

The Sermon on the Mount

Week 2 – The Inner and Outer Life

Matthew 5:13-6:18

Last week, we discussed how the Beatitudes help us answer the question “What does it mean to follow Christ?”:

- We trust in God over the allure of what material things like wealth, possessions, and property can give us.
- In humility, we recognize that we are ultimately reliant on God.
- We hold an ache within us, both for those who are suffering as well as at recognizing our own shortcomings.
- Even in our imperfection, we aspire to live lives that are gentle in our treatment of others, yet forceful in holding fast to what is good.
- When we encounter places in our lives that are at odds with what Christ teaches us, we’re brave enough to seek transformation.
- We trust in God over the allure of what material things like wealth, possessions, and property can give us.
- In humility, we recognize that we are ultimately reliant on God.
- We hold an ache within us, both for those who are suffering as well as at recognizing our own shortcomings.
- Even in our imperfection, we aspire to live lives that are gentle in our treatment of others, yet forceful in holding fast to what is good.
- When we encounter places in our lives that are at odds with what Christ teaches us, we’re brave enough to seek transformation.

This week, Jesus *challenges* us to live out each of those things in our inner and outer lives... and, yes, the emphasis is on challenge.

Bibliography:

- *The Gospel of Matthew: Volume One*, written by William Barclay
- *Following the Call*, compiled and edited by Charles Moore

Salt and Light

Matthew 5:13-16 (NRSVue)

“You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot.

“You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

William Barclay

“We need to discover the lost radiance of the Christian faith. In a worried world, Christians should be the only people who remain serene. In a depressed world, Christians should be the only people who remain full of the joy of life. Wherever they are, if they are to be the salt of earth, Christians must be diffusers of joy.”

Charles Moore

“When we align ourselves with Christ and demonstrate our allegiance to him and him alone, when we honestly and consistently seek to live in accordance with his authority, not just in church but in every area of life, we will invariably draw out and enhance the good already in the world.”

John R.W. Stott

“As the disciples of Jesus, we are not to conceal the truth we know or the truth of who we are. Rather we are to be ourselves, our true Christian selves, openly living the life described in the Beatitudes, and not ashamed of Christ. Then people will see us and our good works, and seeing us will glorify God.”

Not to Abolish, But to Fulfill

Matthew 5:17-20 (NRSVue)

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

William Barclay

“The scribes and Pharisees were right in seeking God’s will, and profoundly right in dedicating their lives to obeying it; they were wrong in finding that will... in rules and regulations. The foundation of all law can be summed up in one word – respect, or even better, reverence... That reverence and that respect Jesus came to fulfill. He came to show men and women in actual life what reverence for God and respect for one another are like.”

Charles Moore

“When we align ourselves with Christ and demonstrate our allegiance to him and him alone, when we honestly and consistently seek to live in accordance with his authority, not just in church but in every area of life, we will invariably draw out and enhance the good already in the world.”

John R.W. Stott

“As the disciples of Jesus, we are not to conceal the truth we know or the truth of who we are. Rather we are to be ourselves, our true Christian selves, openly living the life described in the Beatitudes, and not ashamed of Christ. Then people will see us and our good works, and seeing us will glorify God.”

You Have Heard It Said...

Matthew 5:21-48 (NRSVue)

“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder,’ and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment, and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council, and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.

“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, causes her to commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ But I say to you: Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you: Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also, and if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, give your coat as well, and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. Give to the one who asks of you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven, for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

William Barclay

“It was Jesus’ teaching that thoughts are just as important as deeds, and that it is not enough to not commit a sin; the only thing that is enough is not to wish to commit it... and if that is so, it means that every one of us is in default; for no one can stand in this judgment of God. The new standard kills all pride, and forces us to Jesus Christ.”

Henri Nouwen

“So much of our energy, time, and money goes into maintaining distance from one another. Many if not most of the resources of the world are used to defend ourselves from one another, to maintain or increase our power, and to safeguard our own privileged position. Imagine all that effort being put in the service of peace and reconciliation! Would there be any poverty? Would there be crimes and wars? We say, “I can’t imagine” But God says, “That’s what I imagine, a whole world not only created but also living in my image.”

Thomas Merton

“In the end, the problem of sincerity is a problem of love. A sincere person is not so much one who sees the truth and manifests it as he sees it, but one who loves the truth with a pure love. But the truth is more than an abstraction. It lives and is embodied in people and things that are real. And the secret of sincerity is, therefore, not to be sought in a philosophical love for abstract truth but in a love for real people and real things – a love for God apprehended in the reality around us.”

Done in Secret

Matthew 6:1-18 (NRSVue)

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before others in order to be seen by them, for then you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So whenever you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be praised by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

“And whenever you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, so that they may be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But whenever 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. “When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father in heaven, may your name be revered as holy. May your kingdom come. May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.’ For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

“And whenever you fast, do not look somber, like the hypocrites, for they mark their faces to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Charles Moore

“Jesus’ three examples cover the whole range of religious activity: our duty towards others, our relationship with God, and our own inner state of being. Jesus neither discounts or disparages acts of piety, but he confronts religious hypocrisy. Attention to God, not people’s admiration, is what matters.”

William Barclay

“The highest reward never comes to those who are seeking it... people who are always calculating their reward are thinking of God in terms of a judge or accountant... they are thinking of presenting an account to God and of saying, ‘I have done so much. Now I claim my reward’... the great paradox of Christian reward is this – those who look for reward, do not receive it; those whose only motive is love, and who never think that they have deserved any reward, do in fact receive it... If goodness has been their quest through all their days, they have been growing closer and closer to God; that is the greatest reward of all”.

Mother Teresa

“Have you ever experienced the joy of giving? I do not want you to give to me from your abundance. I never allow people to have fundraisers for me. I don’t want that. I want you to give of yourself. The love you put into the giving is the most important thing... I don’t like people sending me something because they want to get rid of it. Giving is something different. It is sharing... This is something all of us need to learn. The chance to share our love with others is a gift from God. May it be for us just as it was for Jesus.”

Martin Luther

“A Christian heart, that learns out of the word of God, that we have everything from God and nothing from ourselves, such a heart accepts this faith and familiarizes itself with it, so that it can look to him for everything and expect it from him. Thus praying teaches us, so that we recognize both ourselves and God, and learn what we need and whence we are to seek for it and get it.”

Meister Eckhart

“Anyone who by God’s grace unites his will purely and completely with God’s will has no need other than to say in his ardent longing: “Lord, show me what is thy dearest will and give me strength to do it!” There is nothing a man is able to offer God that is more pleasing to him than this kind of detachment. God cares less for our watching, fasting or praying than for this detachment. God needs nothing more from us than a quiet heart...”