

Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5:1-26

Aim: To apply the teaching of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount to our lives.

Intro: On Sunday mornings in our current series on Luke’s Gospel we will be considering teaching that is also found in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. This home group series will seek to add to what we will be considering in our Sunday morning sermon series.

What do you think is the thrust of Christ’s teaching in His Sermon on the Mount?

It is where the King of God’s Kingdom (Jesus) gives us the keys to living in His Kingdom. We are not saved by living out these words, but if we are saved, then these words help us know how we are to live.

Matthew 5:1-12

What was the setting of the start of the Sermon on the Mount? (vv.1-2, 19)

Jesus sought to teach His disciples about how we are to live in His kingdom. He wanted to do this away from the crowds. But as He taught, the crowds came around them (Matt 7:28-29)

Consider the Beatitudes in Matt 5:3-9. How should we view them? What are they about?

They are the Christ-like characteristics that are to mark the heart of every true follower of Jesus.

Note: “Poor in spirit” is humility; those who “mourn” are those who sorrow over sin.

As we live out these characteristics with the help of the Spirit, what encouragement do we have?

We will be blessed of God, and we will receive an appropriate blessing for each characteristic.

What encouragement do you receive from vv.10-12?

No matter what we must bear in regard to persecution, we have a great reward in heaven.

Matthew 5:13-20

As we live out the Beatitudes, what does Jesus want us to become? (vv.13-16)

He wants us to be the salt of the earth; preserving life from sin’s decay, and enhancing life by living out the abundant life of Jesus (John 10:10). We are also to be the light of the world, shining Christ’s light to all. Consider the moon. It’s just dirt, but it reflects the sun’s light. We are meant to reflect Jesus’ light.

As we live as the salt of the earth and the light of the world, what will this result in?

It will result in our “good works” glorifying our Father in heaven. We were made for “good works” (cf. Eph 2:10), and the main goal of our life is to glorify God (1 Cor 10:31). *Does the way we live our life show to others that our main goal is this? What would those around us think our main goal for life is?*

How are we to take vv.17-19 in the light of God’s grace?

We are saved by grace (Eph 2:8-9), but as a follower of Jesus we are to keep God’s law out of love for Him (John 14:15). If we don’t, we should question whether we’ve been born of God (cf. 1 John 2:3-6).

In the light of v.19, when are we “least” or “greatest” in the kingdom of heaven?

We are “least” when we are lawless; we are “great” when we do and teach Christ’s law (cf. Matt 28:20)

The Pharisees were well known for their righteous life. Is our life more righteous than theirs, for unless it is, we will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven? How can we be more righteous than them? (v.20)
We have been made righteous by faith in Christ (Rom 3:21-22). Even so, through the re-birth there ought to be a practical righteousness in our life. The Pharisees practiced their righteousness to be noticed by people. One thing we can do to be more righteous than them is to be righteous for God.

Matthew 5:21-26

In Matt 5:21-7:12 Jesus gives His law in how we are to live in His kingdom. He takes the “damaged” law the Jewish leadership thrust onto the people, and gives the “perfect” law. The first section is on anger.

How should we view anger and contempt toward another in the light of Matt 5:21-22?

We should equate anger and contempt with murder. These sins are as serious as murder in God’s eyes.

Jesus was angry at the temple (Matt 21:12-13). Is there a place for anger?

There is, righteous anger (being angry over injustices and over sins which mars God’s glory). However, most of our anger is not righteous (cf. Jam 1:19-20). It is selfish, coming from fear, frustration or hurt.

In what way could we show contempt toward others? [discuss]

What are we to do if we are not right with someone? (vv.23-24)

We are to go and put things right. The emphasis is on us **going**, and not waiting for the other person to come to us. We are even to put it above religious duties; eg, for us, before we have communion.

In vv.25-26, what is Jesus saying we should do in judicial matters?

What matters most is to seek reconciliation through forgiveness and restitution. We are not to be angry or contemptuous and seek “payback”; even if we are treated unjustly. Cf. Jesus in Luke 23:34.

Summary: Christians are to be distinct from others by the way they live. *How different are you?*

Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 5:27-48

Aim: To apply the teaching of Christ's Sermon on the Mount to our lives.

Revision: *What are all followers of our Lord Jesus Christ to be in this world? (5:13-16)*

We are to be the salt of the earth, the light of the world, by living out the Beatitudes of Christ.

How does God's law apply to us now?

We are not saved by keeping God's law, but as a follower of Jesus, living in His kingdom, we are required and expected to come under Christ and obey His law (cf. 5:19-20; Gal 6:2).

Matthew 5:27-30

Adultery is a serious sin, punishable in the OT by death. What does Jesus say to us in vv.27-28?

Lusting (desiring) after someone who isn't your spouse is also equal to adultery.

We often associate sin with a wrong action or word. What should we also see sin to be?

Evil thoughts/desires are also sin. God sees everything; not just what we do outwardly (1 Chron 28:9).

Consider the society we live in. How common do you think adultery of the heart is? How do we go keeping our heart pure in a society that abounds in sexual promiscuity and sensuality? [Discuss]

How should we understand Jesus' words in 5:29-30?

Hell is so terrible that we should do all we can to keep ourselves from going there by cutting ourselves off from sin (repenting). Repentance is essential for salvation (Acts 2:38), together with faith in Christ.

Matthew 5:31-32

According to our King, what is possibly the only grounds for divorce?

The only possible grounds for divorce for those who follow Jesus is when a spouse commits sexual immorality. Note: Not all Christians hold to this. Some believe there are no grounds for divorce.

What is your reaction to Jesus' teaching? Cf. the disciples' response in Matt 19:8-10. [Discuss]

If our marriage is failing, through neglect or abuse, what options do we have? (1 Cor 7:10-11)

We are either to be reconciled or remain single and unmarried. We do not have the option to re-marry.

Is this the common practice in Christ's church? If not, why not? [Discuss]

Matthew 5:33-37

What is the emphasis of Jesus' teaching in 5:33-37?

As a follower of Jesus we are to be honest, always speaking the truth, and fulfilling our word. How well do we go in accomplishing this as a spouse? A parent? A child? A worker? A boss? [Discuss]

Should we ever make an oath? What about swearing on the Bible in a court of law? [Discuss]

Read Matthew 5:38-42

In the light of 5:38-42, what are we called to give up? How do you feel about that?

We are to give up our right for personal justice. This cuts right across what our human nature desires.

What characteristic are we to show instead to those who seek to hurt us or use us?

Instead of retaliating, we are to be gracious. Grace is to mark our life; not justice and pay-back.

Do we have a right to defend ourselves? Are we just to be a "door-mat"?

God has put in place courts to rule over us. However, as a follower of Jesus, we are not to take things into our own hands in order to seek justice for ourselves. (cf. Rom 12:17-19; 1 Pet 2:21-23).

Matthew 5:43-48

As a follower of Jesus, in what way are we to be different to others according to 5:43-47?

We are not just to love those who love us, but we are to love all people; even our enemies. We are even called to pray for the well-being of those who persecute us.

In the light of this section in the Sermon on the Mount, what is Jesus calling us to display?

We are to be gracious and kind, just as our Father in heaven is. Again, grace is to distinguish us.

How are we to understand 5:48? In what way are we to be perfect?

In the context of 5:43-48, "perfect" is associated with the way we are to love. We are to be perfect in loving all people; believers and unbelievers, the nice and the ugly, friends and persecutors. *Do we?*

We're to live graciously (5:38-42) and love graciously (5:43-48). Does grace characterise your life?

How does a person of the world so often view Christians?

Besides thinking that we are deluded, we are often viewed as being self-righteous hypocrites (not truthful) and judgmental (not gracious). If we all lived out Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, how different we would appear. Imagine all of us being truthful, loving, gracious and holy.

Summary: Living under Christ will result in us being like Christ – full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 6:1-15

Aim: To apply the teaching of Christ's Sermon on the Mount to our lives.

Revision: *According to Jesus' teaching in Matt 5:38-42, what is to characterise a Christian?*

We are to live graciously and not be like those who retaliate and fight for their rights.

According to Matt 5:43-48, how should we treat our enemies and those who persecute us?

We are to love them graciously, to pray and do good to them, in order to be like our Father in heaven.

Matthew 6:1-4

What does the Lord Jesus expect His followers to do? (6:1)

We are to perform righteous deeds, but we are not to be "showy"; to be noticed by others.

Jesus expects us to "give to the poor". How are we to give? (6:2-4)

We are not to be like hypocrites (actors) in our giving, performing before a crowd, but we are to give secretly, so that we may not receive praise from people, but reward from our Father.

"Giving" is one of many righteous acts. In all of them what should our attitude be? (1 Cor 10:31)

We are to do all things for God's glory, not ours; whether it be changing a nappy or sharing the Gospel.

Matthew 6:5-13

How are we not to pray, according to 6:5?

We are not to pray to be noticed by people. This includes praying with eloquence in order to sound good before others. Consider Luke 18:11-12. Who was the Pharisee actually praying to?

What does Jesus instruct us to do instead of praying to be noticed by people? (6:6)

We are to pray in a quiet place, free from distractions and disturbances (eg, in "your closet"). Do you have a place to pray to the Father? Have you noticed how often we're interrupted when we pray? Why?

What else should we not do when we pray? Why is this? (6:7-8)

We should not use meaningless repetition, or any other method to try and "twist the arm of God". This is because our Father already knows our needs (6:32). He just wants us to ask Him. (cf 7:7-8).

In the example prayer that Jesus gives us, who should we direct our prayers to? (6:9)

We should be praying to the Father (cf. also John 16:23-27). It is not wrong to pray to Jesus (cf. Acts 7:59-60), but He directs us to address the Father; the One we've been reconciled to through Christ's death. In your prayers, how do you address God? As Father? Do you cherish the name Father?

What should have precedence when we pray? (6:9-10)

We should pray for the honouring and glorifying of God's name, for God's kingdom to grow and come in all its power and glory, and for God's good, pleasing and perfect will (Rom 12:2) to be done; ie, our primary concern should be for God and His kingdom. Is it?

What three personal requests should come next when we pray? (vv.11-13) Why?

We should pray for our daily needs, in order to be dependent on the Lord for everything; we should pray for forgiveness for sin, for we do sin and need cleansing so that we can be right with God; we should pray for deliverance from sin for we still have a sinful nature and need God's help to not sin.

Matthew 6:14-15

Jesus expands on one of the prayer requests in vv.11-13. What critical teaching does He give?

If we ask God to forgive us of our sins, He will not forgive us if we do not forgive others. This is a very serious matter. Jesus highlights this most important truth in Matt 18:23-35 – vv.34-35 indicate that a person who does not forgive others is not saved.

In the light of Christ's teaching, have you forgiven all others of the sins they've done against you? We must ask ourselves whether we would prefer to go to hell clutching onto some grievance against another, all because we would not forgive. Surely, we cannot expect God's mercy if we are not merciful to others.

Forgiving others can be very difficult for some of us. Do you battle with it? Why is this? What can we do to help us forgive others?

Some battle with forgiveness because they have a strong sense of justice. They will not forgive, because they want justice served. We must learn to let God serve justice (cf. Jesus in 1 Peter 2:23-24). We also need to appreciate how much we have been forgiven in Christ – this will then help us to forgive (cf. Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-13).

Summary: Seek the Father's reward; not the praises of people. Pray to the Father as Jesus taught us.

Forgive others so that you'll be forgiven.

Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 6:16-34

Aim: To apply the teaching of Christ's Sermon on the Mount to our lives.

Revision: *Whether we give or pray, or whatever we do, what does Jesus teach us in Matt 6:1-8?*

Don't do things for show, but for God's glory. Do things for His reward; not for the praise of men.

Do our prayers resemble Jesus' example prayer in Matt 6:9-13? What is often lacking? [Discuss]

We often don't spend time adoring God in prayer, nor praying for His kingdom.

Do we forgive others of their sins against us? If not, what warning does Jesus give us?

Our Father will not forgive us, if we do not forgive others. This is so important. Why? [Discuss]

Matthew 6:16-18

Fasting is something rarely spoken about these days. What is fasting?

In the Old Testament, fasting was equated with prayer (Judges 20:26-27) or with mourning (2 Samuel 1:12). In regard to prayer, it meant going without food in order to dedicate oneself to seeking the Lord.

Is fasting to be practiced today? (cf. Mark 2:18-20)

Jesus taught His disciples that we would fast after He returned to heaven. Therefore, it is to be practiced, just as we see in the New Testament church (cf. Acts 13:1-3; 14:23)

In what situations should we be praying with fasting? (cf. again Acts 13:1-3; 14:23)

There ought to be times when we have extended periods of prayer, whether it be for a national disaster, a terrible sin, or seeking God's will. In such cases of more lengthy prayer, we should fast. This includes for personal times of prayer as well. Can you think of any situations?

According to Matt 6:16-18, when we fast personally, how should we do it?

We are to fast without drawing attention to our self; fasting and praying for God's reward - not man's.

Matthew 6:19-24

What command does Jesus give us in regard to worldly possessions? (Matt 16:19-21) Why?

We are not to accumulate worldly possessions. This is because they will not last, and more importantly, they will draw our heart away to the things of the world, and we will end up living for them.

What are we to store up instead? How do we do that?

We are to store up heavenly treasure. We do that by living for God's glory and seeking His reward.

Surrounded with affluence, are we guilty of storing up earthly treasure? [Discuss]

According to Matt 6:22-23, what must we be particularly careful of?

We must be careful in regard to how we see. If we walk by faith, then we will see well. We will not desire the things of the world, but the things of Christ, and we will have Christ's light (John 8:12). If we walk by sight, then we will covet and desire worldly things, and will be filled with spiritual darkness.

How do you understand Jesus' words in Matt 6:24?

If we store up worldly possessions and have an "eye" for them, then that has become our master. When this occurs, we will not be serving God. It's either one or the other; not both (cf. 1 John 2:15-17).

Matthew 6:25-34

What does Jesus command us not to do? Why not? (Matt 6:25-32, 34)

We are not to worry or be anxious. This is because we have a wonderful Father in heaven who knows our needs (v.32), who cares for us (v.30), and considers us to be of great worth (v.26).

The Lord Jesus uses some examples from nature. What point is He making?

Our Father feeds worthless sparrows and clothes the temporary grass of the field with splendour. How much more will He care for us.

Do you take time to look at nature and see God's goodness and care? (Discuss)

What is the real reason why we worry? What is anxiety a sign of?

We worry because we do not trust God. It's a sign that we lack faith (v.30). Often, we panic rather than pray; often we try to sort out things our self, rather than depend on our Father.

Read Phil 4:6-7 and 1 Peter 5:6-7? What do learn in these verses about what to do when we worry?

We are to pray and cast our cares on God. Then we will be free of anxiety and experience His peace.

Instead of worrying, what should we be doing (v.33)? What does this mean?

We should be seeking God's kingdom and His righteousness. This means seeking to glorify our Father, by submitting to the King of God's kingdom (Jesus) and living for Him. As we do, our Father, who knows our needs, will meet them (cf. Phil 4:19). In other words, live for Christ, and our needs will be met.

Summary: Live for Christ and His kingdom and not for the things of this world.

Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 7:1-12

Aim: To apply the teaching of Christ's Sermon on the Mount to our lives.

Revision: *What is the Sermon on the Mount all about?*

It is Christ teaching His followers how they are to live under His Kingship in order to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, and thereby bring glory to God. We are not saved by living out these words, but if we are saved, we will live them out.

What's some of the main teaching in Matthew 5&6?

Our character is to be that of the Beatitudes; in conduct we are not to lash out (be angry), lust, or lie; we are to live and love graciously; we are to do things for God's glory and not for show; we are to pray as Jesus taught us; we are not to worry, but seek His kingdom.

Matthew 7:1-5

What common human practice does Jesus command us not to do in Matt 7:1-2?

We are not to judge – that is, we are not to condemn others, or to go about finding fault in others. We are, however, encouraged to be discerning (1 Cor 2:15; Phil 1:9-11; Heb 5:14). [Discuss]

Why are we not to judge (condemn) others? (cf. also James 4:11-12)

We are not to judge because God will judge us in the way we judge others; if we are harsh and critical, then God will be to us. Also, when we find fault with others, we can be blind about our own faults.

Besides, when we judge, we place ourselves in the seat of God, for only God has the right to judge.

Instead of judging (condemning) others, what attitude should we have? (cf. Matt 5:7; Jam 5:11)

We should be merciful, like our Father in heaven.

When a believer sins, should we refrain from judging and say nothing? (Matt 7:3-5; Jam 5:19-20)

We are encouraged to point out sin in a fellow believer's life, but we are to do it gently (Gal 6:1), and humbly, conscious of our own sins and flaws.

Matthew 7:6

What does this "intriguing" verse mean? (Matt 7:6)

In the context of judging and Christ's teaching, when it comes to sharing Christ's teaching with others, we are to be discerning. Christ's teaching in Matt 5&6 is not for a non-Christian. Indeed, they may react to it. [Discuss] Jesus' teaching is for those who follow Him, and who have the Holy Spirit to help them.

What should be proclaimed to all people everywhere, without restriction?

The Gospel is to be declared to all – we have been commanded to do so (Matt 28:18-20).

Matthew 7:7-11

Jesus already taught about prayer in Matt 6:5-13. What does He emphasise in Matt 7:7-8?

He encourages us to persevere in prayer, because our Father listens and answers. NB: In the Greek, the verbs in v.7 are to keep on asking, to keep on seeking, and to keep on knocking; ie, don't give up.

How are we to distinguish between Matt 6:7 & Matt 7:7?

We are not to babble or do things to manipulate God in prayer (as the pagans do), but we are to keep on asking about things, remembering we come to the One who knows our needs already (Matt 6:8).

It would appear from Matt 7:7-8 that the Lord will grant us whatever we ask. Is this true?

No! The Lord will only grant our request according to His will (1 John 5:14-15). So, we should seek to know God's will, and request Him about such things, for He will grant them. Also, we are to pray by faith, believing the Lord can grant our request, rather than doubting (cf. James 1:5-8).

What characterises your prayers? Is it more wishful praying, or praying in faith? [Discuss]

What encouragement do you get from Jesus' words in Matt 7:9-11?

Our Father is far better than any earthly father. If earthly parents know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more does our heavenly Father know how to give good gifts to us.

Matthew 7:12

How does Jesus summarise His moral teaching in the Sermon on the Mount? (Matt 7:12)

We are to treat people the way we want them to treat us. This implies thinking of others, and treating them in a loving way. Isn't it interesting how Jesus says this fulfils the Law and the Prophets [Discuss]

Summary: Don't judge; be merciful. Keep on praying. Treat others how you want to be treated.

Sermon on the Mount – Matthew 7:13-20

Aim: To apply the teaching of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount to our lives.

Revision: *What does Jesus mean when He says “don’t judge” in Matt 7:1-5?*

We are not to condemn, criticise, or be fault-finders; we are encouraged to be discerning though.

How should we understand Matt 7:6?

It is inappropriate (even dangerous) to push Christ’s teaching on holy living onto those who aren’t Christians yet. But we are never to hesitate sharing the Gospel with unbelievers.

In Matt 7:7-11 we have some great prayer promises. What is a pre-cursor to answered prayer?

We are to seek God’s kingdom and His righteousness (Matt 6:33), we are to pray in accordance with the model given to us by Jesus in Matt 6:9-13; ie, God’s glory is paramount, and His kingdom and will.

Matthew 7:13-14

How does Jesus describe life in Matt 7:13-14?

There are only two paths in life; the narrow path that leads to life, and the broad path that leads to destruction. NB: Jesus clearly taught that there are not many paths to heaven, as most believe.

What does Jesus mean when He says that the broad path leads to “destruction”?

The Greek word translated as “destruction” does not infer annihilation, but utter ruin or complete loss. People on the broad path will experience utter ruin in hell. Cf. Matt 13:41-42 – hell is a furnace of fire, where people experience weeping and gnashing of teeth (ie, torment). In Matt 25:41 – hell is an eternal fire, where people suffer eternally in the presence of the devil. It’s a place to be avoided at all costs.

Who is on the broad path?

Those on the broad path are all those who have not entered through the narrow gate. The narrow gate is Christ (John 10:9). Unless we turn away from living for self, and embrace Jesus as our Saviour from sin and the Lord of our life, we remain on the broad path (we were born on this path) that leads to hell.

What is the narrow path?

The narrow path is following Jesus. All those who have truly turned to Jesus (ie, entered through the narrow gate) follow Him (John 10:27-28). They have (and will have) eternal life and will never perish.

What is so disturbing about Jesus’ words here? (cf. the end of v.13 and the end of v.14)

Many are on the broad path that leads to destruction, and only a few are on the narrow path that leads to life (heaven). This is against the popular notion where many think that most will make it to heaven.

How should Jesus’ words in Matt 7:13-14 affect us, especially as we consider people?

It should awaken us to the serious reality that most people, including family members, friends, neighbours, etc, who are not following Jesus are heading for eternal ruin. *Do we care? Does it show?*

Matthew 7:15-20

Who does Jesus warn us about in Matthew 7:15-20? Why are they dangerous?

He warns genuine believers about false prophets (false teachers) who seek to turn us away from the narrow path that leads to life; ie, from listening to and following Christ. Watch out for them!

How are false prophets described? What is so disturbing about them? (Matt 7:15)

They are wolves in sheep’s clothing; that is, they outwardly appear to be a genuine follower of Jesus (a sheep), but in actual fact they are like a wolf - out to destroy. They are deceptive (cf. 2 Cor 11:13-14).

False prophets and teachers can deceive us with their charisma and charm, and even with miraculous signs (cf. Matt 24:24). What are we to do to make sure we are not deceived? (Matt 7:15-20)

Firstly, we are to be watchful (v.15); not naive. Secondly, we are to examine their life (v.16), and see if they are a genuine follower of Jesus, bearing the fruit that comes from listening to and obeying Jesus.

Has Christ’s church listened to their Lord and Saviour? [Discuss]

Overall, the Lord’s church has failed to heed His warning. From early church days, false prophets have come in and drawn many away from the narrow path. This problem still continues today.

What key thing should we be doing to prevent ourselves from being deceived? [Discuss]

We should be listening to the Lord by reading His Word and living it out. *Do you? Daily?*

Looking at Matt 7:15-20 from another angle, there are only two kinds of trees. Which one are you?

It is dependent on the fruit we bear – we’re either bearing good fruit or bad fruit (cf. Gal 5:16-23).

Summary: There are only two paths in life; there are only two kinds of trees; which one are you?
It is all hinges on whether we are listening to Jesus and following Him.