

INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW OF ISSUES AND CONTENT:

Some basic study resources:

The Sermon on the Mount - D.A. Carson, Baker Books

Christian Counter-Culture - John R.W. Stott, IVP

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount - Martin Lloyd-Jones, Eerdmans

- 1) **THE UNIQUENESS OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS THE CENTRAL THEME OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.** In fact, Jesus Himself outlines the striking difference He makes in the lives of His disciples:
 - a) His disciples were to be **shining lights** when everything else around them was darkness - **5:14-16** - "**You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] 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. [16] 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.**"

Salt can lose its savor but a city on a hill can't be hidden. Jesus calls His followers to hear His words because, one way or the other, the world is watching. They don't know your **creed**. They watch your **deeds**.

Jesus isn't talking about how we are **saved**. He's talking about how the world is **influenced** - how it judges the truth of the gospel.
 - b) The righteousness of Jesus' disciples was to **exceed that of the Scribes and the Pharisees** - **5:20** - "**For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.**" In startling words Jesus makes clear the mere practice of codified religion will take no one to heaven.

Jesus came to give eternal life to a world already full of devoutly practiced religions. He never came into a world full of **atheists**. He came to save **religious** people.
 - c) The disciple's **love was to be greater** than that of the world around them - **5:43-48** - "**You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' [44] But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, [45] 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. [46] For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? [47] And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? [48] You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**"

Notice **verse 45** - "**....that you may be sons and daughters of your Father in heaven....**" There is a certain love that evidences divine DNA in our Father's children.

The difference wasn't merely to be one of **intensity**. The disciple's love would be offered to those who deserved it least. It would extend to the cruel and wicked. It reached out to enemies.
 - d) The disciple's **prayer-life was to be deep and authentic** - **6:5-13** - "**And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. [6] But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you. [7] 'And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. [8] Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. [9] Pray then like this: 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. [10] Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. [11] Give us this day our daily bread, [12] and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. [13] And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.'"**

There was nothing done just for the show of piety or devotion. It was **more** real in private than in public. Once **inauthenticity** creeps into religions it is useless. This is the great disease of genuine faith.
 - e) The disciple's **ambitions were to be heavenly** rather than **earthly** - **6:19-24** - "**Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, [20] but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. [21] For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. [22] 'The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, [23] but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness! [24] 'No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.'**"

Jesus reveals the deepest threat to divine life begun in the soul - **materialism**. While the world races after material comforts and possessions, Christ's disciples would be faced with the choice to either see the things of this world as a **threat to godliness** if

used up on self, or as **resources** to furnish reaching the world with the gospel.

- 2) **THE SUBJECTS JESUS ADDRESSED IN HIS SERMON** - Notice the kinds of things Jesus taught as foundational right at the beginning of the Christian's journey in discipleship. He wanted to make certain His followers had actually made a **genuine start**, that they weren't kidding themselves about the reality of their relationship to Him, and **weren't defining it on their own terms**. These things marked a definite start in the disciple's journey with Christ:

- a) **The disciple's CHARACTER** - 5:3-12 - "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [4] "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. [5] "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. [6] "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. [7] "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. [8] "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. [9] "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. [10] "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. [12] Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Christ's work starts on the inside. Eight qualities of Christ-likeness are taught with their corresponding blessings attached. Discipleship is **organic**. It can't be **attached** to the outside of the life. Character must be honestly and deeply transformed. This truth was further refined in Jesus' words about the disciples' lives being like branches partaking of the actual life of the vine (as in John 15).

- b) **The disciple's INFLUENCE in the world** - 5:13-16 - "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. [14] "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15] 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. [16] 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."

This is the daily **outworking** or **manifesting** of the kind of character described in point "a". The life of Jesus will spill over into my relationships outside the sanctuary. While character is never enough to be a complete witness in itself, its lack can certainly make any words we say for Christ empty and useless.

We must remember the **two assignments** all disciples must fulfill. We must **show the love of Jesus**, which can be done with no words at all. And we must **share the truth about Jesus**, which can never be done without carefully chosen words.

- c) **The disciple's STANDARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS** - 5:17-48 - We need to know how God measures our lives. The standards of the Pharisees weren't high enough or true enough. Jesus wants more than religious actions alone. What really counts with God? Jesus spells it out clearly in these precious verses. Anger, lust, divorce, oaths and honesty, retaliation, loving enemies - notice the **relational** quality of all the items in this section.

This is how the life of the kingdom reaches your **non-religious life**. Jesus teaches on **anger and worship, hatred and murder, lust and adultery, marriage and divorce, anger and forgiveness**. Never has the church received such detailed and systematic teaching from our Lord on such a wide variety of subjects.

- d) **The disciple's WORSHIP AND DEVOTION** - 6:1-18 - Jesus moves on to deal with the more **religious** side of our actions. Most specifically, our **giving** and our **praying**. It's interesting to note that this is where Jesus had His harshest words. This was obviously close to His heart. There must be nothing **phony or staged** in our practice of worship. But Jesus does much more than just denounce the problem. He teaches the secret to true fervency and power with God.
- e) **The disciple's AMBITIONS AND GOALS** - 6:19-34 - This is the longest section of the sermon dealing with human **greed**. It is significant that the longest section of Jesus' teaching deals with our heart's love affair with money. The life of the kingdom reveals its greatest reach in the way it transforms the **desires of our hearts**.

Jesus taught that many were chasing the wrong things in life. His sermon deals with what is worth the **disciple's attention** and what is **not**. He also goes into much detail about the spiritual damage done to our lives by **divided loyalties** - trying to chase two Gods at once. He tells us where we go wrong and how to keep our lives on target.

- f) **The disciple's RELATIONSHIPS** - 7:1-20 - This is the section of the sermon where Jesus deals with the difference between **judging** people - in the sense of **imputing motives** and **condemning others without hope** - and **discerning** where truth is being proclaimed and where it isn't.

How important this is! We don't live our lives in a temple or a monastery. We bump into all sorts of people. They all have their effect on our hearts. Jesus teaches about the **three circles of relationship** we all must come to terms with - my relationship with my **brother**, my relationship with my **enemy**, and my relationship with **God Himself**.

- g) **The disciple's ENDURANCE** - 7:21-27 - Jesus ends this marvelous sermon with this powerfully simple story of two house-builders.

There are two sides to kingdom wholeness. Not only do we **mean what we say**, but we **do what we hear**. It's important to notice how Jesus closed His sermon. He ends with what matters most. He knew His instruction amounted to nothing until it became foundational in our living patterns. It's the all important theme of obedience in our lives.

Notice that Jesus saw **obedience as the only way to last in the Christian life**. He makes clear, in the story of the two houses on the two foundations, that obedience needs to be seen not only as a list of do's and don'ts, but as the foundation for a lasting, impacting, kingdom life. Thrills won't hold people up when the storms of life strike. Jesus said obedience would not only keep people holy, it would **keeping them on their feet**.