)
 - c. Pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you (5:44d).

Note: In the biblical sense “love” (*agape*) is a deep, unselfish, unconditional desire for the very best for the person loved regardless of the cost to yourself and without thought of the worthiness or unworthiness of the person loved. It is something you do more than something you feel. It requires the action of the will. It cannot be coerced but must always be free and voluntary.

- d. In this way you demonstrate that you have received God's kind of righteousness and are, therefore, becoming true sons of His, new creatures in Christ Jesus, sons of your heavenly Father who love **His** enemies and gives them sunshine and rain (5:45).

- e. Anyone can love his friends - even sinners (unrighteous people) do that! Only a true child of God, filled with His Spirit, can love as He loves, acting only with good toward those who wish him evil and oppose him.

B. By the relationships of husbands and wives in God's new humanity (5:27-32).

1. Regarding adultery and a sound home life (5:27-30).

- a. The quotation from the O.T. - the seventh commandment (5:27, cf. Exodus 20:14 and Deut. 5:18).

- b. The re-interpretation of the negative commandment (5:28). - As in the case of the negative meaning of the sixth commandment ("you must not murder"), Jesus shows that the desire to sin is the root of the act of sin and makes people guilty of sin.

In verses 29-30 Jesus teaches the necessity of taking the most stringent measures to avoid the sin of adultery. The language here is obviously figurative and not literal because the literal application of these verses would NOT correct the sinful desire.

- c. The positive meaning.-- Jesus does not state the positive meaning, but by following the pattern He set in the previous verses we can easily sense it: Build such a strong relationship of love with your spouse so that adultery is never even considered and lust is kept under control! In this way you demonstrate that you have received God's kind of righteousness and are living by the principle of love which is a fruit of the Spirit.

2. Regarding divorce and God's ideal for marriage (5:31-32).

- a. Quotation from the O.T. - the law regarding divorce (5:31; cf. Deut. 24:1-4).

- b. Re-interpretation of the negative meaning of the law: - Divorce and re-marriage involve the danger of adultery. Jesus does not enlarge on this point, but by analogy with previous verses we may infer that the desire to destroy a marriage is the root of which divorce is the fruit. Such a desire is obviously not good for it strikes at the heart of the family unit which is the basis of a strong social order (5:32).

- c. The positive teaching. - Again Jesus leaves the positive teaching implied rather than expressed: Build such a wonderful Christian home, with Christ at the head, so that divorce will never be considered. In this way you demonstrate that you have received God's kind of righteousness and that you are living by the principle of love.

C. By the honesty and truthfulness with which God's new humanity deals with all others (5:33-37).

1. The quotation from the O.T. - the law regarding oaths (5:33, cf. Lev. 19:12; Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21).
2. Re-interpretation of the negative command. -
 - a. The O.T. law permitted swearing (taking an oath to tell the truth or making a vow to do something) but prohibited “false swearing,” i.e., swearing to tell the truth and then telling a lie (perjury) or vowing to do something and then not doing it. Jesus prohibits even the kinds of swearing permitted in the O.T.
 - b. The reason for Jesus’ position- swearing is unnecessary if one **always** tells the truth and **always** does what he promises to do. In fact, if one has to reinforce his words with an oath, this in itself implies that the speaker doubts that the listener will believe him! So beware of those who swear that something is so, or that he will do something.
 - c. The positive teaching.-- Make your words **absolutely trustworthy** at all times!!
Respect for truth is a cardinal virtue of the Christian faith and the basis of all moral, scientific and even technological progress. Being absolutely, but lovingly and tactfully honest and truthful with oneself as well as with others in a spirit of love and kindness is another way we demonstrate that we have received God’s kind of righteousness.

III. Jesus emphasizes the inward and spiritual nature of the worship of God’s new humanity (6:1-18).

Introduction. -

1. General statement. - “Pay attention always and see to it that you **stop** doing your deeds of righteousness before men so that they will see what you are doing; for if you do, you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven” (6:1)
 2. Three examples of doing “righteous deeds” to be seen by other people- almsgiving, prayer and fasting. We will study prayer and fasting first, then come back to almsgiving as various aspects of worship.
- A. Prayer as part of the worship of God’s new humanity. - (6:5-15)
1. Negative aspects. - (6:5, 7-8a)
 - a. Do not pray to be seen and heard by others (6:5).
 - b. Do not keep on repeating empty phrases like the heathen (6:7-8a).
 2. Positive aspects. - (6:6, 8b-15)
 - a. Pray in private, not to be seen or heard by others (pride) (6:6)

- b. Pray with the following attitudes- confidence, reverence, submission dependence, forgiveness, humility, and praise (6:8b-13).
- c. Be especially careful to pray with a forgiving spirit (6:14-15).

B. Fasting as part of the worship of God's new humanity. - (6:16-18)

- 1. **Negative aspects.** - Stop being like the hypocrites who try to impress people with their apparent suffering from fasting (6:16)
- 2. **Positive aspects.** - When you fast, fast for God, not for show (6:17-18)

C. Deeds of mercy (almsgiving) as part of the worship of God's new humanity. -

- 1. **Negative aspects.** - Don't call attention to your act of mercy (or almsgiving, for example) (6:2).
- 2. **Positive aspects.** - Do your deeds of mercy (or almsgiving) secretly, without publicity, for people in need, not for others to see you or praise you (6:3-4).

IV. **Jesus summarizes the priorities and values of God's new humanity.** - (6:19-34)

A. Undivided loyalty to one Master is essential. - (6:19-24).

- 1. The example of a single value - heavenly treasure (6:19-21)
- 2. The example of single vision - heavenly enlightenment (6:22-23).
- 3. The example of single loyalty - heavenly service (6:24).

B. Undiluted dependence on God's provision is also essential. - (6:25-34)

- 1. **Negative aspects.** - Stop worrying yourself to distraction about material things (various phrases in various verses).
- 2. **Positive aspects.** - Seek first God's kingdom - spiritual values - and God will see that your material needs are cared for (various phrases in various verses)

Summary- Take life (Live) one day at a time (6:34).

V. Jesus requires the application of the principle of spiritual discernment in God's new humanity. - (7:1-12,

cf. 15-20)

- A. He prohibits discerning the faults in others and encourages discerning the faults in oneself. - (7:1-5)
- B. He commands us to discern between those who have spiritual perception and those who do not. - (7:6)
- C. He calls upon us to discern the source of spiritual gifts and power and explains how to receive them. - (7:7-12)

God is the source. The gifts and the power are received through prayer. They are applied as stated in the Golden Rule.

VI. Jesus contrasts God's new humanity with others. - (7:13-27)

- A. The two gates and the two roads contrasted. - (7:13-14)
- B. The two kinds of fruit trees contrasted. - (7:15-23)
- C. The two kinds of houses contrasted. - (7:24-27)

Conclusion. - The crowd is amazed because of Jesus' authority in teaching (7:28-29).