

THE NORMAL CHRISTIAN LIFE

Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

For the next 6 months, we will be teaching a ‘crash course’ in what I am calling the “normal Christian life” as revealed by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 5-6-7, commonly known as the “Sermon on the Mount.” The operative word is “normal”.

The word “normal” means “conforming to the standard, or “natural”. Ironically, the term comes from the Latin word “normalis”, which means “conforming to the carpenter’s square”!

We take up the task because the current condition of the Christian church calls for it! Multitudes of God’s people are living far below the “abundant life” that Jesus promised He came to give. I dare say that most American Christians are living an “abnormal” Christian life, because it is not “conformed to the standard”.

We who are preachers and teachers bear the blame for this, mostly because we have failed to clearly set forth the standard of what the “normal Christian life” is and what it looks like.

But we can fix it. There *is* a “standard”. There is a “carpenter’s square” to measure by. It’s found in 106 Bible verses in the Book of Matthew, known as the Sermon on the Mount, or as I call it....

Part One

“The Greatest Sermon Ever Preached”

I. The Greatest Sermon Ever Preached By The Greatest Preacher Who Ever Lived

A. The Uniqueness Of The Passage

1. It is the *longest* continuous discourse of Christ; 3 entire chapters, 106 verses in red.

2. It is the *most familiar* of all Jesus’ teachings because it contains:

- The Beatitudes: “Blessed are the meek”, etc.

- The Lord's Prayer: "Our Father which art in heaven..."
- The Golden Rule: "Do unto others..."

3. The Sermon on the Mount is also one of the *most quoted* sections of scripture, even by the world, because it contains many familiar phrases like these:

- "Turn the other cheek"
- "Judge not"
- "Beware of false prophets"
- And the term "wolves in sheep's clothing"

4. It is the one of the most *admired* passages in the Bible!

a. **John Adams**, the 2nd President of the United States:

"The 10 commandments and the Sermon on the Mount contain my religion".

b. **Franklin D. Roosevelt**, the 32nd President of the United States:

"No greater blessing could come to our land today than a revival of the spirit of religion. I doubt if there is any problem in the world today that would not find a happy solution if approached in the spirit of the Sermon on the Mount."

c. **Harry S. Truman**, the 33rd President of the United States:

"A person who is fundamentally honest doesn't need a code of ethics. The 10 commandments and the Sermon on the Mount are all the ethical code anybody needs."

d. **The great WWII General Omar Bradley**, after we dropped the atomic bombs on Japan lamented:

"We have grasped the mystery of the atom and rejected the Sermon on the Mount. Ours is an age of nuclear giants and ethical infants."

e. And listen to this, from the great German Pastor and Theologian **Deitrich Bonhoeffer**, who was executed by the Nazis just before the end of World War II:

"The restoration of the Church depends upon a life of uncompromising discipleship, following Christ according to the Sermon on the Mount. I believe the time has come to gather people together to do this."

5. And we agree! But to do this right, we must be willing to receive the sermon as a whole and study it verse by verse.

6. Because the problem is that you can be familiar with *pieces* of the Sermon and still misunderstand its meaning apart from the *whole*; this is a big mistake because...

“No part of this Sermon can be truly understood except in the light of the whole.”

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

B. Context! Context! Context!

1. There's an old rule in the real estate industry about the 3 most important things that determine the value of a piece of property: 1. Location 2. Location, and 3. Location!

2. But when it comes to the Bible, the 3 most important things about understanding any portion of scripture are: Context! Context! Context!

3. The Church suffers when we who are Pastors and Bible teachers fail to preach truth in context, or what Paul called “whole counsel of God”.

**Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men.
For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.**

Acts 20:26-27 NKJV

4. We tend to take a piece of scripture: a verse, a story, or one particular topic, and build a whole theology around it, instead of considering every piece of truth as a part of the whole!

“The Bible is a wonderful book. You can prove anything you want with it.”

Mark Twain

5. In one sense this is true. You can easily pluck a verse out of the Bible and build an entire theology around it! You can take a truth and turn it into error if you take it out of context.

Context! Context! Context!

a. The Apostle John tells us “God is love.” (1 John 4:8,16) True. But the Psalmist tells us He is also holy and “angry with the wicked every day”. (Psalm 7:11)

b. The Bible tells us “God is good”; but Paul taught the Roman church if they did not continue in His goodness, God would cut them off the same way He did unbelieving Israel. (Romans 11:22)

c. Today, if you speak out against sin, some brother will remind you that Jesus said, “Judge not”. But we must remind them that a few verses later He warns us to “Beware of false prophets” (which means we must judge!) And in John 7:24 He tells us to “judge righteous judgment”.

d. Another big contextual error today is how the hyper-grace teachers have built an entire theology out of Romans 6:14: “We are not under the Law but under grace.” Then they totally disregard the next verse:

**What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?
God forbid.**

Romans 6:15

e. They will quote John 1:17, “the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Christ Jesus.” True. But then they will totally ignore what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount...

"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose.

Matthew 5:17-18 NLT

f. Worst of all the context offenders are the Dispensationalists who tell us that the Sermon on the Mount has nothing to say to us today because it is part of the Old Testament, because the New Testament didn’t begin until Jesus was raised from the dead!

6. All these errors are but a few examples of what happens when we try to study the Bible out of context. That is why we’re going to teach through the Sermon on the Mount verse by verse, yet within the context of the whole. So let us look at...

II. The Context of the Sermon on the Mount

A. The Gospel of Matthew

1. Many wonder: “Why are there 4 Gospels?.

2. There are many reasons for this, but most Bible scholars agree that while all the Gospels apply to all, each of the 4 were originally addressed to a particular people group:

a. Mark was written with the Romans in mind

b. Luke to the Greeks

c. John was written to the Church

d. But all agree that **the Gospel of Matthew, where the Sermon on the Mount appears in its fullest form, (portions of it are recorded in Luke), was written primarily to the Jews.**

3. Jesus was born of Jewish lineage on the human side. All 12 of His chosen Apostles were Jewish. And the Gospel of Matthew focuses on Jewish issues, primarily because of its focus on the “Kingdom of heaven”.

a. The term “kingdom” is used over 50 times in this Gospel.

b. And Jesus will speak of the Kingdom 9 times in the Sermon on the Mount.

4. Context: The Jews were *obsessed* with the Kingdom and the coming of the Kingdom through the Messiah.

5. But the Jewish idea of the “Kingdom of God” was primarily *political*.

The Jews had a false, materialistic conception of the kingdom. They thought the Messiah was one who was coming to give them political emancipation. They were looking forward to someone who would deliver them from the bondage and yoke of the Roman Empire. They always thought of the kingdom in an external sense, a mechanical, military, materialistic sense.

a. Many Christians make the same mistake today; many think of the Kingdom of God as a future reality; that the Kingdom can't come until Jesus comes back.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

This is why Matthew puts the true teaching concerning the kingdom in the very forefront of his Gospel, for the great purpose of this Sermon is to give an exposition of the kingdom as something which is essentially spiritual.

David Martyn Lloyd-Jones, Studies in the Sermon on the Mount

6. The Sermon on the Mount is nothing less than the Constitution of the Kingdom of God “on earth as it is in heaven”.

a. The term “kingdom” is “king” (the one who rules) + “Dom”, His domain or where He is reigning. The Kingdom of God is spiritual; it exists wherever the King is ruling!

7. So let me close with....

B. 3 Ways To Understand The Kingdom of God: Past, Present, Future

1. The Kingdom *was present* in the earthly ministry of Jesus.

a. Jesus was a King and brought the Kingdom with Him when He came.

“...be ye sure of this, that the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you.”

Luke 10:11

b. Jesus authority over sickness, disease, and devils proved the Kingdom had come...

“But if I am casting out demons by the power of God,* then the Kingdom of God has arrived among you.”

Luke 11:20 NLT

2. The Kingdom of God *is present* at this moment to all who are true believers.

a. We are already IN the Kingdom!

Giving thanks unto the Father...Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son...

Excerpt from Colossians 1:12-13 NKJV

b. Jesus warned His disciples about limiting the Kingdom to the future!

"The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!'"* For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you."

Luke 17:20-21 NKJV

3. Finally, the full manifestation of the Kingdom of God is yet to come..

a. There IS a future day when there will be a full manifestation of the Kingdom of God...when the kingdoms of this world will have become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ. (Revelation 11:15)

4. So we understand the Kingdom 3 ways: it has come; it is coming; it is yet to fully come.

a. It *was* here when Jesus ministered; it *is* here in us now; it is *yet to come* at the end, when Christ comes to judge the world.

**And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying,
The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his
Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever.**

Revelation 11:15

5. Jesus came to bring the Kingdom and present a new way of living.

6. We will dive into the New Year by getting into the text of the Sermon next week; but let me close with a question....

Why did Jesus preach the Sermon on the Mount on a mountain?

III. Conclusion: Why The Sermon on a *Mount*?

Matt 4:25-5:2

And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan. And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying...

1. There is a shorter version of the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel of Luke; but Luke does not mention that He preached it on a mountain. Why? Remember, Luke was written with a Gentile audience in mind; but Matthew was thinking of the Jews!

2. Gentile Christians wouldn't care where the sermon was preached; but Matthew knew Jesus' Jewish disciples would know why Jesus "*went up into a mountain*" to deliver His message.

3. The Jews instinctively knew that Jesus was presenting Himself as the "new Moses"! The great Lawgiver! God Himself!

a. Jesus was doing what He had seen the Father do! (John 5:19-20)

4. In the same way God established the nation of Israel by giving them His Law, writing His commandments to them in the stone of a mountain, so now the Son of God will establish His Kingdom on earth by giving them the New Testament version of the Law, the Sermon on the Mount!

5. God saved His people from Egypt; then He led them to a Mountain where He gave them His Law to tell them how to live. Now comes Jesus. He saves His people, then leads them to a Mountain to do the same!

a. He is about to fulfill the prophecy God spoke to Jeremiah:

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord , "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord . 33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord , "I will put My law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 NASB

6. Moses went up to the Mountain to receive God's laws written on stone; but Jesus goes up to the Mount to write the Law on our hearts; a perfect picture of what the "normal Christian life" will look like!

7. I call it "the greatest sermon ever preached". And we will unpack every precious verse beginning next week. And God is going to write some new things on our hearts!

B. Altar Call and Prayer

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