

The Sermon on the Mount - The Greatest Preacher

Matt 4:23-5:2, 7:28-8:4

I want to do something a little different than I normally do. I want to read some of the passages before the sermon, skim through the sermon quickly - not read it all - and then read the end. Just to give us a high level overview of what's here. If you're familiar with the sermon this will be a refresher. If you're not, you might be surprised how much of it you actually know without having read it before. **Read**

This morning we are beginning a series on the Sermon on the Mount. Some of you know that I took a class on the Sermon some time ago that was entirely dedicated to this sermon. It was a wonderful class, very encouraging and insightful. Part of the class work was to actually prepare a teaching series through the sermon. I think this will be a great benefit for all of us.

What I want to do this morning is to start off with some background and overview. It'll probably feel a little bit more like a Bible college course for a bit. But then I want to turn our attention to just one thing: that this is actually a sermon. And Jesus was a preacher; really he was the greatest preacher to ever live.

I think sometimes we can get a little caught up in the ideas of Jesus or about Jesus. We can love theology and knowing things about the Bible, but if we're not careful we can forget that the Triune God is not a concept but a person. And that all our love and devotion to the Word of God and things of God should drive us to the person of God specifically revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is through him we know the Father to him we come by the power of the Spirit. But he is a person: fully God, fully man, one with the Father and Spirit, our brother, master, Savior and friend. And it is appropriate, since what we are studying is a sermon, to see what Jesus was like as a preacher.

Before we get to that, let's dig into the nitty gritty a little bit. Most of us are probably familiar with the sermon. It's really one of the most well known portions of Scripture. The beatitudes are familiar, we are salt and light, tearing our eyes out rather than going to hell, the Lord's Prayer, judge not lest ye be judged, the wise man who builds his house on the rock, "Lord, Lord, did we not do all these things!" "I never knew you." Many of those things are familiar.

Side: I want to challenge you to read this sermon in one sitting once a week as we go through it. It'll take you 15 minutes. And each time you read it I want you to think about it in different ways. Read it asking: what does it say about the Trinity / grace / Bible / love / Jesus / marriage / obedience / money / heaven. So on. Study it through that lens. One of the best ways to get the most out of Scripture is to immerse yourself in a particular section. Look at the cross references, read what your study Bible says. Listen to sermons on it. And get to know it well.

1) This sermon is an outline of what Jesus probably preached many, many times. Now, to be clear, I believe that Jesus really did preach this sermon on a mountainous area to a massive crowd of people. But I believe what we have here is really just the outline of what he preached because if you just read it out loud it only takes about 15 minutes to read the whole thing. What we understand from other parts of the gospels, Jesus usually spoke for a long time. So this is probably the barebones takeaway from the totality of what he preached here and elsewhere. **Look at Luke 6:20.** Most of you know that much of the sermon is repeated in Luke's gospel. Some of it is almost exactly the same, some of it is different. **Read 6:20-26, 37; 11:1-4.**

So I think this is probably the same exact sermon. But there are differences. Luke: blessed are the poor, Matthew: blessed are the poor *in spirit*. Luke: adds woes where Matthew doesn't. Why are there differences? Do we have errors in the Bible? The answer is no.

Let's say you had lunch with someone who goes to a different church and asked them about the morning sermon and they gave you a report. And then you had dinner with someone else from that church and asked them about the sermon. And there were similarities in their story, but it wasn't quite the same. Would you think they were lying or in error? No. Even if they read you their notes. One might structure their notes differently, or want to emphasize something differently. Or group things topically rather than verse by verse. There will be variations in the sermon emphasizing different things, but the gist is usually the same.

This sermon is essentially the Cliff's Notes version of what Jesus preached over and over. **Look** back at **Matt. 5**.

2) The sermon was primary meant to be heard. Now, I want you to use your sanctified imagination here a little bit. Let's say you're following Jesus around and you have some family who can't go to where Jesus is. So they ask you to write down what he says and bring it back. You don't have a computer, or microphone. You have 3 pieces of papyri - ancient paper - and you can write down by hand what he says. The paper costs \$1000 so you only have one shot. What do you write down? Remember, your family is probably going to read this over and over and they'll probably memorize it and pass it down through speech.

See, we live in a day and age where almost everyone is literate to some degree. Most of us can read, and we have books everywhere. We have so many books, we actually now have digital books on iPhones and iPads that can have thousands of books. But for most of history books were outrageously expensive so people **heard** things and had to memorize them.

So you not only summarize Jesus' teaching, but you have arrange Jesus's sermon in a way that could easily be memorized and reproduced with accuracy. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that's what Matthew has done for us. It's the gist of Jesus's teaching, but it's also structured in a way that Jesus's followers could memorize it. That's why when we read it we're like, "Well this is good, it's just a weird sermon." No, it's a phenomenal sermon that you can memorize and then go preach the daylights out of. And that's exactly what the early church did.

There are patterns:

Blessed are the...for theirs is.

You have heard it said, but I what? Say to you.

Don't do this for public recognition, do this for a reward from the Father.

Summary: 9 Blesseds / salt, light, law / 6 I says / 6 rewards / 2 eyes / 2 animals / 2 givers / 2 gates / 2 trees / 2 followers / 2 houses on 2 foundations.

If you memorize that 1 sentence outline, and you read the sermon about 5 times, you'll basically be able to recall the entire thing even if you don't memorize it. What Matthew has done for us through the Spirit's guidance so that we would understand and impress these truths into our hearts is nothing short of genius.

3) It's a sermon primarily about the Kingdom of Heaven: **Look** at **Matthew 4:23-5:1**. **Read**

So the phrase Kingdom of heaven is a packed phrase. Matthew uses Kingdom of heaven, the other gospels use "kingdom of God." There's probably some overlap in the terms. Some people say that Matthew uses the term KOH rather than KOG because he's writing to Jews who wouldn't like to hear the word "God." I'm not convinced of that because he actually uses the phrase Kingdom of God 5 times in his gospel and I don't think it's because he got sloppy (**6:33, 12:28, 19:24, 21:31, 21:43**).

As I've read other scholars, I do believe Matthew is writing primarily to a Jewish audience, but the reason he uses the phrase KOH is because he's emphasizing is that that King Jesus has come down from heaven and he is calling people into his heavenly Kingdom. The Kingdom is still in heaven and the Kingdom is what all the followers of Jesus will inherit. But there is a sense in which we can become citizens of the heavenly Kingdom right now through following King Jesus as his disciples here on earth. So Matthew is emphasizing that heaven has burst forth on earth in the person and work Jesus who is calling us into the heavenly Kingdom.

It's like when you're in high school all these college recruiters start coming to the campus and they're recruiting you. They want to recruit you to the kingdom of WSU. And you can apply your junior year and get accepted and you're a Cougar. You're not technically on campus, you're not there yet. But you're signed up, you've got all the Cougar gear, you trash talk the Huskies. You're not on campus, but one day you will be and you spend the rest of your time until then recruiting people to come with you.

That's basically how Jesus preaches the Kingdom of God. And that's basically what the apostles preached. Jesus goes around preaching about the gospel of the Kingdom. What is that? Well usually when we hear the gospel we think: we are sinners deserving death and hell, God in love sent his Son Jesus to die for sins and rise again so that those who believe in him will have eternal life. And that's true, that's just not complete.

The good news is even better than just that basic message. It's that God himself has come down in the person of Jesus, heaven has come down. God's kingdom is breaking forth on the earth. And Jesus is creating a new people of God who are citizens of the Kingdom, empowered by his Spirit who will live out the commands God has given in the past in a new and glorious way. Yes there is forgiveness and eternal life, but fundamentally, we are a new people who belong to God's heavenly kingdom. Our citizenship is primarily in heaven. We're a heavenly people who live in exile on the earth. One day the Kingdom will come in its fulness when Jesus comes back. In the meantime we live like we would if we were in heaven. That's the gospel of the Kingdom of heaven.

Side: We don't talk about the Kingdom of God/Heaven a lot. But if you survey the NT especially, the kingdom is all over the place. Sometimes the apostles preach the kingdom, sometimes they preach the gospel. What's the difference? There is none. The gospel is the gospel of the Kingdom. There are people who try to make a distinction - I once heard that there were 3 different gospels of the Kingdom that are preached to different people at different times. That's nonsense. There is no distinction. When you were saved from your sins, yes you go to heaven but more than that you became a citizen of heaven. An Ambassador of the King.

4) The sermon is one to be lived. There's a lot of debate about what to do with the sermon. Some of our Lutheran or Presbyterian friends say that the primary point of the sermon is to show us how incapable we are of keeping it's demands and therefore it drives us to Jesus because we need grace. So the whole point is to show us just how bad we are. That's nice and we do need grace, but that's nowhere in the text. As Jesus preaches he has every expectation that his followers will obey this sermon. They'll say: "Who can possibly go through life without anger or looking on someone with lust?" "That's impossible." Well, so are all the commands of the Bible. We still follow them, don't we?

Prior to the reformers, people thought that the only way to actually obey the sermon was to live in a monastery. If you're in a monastery you can't lust, can't take an oath, no need for retaliation, you have no wealth - see? You can keep the demands of the sermon as long as you leave society and live in isolation. Except Jesus wasn't calling people to live in a monastery. He was talking common people from Galilee and Syria and Jerusalem and the Decapolis (east of the Jordan River) and Judea. This sermon isn't for those who isolate themselves from the world. This sermon is for us to be salt and light **in the world**.

Some will say the demands in the sermon are so high that this is really given for those who will live in the future Millennium - where we will have glorified bodies. This is not for us to live as Christians now. Except that this assumes life in the here and now, with marriage, and false judgement. This is a sermon that is designed to be lived out. We called to do these things. Will we fail? Of course, and there's grace for that. But we are called to follow these commands nonetheless.

In fact, the world will see us living this out and persecute us. Be we shine our light anyway. We don't retaliate when the world attacks us. We love the those in the world like God the Father does. We forgive our debtors, sometimes we engage with unholy dogs who hate us, and have to discern who is and is not a true disciple of Jesus. That means we're in the world living this stuff out.

5) This is a sermon given by a master preacher. We've done a lot of technical/background work but don't forget this was a sermon!

Think about some of the greatest sermons you've ever heard. What made them so great? Maybe good illustrations. I often remember whole sermons when I recall an illustration. Maybe it was powerful, convicting, yet filled with grace and motivated you to change or love God more. Maybe it was a confusing passage where you finally understood the meaning better. Maybe the preacher preached with authority like you hadn't heard before.

All of those are elements of this sermon. It's filled with illustrations, it's powerful, convicting, yet loaded with grace. It explains passages from the OT in ways we'd never thought of before. And Jesus preaches it with authority.

Here's what we need to understand: Jesus is first and foremost a preacher. Yes, he is God who came in the flesh and died for sins. But think about this: Matthew spends 1 chapter on Jesus's crucifixion, 1 paragraph on his resurrection. But half of his book is Jesus's preaching and teaching. If you have a red letter Bible just take 10 seconds and flip through Matthew. It's half red with teaching and preaching. That's not to undermine Jesus's death and resurrection, but it is to elevate in our mind how great a teacher he was.

To use a Troy Caselli phrase: Jesus was a lights-out preacher. He was an amazing communicator. There was no one even close to Jesus. If Jesus were to come to Redeemer Bible Church and give a sermon we would all be floored from start to finish. He could preach for 10 minutes or 2 hours and we wouldn't even notice the time.

Read Matthew 7:28-29

The word in Greek for astonished is ἐκπλήσσω - to be astonished to the point being overwhelmed (BDAG). And this is the common reaction to Jesus' preaching. Jesus is not a one-hit wonder preacher. Jesus bats 1.000 every time. And he does so at every age.

Luke 2:47-48 (Jesus is 12): And all who heard him were **amazed** at his understanding and his answers. And when his parents saw him, they were **astonished**. And his mother said to him, "Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."

Not only are the religious leaders amazed, Jesus parents are amazed that he's schooling them. And then he gets older and he's still an amazing teacher.

Look at Matthew 13:53-57: Jesus comes back to his hometown where he was known as the carpenter's son. **Read 53-57**

Where'd little Jesus learn to preach?! We know him and his family. He's no rabbi, he didn't sit at the feet of Gamaliel or Hillel - the famous rabbis of the day. How does he handle the Word of God like that?

Look at Mark 1:21-28. Read It's the same description. Yes he's casting out demons - that's a wild church service. But the idea is that his preaching and words are so powerful even demons obey him. That's preaching, boy! Everywhere he goes people recognize that Jesus' preaching is fundamentally different than the religious leaders of the day. He becomes famous for what he does with his words.

Look down at Mark 1:35-38. Preaching was essential to the ministry of Jesus. **Read**

It wasn't just for healing and casting out demons and living a righteous life and dying for sins that Jesus came - though he came for all those things. Preaching was foundational to his life and ministry. And he was good at it.

Turn to Mark 10:23-26 - A rich man wants into heaven but won't give up his stuff. Again look at the reaction. **Read**

What's the answer? With man it is impossible, but with God what? All things are possible. They are **exceedingly** astonished.

I mean, we live in a rich society. This would be like Jesus saying: if you have a 401k or a flatscreen TV you cannot be saved. There is no salvation for those with HD TV. If I actually said that you'd think I was out of my mind. That's a bold claim. Some of you'd laugh at me: "Who then can be saved?" Listen, with man it is impossible, with God all things are possible. Some of you, though, would try to justify yourself. "I don't have a 401k or a flatscreen - I'm in!" That's actually what the disciples said. **Read 28-31**

Don't think you're so holy because you don't have those things. If you follow Jesus it's better than a thousand flatscreen TVs and better than winning the lottery. Both now and in heaven. He cuts everyone on the economic

ladder down to size. It's only God who makes salvation possible. The rich are standing there with their mouths open and the poor are standing there with their mouths open because in the span of 30 seconds Jesus has destroyed the self-righteousness of both through preaching.

Look at Mark 11:15-19: Jesus goes into the Temple, clears the whole place out with a whip. He turns over tables, of the money changers. And the religious leaders don't do anything. Why not? Go get him! **Read**

They didn't touch him because he had such a mastery over the crowd of people. Everyone was so in awe of Jesus' preaching there's no way anyone could touch him. Again, the idea is astonished and overwhelmed. The crowd is filled to overflowing by the preaching of Jesus. I mean, wouldn't you want to have been there for just one sermon? Just taste a little bit of what Jesus said and how he said it? Because this is continually the response to Jesus' teaching. He is never a half-hearted preacher, his message is never ho-hum. It's a grand slam every time he preaches.

It was said of Martyn Lloyd-Jones - the great British preacher from London in the early 1900's - that his preaching was electric. People would sail from all over the world to hear him preach in Westminster Chapel where thousands would gather to hear him preach. Lloyd-Jones didn't hold a candle to Jesus.

Charles Spurgeon is called the prince of preachers. The great British preacher of the 1800's would preach to up to 5,000 people on any given Sunday. No microphone, no speakers. It would be standing room only every Sunday where people would have to be turned away for lack of room. It was said when they were building the Metropolitan Tabernacle for Spurgeon that he visited the site during the last phases of construction and stepped up to the pulpit and bellowed out "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world!" to test the acoustics. And the sound of his voice was so powerful that a man working up on the scaffolding heard that phrase was overwhelmed with conviction and instantly gave his life to Christ. Spurgeon wasn't even close to Jesus.

John MacArthur, Alistair Begg, RC Sproul, Al Mohler, Voddie Baucham - no one comes close. Every time Jesus preached his words were the pure, unadulterated Word of God coming with the force of that only God himself can bring.

Again, why was Jesus' preaching so powerful? **Matthew 7:29:** For he was teaching them as one who had authority, not as their scribes. The commands in the sermon were not suggestions. Obedience is not optional or theoretical.

The scribes and religious leaders never taught with authority. They would get up to preach or teach and say "This rabbi says this about this issue, this other rabbi says this thing." Rarely did anyone ever actually proclaim with authority what God had said.

I grew up in a seeker sensitive church where the Bible was rarely opened for the sermon and the sermons consisted of a lot of jokes and non-sense. And I remember going down to Southern California to the Master's College. And the first Sunday all the freshman attend Grace Community Church - John MacArthur's church. I had no idea who John MacArthur was and he preached a sermon out of Hebrews 6 on the warning passage. And I remember being astonished at his teaching. And thinking this very thing: I had never heard anyone preach with that kind of authority.

See, it's only when someone preaches with authority that lives are changed. If you preach without authority people think what you're saying is optional. You say: well, I'm not a preacher. I can't be a preacher.

Yes you can. Maybe not in a pastoral sense, but the sermon was designed to be memorized and taught over and over again. If you have no other thing to teach people, teach them what the Lord taught them. Not as a suggestion, but with the same authority as Jesus.

Titus 2:15 Paul says to Titus: Declare these things; exhort and rebuke with all authority. Let no one disregard you.

It's kind of hard for a preacher to just suggest the Word of God. "Um, please don't commit adultery?" That doesn't work. Declare, exhort, rebuke - with authority. "I can't do that, I'm a woman." Timothy's mom did it and Timothy's grandmother did it. Timothy was well aquatinted with the sacred writings that Lois and Eunice declared to him in the context of their family. There are limits to preaching but there are no limits to speaking the truth in love.

And listen this doesn't mean we need to be rude and abrasive. Authority doesn't have to be rude or abrasive. Although Jesus taught with authority, I don't think he was a mean, hell-fire guy. At least not all the time. I think Jesus was kind and gentle even as he preached. How do we know that? Because children loved Jesus, they ran to Jesus. I have little children and they don't like strangers anyway, but especially ones who seem threatening they don't even give the time of day. Jesus never came off as a threat to children, they came to him in droves. Even toddlers understood this preacher was amazing. They loved his stories about farming and working and praying and giving and loving God.

So we're going to study the greatest sermon ever preached, by the greatest preacher who ever preached, so we too can go and make disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, to his glory.

Pray