

# ***THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST***

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## **MATTHEW LESSON 3 (Chapters 5-7)**

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.* Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

What makes a great sermon? Can you think back to what you believe is the greatest sermon you've ever heard? What made that sermon so powerful? It probably was because it was both biblical and relevant. It was true to the Bible, yet it was practical in your life. Today we are going to be introduced to what I believe is the greatest sermon ever preached—Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount," as recorded in Matthew 5-7. Jesus' sermon was biblical. It was true to the text of the Old Testament, and its principles related to the New Testament as well. Plus, it was (and is) practical to people's lives. In this text, Jesus discussed "kingdom characteristics." The Sermon on the Mount was all about the characteristics of the kingdom, and what the citizens of the kingdom would be like. Remember that Matthew is discussing the kingdom of Heaven, a phrase that is mentioned numerous times in the Book of Matthew. The Book of Matthew is all about Christ and His kingdom. Christ is the King, and we are the citizens of His kingdom. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows us the characteristics of the kingdom and those who will compose the kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is a very relevant sermon because Jesus takes the text and applies it to daily living so that people can live the way that God wants them to live.

Jesus begins the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:1-12 by talking about Christian character. This section contains what we know as "the beatitudes." Each of these beatitudes builds upon another, and suggests the character that a child of God ought to have. "Blessed are the poor in spirit." "Blessed are the meek." "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Mt. 5:3-6). Christ talks about being peacemakers, and about suffering for righteousness' sake. All of these characteristics emphasize the attitude and demeanor that we should have as Christians. If there was just one of the beatitudes that we could extract that might express the general attitude of all the beatitudes, it would be Matthew 5:6. Notice what Jesus said here: "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled." This idea of righteousness (right living, right doing) is basically the idea of doing what **God** wants us to do. We are to obey **His** will and follow **His** teaching. Jesus said that those who have a spiritual appetite **will** be blessed. In a society where it seems as if many people have an appetite for sin, the kingdom of God ought to be composed of those who have an attitude for doing right. In the Bible, the idea of righteousness is directly connected to the idea of holiness. If we are going to be righteous, that carries with it the idea of being holy. This is something that God has called us to do. In 1 Peter 1:15, the Bible says, "As He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct." We are to walk in the footsteps of Jesus (1 Pet. 2:21-22). Thus, in our daily lives, we must have a desire (or passion) to be right with God. If we have a passion to be right with God, then the characteristics contained within the beatitudes will fall in place in our lives. Nothing is more important than having a passion to serve God and to do what is right. In Luke 9:23, Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me." That is the attitude we need to have. We must not worry about the world. Instead, we must follow Jesus and want to do what is right. We must be willing to give up everything for Him, regardless of the cost.

As the Sermon on the Mount continues, it speaks not only about the Christian's **character**, but also about the Christian's **righteousness**. In Matthew 5:17-48, Jesus continues the idea of being right. The idea of a Christian's righteousness is one of the keys to the Sermon on the Mount. In this section, we find Jesus saying something that is very important and that sets the tone and tenor for this sermon. In Matthew 5:20, Jesus gave us the background to the Sermon on the Mount when He said, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." Righteousness is not about meeting the status quo. It is not about following the religious elite. The scribes and the Pharisees were the very people to whom the Jews looked for an example. They were seen as the religious leaders of the day. Jesus said, however, "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." At the first hearing, this would have shocked the people who heard Jesus' words. But as Jesus delved deeper into this topic, we learn (as did the people who heard Him) exactly what He meant. These people (the scribes and Pharisees) were not actually the most righteous people. We are going to learn in Matthew 6 that they stood on the street corners and prayed to be heard by others. They did good deeds—and they sounded a trumpet to call attention to what they had done so that people could say, "Look at what they have done!" The scribes and Pharisees were not really right with God in their hearts.

But what did Jesus mean when He urged His listeners to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? In Matthew 5:17-48, Jesus touched on several points. First, He said that we must be righteous in our dealing with anger. In Matthew 5:22-22, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." Such a person had, in essence, already committed murder. Jesus was trying to get people to put the teachings they already knew into effect in their lives. His point was, "You know the text that says, 'Do not murder.' But I want you to make that application to everyday life. What if you are angry with your brother? You have already murdered him in your heart." Here, Jesus was teaching people who had a good knowledge of the Old Testament text about how to apply that knowledge in their daily lives. This is what separates **feigned** righteousness from **true** righteousness. It may seem that some people are righteous merely because they have a good knowledge of the Bible. But Jesus teaches us that true righteousness is found in our ability to apply to our everyday lives what the Scriptures teach. Merely knowing the Word of God is not enough. Paul said in Philippians 4:9, "The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these **do**, and the God of peace will be with you." The key word, of course, is "do."

In this context, the key phrase is "self-control." For example, Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Mt. 5:27-28). Jesus said, "You know that you should not go out and have sexual relations with a woman who is not your wife. But let's make it practical. You should not even **think** about another woman in a lustful fashion in your heart because if you do, then you have already committed adultery with her." Each of these principles that Jesus applied dealt with the mind and the heart as the principles applied to a person's daily life. In Matthew 5:31-32, Jesus took the matter even farther when He discussed the matter of divorce. It was there that He taught that the only reason for divorce was fornication. The Jews had a lot of disagreement about this issue. There were two schools of thought. Jesus said, "Let's forget about that, and let's go back to the text." The only reason that Jesus gave for divorce (Mt. 5:32; Mt. 19:9) was fornication.

Jesus not only dealt with these types of ideas, but also dealt with a person's enemies. In Matthew 5:38 He said, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'" But Jesus went on to say basically, "No, that's not the idea. You should not want to go knock out someone's teeth." Rather, He says in essence, "You need to go the extra mile. If someone wants your cloak, give them your tunic as well. If someone needs something, do what you can to help that person. Jesus is trying to apply the principle of "loving our enemies" to daily life. Jesus said, "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you" (Mt. 5:43-44). Here, Jesus is teaching righteousness and how it applies to daily life.

However, Jesus teaches us not only about Christian righteousness, but also about sincerity. In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus instructs His followers to be different from those who are "the religious elite." Jesus referred to the religious elite of His day as hypocrites. What was the main problem of the sincerity of the scribes and Pharisees? Look at Matthew 6:1 where Jesus identifies the problem. "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, **to be seen by them**. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven." The religious elite of the day **were** doing good deeds. But it was as if every time they did a good deed, they rang a bell so that everyone's attention could be drawn to their deeds. Jesus said, "No, that is not what doing a good deed is all about. You shouldn't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. If you do a good deed, you should not go tell others. You do it because it is the right thing to do." So, in this context we find that a Christian's sincerity is not based on what **others** may think. Rather, it is based on what **God** thinks. It is not based on how many people know about what we did. Instead, it is based on doing what is **right** because it is the right thing to do. Jesus dealt with their sincerity in regard to giving, doing charitable deeds, and helping others. He was saying, in essence, "You don't go tell someone, 'I gave old so-and-so \$100. Look what I did for them.'" That is not true Christian sincerity. That is pride. It is the devil taking a foothold in your life."

Jesus also dealt with sincerity concerning prayer (Mt. 6:5-15). The religious elite were standing on street corners while everyone was there to see them. They said long prayers with big words, and they repeated the same phrases over and over so everyone could look up and say, "Wow, they are **really** religious." Jesus said, "No, when you pray, go into your inner room, shut the door, and make your prayer between you and God alone." Prayer is not about what others think. Nor is it about what "\$5 words" a person may use. Prayer is about a relationship with God. Jesus taught His disciples in His model prayer the things for which they ought to pray. In Matthew 5:9-11, Jesus said, "Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread." In other words, Jesus was teaching them to talk to God about things they needed to mention. Jesus talked about sincerity in prayer, and how that it was not an outward sign, but instead was something of the heart that helped them have a better relationship with God. The basic principle is this: If we are going to be sincere, and if we are going to be right with God, then we should not worry about what others may or may not think. Rather, we need to do what we do in order to be right with God, and because it is the right thing to do. We must do things with the right attitude so that we can be pleasing unto God. Suppose that you helped someone in a big way, but no one ever knew. Guess what? **God knows!** And on the Day of Judgment, we know that we **will** be rewarded for such things. That is what really matters in this life.

Jesus dealt not just with a Christian's sincerity, but also with a Christian's priorities. If there is a text that really ought to encourage and help us citizens of God's kingdom, it is found here, where Jesus tells us about how to handle our priorities. The majority of this text deals

with anxiety, and how Christians should not worry about the things of this life. Jesus talked about priorities in four different ways. First, He dealt with our priorities regarding earthly treasures. He said in Matthew 6:19-21, "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal." Here, Jesus teaches us that our priorities must not be tied up in earthly treasures. There are so many people who get caught up in this Earth and its treasures. But what is going to happen to those things? Suppose you have the nicest diamond ring, the finest gold watch, or the nicest mansion. When Jesus comes back, what is going to happen to those things? The text of 2 Peter 3:10-12 tells us that the Earth and everything on it will be burned up with a fervent heat. Then Peter says, "Since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" Peter does not ask, "How many goods can you accumulate." Instead, he asks, "What manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness?" Our treasures must not be on this Earth, but in Heaven.

Jesus then dealt with our priorities in regard to our vision (Mt. 6:23-24). His point was that if our eyes are bad, then everything about us will be bad. Jesus was teaching us that our priorities need to be focused on spiritual things. We must see "with spiritual eyes, not with physical eyes." If our spiritual eyes are darkened, then everything about us is darkened. We need to come to Jesus with true light so that we can see what God wants us to do in this life so that we will not spend our lives in darkness.

Jesus also dealt with our priorities regarding devotion, concentrating especially on worrying. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus said, "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [earthly riches]." In this life, we must focus on devoting ourselves to God and His kingdom.

Jesus brought His comments to a climax in verses 25-34 when He talked about the body and the physical needs of this life. Jesus said that the body is not all about clothing or food. Our bodies are a temple that houses the spirit of man, and those bodies are intended to help us in this life as we serve God in order to prepare for eternity. Jesus then asked His listeners why they were concerned about things of the body. He offered several examples. Does God not take care of the sparrows? Look at the flowers. They neither toil nor spin, yet you are more precious than they are. Consider Solomon in all of his glory. We are more important than that. We simply need to realize that God does not want us to worry about the things in this life. Rather, we should seek His kingdom. There is an important principle to learn in Matthew 6:25-34. If we put God and His kingdom first in our lives, we will not have to worry about food, shelter, and clothing. The psalmist said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread" (Ps. 37:25). As we think about righteous people, we need to know that righteous people do not stand on a street corner holding a sign that says, "WILL WORK FOR FOOD!" That is not a righteous person, because those who are righteous, and who therefore are putting God and His kingdom first, will not have to worry about food, shelter, and clothing. This does not mean, of course, that they do not have to work or hold a job. Rather, it is not something about which they have to worry because God is going to take care of those things. Look at what Jesus said as a sort of summary statement. Jesus said, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Mt. 6:33). Jesus' point was that we should not worry about food, shelter, or clothing. Instead, Jesus is asking, "What is the Christian's priority?" We are to seek first the kingdom of God and God's righteousness, and then all of these physical blessings will be taken care of. As we talk about

priorities, we need to realize that there is one main priority that we are to have in this life. We are to seek to be the best citizen in the kingdom, to be as faithful as possible to the Lord, and to do what God wants us to do.

As I think about these things, I am reminded of what Paul said in Philippians 1:21 where he wrote, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain." There is a man who had his priorities right! Think about the questions that Jesus asked in Mark 8:36-37. Jesus asked, "What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" Imagine if you had amassed the wealth of many famous people in this world. When you stand at the judgment bar of God, and you know that you have not lived properly, what will all that wealth do for you? The answer is: not one thing! The priority that we need to have in this life is to **get right** with God and to **stay right** with God. We must make sure that we "seek first the kingdom." There are many Christians who do not seem to have understood this point. Seeking first the kingdom of God is not just about going to worship services on Sunday or Wednesday. Seeking first the kingdom is not necessarily just about becoming a Christian (although that is important). Seeking the kingdom is about remaining faithful to the Lord every day. It is not a Sunday and Wednesday religion. Seeking first the kingdom means that we put God first in every decision that we make. Before we make a decision, we must ask, "What would the Lord have me to do?" In John 2:5 we find a great statement made by Mary concerning her Son Jesus. She said, "Whatever He says to you, do it." We need to be careful that we have our priorities in order in this life.

In Matthew 7, Jesus dealt with the Christian and his judgment. Oftentimes, we as Christians are concerned with judging others. At times, we can even get caught up in that. Jesus said in Matthew 7:1, "Judge not lest you be judged." That does not mean that we cannot make biblically based judgments and say that something is morally right or wrong. Keep the verse in context. This is one of the most misunderstood verses in the Bible within the religious world at large. Frequently when we say that something is wrong biblically or morally, people will say, "Judge not lest you be judged!" Matthew 7:1 is not teaching that we cannot make biblical judgments regarding what is right or wrong, or that we cannot make a decision regarding such things. In the context, the verse is teaching that we should not judge like the hypocrites of Jesus' day did. Jesus used an example to get His point across. A man had a tiny speck in his eye, and another man comes up to him and says, "Oh, let me remove that speck from your eye." But this fellow has a two-by-four sticking out of his own eye! Jesus' point was that we should not judge with a hypocritical judgment. There are places where we are commanded to make "righteous judgments." In John 7:24, Jesus commanded, "Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment." How does a Christian judge properly? First, he does it by not being hypocritical. Second, he makes a righteous judgment by going to the Bible to see what God has to say about it. There is one verse that can help Christians in making judgments than perhaps anything else—Matthew 7:12. Look at what Jesus said: "Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets." Here is the Golden Rule: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." That is the perfect way to make a judgment. If you have to pass judgment, remember that you need to do to others what you would want them to do to you. We would want people to come to us lovingly, kindly, and biblically. We would want their motives to be out of love. We would not want them to come to us with the attitude that they need to pick a speck out of our eyes while they have a two-by-four sticking out of their eyes. We do not want someone to condemn us or find fault in our lives, but instead we want someone to come to us out of love in order to teach us what God's Word has to say. This, then, is the basic principle for judging. We are to do unto others as we want them to do unto us.

Jesus closes the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 7:13-27 by talking about the Christian's commitment. That commitment is first of all a commitment to knowing the difference between right and wrong. As a child of God, and as a part of God's kingdom, we must have a commitment to do what is right and abhor that which is wrong. We learn this from Jesus' comments about the straight and narrow way in Matthew 7:13-14. Jesus said, "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it." We have a commitment as children of God to do what is right and to go the narrow way, regardless of whether or not anyone else does. We must be committed to doing what is right, and to doing what God wants us to do. In a world where there are so few standards, we need to return to God's Word. We as Christians need to say as Micaiah did in the great long ago: "Whatever my God says, that I will do" (2 Chron. 18:13). We need to be people who are committed to doing what is right, regardless of what others may think.

We also need to have a commitment to recognizing false teachers so that we can be sure not to allow their doctrines to infect us. In Matthew 17:15-20, Jesus said that there would be certain false teachers who were nothing but wolves masquerading in sheep's clothing. He said that they would destroy the flock. If we have a commitment to doing what is right, we cannot allow false teaching to go on. We need to "contend earnestly for the faith" (Jude 3). We need to expose error in a loving way so that all people can be led to do God's will.

The Bible teaches us that we also need to have a commitment to saying and being. We need to say that we love God. But saying that and doing that are two different things. In Matthew 7:21-23, Jesus teaches us a lesson about how, if we **say** we love God, then we must **be** such a person by living according to His teachings. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." True Christian commitment is about saying and being (or doing). If we say that we love God, and if we call Jesus "Lord," then that necessarily means that we must do what He commands us to do. If there was ever a passage which teaches that merely "believing" in Jesus will not get us to Heaven, it is this passage. This is the very thing that some people are doing today. They are claiming that Jesus is the Lord. They look up and say, "I believe in Jesus." Yet their belief goes no farther than that. Jesus teaches us that we cannot simply mouth the words, "Lord, Lord," yet not do what Jesus has commanded. The one who **does** the will of God is the one who is going to Heaven. In Hebrews 5:8-9, we learn that Jesus is the Author of eternal salvation to all those who "obey Him." In Luke 6:46, Jesus asked the religious hypocrites of His day this question: "Why do you call Me Lord, Lord,' and do not do the things which I say?" We cannot call Jesus "Lord," yet not do what He has commanded us to do. Here, then, is an important practical principle. If we want to do God's will, we have to obey Christ.

As we think about doing God's will, maybe you have never obeyed the Gospel. Maybe you have never become a Christian. It is not something that is hard to do. It is something that you can do by coming to the Bible, which will allow you to know what God wants you to do. You can do that, and then you can know that you are right with God. The Bible teaches that a person must be willing to believe that Jesus is the Son of God. In John 8:24, Jesus said, "If you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins." The "golden text of the Bible" is John 3:16. There we find, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." A person must believe in Christ as God's Son. But belief alone is not what saves us. The only time that the idea of "faith only" is found in the Bible is in James 2:24, which says, "Man is justified by works, and **not** by faith only." Belief by itself is not what saves us. We

must believe, but we also must be willing to change our lives by repenting. In Acts 3:19, Peter preached, "Repent and turn again." That is the idea. We change our way of life. We do not do what we used to do. We do not live like we used to live. Then we must be willing to confess that Jesus is the Son of God. In Romans 10:10, the Bible says, "For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." The Bible also teaches that if a person is going to be saved, he or she must be baptized for the remission of sins. Jesus could not have said it any plainer than He did in Mark 16:16—"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." Jesus said that belief and baptism are both conditions for salvation. It is not that we earn our salvation. Instead, we are simply obeying God's will. The text of 1 Peter 3:31 says that "baptism does also now save us." Paul preached in Galatians 3:27 that "as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." Salvation is in Christ. All spiritual blessings are in Christ. So how does a person get inside Christ? The answer is in Galatians 3:27—"As many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ." If you have never become a part of God's kingdom, then we want you to know that God loves you, that we love you, and that we want to see you become a part of His kingdom so that you can glorify God all of your life.

**Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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### STUDY QUESTIONS FOR MATTHEW LESSON 3 (CHAPTERS 5-7)

1. What important event is recorded in Matthew 5-7?
2. What do we find listed in Matthew 5:3-11?
3. In Matthew 5:6, what did Christ urge us to do?
4. In 1 Peter 1:15, what did the apostle Peter urge us to do?
5. According to 1 Peter 2:21-22, what are we to do?
6. In Matthew 5:20, Jesus said, "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." What did He mean by such a statement?
7. What did Jesus condemn in Matthew 5:27-28?
8. In Matthew 5:31-32, what was the sole reason given by Christ for divorce?
9. What difficult command did Christ lay upon His followers in Matthew 5:44?
10. In Matthew 6:1 Jesus said, "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them." What was His point?
11. With what specific topic was Christ dealing in Matthew 6:5-15?
12. In Matthew 5:9-11, what did Jesus provide for the disciples of His day?
13. In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus told the people to whom He spoke **not** to do something. What was it?
14. According to 2 Peter 3:10-12, why did Jesus give the command He did in Matthew 6:19-21?
15. According to Paul's statement in Philippians 1:21, what should be a Christian's goal?
16. What did Jesus command us to do in Matthew 6:33?
17. If we carry out the command of Matthew 6:33, what will God do for us?
18. What was Jesus teaching when He said, "Judge not lest you be judged" (Mt. 7:1)?
19. What was Jesus **not** teaching in Matthew 7:1?
20. According to John 7:24, what is every Christian commanded to do?
21. In Matthew 7:13, what did Jesus command His disciples to do?
22. Against what did Jesus warn His disciples in Matthew 7:14?