

Matthew

The Gospel of

WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

LESSON SIX

MATTHEW 5:13-48

Day 1



Father, as I read your word, please plant it deep in my heart. May it change the way I think, the way I see, and the way I live and love.

- Read chapter 5:13-48
- The remaining section in chapter 5 continues with the theme of what God's kingdom people will look like. Jesus challenges the traditional views of Old Testament commands and shows their true meaning in keeping with the heart of God. Take note of heart attitudes and counter-cultural actions that are family traits in Jesus' kingdom people.
- What is one truth in today's passage that moves your heart to praise, thanksgiving, confession, action or love for God?

Day 2- Matthew 5:13-16

1. What does Jesus call his followers in verse 13?

-What danger does Jesus warn about?

-How does this relate to Jesus' followers?

For Discussion: What are some of the ways followers of Jesus can lose our “saltiness”?

2. What other metaphor does Jesus use for his disciples in verse 14?

-What is a characteristic of light in verse 14?

3. What words in verses 13 and 14 show the scope of the impact Jesus' followers are to have?

4. What is the purpose of being a light to the world according to verse 16?

Scholar's Note: Good works encompass “all righteousness; everything [Jesus' followers] are and do that reflects the mind and will of God”.¹

Picture and Ponder: “The coming of God's kingdom is so much more than just being kind to others and performing good deeds. There is a demand to be different and to act differently, that is, to be right with God and to act the way God demands, by following Jesus in countercultural directions. Change is the name of the game, and it must occur at the ontological level (who we are) and at the functional level (how we live and act).”²



Salt was used in the ancient world primarily as a preservative to slow decay, but it was also used as flavoring, fertilizer and as a purifier. Light illuminates, it helps make things to be clearly seen, and it dispels the darkness. With both salt and light Jesus teaches us that, as his followers, we are to make an impact in the world. The kingdom norms that we saw in the beatitudes are to so permeate our lives that we become salt and light and so bear witness to the world of the kingdom of God.

- ❖ Give some examples of how you can be salt and slow decay in the world around you. How can flavoring (your distinctiveness) be beneficial to the world?

- ❖ Give some examples of how you might be able to dispel darkness around you.

- ❖ How do words and deeds or our talk and walk work together as a witness? Why are they each insufficient on their own?

- ❖ Good works (v. 16) are not merely isolated deeds that a Christian does. Good works involve our whole lives- everything we are and do that shows who God is. What does your life say about God? Pray and ask God to align your heart with his in wanting to impact the world for his glory.

Day 3- Matthew 5:17-26

In the body of his sermon (vs. 17-48) Jesus shows the relationship between the Old Testament/Covenant to the New Covenant in him. The Law will now be understood only in the context of Jesus, his work and his kingdom.

Scholar's Note: The Law and the Prophets (v. 17) refer to the Old Testament scriptures.

5. In light of the radical nature of Jesus' teaching about the kingdom, what does Jesus make clear in verse 17?

Scholar's Note: *Truly I say to you* is an authority formula. It occurs thirty-one times in Matthew at particularly critical points. *Truly* in Hebrew is 'amen. "In the OT the Hebrew 'āmēn means to verify a key teaching, so Jesus uses this to highlight an important, solemn truth. He wants his disciples to listen carefully to an authoritative pronouncement."³

6. What important truth is Jesus teaching in verse 18?

For Discussion: In verse 19, Jesus says whoever practices and teaches God's commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Why do you think this is a mark of greatness in God's kingdom?

Digging Deeper: Jesus tells his followers in Verse 20, that unless their righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees they would not enter the kingdom of heaven. From the following verses describe the kind of righteousness the Pharisees had.

Matthew 23:25-28²⁵ "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! ²⁶You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish, and then the outside will become clean, too."²⁷ "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. ²⁸Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.(NLT)

How do we receive the inner righteousness that we need to enter the kingdom according to the following verses?

2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him [Jesus] to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him [Jesus] we might become the righteousness of God.

Galatians 5:4-5 ⁴You are severed from Christ, you who would be justified by the law; you have fallen away from grace. ⁵For through the Spirit, by faith, we ourselves eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness.

Titus 3:5 ...he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit...

Picture and Ponder: " What Jesus is demanding is not more righteous deeds by human effort, but more righteous hearts by divine grace."⁴

Anger and Reconciliation

7. As the fulfiller of the Law, Jesus authoritatively corrects the misunderstanding of it and points to its true direction. What is at the heart of murder that Jesus addresses in verse 22?

8. Who is the angry one in verse 23?

9. In contrast to simmering anger, what phrases in verses 24 and 25 show the heart of God?

-Even if you are not the angry one, what is your responsibility?



Jesus is teaching us that to live up to the righteous requirements of the heart of the Holy God, not only do we have to not physically murder anyone, but we also have to not let anger rise up in our hearts against another. We have to not insult people or call them names or have any ill will between you and another person. It's relatively easy to not actually murder anyone. But it's impossible for us to not get angry at people, insult or offend people, call them names, if not out loud or to their face certainly behind their back and in our thoughts. This is murder in our hearts.

Jesus mercifully shows us how far we really are from God when we have only an external righteousness. To be close to him we must have a heart like his. This is why Jesus came. To draw us near. To live and die in our place, cleansing us from sin and transforming our hearts of stone to a heart like his.

Reflect on the following thoughts:

- ❖ While stuffing our anger, zipping our lips, denying our grudges is socially beneficial, it sometimes deceives us into thinking we are ok because from the outside we might look ok. Yes, count to ten, walk it off, close your mouth, but don't stop there. What sin is at the core of your anger? Take that anger to Jesus, confess it and ask him to show you its roots and heal you from its causes.

- ❖ Avoiding sin is the minimum requirement. Jesus points us to living out the heart of God, discovering and following God's perfect will for his people. What is the heart of God like in regard to anger? What does he get angry about? When he withholds his anger, what does he show instead?

- ❖ In Jesus' illustration in verse 24, anger interfered with worship and Jesus called for reconciliation. Is there anyone you need to reconcile with?

Picture and Ponder: "To be angry or feel contempt for another is to disparage God's child and, therefore, God himself. We cannot separate relationships with others from our relationship with God."⁵



Father forgive me for the selfishness and arrogance in my heart that is revealed by my anger. Lord I turn away from those sins and turn to you and your riches in grace.

Day 4- Matthew 5:27-32

Protecting Marriage

10. In verse 28, how does Jesus show that what goes on in our heart is just as serious as wrong actions?

11. What is at the heart of not lusting, that God wants for his people?

For Discussion: "It would be silly to legislate about fashions, but wise to ask [women] to make this distinction: It is one thing to make yourself attractive; it is another to make yourself deliberately seductive." ⁶How does this relate to your heart? How does this relate to purity?



In verses 29 and 30 Jesus uses hyperbole to demonstrate how serious sin is. Jesus is not saying to literally maim yourself, but he is saying to take drastic measures on sin that has got a hold on you. Reflect on the following thoughts:

- ❖ How are the eyes and heart connected to your struggle with sin?

- ❖ Maybe it is your imagination that tempts you to sin more than your eyes. How can imagining that your marriage or spouse is something different than what is, lead to sin in your heart? (I am not talking about a godly desire that you take to the Lord in prayer.)

- ❖ Is there an area of sin in your life that requires drastic measures?

12. In verses 31-32 what is Jesus saying about marriage by equating divorce with adultery?

Digging Deeper: In verse 31, Jesus' reference, *it was also said* is to Deuteronomy 24:1-4 where Moses gives rules on divorce that were designed to protect the woman. Moses only permitted divorce for "some indecency". Jesus addresses divorce again later on in Matthew in response to the Pharisees, and the practice of divorcing for trivial reasons. Why did Moses allow divorce according to the following verses and what was God's heart on the matter?

Matthew 19:3-8 ³ Some Pharisees came and tried to trap him with this question: "Should a man be allowed to divorce his wife for just any reason?"⁴ "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.'" ⁵ And he said, "'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.'" ⁶ Since they are no longer two but one, let no one split apart what God has joined together."⁷ "Then why did Moses say in the law that a man could give his wife a written notice of divorce and send her away?" they asked.⁸ Jesus replied, "Moses permitted divorce only as a concession to your hard hearts, but it was not what God had originally intended. (NLT)

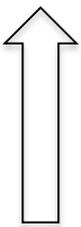


In Jesus' sermon he calls his people to a deeper righteousness than just technically obeying the letter of the law. He shows us the spirit of the law—the heart of God on the matter. While the Pharisees looked for reasons to divorce, Jesus focused on the sanctity of marriage as God designed it.

- ❖ What characteristics of kingdom life do you need to apply to your marriage in order to heal, protect or grow it? (Think about peacemaking, meekness, mercy, reconciliation)



If adultery or divorce has somehow been a part of your story, remember that our God is the God of forgiveness, restoration, redemption and healing. There is nothing in our lives as his children that is irredeemable. He works all things for our good when we humbly submit to him.



Father, I lift up the hearts that have been broken by adultery or divorce and ask you to heal them by your word and with your love. Thank you for the healing and restoration you have already accomplished in so many lives. Help those who feel hopeless in their marriage to look to your wisdom and your ways and to remember that with you all things are possible.

Day 5- Matthew 5:33-48

Honesty and Integrity

Scholar's Note: The Pharisees had devised complicated formulas for taking oaths that really were designed to allow them not to keep their word if they didn't utter the exact formula with God's name. It was a devious way of justifying themselves when they

didn't keep their word. It was kind of like making a promise while crossing your fingers behind your back.

13. Because the Pharisees insisted their oaths only counted if they invoked God's name in some specific way, how did Jesus show them the folly of that in verses 34-36?

14. How did Jesus show the aim of the Old Testament Law in verse 37?

-What deeper righteousness does Jesus want his kingdom people to display?

Picture and Ponder: "Swearing (oath-taking) is really a pathetic confession to our own dishonesty."⁷



Our aim as God's children should be much more than just not telling lies. Our words should be reliable and accurate. We should mean what we say and say what we mean. As followers of Jesus we should be known as people of integrity who keep our word.

- ❖ Exaggeration, flattery, saying things you don't really intend to follow through on, being careless with what you've promised... What do these things reflect about us?

Non-retaliation and Active Love

Old Testament Ties: In verse 38 Jesus quotes Ex. 21:24, Lev.24:20 and Deut.19:20-21.

An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was an Old Testament law designed to provide Israel's judges with a formula for penalties for crimes that was fair and not excessive—the punishment should fit the crime. Its aim was not to take revenge, but to stop personal vengeance and retribution. "Like the OT laws permitting divorce, enacted because of the hardness of men's hearts (19:3-12), the *lex talionis* [Latin for law of retribution] was instituted to curb evil because of the hardness of men's

hearts."⁸How does the following verse show God's true desire and intent for his people?

Leviticus 19:18 You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the sons of your own people but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.

15. Now that Jesus had come and inaugurated the kingdom with the promise of the Holy Spirit and new hearts for his people, he shows the shocking ethic of his kingdom in verses 39-42. What principles govern Jesus' command?

Scholar's Note: "... most agree that Jesus is speaking at the level of personal vengeance rather than legal rights. This principle of nonresistance or nonretaliation means in effect that the believer refuses to descend to the level of the aggressor and return evil for evil."⁹

Digging Deeper: If we are not to take matters into our own hands and retaliate against someone who is doing evil against us, what are we to do according to the following verses?

What dominant principle from Romans do you see at work in verses 40-42?

Romans 12:17-21 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord. To the contrary, if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink: for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good."

1 Peter 2:21-23 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. When he was reviled, he did not revile in

return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly.



Lord let overcoming evil with good be my desire and my first response to evil and opposition, and please give me the perseverance, strength and the wisdom to carry this out for your glory.

Picture and Ponder: “[Jesus] teaches not the irresponsibility which encourages evil but the forbearance which renounces revenge”.¹⁰



One of the prized values of our culture is seen in our common idioms: *stand up for yourself, don't be a doormat, give as good as you get, don't take anything from anybody*. The words of Jesus cut against the grain of our human nature and they are hard to swallow, but they show us Jesus himself. At the heart of Jesus' command is selfless love. John Stott describes this kind of person who, “when injured, refuses to satisfy himself by taking revenge, but studies instead the highest welfare of the other person and of society, and determines his reactions accordingly.”¹¹

- ❖ What is your biggest roadblock in following Jesus' footsteps in this kind of love and life? Confess it now and ask for the Holy Spirit's help in responding to evil aimed at you personally, like Jesus did.

For Discussion: How is standing up for someone else, or fighting against societal evil different than what Jesus is saying?

Off the Beaten Path: Read Acts 9:23-25, 21:27-26:32 What ways did Paul fight against evil? What is Paul's one consuming motivation? What principle can we learn from Paul?

16. The popular interpretation of the law from Leviticus 19 that states to love *your neighbor as yourself* was: love your neighbor—those who are like you and close to you, and then the convenient deduction from that was to hate your enemy. How does Jesus contradict this tradition in verse 44?

-How is praying for your enemy a high form of love?



Enemy is defined as someone who feels hatred against another, an adversary or opponent, someone who is against you. Enemy seems like such a strong term, but haven't we all had people in our lives who don't like us or are against us?

- ❖ Have you ever prayed for an enemy? What changed when you prayed?
- ❖ Begin in obedience to pray for an enemy this week.
- ❖ What other action can you take this week to show love to an enemy?

17. How are we becoming like our heavenly Father when we love this way according to verse 45?

Picture and Ponder: "...to bless and pray for those who persecute us is to align oneself with the character of God."¹²

Digging Deeper: How did God show us love while we were his enemies?

Rom 5:10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, now that we are reconciled, shall we be saved by his life.



Heavenly Father thank you that you loved me when I was your enemy! I am so grateful and filled with joy that you did not treat me as I deserved, but gave me mercy and grace and brought me into your family as your child!

18. What makes us distinctive as Christians according to verses 46-47?

19. In verses 21-47 Jesus has shown us the true direction of the law, which displays the heart of God and reflects his perfect character. He sums it up in verse 48 as the perfection of God. What does he require of his followers?



So now Jesus has made it perfectly clear just what kind of righteousness we need to enter into the kingdom of heaven—the perfection of God. The Pharisee’s righteousness, that Jesus said wasn’t enough, was a righteousness of their own, based on external works that didn’t touch their hearts. Jesus shows us that we must have a heart like God’s. This inner heart-righteousness was a promised blessing of the New Covenant that the prophets had told of, and that Jesus taught in his sermon. Jeremiah 31:33b says,

I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.

How will God do this? Ezekiel 36:26-27 tells us,

And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

What Jesus demands of his kingdom people, he also provides. It is through his perfect life and sacrificial death that we receive his heart of righteousness and the power and desire to live his kingdom ethic.

- ❖ Sometimes even as people with new hearts we act like some of the Pharisees and try to minimize or dodge Jesus’ hard commands, and yet still look good on the outside. We try to make them fit our preconceived ideas or our worldview or experiences. Spend some time reflecting on how you might be doing that. Ask God to work on your heart in this area and make you willing conform to his thinking and ways.

- ❖ Sometimes we act like other Pharisees and try and pursue Jesus' commands as if they were based on works instead of faith (Rom. 10:32). How do you pursue Jesus' commands through faith instead of works?

One Thing: Look back over this week's study. Pick one thing that God impressed on you, convicted you about, or something new that you learned and write it here. How will this truth impact the way you think and act?

¹ Expositor's Commentary Copyright © 1998-2018 Olive Tree Bible Software

² Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Locations 4768-4771). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

³ Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Locations 4880-4882). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

⁴ Platt, David. Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary: Exalting Jesus in Matthew. Copyright 2013 by David Platt, B & H Publishing Group

⁵ Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Locations 5132-5134). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

⁶ Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p. 88

⁷ Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p.102

⁸ quoted in Expositor's Commentary Copyright © 1998-2018 Olive Tree Bible Software

⁹ Osborne, Grant R.. Matthew (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on The New Testament series Book 1) (Kindle Locations 5504-5506). Zondervan Academic. Kindle Edition.

¹⁰ Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p. 108

¹¹ Stott, John R. W. The Message of the Sermon on the Mount, The Bible Speaks Today, Inter-Varsity Press, USA, 1978 p.107

¹² Carson, D.A. Sermon on the mount P. 53 as quoted in Expositor's Commentary