

The Life and Ministry of Christ – Part 8

The Sermon on the Mount was probably delivered on a hill on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. As was the tradition of a teacher or rabbi, Jesus sat down while the crowd gathered around. Jesus had many disciples beside the twelve who gathered around Him to receive this instruction. We are not given a comprehensive list of those present, however, the message was delivered to His disciples about the nature of God's kingdom and the life that is expected of those who would be part of it. The Sermon on the Mount is a synopsis of what it is to live the Christian life and be a disciple. These are essential qualities for genuine believers daily living. The Sermon on the Mount opened with the Beatitudes. These Beatitudes revealed what people of the Kingdom of God are and describes their attitude and nature. Before we can be instructed in paths of obedience and righteousness, we must come to Christ. It is important to remember that these spiritual qualities are a direct result of God's grace. Once we have been born again, we are brought into this new and vibrant life in Christ. The Sermon on the Mount presents a new level of obedience to the mind and will of God that cannot be achieved by the Law. This obedience is from within, from the heart and comes from a genuine love for the Lord and transformation. The Pharisees, Sadducees, and legalist attempted obedience by outward rules, ordinances, and persuasion. They were convinced that their manner of living was sufficient. In the Sermon, Jesus presented several challenges to the way we should behave. After the Beatitudes, Jesus told His disciples you are salt and light.

Salt and Light – the Similitudes – Matthew 5:13-16

Matthew 5:13-16 NKJV You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Goodness and light are the opposite of Satan's kingdom of darkness and evil. When we become children of God, we are transformed into God's Kingdom. Being people of the Kingdom changes our "being."

Ephesians 5:8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light!

We have been changed from "darkness" to "light." We do not perform the malignancy of the old life.

God's people are now both salt and light in the world.

Notice that He did not say that you will become salt and light. You are salt and light in Christ. In any age or situation, you are both salt and light. We either are salt and light or we are not. Our saltiness and light come from God. All your goodness comes from God. God is not only the source of light, He is light.

What is the influence of salt and light?

Salt – has an influence for good in the world, salt resists decay.

Light — In a similar fashion, light banishes darkness.

Matthew 5:16 NKJV Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

According to Christ, our lives must manifest this saltiness and light. For salt or light to have the intended impact, they must give of themselves or share of their nature and character. Salt and light cease to be effective when they are hidden or kept private. Jesus was teaching “God-centered” living. The aim and purpose of our lives should be to glorify God. The light we have is a reflective light that comes from beholding the glory of the LORD. The greater exposure we have to God’s presence, the more the light of the glory.

2 Corinthians 4:6 NIV84 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 NIV84 And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

It seems appropriate that Jesus was speaking about these Kingdom dynamics to His disciples and was revealing the intended influence they would have on the world.

1 John 1:6-7 NKJV If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.

How to Practice Obedience – Matthew 5:17– 6:8

In the next section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus shows how to walk in obedience to the Law of God. Many of the attacks against Him were in regard to perceived methods of obedience to the Law. The various groups of legalists argued with the Lord about His actions on the Sabbath and their perceived concepts about the interpretation of the Law and how to obey it. Jesus made it clear that He was not against God’s Law.

Matthew 5:17 AMP Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo but to

complete and fulfill them.

How did Jesus fulfill the Law?

The Old Testament Messianic prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. He alone lived out and gave a true interpretation of the Law's moral precepts and was able to perfectly obey God and live a sinless life. Since God's standards have not changed, we cannot attain righteousness by our own strength. We need God's grace, mercy and help to do this. Jesus Christ is able to make every believer become righteous through His Own righteousness.

Matthew 5:18 NKJV For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled.

"Jot" refers either to the Greek "*iota*" or the Hebrew "*yod*," which is the smallest letter in both alphabets. A "*tittle*" is a tiny mark used to distinguish certain Hebrew letters that is similar to an apostrophe. In Hebrew, it is a decorative element that adorns letters of the alphabet. In Greek, the word "tittle" means "little horn." In both cases it was used to emphasize the importance of even the smallest details of the Law. Jesus is affirming the complete fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets. He is clearly saying that the Law and Prophets and God's standard of righteousness have not been removed. In fact, the Law is a school master that points us to Christ and the finished work of His cross.

Galatians 2:20 NKJV I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me.

"Christ in you" is the only hope of glory. Through Him alone we are able to become righteous.

Matthew 5:19 NKJV Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

We cannot break the commandments and get by with it and at the same time, we cannot keep them in our own strength. Since God's standards do not change, we depend on Christ to take us where we could not go through our own efforts. This throws us onto the grace, mercy, and power of Christ's salvation. This is the good news of the Gospel of Christ. He is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him.

Matthew 5:20 NKJV 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.

To illustrate what was wrong with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus' Sermon referred to the Law and showed the distinctive manner in which we can become obedient to the Law. He lists murder, adultery, divorce, swearing falsely, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, love your neighbor, giving, and prayer. In all of these situations, Jesus went deeper than the scribes and Pharisees' interpretation of the Law. Jesus went to the heart of the matter.

Righteousness – Matthew 5:21-6:4

Matthew 5:21-26 — Rather than talking about **murder**, Jesus addressed anger. Everyone who is *angry* with his brother is subject to judgment. He said, *“Reach a settlement quickly with your adversary while you are on the way with him.”*

Matthew 5:27-30 — Rather than dealing with **adultery**, Jesus addressed lust in the heart. He said, “Everyone who looks at a woman to *lust* for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” He said we should deal with any part of the body that causes us to sin.

Matthew 5:31-32 — Rather than the concession that Moses gave to give a certificate of **divorce** for a legal protection to the wife and husband, Jesus dealt with the reasons the law gives for divorce. Here and in Matthew 19:8 He made it clear that adultery or fornication is a legitimate ground for divorce. The text mentions sexual immorality which means any deviation from clearly defined biblical standards for sexual activity (homosexuality, adultery, fornication, prostitution — see Romans 1:26-32)

Matthew 5:33-37 — Rather than dealing with **swearing falsely**, or breaking an **oath**, Jesus said don't take an oath at all. He is talking about making a pledge or contract to do something. If you are going to do something, just do it. Take care of things now.

Matthew 5:38-42 — Rather than **retaliation** for a wrong (an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth) Jesus said “don't retaliate.” Don't avenge yourself of wrong. If someone slaps you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also. If someone takes your shirt, let him have your coat as well. Give to anyone who asks you. This is meekness and humility in action.

Matthew 5:43-48 — Rather than telling them to love your neighbor, Jesus said “**love** your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” If you want a reward in heaven, be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 6:1-4 — Rather than doing your **good deeds** to be seen by others, do your acts of charity and acts of piety to please God and not to gain praise from others. Practice your righteousness even when no one is

watching. If no one applauds you, do the right thing. Give without seeking approval from others. Don't practice your worship just so other people will see how righteous you are.

Jesus is talking about a new kind of life.

This life is lived from the inside out rather than the outside in. Serve God with all your heart, mind and strength. The Sermon on the Mount shows us how we have sinned and that we need God's mercy and help.

Matthew 5:29-30 NKJV If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell.

Jesus was demonstrating the seriousness of committing sin. We know that the issue with sin is not with the eye or the hand but with the heart of man. Self-flagellation, scourging, or mortification which is practiced by Shia Muslims, Anglicans, Roman Catholics and other groups is not what Jesus was encouraging. Fasting or doing physical harm to one's body does not guarantee or provide righteousness or entrance into heaven. We must bring our passions and desires under the Spirit of God's control. We need a Savior and the help of the Holy Spirit to change in our innermost being and behavior. We should not deceive ourselves or pretend that we are something that we are not.

Romans 7:18 AMP For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot perform it. [I have the intention and urge to do what is right, but no power to carry it out.]

All of us have this same problem for we have all sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The Law shows us all of our sins and iniquities and magnifies our need for a Savior. Although we have a desire to do what is right, it is impossible for us to do everything God requires on our own. We need a Savior. Jesus dealt with these issues in this Sermon on the Mount to show all of us our need. He did not come into the world to condemn the world but that the world through Him might be saved. Even when we sin, God is willing to save us.

1 John 1:9 NKJV If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.