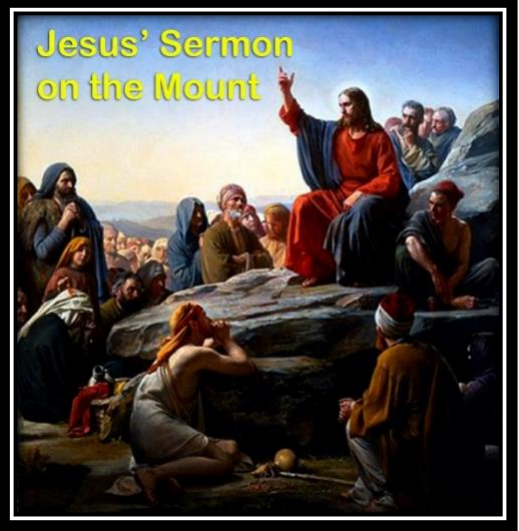


MATTHEW 5 & 6

HPC Trinity Class
Dec. 17, 2023



NOTES FROM LAST SESSION REGARDING BAPTISM:

1. Q. When did the Jews begin baptizing?

A. We don't know for sure. Most ancient religions employed baptism in some manner (water, blood, fire), though it was mostly used for purifying and anointing the religious leaders. Later, a complete immersion baptism was the solution for absolving the sins of anyone who professed faith. We know that the Hebrews were using water baptism early in their history (e.g., Exodus 29---@1300 B.C.).

The Mandeans are possibly the earliest group to practice water baptism,¹ and even today remain devout followers of John the Baptist. During the Temple period in Jesus' day "baptism, next to circumcision and sacrifice, was an absolutely necessary condition to be fulfilled by a proselyte to Judaism."²

2. Q. Do Jews still baptize?

A. Yes. Anyone who has sinned (i.e., broken Levitical laws) is encouraged to perform a total water immersion in a *mikvah* (ritual pool) in the presence of a rabbinical court. It signifies a purification or consecration. It also symbolizes a recommitment to Jewish ways. If the person is a proselyte this ceremony includes a sprinkling of blood.

Sermon on the Mount

Q.--What was Jesus' purpose for giving this "sermon"?

A.—Basically, to give his followers a guideline for their discipleship.

[WHY IS THE WORD "SERMON" IN QUOTATION MARKS?]

Q.—Who was his original audience?

A.---Jesus' 12 disciples and interested onlookers.

Q.---Where is "the mount"?



¹ McGrath, James. "The First Baptists, the Last Gnostics: the Mandeans." From a lunchtime YouTube talk at Butler University, Jan. 22, 2015.

² JewishEncyclopedia, "Baptism."

A.---This may or may not be a specific place. It could simply mean "in the hills," though it was likely somewhere north or west of the Sea of Galilee, and possibly on the ancient volcano known as the Horns of Hattin.

5:1-2---Matthew describes Jesus with words similar to those used for a high ranking rabbi:

- ✓ "crowds" would follow ancient teachers seeking their advice and teaching;
- ✓ "sat down" (*kathizō*) is a symbolic phrase used of rabbis, who customarily sat to teach;
- ✓ "he began to teach." In Greek this phrase has a nuance emphasizing this to be an intimate and personal teaching.

The Beatitudes (5:3-12) from the Latin *beatitudo*, meaning "blessedness."

Beatitudes are not unique to the NT. For example, Isa. 56:2, Prov. 8:34, and Dan 12:12. And Psalms has many: 1:1; 41:1; 106:3; et. al. Believers who lived out the lifestyle mentioned in the beatitudes knew the nearness of God.

[READ A BEATITUDE FROM PSALMS]

- "The NT beatitudes differ from those of the OT in one important respect: The NT beatitudes stress the eschatological joy of participation in the kingdom of God, rather than rewards for this earthly life."³

Luke's Gospel has similar beatitudes in what is known as Jesus' Sermon on the Plain (LK 6:20-22). However, Luke only lists four and each is balanced by four "woes," not found in Matthew. Also, Luke uses the second person (e.g., "blessed are YOU who are poor...") and stresses the material well-being of the believers of his time; Matthew's beatitudes emphasize the spiritual qualities of all who enter the kingdom of heaven.⁴ Its focus is not on ethics but upon discipleship.

[READ MATTHEW 5:3-5]

BLESSED--

- The Greek word for "blessed" means to be fully satisfied. It implies a wholeness of joy and well-being, and a peace equivalent to the Hebrew word "shalom."
 - In later Classical Greek literature it refers to finding satisfaction in the hereafter.
 - **In the NT, however, it designates the joy that comes from salvation.**

³ Interpreters', vol. 1, "Beatitudes," pg. 370.

⁴ Tyndale, pg. 108.

Two
experts---
Two
views!!

5:3---"poor in spirit" (*ptōchoi*) does not simply mean someone who is gloomy or who is a non-believer. Rather, it means a person who is utterly helpless-- someone in abject poverty.

- Any time we see the word "poor" in our Bible it almost always refers to *ptōchos*,⁵ which is Greek meaning "to crouch or cower like a beggar." One who is *ptōchos* is able to survive only by begging.
- Another word for "poor" is *penēs*. But *ptōchos* is not the same as *penēs*. One who is *penēs* may be starving but he/she is at least able to earn wages.

"The *penēs* had nothing superfluous, while the *ptōchoi* had nothing at all."⁶

[READ LUKE 16:19-21]

5:4---To "mourn" does not necessarily mean to mourn for the dead.⁷ It also applies to those who feel lost and hopeless, who are sorrowful about the life they have lived. It echoes the words of Isaiah: "...because the Lord has anointed me to preach the good news...to proclaim freedom for the captives...[and] to comfort all who mourn." (Is. 61).

5:5---The "meek." (Some Bibles say "gentle" or "humble.") It does not mean timid or shy, and it is not a weakness. As Aristotle said, "meek" is in-between anger and indifference.⁸ It denotes self-control and humility. Do not act with pride, but instead give all credit to God. This reflects Jesus' own attitude (MT 11:29, 12:15-21, 21:5).

[READ MATTHEW 5:6-10]

5:6---"righteousness" = the desire to be in a right relationship (obedience and trust) with God (and not necessarily right with the Torah!) This is not a direct call for social justice, though one often leads to the other.

5:7---Those who are "merciful" will be shown mercy, as demonstrated by Jesus in MT 9:27ff (healing the blind).

5:8---Those who are "pure in heart" love God totally, and it's demonstrated by their actions. There are no dual purposes in the actions and thoughts of the pure in heart. **[What does this mean?]** **[READ DEUTERONOMY 6: 4-6]**

5:9---"peacemakers" are rare, but if one lives the life with the humble characteristics shown above, God will be pleased.

⁵ The only time *penēs* appears is in 2 Corinthians 9:9.

⁶ *Interpreter's*, "Lexical Aids to the NT," pg. 1670.

⁷ *Penthos* (to mourn) is the strongest possible Greek word for mourning. [Augsburger, pg. 63]

⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 63.

5:10-12---“persecution” will undoubtedly come. It’s easy for us to melt into a pluralistic society such as ours and be accepted. When our faith is tested, however, and we intentionally choose Jesus’ way over that of our social sphere, that’s when the persecution begins. **[READ ACTS 4:12]**



Salt & Light---vss. 13-16

Salt symbolized purity, preservation, and flavor.

- Most salt came from marshes, not by sea water evaporation. This contained many impurities. Therefore, when this impure salt was leached out it became worthless except for salting roads and roofs.
- Roman soldiers were often paid in salt. (The base of our word “salary.”)

Light also symbolized purity.


- Cities were often built of white limestone, so a “city on a hill cannot be hidden.” As the persecuted theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, “A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow him.”⁹

Fulfillment of the Law---vss. 17-20 **[READ MATTHEW 5:17-20]**

- The Law, as viewed by Jews in Jesus’ day:
 - 1) It is older than the world;
 - 2) It is connected with the very act of Creation;
 - 3) It is one of the pillars of the universe;
 - 4) God himself is bound by the Law.
 - 5) Therefore, the Torah is perfect and eternal.

No wonder Jesus is so careful with his words; he wants no misunderstandings about the nature of the kingdom. It’s the *spirit* of the Law that counts, not the *letter* of the Law.

- 5:19---“one of the least of these commandments”....” Rabbis of the time, including Jesus, recognized the Law as having both “light” (not too important) and “heavy” (very important) commandments. Treat all commandments with equal respect.

Verses 21-48 are sometimes called the six antitheses because all six sections begin with some variation of “you have heard it said...but I say.” Jewish rabbinic writings of Jesus’ time often used the same style.  In each case Jesus is not so much denying the Law; rather, he is trying to simply show that the Law has been misunderstood....until now.

[READ MATTHEW 5:21-22]

⁹ Bonhoeffer, pg.118.

Murder---vss. 21-26

The root of murder is anger. Anything that leads to murder, such as anger or holding a grudge, is a sin equal to murder.¹⁰

- "Raca" = empty-headed. An Aramaic term of contempt.
- "You fool" = *mōros*. Used of persons who are morally worthless, with bad heart and character. It is much more serious than "raca."
- vs. 23---Don't put it off! Reconcile ASAP...or else!

Adultery---vss. 27-30

[READ MATTHEW 5:27-30]

In ancient Jewish times adultery was viewed in the context of theft ("You stole my wife!"), rather than being one of purity or unfaithfulness. Instead, Jesus says that we are to view this subject as a function of purity which refuses to lust.

- The NIV Bible reads: "anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery *with her* in his heart." But this doesn't quite jive with the Greek version:



- "Woman" in Greek is *gynē*, which is almost always used to describe a married woman. In this story, if the man were the only guilty person then the words "*with her*" would be unnecessary to a Greek speaking audience. But by adding "*with her*" makes a strong argument that the man is leering at the woman in the hopes of enticing her to lust. If he is successful in doing so—even if only in their imaginations—he has "already committed adultery with her in his heart," which likewise makes the woman an adulteress.¹¹

Regardless, it still boils down to lust and intent.



Divorce---vss. 31-32 (The phrasing of this section and the first sentence indicate that it's tied to the previous one on adultery.)

For 800+ years the Jewish people had relied on Deuteronomy 24:1-4 as a guide for divorce. This, along with the Talmud, was what Jesus referred to when he states, "It has been said." Basically, society permitted a man to divorce his wife if she had displeased him. (The wife did not have the same right, and "displeased" could be taken very liberally.)¹²

The Presbyterian *Book of Common Worship* says that God "established marriage for the welfare and happiness of humankind." Marriage is God's idea.

¹⁰ In his 1958 work *Stride Toward Freedom*, Martin Luther King, Jr. admonished his people "to avoid not only external physical violence but also violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him."

¹¹ Carson, pg. 151 citing Klaus Haacker

¹² Hosea 2:2 cites a simple divorce certificate: "She is not my wife, and I am not her husband." Childlessness was a common reason for divorce.

Jesus knew this, but recognized that we mortals are hard hearted and often divorce too quickly and for poor reasons.

Oaths---vss. 33-37 (this refers to pledges, not curses)

Oaths are sacred and solemn promises, usually to a god. This practice extends back in world history at least 2,000 years before Moses. Later in Palestine, the "Mosaic law forbade irreverent oaths, light use of the Lord's name, and broken vows. Once Yahweh's name was invoked, the vow to which it was attached became a debt that had to be paid to the Lord."¹³ "In the time of Jesus in the 1st century CE, oaths were often misused and, for that reason, were often rebuked in early Christianity."¹⁴ Thus the reason for Jesus' admonishment. Even the strict Qumran texts were not as harsh as Jesus' command.

[READ MATTHEW 5:38-42]



---vss. 38-42 a.k.a. *lex talionis* (the law of retribution in kind)

The people knew this saying well; it's stressed in Exodus, Leviticus, and Deuteronomy. Many other peoples knew it, too—the Code of Hammurabi from ancient Babylon (18th century BC) even used some of the same wording.

This harsh *lex* was not meant to be used as some kind of ground rule for retribution. Rather, it was given to Moses' followers as a method of standardizing the nation's budding judicial system. "Do not resist" ≠ do not retaliate. It simply means we should willingly accept whatever comes.

Despite its emphasis in the OT, during Christ's time this eye-for-an-eye punishment was seldom delt out by the courts but was replaced by financial damages instead.

Love your Enemies---vss. 43-48 **[THE APEX OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT]**

Leviticus 19:18 says, "Love your neighbor as yourself," but no OT scripture adds "and hate your enemy." By Jesus' day this popular phrase may have morphed so that it logically meant to likewise hate one's enemies. But in the Father's eyes all are loved and treated equally ("he sends the rain on the righteous and the unrighteous").

THEREFORE, GO FORTH AND BE PERFECT, AS YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER IS PERFECT.



¹³ Carson, pg. 153.

¹⁴ Britannica, "Oath."

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