

## FAITH SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON

January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2012

### Sermon on the Mount Part I

**Focal Passage: Matthew 5 (ESV)**

Cross References: Eph 4:26-27, Deut 24:1-4, Josh 10:40, Lev 19:18

**Central Idea:** The Sermon on the Mount introduces a series of five important discourses recorded in Matthew. This sermon expounds the law masterfully and assaults Pharisaic legalism potently, closing with a call to true faith and salvation (7:13-29). In it Christ expounds the full meaning of the law, showing that its demands are humanly impossible (5:48). This proper use of the law with respect to salvation closes off every possible avenue of human merit and leaves sinners dependent on nothing but divine grace for salvation (cf. Rom 3:19, 20, Gal 3:23, 24). Christ plumbs the depth of the law, showing that its true demands go far beyond the surface meaning of the words (5:28, 39, 44) and set a standard that is higher than that the most diligent students of the law have realized (5:20).

**Lesson Idea:** Understanding and following the commands of Christ. It's easier said than done!

**Background:** The MacArthur Commentary says

"Since Matthew is concerned with setting forth Jesus as Messiah, the King of the Jews, an interest in the OT kingdom promises runs throughout this Gospel. Matthew's signature phrase "the kingdom of heaven" occurs thirty-two times in this book (and nowhere else in all of Scripture).

The opening genealogy is designed to document Christ's credentials as Israel's king, and the rest of the book completes this theme. Matthew shows that Christ is the heir of the kingly line. He demonstrates that Jesus is the fulfillment of dozens of OT prophecies regarding the king who would come. He offers evidence after evidence to establish Christ's kingly prerogative. All other historical and theological themes in the book revolve around this one.

Matthew records five major discourses: (1) the Sermon on the Mount (chs. 5-7); (2) the commissioning of the apostles (ch. 10); (3) the parables about the kingdom (ch. 13); (4) a discourse about the childlikeness of the believer (ch. 18); (5) the discourse on His Second Coming (chs. 24, 25). Each discourse ends with a variation of this phrase: "when Jesus had ended these sayings" (7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, 26:1). That becomes a motif signaling a new narrative portion. A long opening section (chs. 1-4) and a short conclusion (28:16-20) bracket the rest of the Gospel, which naturally divides into five sections, each with a discourse and a narrative section. Some have seen a parallel between these five sections and the five books of Moses in the OT.

The rejection of Israel's Messiah is another constant theme in this Gospel. In no other Gospel are the attacks against Jesus portrayed as strongly as here. From the light into Egypt to the scene at the cross, Matthew portrays Christ's rejection more vividly than any of the other evangelists. In Matthew's account of the Crucifixion, for example, no thief repents, and no friends or loved ones are seen at the foot of the cross. In His death, He is forsaken even by God (27:46). The shadow of rejection is never lifted from the story.

Yet Matthew also portrays Jesus as a victorious King who will one day return "on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (24:30)."

#### **Matt 5:1-12 The Beatitudes**

<sup>1</sup> *Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.*

<sup>2</sup> *And 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 satisfied.*

<sup>7</sup> *"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive 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 others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- Beatitudes come from the Latin adjective *Beatus* which means happy, fortunate, or blissful.
- Here Christ gives eight characteristics of blessed people, which represent to us the principal graces of a Christian. What are those eight characteristics?
- This list is a "be" list, not a "do" list. There is a difference in doing, for the sake of doing, and being. What has caused you to learn to "be" these things?
- If you aren't "being" these things already what would it take to cause you to "be" them?

### **Matt 5:13-16 Salt and Light**

<sup>13</sup> *“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.*

<sup>14</sup> *“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. <sup>16</sup> In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- What is the point of salt?
- What is the point of light?
- How are you salt and light in your family? Your work? With your friends?
- What does it look like to be salt and light in your home? At your work? With your friends?
- Is there ever a time to not be salt and light? Why?

### **Matt 5:17-20 Christ came to fulfill the law**

<sup>17</sup> *“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. <sup>18</sup> For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. <sup>19</sup> Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. <sup>20</sup> For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- What did Jesus come to do? What did he not come to do? What do you think about that?
- What facts do we learn here? What does it mean that not even the smallest detail “will pass from the Law until all is accomplished”? What difference does this make to know that?
- Why are the commands of the law important?

### **Matt 5:21-26 Anger**

<sup>21</sup> *“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. <sup>23</sup> So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, <sup>24</sup> leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. <sup>25</sup> Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. <sup>26</sup> Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.*

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- What is the difference between Vs. 21 and 22? Why is Christ making a statement about anger making you liable to judgment?
- What does anger do to us? To those around us?
- Is anger sin? Read Eph 4:26-27. How does this work with what Christ is saying?
- What are we told to do when we come to “offer your gift” and there is someone with something against us? Why are we told to do this?

### **Matt 5:27-30 Lust**

<sup>27</sup> *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ <sup>28</sup> But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup> If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. <sup>30</sup> And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.*

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- What does this mean about our thought lives?
- The issue of lust doesn't just rest on men and the desire for women, lust comes from the word “epithumia” which “denotes strong desire of any kind”. Lust can be defined by any strong desire for that which is not yours, or cannot be righteously fulfilled.
- Why the command to disfigure yourself? Is this literal or figurative? Why does he use such an extreme picture?

### **Matt 5:31-32 Divorce**

<sup>31</sup> *“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ <sup>32</sup> But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- Read Deut 24:1-4.
- For what cause does Christ “allow” divorce? How does any other reason for divorce cause one to commit adultery?

- For more information on this subject I recommend “The Biblical Position on Divorce and Remarriage” published by Grace Community Church.

#### **Matt 5:33-37 Oaths**

<sup>33</sup> “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’<sup>34</sup> But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,<sup>35</sup> or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.<sup>36</sup> And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.<sup>37</sup> Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- What is the significance of this passage? Why is Christ telling us this?
- What should we do rather than making an “oath” or “swearing”?

#### **Matt 5:38-42 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 say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.<sup>40</sup> And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.<sup>41</sup> And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.<sup>42</sup> Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- This passage is dealing with matters of personal retaliation, not criminal offenses or acts of military aggression. He is calling for a full surrender of all personal rights.
- Why is the way we respond so important? Contrast the difference between the commands of Christ here to His followers, and the commands of God in the OT to destroy their enemies like in Josh 10:40.

#### **Matt 5:43-48 Love your enemies**

<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 and pray for those who persecute you,<sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is 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 do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?<sup>47</sup> And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?<sup>48</sup> You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

- The first half of verse 43 is found in Lev 19:18, the second part is found in how the Pharisees explained and applied the OT command.
- What command is given in Vs 44? How can we do this? Who will we be like if we love our enemies?
- What example does Jesus give of how God even loves his enemies?
- What is God’s standard for our behavior? Can we attain it? Why or why not?

#### **APPLICATION**

- Maybe today you are walking away with a heart that is turned against God, I would encourage you to pray that God would cause you to “want, to want to do right”.
- Plan to share next week how you were salt and light in your circle of influence this week.
- Are you a trustworthy person whose word is counted as being something that can be trusted? If not what can you do to change that? If so, what are you doing to maintain it?
- What will you do this week to implement the commands of Christ found in Matthew 5?