

## THE GREAT SERMON

Jesus grew up in Nazareth, hidden in the upper region of Israel. He spent most of His early public ministry in the hills and towns surrounding the peaceful, yet lively lake of Galilee. And it was in this setting that His most notable "Sermon on the Mount" took place, perhaps along the seashore village of Capernaum.

It has been debated whether this great sermon was one actual continuous discourse as recorded by Matthew, chapters 5 through 7. Some scholars think that Jesus taught many short lessons while He spent time around the Sea of Galilee and that He repeated much of His teaching in order to make the message sink in. These sermons were then collected and recorded into one long passage. Either way, we should be concerned with the content of His Sermon - what He said and how He said it!

Jesus certainly taught some ideas that were startling to His audience. They were mostly Jews, who lived under the Old Law and were familiar with the expectations and teachings of the Pharisees. But in this sermon, Jesus was making statements that were challenging, unexpected, and fresh!

He begins His gems of wisdom with declarations of blessedness, The Beatitudes, as we commonly call them.

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.*

*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* (Matt. 5:1-10, NKJV)

In these few statements of happiness, Jesus tells us that true contentment comes by looking at life from God's point of view, not man's. Happy are those who follow God! Interestingly enough, the first beatitude says to be humble. Pride is perhaps man's greatest shortcoming.

Next, Jesus compares His disciples to the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world". Obviously, He expected those who believed in Him to be moral and spiritual influences in the world. (Matt. 5:13-16) Are we?

Then Jesus addressed the religion of the Pharisees and lawyers in Matt. 5:17-48. He told His listeners to rise above the traditions and interpretations of the Old Testament and of the rabbis. To enter the kingdom of heaven would require a morality that went beyond the letter of the Law.

He redefined murder as unresolved anger (vs. 21-26). He redefined adultery as mental lust (vs. 27-30). He clarified the divorce and remarriage issue under the Law of Moses (vs. 31-32). He taught to avoid making unnecessary oaths (vs. 33-37), to practice justice with all men (vs. 38-42), and to "love your enemies" (vs. 43-47).

True Christianity also involved proper behavior. But unlike the outward pretenses of the Jewish religious leaders, Jesus explained that His followers would do the right thing, simply and humbly. They would realize the value of one's true inner character (Matt. 6:1-18), and not possess that desire to be men pleasers.

Of special note is the model prayer that Jesus taught: "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen." (Matt. 6:9-13 NKJV)

In the next passage Jesus discusses our involvement with money and material possessions (vs. 19-34). We worry too much about

such tangible things. Our Savior tells us to quit being so anxious. God will provide for his people, just as he has been doing for centuries and centuries.

Another important topic dealt with judging right and wrong. Jesus said that we need to pay more attention to our own faults rather than trying to point out the sins of others (Matt. 7:1-6). Hard to do sometimes, isn't it?

He also spoke of how our heavenly Father will answer our requests. But we must ask, seek, and knock (vs. 7-11). Remember the golden rule: *"Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."* (Matt. 7:12 NKJV)

As a conclusion, our Lord challenged His listeners to obedience. It would definitely require a changing lifestyle. Few would do it (vs. 13-14) but it would be obvious by their fruits and by their actions who were the true followers (vs. 15-23). Anyone who applied these precepts would be compared to a wise man (vs. 23-27).

At the end of this great sermon, Matthew says that the people who heard Jesus were *"astonished"* at His teachings (Matt. 7:28). They were literally 'overwhelmed', 'stunned', and 'amazed'. How about you? How does this sermon and its implications affect your life?

RAY McMANUS

## WORRY AND THE CHRISTIAN

As children of God, we are not expected to be blind followers. We are not to serve in ignorance as do slaves, but we are to have the understanding of a child. In (Rom. 8:16-17), *"The Spirit itself beareth witness with our Spirit, that we are the children of God. And if children, then heirs, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together."* Then we should exercise our minds in the teachings of Christ. We should study the Word of God daily and practice its truths in our lives. *"Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth."* (II Tim. 2:15). We are to prepare our minds so that we can love the Lord as we should!

There are many ways we can clutter our minds so it would be difficult to love God. If we fill our minds with these non-essential things it leaves little room for God. One of the troublesome things that can occupy our mind is worry - needless anxiety - fear. Worry can so fill our minds that it would be difficult to keep God first.

We are told to have "fear" - but this is to be the fear of God. *"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."* (Eccl. 12:13) But we read, *"The fear of the Lord is to hate evil."* (Prov. 8:13). The fear that can cause us to worry is needless fear - the fear of anxiety. *"In nothing be anxious; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."* (Phil. 4:6). In other words, don't fret, stew around, concern yourselves about life's problems - needlessly!!

There is a story of a young serviceman in Europe during World War II. His duty was to care for the wounded. Over a period of time he became so worried about the suffering he saw, he became ill. His condition was diagnosed as combat fatigued. A psychiatrist at an Army hospital told him his troubles were mental. He said, "Ted, I want you to think of your life as an hourglass. You know there are thousands of grains of sand in the top of the hourglass; and they all pass slowly and evenly through the narrow neck in the middle. Nothing you or I could do would make more than one grain of sand pass through this narrow neck without impairing the hourglass. You and I and everyone else are like this hourglass. When we start in the morning, there are hundreds of tasks which we feel that we must accomplish that day, but if we do not take them one at a time and let them pass through the day slowly and evenly, as do the grains of sand passing through the narrow neck of the hourglass, then we are going to break our own physical or mental structure." The soldier practiced that philosophy the Army doctor gave him and it made a new man out of him. One grain of sand at a time ... one task at a time. We are reminded of a song we sometimes sing, "One Step at a Time, Dear Saviour." How true this is!!

There are many things that could cause us all this needless fear, anxiety, and worry. Some of them are health, finances, job, other's misfortune, death, etc. Certainly, these things are something to be concerned about—but not to the extent that one's mind has no room for pleasant thoughts - thoughts of faith!

What do the scriptures say about this? In (Phil. 4:4-8), *"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things."* We, as Christians, of all people should be happy and joyous. We have Christ - the world does not!! Still, many of us clutter up our minds - leaving little room for God!

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## GOSPEL MEETINGS

<u>DATES</u>	<u>PLACE &amp; TIME</u>	<u>SPEAKER</u>
July 30 - - Aug. 1	Fayetteville Rd Church Fairburn, GA	Chad Prince (AL) & Brad Prince (AL)
August 6 - 8	New Bethel Church Cullman, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
August 9 - 13	Owens Rd Church Prattville, AL	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)
August 12 - 15	Antioch Church Monroe, TN	Joe Hill (Hagerhill, KY)
August 20 - 22	Pleasant Ridge Church Woodbury, TN	Thadeus Eubank (Waynesboro, KY)
August 27 - 29	Willow Oak Church Russell Springs, KY	James McDonald (Woodbury, TN)

## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Solomon built the temple of the Lord. Who designed it?
2. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, for what two reasons was the son hungry?
3. According to James, if one breaks one point of the law, of what is he guilty?
4. What did Zedekiah say would happen to Jeremiah if he revealed their secret conversation?
5. What kind of water creatures were Israelites allowed to eat?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. How many kings did Joshua conquer in the promised land?  
THIRTY-ONE (Josh. 12:24)
2. Christ likened Satan's fall to what?     LIGHTNING FALLING  
FROM HEAVEN (Lk. 10:18)
3. Paul says he buffets his body, for what reason?     TO BRING  
IT INTO SUBJECTION (1 Cor. 9:27)
4. Which structure was greater in height: the ark Noah built  
or the golden image Nebuchadnezzar built?     THE GOLDEN  
IMAGE (Gen. 6:15; Dan. 3:1)
5. What was the first thing Joseph's brothers did when he  
found them in Dothan?     STRIPPED HIM OF HIS COAT (Gen.  
37:23)