

Week of January 30 - February 5

The Sermon on the Mount: Beatitudes Matthew 5:1-12; Luke 6:20-23)

Seeing the crowds, Jesus sat down on a hillside to instruct them on the characteristics of a believer: “Humble men are very fortunate because the Kingdom of God is given to them! Those who mourn are fortunate because they will be comforted. The meek and lowly are fortunate because the whole world belongs to them. Those who long to be just and good will be completely satisfied. The kind and merciful will be shown mercy. Those with pure hearts will see God. Those who strive for peace will be called sons of God. Lastly, those who are persecuted because they are good will have the Kingdom of Heaven. And when you are despised and persecuted because you follow me, be happy because a reward awaits you in heaven. The prophets were persecuted, too.

Teaching about Salt and Light (Matthew 5:13-20)

“You were made to be like salt, adding flavor and preserving the things of earth. Don’t lose your savor; otherwise you are no value to me.

“You are light in the world. Don’t put it under a basket, but on a table so it can light up the room. Then men will see your life and come to respect and honor God.

“I didn’t come to abolish the rules and regulations you find in Scripture, but to fulfill them. Not one letter or punctuation mark will disappear until its purpose is achieved. If you violate the slightest of these instructions or influence someone else to do so, you will be regarded as lowly in the Kingdom. Follow and promote them if you want respect in the Kingdom. But your righteousness must be more genuine than the religious leaders for you to enter the Kingdom.

Anger, Reconciliation, Adultery, and Divorce (Matthew 5:21-32)

“If you have offended someone, go and make amends. Come to terms quickly with your enemy before it’s too late, and you are sued.

“If you lust in your mind, you have committed adultery. If you can’t control your thoughts, don’t look! You would be better off blind if you can’t control your eyes. You would be better off without your hands if you can’t control them.

“Don’t dissolve a marriage unless you are betrayed and can’t bear the abuse. Don’t break your wedding vows you made before God, but fulfill them.

Oaths and Retaliation (Matthew 5:33-48; Luke 6:29-36)

“I say don’t make promises or vows at all. You can’t control what the future holds, so just agree or disagree, then stand by what you say. Anything more than a simple yes or no can get you into trouble.

“Let revenge go. If someone slaps you on the face, turn the other cheek. If someone beats you in court, give him more than the judge determines he is out. Always give more than what’s required, giving to those who ask and lend a hand where you see a need.

“Love your friends and your adversaries alike. Be friendly to those who curse you, fair to those who provoke you, pray for those who intimidate you. Treat others with the same consideration you would have them extend to you. This is the fundamental rule of the scriptures.

“Reflect the image of the Father who lets the sun shine on the evil and the good and sends his rain on the just as on the unjust. Loving only those who love you is nothing. Even evil people do that. Aspire for something higher and nobler. Reflect godly character.

Piety and Almsgiving, Prayer and Fasting (Matthew 6:1-18; Luke 11:1-13)

“Don’t make a spectacle of yourself. When you do good, don’t bring attention to yourself like the hypocrites who like to be seen at worship services and acknowledges in public. When you honor God, do so privately, and God will reward you openly.

“Don’t pray like the hypocrites who love to pray where they can be seen. Find a place to be alone with God, who can hear your most private prayers, and he will bless you openly. Instead, pray from your heart, like this: ‘Father in Heaven, you alone are worthy of ultimate honor, reverence, and respect. Your authority is as valid on Earth as it is in Heaven. Give us what we need day-by-day. Forgive our transgressions as we come to forgive others who hurt us. Guide us through temptation and protect us from being influenced by evil. Your authority and power are beyond our comprehension.

“If you are merciful to others, God will be merciful to you. But if you won’t forgive others, why should you expect God to extend forgiveness to you?

“When you fast, don’t mope around like a religious hypocrite who tries to look miserable to show they’re fasting. When they get noticed, they have exactly what they wanted. Just wash up and groom yourself while you fast so only God will know you’re fasting. Then He will reward you openly.

Processions and Masters (Matthew 6:19-23)

“The eye is the lamp of the body. Look at what is wholesome and be full of light. Don’t cultivate perversion, filth, and greed, or you will be cloaked in darkness and get deeper into despair.

Anxiety and God’s Kingdom (Matthew 24-34)

“You can’t serve two masters. You must choose whether you are really in pursuit of spiritual or material objects.

“Don’t worry about having enough to eat or drink or what you’ll wear. Life is more than food and clothing. The birds don’t plant or harvest, nor stockpile food in barns. God gives that enough to eat. You’re more valuable than birds. You can’t grow any taller by worrying about your height, so why worry about your clothes? The flowers don’t work at being beautiful but are more so than Solomon in his glory. God will provide for you. Be confident in that! God knows what you need so make doing what’s right in God’s sight your priority and everything else will fall in line. Look at your priorities for today, not tomorrow.

Judging and Hypocrisy (Matthew 7:1-6; Luke 6:37-42)

“Don’t criticize others unless you are willing to open yourself up to scrutiny. You will be judged the same way you judge others. How can you be irritated with another’s flaw when you have greater flaws yourself? Look within and fix your flaws before offering constructive criticism to others.

“Don’t offer godly advice or force what you know is sacred to someone who won’t accept it. They don’t understand or appreciate it. They may even turn and attack you.

Prayer and the Golden Rule, the Narrow and Wide Gates (Matthew 7:7-14)

“Ask, and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and the doors will open for you. Which of you would give a stone to a child who pleads for bread or a snake when he asks for a fish? If you then, being so imperfect, can provide for your children, how much more appropriately do you think your Heavenly Father will respond to you?

“Most people set their life course on a path of ruin following worldly distractions. But the road to life is straight and narrow, and few have the discipline and sense of direction it demands.

The Test of the Prophets (Matthew 7:15-23; Luke 6:43-46)

“Watch out for teachers who promote false doctrines, who appear as harmless as sheep, but are horribly destructive. Look at their fruit. Grapes aren’t found on rose stems or figs in bushes. A wholesome plant doesn’t yield poisonous fruit, and a rotten plant can’t yield good fruit. Cut it down and burn it. Look at the charlatan among you the same way, looking at what his life produces, not by what he says.

“Only those who do the will of God will enter the kingdom of Heaven, not those who offer me lip service. Many claim to have done great things in my honor, but I will send them away because they never really came to know me.

The Wise and Foolish Builders (Matthew 7:24-28; Luke 6:47-49)

“If you hear me and do what I say, you are like the man who built his house on a rock, that survived the raging storm. But one who hears my words and disregards what I have to say is like a man who built on sand, that when the storm comes, the house fell down and everything he strived so hard for was destroyed and forgotten.

When He had finished speaking, the crowd was awestruck. Jesus spoke from his heart with great authority and conviction, unlike those who merely study the scriptures. He was like no one they ever heard, and when He came down the hill, great crowds swarmed around him.