The Sermon on the Mount

Week 3 – Seeking the Kingdom of God First

Matthew 6:19-7:29

For Where Your Treasure Is…

Matthew 6:19-24 (NRSVue)

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

"The eye is the lamp of the body. So if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, but if your eye is unhealthy, your whole body will be full of darkness. If, then, the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

"No one can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.

William Barclay

"If we are wise, we will build our happiness on things which we cannot lose, things which are independent of the chances and changes of this life… Jesus never said this world was unimportant; but he said and implied over and over again that its importance is not in itself, but in that to which it leads."

John Wesley

"We charge you, therefore, who are rich in this world, to be habitually doing good, to live in a course of good works. Disperse abroad, give to the poor, deal your bread to the hungry. Cover the naked with a garment, defend the oppressed, plead the cause of the fatherless, and make the widow's heart sing for joy."

Timothy Keller

"Materialism is an inordinate desire or dependance on money and material things that has the peculiar effect of blinding you spiritually, of distorting the way you see things. It has power over the way you see everything."

William Barclay
'If your eye is healthy': "The word used here is ἁπλοῦς (haplous) and its corresponding noun is ἁπλότης (haplotēs); regularly in the Bible, these words means generous and generosity. It is the generous eye which Jesus is commending.

Eberhard Arnold
"Mammon is the rule of money over people. Dependance on material affluence and financial security – that is mammon… money reduces human relationships to a materialistic association, until the only value is money itself."

Do Not Worry

Matthew 6:25-34 (NRSVue)
"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And which of you by worrying can add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the gentiles who seek all these things, and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.

William Barclay
"Greek word used for worry is μεριμνᾶτε (merimnate) – a word meaning 'to worry anxiously'. Jesus is not advocating for a reckless, thoughtless, improvident attitude to life… he is teaching a lesson of prudence, serenity, and trust combined."

Christoph Friedrich Blumhardt

"This may shock you, but we must preach that religious knowledge by itself is of no value. People should learn how to be truly active, especially with their neighbors, and to see to it that all have what they need to live a fruitful life. We need to keep the true goal in mind: the need of the world and the benefit of the people. That is the mind and spirit of the Christ who reconciles all things. This is what we mean by seeking first the kingdom of God."

Do Unto Others

Matthew 7:1-12 (NRSVue)

"Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For the judgment you give will be the judgment you get, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye. "Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under foot and turn and maul you. "Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened. Is there anyone among you who, if your child asked for bread, would give a stone? Or if the child asked for a fish, would give a snake? If you, then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

William Barclay

"We never know the whole facts or the whole person.
It is almost impossible to be impartial in our judgment.
No one is good enough to judge another person.

We have quite enough to do to rectify our own lives without seeking censoriously to rectify the lives of others. We would do well to concentrate on our own faults, and to leave the faults of others to God."

William Barclay

Do not give what is holy to dogs; do not throw pearls before swine.

"The Church was desperately aware of the necessity of maintaining the purity of the faith, lest Christianity be gradually assimilated into [Roman culture] and swallowed up… the weakness of the Church lies not in the lack of Christian arguments but in the lack of Christian lives."

Ask and it shall be given to you; search, and you will find.

"This saying of Jesus tells us not only that God will answer, but also that God will answer in wisdom and in love… we must bring to God an undiscouraged life of prayer, which tests the rightness of the things we pray for, and which tests our own sincerity in asking for them."

Roger Shinn

"The Golden Rule can be a source of frustration. Even though, as we have seen, it is not always a very high ethic, it often rises above our normal conduct… when the words convey the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount, they become a helpful guide in many a situation. In Luke's Gospel the Golden Rule concludes the paragraph which starts, "Love your enemies." Love, mercy, forgiveness, the spirit of the Beatitudes – here we find the spirit in which Jesus meant the Golden Rule."

By Their Fruits

Matthew 7:13-29 (NRSVue)

"Enter through the narrow gate, for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it. "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thorns or figs from thistles? In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. Thus you will know them by their fruits.

"Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' Then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; go away from me, you who behave lawlessly.' "Everyone, then, who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall because it had been founded on rock. And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell—and great was its fall!"

Now when Jesus had finished saying these words, the crowds were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority and not as their scribes.

The Didache

"There are two ways, one of life and one of death, and there is a great difference between those two ways. Now this is the way of life: First, you shall love God who made you. Second, you shall love your neighbor as yourself; but whatever you do not wish to happen to you, do not do to another. The teaching of these words is this: Bless those who curse you, and pray for your enemies... if you are able to bear the whole yoke of the Lord, you will be perfect. But if you are not able, then do what you can."

C.S. Lewis

"The Christian way is different: harder, and easier. Hand over the whole natural self, all the desires you think are innocent as well as the ones you think are wicked – the whole outfit. I will give you a new self instead. In fact, I will give you myself: my own will shall become yours."

"We can only do it for moments at first. But from those moments the new sort of life will be spreading though our system: because now we are letting Christ work at the right part of us. It is the difference between paint, which is merely laid on the surface, and a dye or stain which soaks right through."