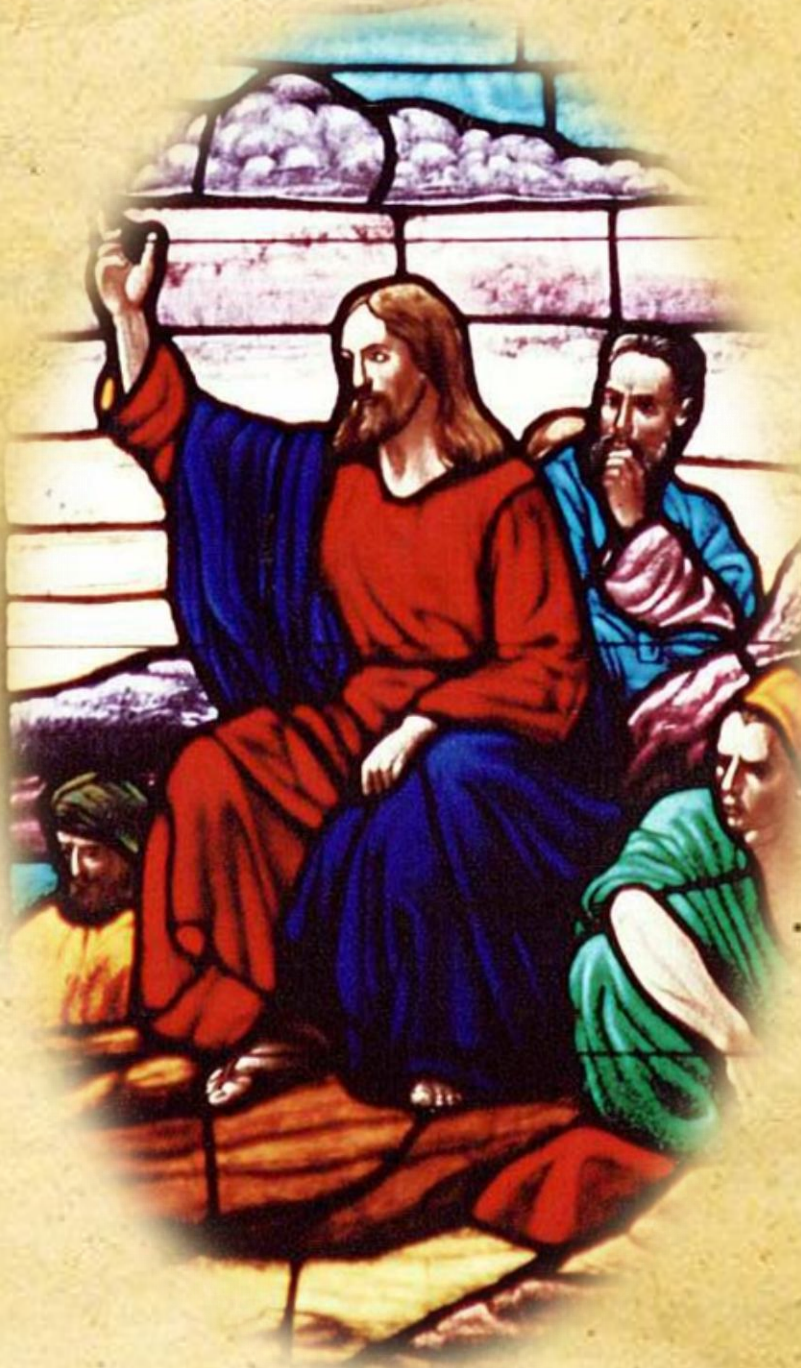


## *Chapter 9*

# **SERMON ON THE MOUNT**



**"SERMON ON THE MOUNT"** Compliments of Austin Ave United Methodist Church, Waco, TX

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

**Matthew 5: 17** (KJV King James Version)

**Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.**

Jesus made it extremely clear that he had not come to earth to destroy the law that God had established through Moses as recorded in the Old Testament; the moral law that reveals the very nature and will of God. Instead, by taking a closer look at the Sermon On The Mount, we will quickly discover Jesus unveils a graphic picture of how a Christian is expected to obey the law; meaning it is much easier to study God's laws and tell others how to put them into practice than to personally obey them both outwardly and inwardly. Since God judges a man's heart as well as his deeds, false piety will never please the Almighty.

Thus, the message of Jesus was centered on the spirit, not the letter of the law. In order to understand this principle, I invite you to open the hymnal on this site and locate the hymn played by master organist, Brad Jent, called "His Eye Is On A Sparrow." Brad has committed all the old familiar notes (Represent the Law) that make up the melody to memory. Yet, as you listen to his rendition, you will hear how the Holy Spirit flowed through his entire being (spirit of the law) to produce sounds that brought the song to life and made you feel as if you could actually see and hear the sparrows gracefully flying among the branches covered with dew kissed leaves. Since Brad allowed the Spirit to guide him as he played each note, the end result was a passion filled melody that is alive with the ethereal sounds of heaven. In short: (Law=notes or melody) and (Spirit=expression or the life and passion of the melody)

Simply stated: The law was the commandments of God. The spirit meant obeying them both inwardly and outwardly. Jesus simply wanted the people to practice the timeless commands that God had established and follow with strict obedience. In other words, just as Moses had received the law at Mt. Sinai, Jesus was delivering the message as to how children in the kingdom of God were to fulfill them. The people he was speaking to were trying to obey so many laws made by the Pharisees that it was impossible to live one day without sinning. It has been stated that over 600 laws could be broken in a single day; as judged by outward appearance only. Jesus is setting a totally new standard; raising the bar to an all time high. Yet, to those who felt imprisoned by a mountain of manmade rules, liberation had probably arrived. On the other hand, Jesus was also painting the picture that it is in the heart where attitude and allegiance lie. Since, in the eyes of God the heart is an open book, false piety is out of the question. As the Sermon on the Mount unfolds, keep in mind that Jesus is offering a fuller understanding of what God intended when he made the law in the presence of Moses. He was trying to get people to understand and apply the law as it was originally intended; meaning it is as fresh for Christians today living in the kingdom of God, as then.

## ATTRIBUTES OF A CHRISTIAN

At this point in your journey through “My Jewish Messiah”, you have probably chosen your favorite disciple to accompany and are both mesmerized beyond words at the parables and miracles Jesus has performed. Also, at this juncture, since news about Christ has spread all over Syria, large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan are clamoring after him, now presenting to you a challenge in locating a spot close enough to hear his words of wisdom. Has your disciple of choice been able to keep his equilibrium because of the popularity of the Master? After all, it must be a wonderful compliment to have been chosen as one of his twelve disciples out of all the potential candidates. Is it even possible to keep the enemy called PRIDE from entering the scene? Certainly, our Lord who sees the heart of every individual recognized this as a growing concern in the group of men he had chosen. As he listened to their comments about the position they would fill in the arrival of the kingdom he had described, Jesus knew it was time for a heart to heart conversation before the crowd of people caught up with them again.

Therefore, he went up the mountainside, gathered his disciples around him, and began warning them about the temptations they would face as his followers. Above all, the Lord knowing the reward they were anticipating for being his followers would not occur in their life time on earth, realized the importance of getting them to understand the code of conduct needed for operating in the kingdom of God; self importance not being acceptable.

Thus, it is at this point the content of Jesus’ message takes on a depth in meaning that has not been heard before by anyone in his presence. Rather than using extremely descriptive words filled with beautiful picturesque visual images to stress his point, all those in his presence quickly recognized the Lord was laying out for all his followers what would be expected behaviorally for citizens belonging to the kingdom of heaven. Thus, in a poetic structure consisting of only eight verses, he delivered to his disciples what we all know today as the Beatitudes; constituting that of a general summary of Christian teaching.

In the book “The Sermon On The Mount” written by Emmet Fox, we are reminded that in these general teachings by Jesus that he was concerned with one’s mental state. The Lord fully recognized that “if one’s mental state is right, everything must be right, too.” Whereas, Fox stated, “If these are wrong, nothing else can be right.” He also indicates the stance of Jesus as being ant-ritualistic, anti-formalistic, and lacking detailed instructions. Look carefully at the word **Be.....attitude.....**as that of being in the right attitude or frame of mind.



## THE BEATITUDES

The eight Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3–12 during the Sermon on the Mount each begins with:

*Blessed are...*

*....the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven. (5:3)*

*....those who mourn: for they will be comforted. (5:4)*

*....the meek: for they will inherit the earth. (5:5)*

*....those who hunger and thirst for righteousness: for they will be filled. (5:6)*

*....the merciful: for they will be shown mercy. (5:7)*

*....the pure in heart: for they will see God. (5:8)*

*....the peacemakers: for they will be called children of God. (5:9)*

*....those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*



*(All stained glass windows of the Beatitudes are by permission of St Peter 1" by Weglinde - Own work. Licensed under CC0 via Commons*

*[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St\\_Peter\\_1.jpg#/media/File:St\\_Peter\\_1.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:St_Peter_1.jpg#/media/File:St_Peter_1.jpg)*

### **1) "Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."**

As you read this first Beatitude, it is important to stress that meanings of some English words have changed since the time of Christ on earth; thus causing us to scratch our heads in wonder at times. In this first one, the application of the words "poor in spirit" does not mean for us to define it as poor-spirited. As Fox indicates in his book "The Sermon On The Mount", to be poor in spirit is to have emptied one's self of all desire to exercise personal self-will, and renounce all preconceived opinions in the wholehearted searched for God." Did I just here you gasp saying, "That's me Jesus is talking about?" There is an old saying that when you are feeling God is far away, take a look and see if you are the one who is distancing yourself from the Father through self absorption. Refer in the Bible to the conversation between the rich man and Jesus. He turned down the invitation to follow Jesus because of love for his earthly possessions. The poor are not as likely to be tempted by these treasures.



## 2) "Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted".

Do you recall in the Bible where Jesus is described as weeping over Jerusalem as well as at his friend Lazarus' funeral? Another Scripture to consider is from **Psalm 119: 136**, "My eyes shed streams of tears because men do not keep thy law." These instances will automatically expand the definition of mourning in Beatitude # 2. Instead of thinking of the act of mourning as occurring only when a person dies, it is necessary to open the mind to a different type of sorrow; grief over the loss of self-respect, another's wretched behavior, others misfortune, or the lack of morality in society as a whole.

John R. W. Stott in the book "The Message of the Sermon on the Mount" restates this Beatitude in a very interesting manner by writing, "Happy are the unhappy". In other words, it is during times of adversity that mankind tends to focus on God and cries out for help. An example of this is to think back on 9/11 when terrorists entered our borders causing the world's inhabitants to gnash their teeth and mourn not only the loss of life, but that of a nation's innocence, as well. In fact, the first Sunday after this horrible attack, churches were full to overflowing with frightened individuals seeking comfort from God. Unfortunately, only one week later, attendance in religious institutions

noticeably decreased and continued to follow suit, signaling people were back in the mode of self-reliance or in possession of apathetic feelings once again.



## 3) "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth"

Before grasping the full meaning of the message Jesus was delivering in this statement, one must center on the words **meek** and **earth**. Otherwise, given the definition in society today regarding an individual being meek, our mind would immediately think of a willow in the wind; of one unable and unwilling to stand up in the face of adversity. However, this was not the meaning Jesus had in mind. Instead, let us focus on a common Christian definition that appears throughout a number of writings defining it as, "**strength under control.**" Another way to reconfigure it in your thinking process is to quote from **Colossians 3: 12** by saying, "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." This flies in the face of people in today's world named as successful or popular, doesn't it? Add to this Emmet Fox's definition of **earth** from his book, "The Sermon On The Mount", as meaning "**the whole of your outer experience**" and it all is crystal clear. How would the world look if mankind lived out Beatitude #3 using this clarified meaning?



4) "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness for they will be satisfied."

Do you remember when the Prodigal son was so starved for nourishment that even slop he was feeding to the pigs would have tasted like a gourmet meal? Have you ever needed liquid so much that your mouth felt like that of a parched desert ground? Conjuring up these images in your mind lets you know the intensity Jesus desired his followers to have when hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Unfortunately, in order for Christians to reach this level of desire, it takes finding a way for each individual to be delivered from the constant need of self-gratification. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones succinctly states this in his book "Studies in the Sermon on the Mount" with these words, "To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to desire to be free from self in all its horrible manifestations, in all its forms." Certainly in order to walk with God, we must have fellowship with him in Spirit and Truth; being on a journey where his Light illuminates our every step. Before you view that as an impossibility, humbly kneel at the altar of prayer asking God to transform your hunger and thirst for righteousness in such a deeply profound manner that you will search desperately for it all the days of your life. Amen! **Philippians 1:21** (New International Version (NIV))<sup>21</sup> "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain," succinctly says it all.



5) "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy"

At this juncture, you will note a sequential order in Jesus' teaching, by comparing the first four to this the fifth Beatitude. If we have shown great hunger and thirst toward God's Word, the Lord is now describing an expected outcome of a Christian's behavior. Rather than enjoying revenge or being quick to judge others with an iron fist, we will now speak and act in a merciful manner toward our neighbor. The definition of extending mercy certainly does not imply that one should pretend wrong is not transpiring in today's world. Jesus does not want us to look the other way when an injustice is occurring; a message he sent during his ministry on earth through the people with whom he chose to associate; meaning the downtrodden in society. In other words, merciful doesn't mean being so laid back that not much matters in this world.

Additionally, one must also be cognizant of the link between mercy and grace. Comparing the differences between the definitions of these two words adds clarity beyond measure. **GRACE IS GETTING WHAT YOU DO NOT DESERVE whereas MERCY IS NOT GETTING WHAT YOU DO DESERVE.** Since we all consistently sin and fall short of the mark, the act of showing grace and mercy is paramount to our very survival as people. Being of this attitude is Christ's point.



## 6) "Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God."

The Scripture from **Proverbs 23: 26** stresses in the mind of the writer what it means to be pure in heart by stating, **"My son, give me your heart and let your eyes keep to my ways."** If we hunger and thirst after righteousness, then showing mercy and grace to others will bring us closer to being pure in heart; a behavior that must be practiced all the days of our lives.

An example of this was experienced by the writer as she ministered among the residents at a local nursing home as a volunteer reader. One Thursday when rotating among the dining tables in animated conversation with the residents, a sweet little old soul opened her arms indicating the need for a hug and surprised the writer by whispering in her ear, "I can see Jesus in your face." Interestingly enough, as the writer looked deeply into her beautiful blue eyes, she was certain beyond doubt that at that very moment in time, she saw the face of God!

If one's life is about dying to self and allowing God to take the lead, the ordinary will become extraordinary, rainbows will fill the skies, and dark clouds will turn into sunshine. As we love our neighbors as ourselves, we will see the face of God everywhere we walk.



## 7) "Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the children of God."

**John 17:23 New International Version (NIV)** <sup>23</sup> **"I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."** Since Jesus was very clear that citizens of the kingdom should carry one another's burdens; it would require the body of Christ to be unified and filled to overflowing with peacemakers. This command is certainly to the point, but less than simple to live out because it requires Christians to view life through the scope of what is best for others rather than self. Thus, it may call for silence through the act of endurance rather than offering loud resistance to preserve one's fragile ego. How much violence occurs today because of the attitude, "You discounted ("dist") me?"

However, by no means does this call for a Christian to always behave in a passive manner and take the path of least resistance; meaning "let sleeping dogs lie." Being a peacemaker may require having crucial conversations; a time when the words spoken, out of love, are hard to say but are necessary for another to hear; thus, viewing the individual through the light of God's Word, not from the vantage point of thinking, "Why is he/she like that?"



8) "Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven".

As usual, just when we see a pattern developing in Jesus' teaching, he calls us to attention with a challenging Beatitude like that of facing persecution because of believing in him. Righteousness as a Christian should never be that of acting in neither a fanatical nor overzealous manner; or for assuming the role of a martyr. Jesus most certainly was not a martyr, because he could have called the legions of angels to his rescue at anytime. He resolutely made the decision to die as a sacrifice for our sins.

The fact is, no matter how much attention one pays to that of peacekeeping, the obvious may occur when two value systems collide. Not everyone is going to like or agree with you. However, as Christians, we should practice the behavior that "It is all right to disagree as long as it is done agreeably." Jesus is very clear about the fact that his followers are going to have trouble in this world. Just stop and read about the hardships his disciples incurred; resulting in all being killed, except for John. Also, Dietrich Bonhoeffer certainly internalized the concept of what it meant to suffer because of his stance regarding the Nazi regime. He suffered imprisonment, the threat of torture, danger to his own family and even death. If we are suffering as a Christian for mirroring the actions of Jesus, then we can make the assumption that we are being persecuted for righteousness sake.

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The Sermon on the Mount; the longest recorded sermon preached by Jesus, thought to have lasted for several days, made it very clear as to what was expected of his followers, not only then, but also today. His words are considered timeless because of their ability to address all generations of believers. It is thought by many scholars to have been his most important message; one that is passed lightly over by some and ignored by others because it is misunderstood and makes many believers uncomfortable to the point of squirming. Perhaps this, too, is one of its purposes. Since, as self-centered human beings, we must be placed between a rock and a hard place by the hand of God before being brought to attention, Jesus minced no words in declaring that following him was going to be far from a cake walk. In short, it required the development of traits that were not of this world; behaviors that would meet resistance in daily life.

As you independently read the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount, the following subheadings and brief descriptions have been written as a guide to promote understanding.



### **A CHRISTIAN'S IMPACT ON OTHERS (Matthew 5: 13-16):**



Through using the examples of salt and light, Jesus clearly sends the message of the impact a follower can offer the world at large through discipleship. Possessing little flavor as Christians, means we are of limited value to God because of being immersed in the things of this world without letting our light shine in a way that leads others to Christ. Followers of Jesus must live differently through modeling his example in ways that will demonstrate clearly what living in the kingdom is all about. Actions do speak louder than words not only on Sunday, but every day of the week.

*([https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File: Hunt-Light of the World.](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hunt-Light_of_the_World.))*

### **ADHERENCE TO MORAL PRINCIPLES (Matthew 5: 17-48):**

In this section, Jesus teaches about the law, anger, lust, divorce, vows, retaliation and loving our enemies; as well as rules of right conduct and differences between right and wrong. In the Life Application Study Bible (*New International Version*), a Christian's adherence is described with the following words, "We, are more often than not, guilty of avoiding the extreme sins while regularly committing the types of sins with which Jesus was most concerned. In these examples, our real struggle with sin is exposed. Jesus pointed out what kind of moral principles would be required of his followers." After carefully reading the rules of right conduct in Matthew 5: 17-48, it should be stunningly obvious that mankind is absolutely overpowered by the circumstances of life. Since, throughout our journey, we allow the personal sins we commit to taint and taunt us, it is obvious how much power we assign to SIN. Solution: Through the forgiveness of Jesus, sin becomes powerless and we are set free. *"You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness". (Romans 6: 18) New International Version*



*(Photo above: A page from Matthew, from Papyrus 1, c. 250 AD)*

### **GODLINESS OF A CHRISTIAN (Matthew 6: 1-18)**

As you read and contemplate the messages Jesus delivers in Matthew 6: 1-18, it is important to always remember that every second of our lives, we are in the presence of God the Father who sees the heart. The words from the book of *Psalm 11: 4* make this abundantly clear by stating, ***“The LORD is in his holy temple; the LORD is on his heavenly throne. He observes the sons of men; his eyes examine them.”*** (Life Application Study Bible; New International Version) As Jesus teaches on giving alms to the poor, sincerity in prayer and humility during fasting, common threads of warning are woven throughout regarding hollowness of action. At no time is a Christian supposed to put into practice these principles with the focus on self gratification; behaving in a way that shows only surface level piety. Pretentious behavior in following the commands of God will not be pleasing to the Almighty who knows the secrets of men.

Finally in this group of teachings by Jesus is his emphasis on forgiveness. Due to our enormous need to be forgiven by the Father every moment of our existence, Scripture offers all of us great assurance in the book of *Isaiah 43: 25* with the words, ***“ I, even I, am he who blots out your transgressions, for my own sake, and remembers your sins no more.”*** (Life Application Study Bible; New International Version) In turn, the expectations of following an example of this Scripture as a Christian serves as a demonstration of how the Word cuts like a sharp sword with the direct quote from the Sermon on the Mount in *Matthew 6: 15*: ***“But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*** (Life Application Study Bible; New International Version) Ladies and gentlemen, let us all focus with great attention on the fact that Jesus means business in a way that directly affects all of us. This only requires from each of us three words proclaimed to another that complete an entire sentence that is packed with potential for a positive outcome by saying, “Please forgive me.” (If that does not work, how about, “I am sorry.”) Let us all swallow our pride, mean what we say, and comply!

### **ASPIRATIONS OF A CHRISTIAN (Matthew 6: 19-34)**



A warning straight from the lips of Christ against storing treasures on earth that will simply waste away begins this group of verses. Since society equates personal wealth with being successful in life, people are conditioned into believing happiness revolves around the almighty dollar, minus the thought of sharing with others.

After reading these verses, the writer was reminded of a conversation she held with a sweet old soul that sounded like she had been in the presence of Jesus as he delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Still wearing her apron

that held the aroma of freshly baked bread, she joyfully entered a retail store holding a hand written list of necessities. It was obvious from her demeanor that all was well with her soul. Her soft silver hair worn up on top of her head allowed everyone in her presence to witness the sweetness in her sky blue eyes and bask in the warm glow that radiated from her face. Every person she met was the beneficiary of a smile and words of encouragement. Even though she was a stranger, the writer could not resist asking how she had arrived at such a peaceful state of mind. In a kind voice that matched her appearance she replied, "Honey, I have never seen a casket hooked to a U-Haul. The Lord provides for my every need. I want for nothing because of his love. What I classify as a treasure will be received in heaven, not on earth. Have a wonderful day, sweet one."

Then, as a part of the verses on treasures, Jesus surprises us by including a lesson on the eye being the lamp of the body; which requires researching the Old Testament Scriptures before a connection between the two concepts occurs. Giving alms to the poor was a duty of those living during the time of Christ. If anyone viewed those less fortunate with haughty eyes that were filled with disdain for their plight in life, it was thought their own soul was full of darkness. It is important to view others as being worthy of being blessed; thus a reason to share with others in need. Thus, the eye then serves as a lamp of the body; sending a clear message whether the individual has a soul filled with light or darkness. Remembering that everything belongs to God should help all of us realize that blessings are for blessing others.



#### **HOW A CHRISTIAN TREATS OTHERS (Matthew 7: 1-20)**

(A c. 1619 painting by [Domenico Fetti](#) entitled *The Parable of the Mote and the Beam*.)

***“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*** (Matthew 7: 1-2) *Life Application Study Bible, NIV* Does this Scripture cause you to flinch and feel uneasy? Have we all not been guilty of this behavior? It is much easier to build oneself up by tearing down another’s actions, isn’t it? Yet, when we do this, somehow the end result lacks satisfaction. There is not one with a clean slate when it comes to this action. However, let us ask the Holy Spirit to assist us in changing this challenge before the plank in our eye gets so big that judging others becomes a

conditioned response. Jesus continues with words that give us even more reason to contemplate this behavior by saying, *“So, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”* Need he say more?

### **A CHRISTIAN’S DEDICATION (Matthew 7: 21-27)**



As we conclude reading the last portion of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus describes the gate to eternal life as being very narrow; a path few will choose to follow because of the behavior required for its citizens. He also warns that many will be misled by false teachers offering an easy road, filled with messages of self-gratification. Then, in the last words of his sermon, he closes by offering the only sure way to heaven by letting everyone know the importance of building our spiritual house on the solid rock; meaning Jesus himself. If we use Christ as our compass, we will stay on the straight and narrow, never losing sight of our eternal home; HEAVEN! •

*(Photograph “Narrow Is The Way” courtesy of Melody Childers)*

### **TIME FOR CONTEMPLATION:**

Throughout the three years Jesus conducted his ministry on earth, his behavior served as an example of everything he told us to do when delivering the Sermon on the Mount. He was faithful first to his Heavenly Father by constantly staying in touch with him through prayer. He showed mercy, grace, and made peace whenever possible. The courage he demonstrated in going about his Father's business was astounding; refusing to back down when confronted by his enemies and never faltering when his task at hand was that of reaching out to individuals labeled as unclean and untouchable; the downtrodden in society. He was salt, light and demonstrated humility that was unimaginable. In short, he was a living example of how a Christian is supposed to conduct himself/herself as a kingdom member.

Let us close this chapter by imagining what the atmosphere around Jesus was like as his voice grew silent, signaling the Sermon on the Mount was finished. If you were sitting beside your disciple of choice, the two of you could probably have heard a pin drop or perhaps the sound of your own breathing. Then, when voices were heard, once again, do you think they were speaking to one another in puzzlement regarding the behavioral standards necessary for being children of the kingdom that were in direct opposition from the law under which they lived that was so stifling? Certainly, Scripture lets us know the people were amazed at Jesus' teaching because he spoke as one who had authority; a position unlike that of the teachers of the law who cited traditions and quoted authorities while debating constantly among themselves. Why was Jesus able to speak with such great authority? *John 1: 1-3* supplies the answer to this question by stating, *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made."* My friends, since God is our Creator, to him we are valuable and uniquely precious; so priceless that out of his great love for us, he delivered the greatest sermon ever known to mankind; THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT! Amen!

#### SOURCES:

*"SERMON ON THE MOUNT," John R. W. Stott*

*"THE NATURE OF THE KINGDOM," John Wesley*

*"THE PREACHING OF AUGUSTINE," Augustinus, Aurelius, Saint, Bp. of Hippo.*

*"THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT," Emmet Fox*



## GROWING IN THE WORD



1) Before beginning your time as a discussion group, go to the home page of [devotionalembers.com](http://devotionalembers.com), open the hymnal and choose a hymn that best fits the message Jesus sent in the Sermon on the Mount. Play it for the group in preparation for working together. (I chose the hymn, "ROCK OF AGES.")

2) In researching the Sermon on the Mount, it was referred to by some scholars as being as close to fitting the definition of manifesto as they had ever seen. Read the definition of MANIFESTO supplied below and see if you agree or disagree.

**MANIFESTO**---- is a published verbal declaration of the intentions, motives, or views of the issuer, be it an individual, group, political party or government. A manifesto usually accepts a previously published opinion or public consensus and/or promotes a new idea with prescriptive notions for carrying out changes the author believes should be made. It often is political or artistic in nature, but may present an individual's life stance. Manifestos relating to religious belief are generally referred to as creeds.  
(Wikipedia)

3) Which Beatitude did you find the most challenging? Share with others if you are comfortable in doing so.

4) After the people departed from hearing Jesus deliver a standard for new behavior, and time lapsed, what challenges do you think they faced given the time and location in which they lived? Compare the challenges of following the rules for Christian living then and now. Similarities and differences?

### PRAYER

*Dear kind Father,*

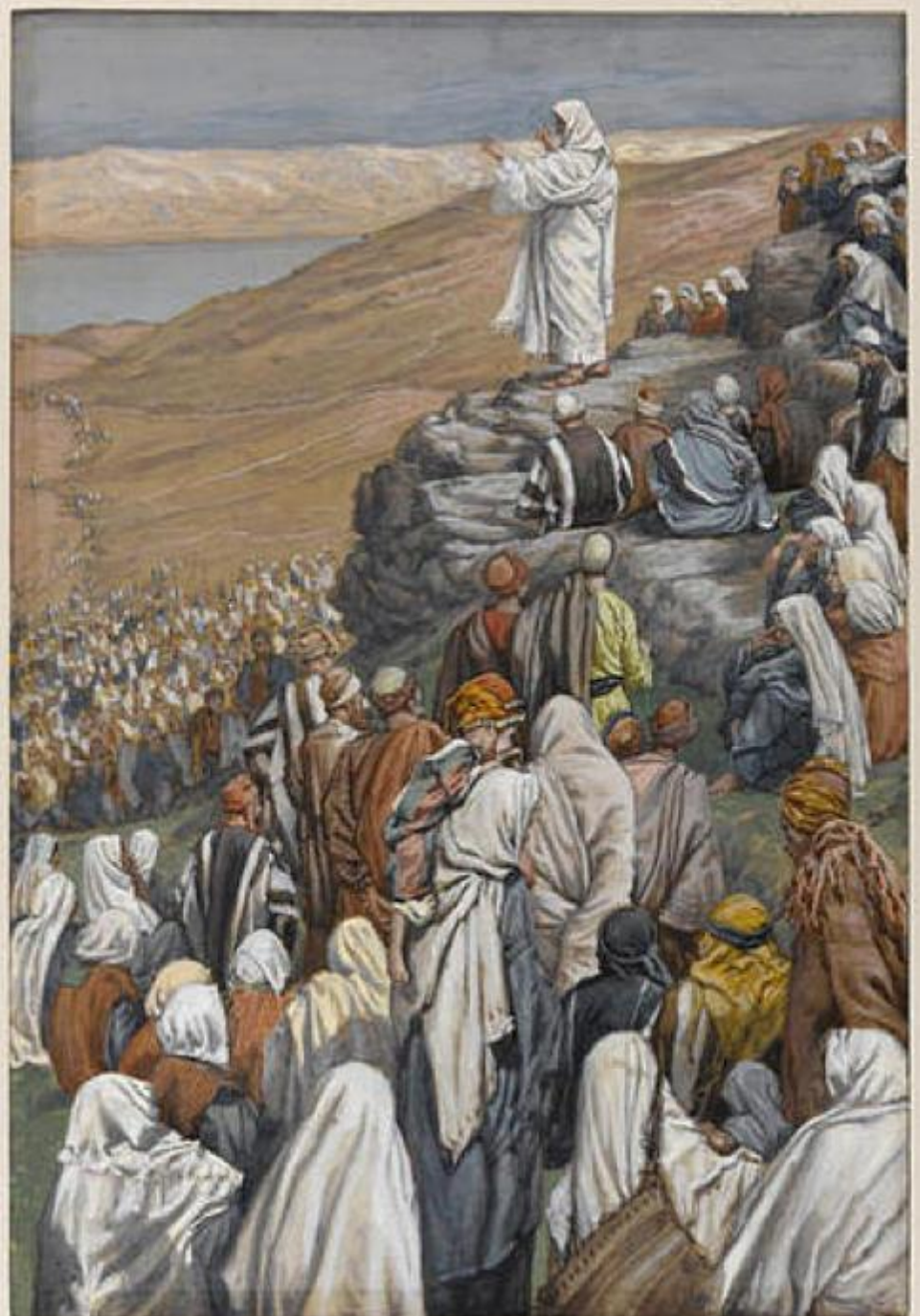
*As your disciple, I have to admit that your words in the Sermon on the Mount aroused in me feelings of excitement along with fear. Energy flowed throughout my being when I thought about someday being able to sit at your feet eternally and hear the peaceful sound of your voice. Then, as you delivered powerful descriptions of how I am to treat my fellowmen, I found myself questioning my own ability.*

*However, the Holy Spirit whispered in my ear to take away the word "I" and replace it with "we." Stopping for a moment to contemplate, the realization swept over me that you are always at my side offering your hand along the journey toward heaven.*

*Then, as you continued to describe the expected behavior for children living in your kingdom, feelings of my own inadequacy surfaced again. As a sinner, I saw my own facial expressions of being unlovely toward others, extending closed instead of open hands, and realized it would take more than tweezers to remove the PLANK from my own eye. For these things, I ask forgiveness and the courage to extend that forgiveness to others.*

*Last, please receive my eternal gratitude for loving your creation so much that you spent several days on the side of a mountain teaching all of us how to live. You must have been drained beyond imagination. Yet, as many times as the lessons need to be repeated to this stubborn, sinful child, you are willing to comply. Please help, not only myself, but all your believers follow with complete obedience. All these things we pray in the name of your Son, Jesus.*

**Amen!**



*(The Sermon On The Mount,  
Illustration for "The Life of Christ," by  
James Tissot*