

The Gospel of Matthew

4.

The Sermon on the Mount: Magisterial Teaching, A
Charter for Discipleship. Part 2 (6:1—8:1)

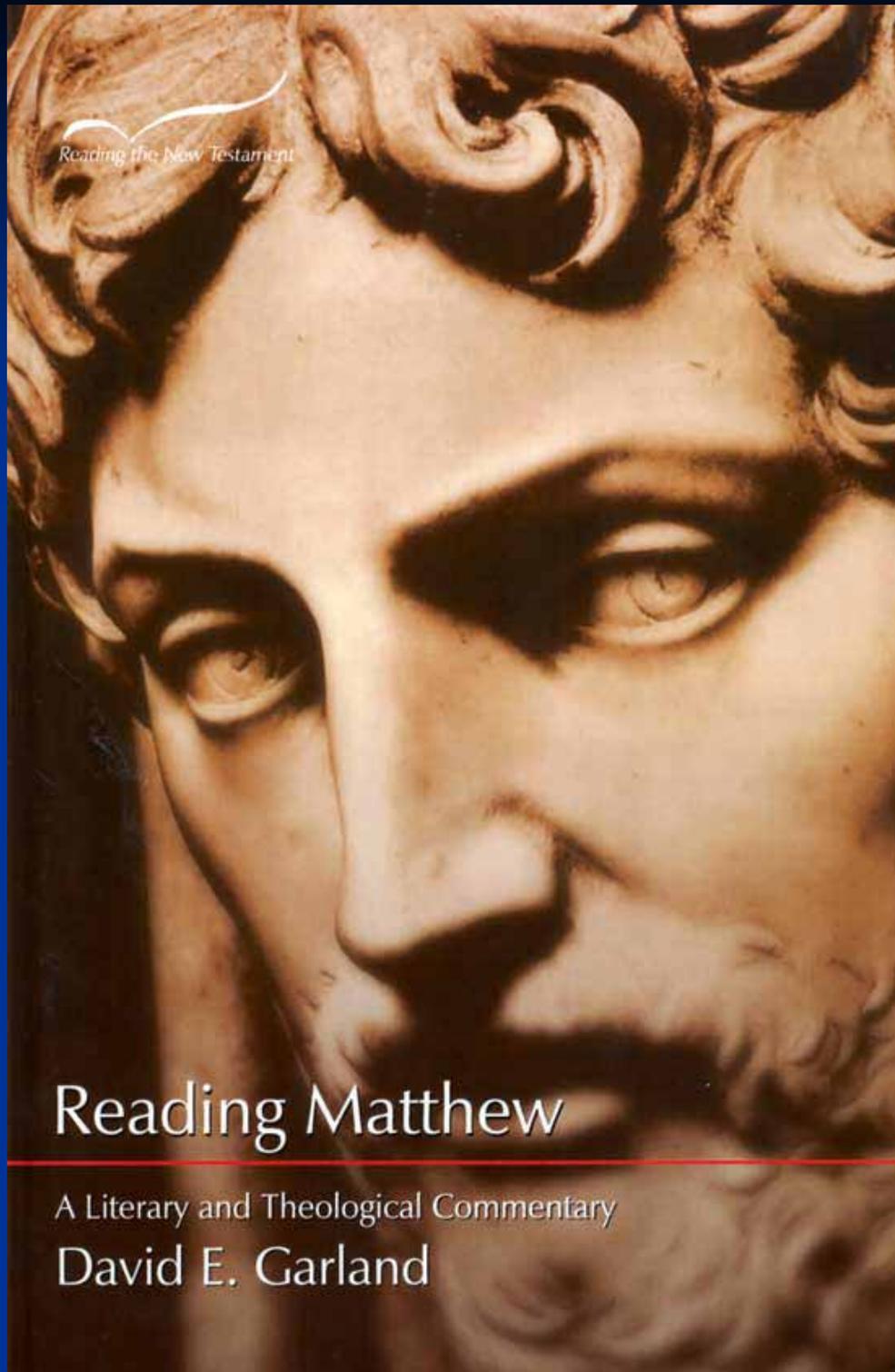
Sunday, December 18, 2005

10 to 11 am in the Parlor.

Everyone is welcome!

St. John in the Wilderness

**Living God, you called your people out of
Egypt
and gave them the covenant;
prepare our hearts to hear your call,
so that we may receive with joy the
gospel of your Son
and be your faithful people,
now and forever.**



- **Reading Matthew. A Literary and Theological Commentary**, David E. Garland, Smyth & Helwys, 2001, ISBN 1-57312-274
- **Dr. Garland** is Professor of Christian Scriptures and Associate Dean for Academic Services at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Baylor University

INTERPRETING
I · B · T
BIBLICAL TEXTS

THE
GOSPEL
OF
MATTHEW

Donald Senior

- **The Gospel of Matthew** (**Interpreting Biblical Texts Series**), Donald Senior, Abingdon Press, 1997, ISBN 0-687-00848-4
- **Dr. Senior** is Professor of New Testament Studies at Catholic Theological Union, Chicago.

- **Introducing Jesus the Messiah, the Son of God (Matthew 1:1—4:16)**
 - The Birth of the Messiah: The Fulfillment of God's Promises (1:1-25)
 - From Judea of David to the Galilee of the Gentiles (2:1-23)
 - Getting Ready: God's Son in the Wilderness (3:1—4:11)
 - Dispelling the Darkness in Galilee (4:12-16)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 1. Teaching, Healing, and Calling the Lost Sheep (Matthew 4:17—10:42)**
 - Jesus' Debut: Authority and Compassion. Dawn in Galilee (4:17-25)
 - The Sermon on the Mount: Magisterial Teaching, A Charter for Discipleship (5:1—8:1)
 - Jesus ascends the mountain (5:1-2)
 - The Beatitudes (5:3-12)
 - The mission of disciples of Jesus to change the world (5:13-16)
 - The fulfillment of the law by Jesus: the greater righteousness demanded of his disciples (5:17-48)
 - Murder, Adultery, Divorce
 - Oaths, Retaliation, Love of Enemies
 - Directions on piety (6:1-18)
 - Directions on money (6:19-34)
 - Directions on social relationships (7:1-12)
 - Warnings (7:13-27)
 - Reaction of the crowds; descent from the mountain (7:28—8:1)
 - Restoring Life to Others: Jesus the Healer (8:2—9:35)
 - Great Harvest and Great Dangers: The Mission Discourse (9:36—10:42)
- **Jesus' Ministry to Israel - Part 2. Rejection and Confession (Matthew 11:2—16:20)**
 - Doubt, Indifference, and Dissent (11:2—12:45)
 - The Parable Discourse: the Mysteries of the Kingdom Revealed (12:46—13:54)
 - The Mission Resumes (13:54—16:12)
 - Rejection in Nazareth (13:54-58)
 - The Death of John (14:1-12)
 - Two Great Signs (14:13-36)
 - A Dispute with Israel; An Opening to the Gentiles (15:1-28)
 - Healing and Feeding the Multitudes; Demand for a Sign (15:29—16:12)
- **Jesus' Passion and Resurrection (Matthew 16:21-28:20)**
 - The Journey to Jerusalem (16:13—20:34)
 - Confession at Caesarea Philippi (16:13-28)
 - Transfiguration (17:1-21)
 - Living Together as the Family of God: Life Within the Community of the Kingdom (17:22—18:35)
 - Teachings on the Journey (19:1—20:16)
 - The Conclusion of the Journey (20:17-34)
 - In the Holy City: Conflict, Death, and Resurrection (21:1—28:15)
 - The Messiah in the Temple (21:1-17)
 - The Teacher and His Opponents (21:18—22:46)
 - False Teachers Lead Others to Ruin: Condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees (23:1-39)
 - The Coming of the Son of Man and the Judgment of the World (24:1—25:46)
 - The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus. Finale (26:1—28:15)

**The Sermon on the
Mount: Magisterial
Teaching, A Charter for
Discipleship**

Matthew 5:1—8:1

Sermon on the Mount

Introduction

- Likely was composed by Matthew from various sayings of Jesus to reflect the central themes of Jesus' teachings.
- Answers the question: How should we live as followers / disciples of Jesus?
- The answer Jesus gives seems awesomely demanding, impossible – yet obedience to the demands is required to enter the kingdom of heaven (5:20)
 - The issue of the practicality of the demands did not arise for Matthew.

Matthew 5:1—8:1

Sermon on the Mount

Introduction

- An Outline of the Sermon on the Mount:
 - 5:1-2: Jesus ascends the mountain.
 - 5:3-12: The Beatitudes.
 - 5:13-16: The mission of disciples of Jesus to change the world.
 - 5:17-48: The fulfillment of the law by Jesus: the greater righteousness demanded of his disciples.
 - Murder, Adultery, Divorce
 - Oaths, Retaliation, Love of Enemies
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 - 7:28—8:1: Reaction of the crowds; descent from the mountain.

Highlighted = today's coverage

Matthew 5:1—8:1

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

- In the Hebrew scriptures, God declares, “**You must neither add anything to what I command you nor take away anything from it, but keep the commandments of the LORD your God with which I am charging you.**” (Deuteronomy 4:2 NRSV).
- Jesus confirms this: “**Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.**” (Matthew 5:17-18 NRSV)

Matthew 5:17-48

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

- Jesus now describes how in the new fulfillment of the law, the follower of Jesus is called to a **greater** righteousness (= doing what is pleasing to God).

Matthew 5:17-48

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

- Two series:
 - In the first series (5:17-32), which begins with **“You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times...”** (5:21), Jesus deals with laws from Exodus and Deuteronomy:
 - Murder (Exodus 20:13, Deuteronomy 5:17)
 - Adultery (Exodus 20:14, Deuteronomy 5:18)
 - Divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1)

Matthew 5:17-32

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

- Two series:
 - In the second series (5:33-48), which begins with **“Again you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times...”** (5:21), Jesus deals with laws from Leviticus:
 - Oaths (Leviticus 19:12)
 - Retaliation (Leviticus 24:20)
 - Love of Enemies (Leviticus 19:18)

Matthew 5:33-48

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

- Jesus radicalizes many of the Old Testament laws, demanding
 - not merely a change in exterior actions, but
 - a change in the attitude and disposition of one's heart,
 - a change which must ultimately be rooted in a love of the Other.
- Furthermore, the scope of our love must imitates God's, and include all those to whom God gives sunlight and rainfall (5:45)

Matthew 5:17-48

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Oaths

- In Deuteronomy 6:13 and 10:20, the faithful were told to swear by the name of God as a sign of allegiance to God
 - False oaths profane the name of God
- In Jesus time:
 - Public commonly used roundabout, indirect language referring to God in making oaths, as if that would protect them from profaning God if the oath was broken
 - Scribes and Pharisees were into the legal niceties of what was still a valid versus invalid oaths, what was an oath versus a vow

Matthew 5:33-37

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Oaths

- Many in Jesus' day lamented the abuse of oaths.
- Jesus rejected oaths entirely:
 - He scorned pious efforts to avoid profaning the name of God by referring to God in an oblique, roundabout manner
 - He condemned swearing by our head or life, because that usurps God's jurisdiction over your life
 - A disciple should speak the truth all the time because he/she is inwardly pure – and not because he/she is compelled to do so by an oath

Matthew 5:33-37

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Oaths

- Jesus rejected oaths entirely:
 - We are bound to God in all of life, and we are accountable for every word we say, not just those delivered under oath
 - Garland: “The call for God to notarize one’s fallible utterances is an infringement on God’s majesty and reduces God to an object of human manipulation.”

Matthew 5:33-37

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Retaliation

- The Law of the Tooth (an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth) is described in Exodus 21:23-25, Leviticus 24:19-20, and Deuteronomy 19:21
 - It served to rein in unrestricted vengeance, such as Lamech's boast: **“Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain is avenged sevenfold, truly Lamech seventy-sevenfold.”** (Genesis 4:23-24 NRSV)
 - It required a just proportion between crime and punishment.

Matthew 5:38-42

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Retaliation

- Jesus however prohibits even a “just” retaliation
 - This should not be interpreted as a call to “surrender,” but rather as a call to renounce a violent response.
- So what is the proper response to mistreatment? Jesus gives three examples / illustrations in Matthew 5:39-41:
 - 1. **“if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also;”** (NRSV)
 - 2. **“if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well;”** (NRSV)
 - 3. **“if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.”** (NRSV)

Matthew 5:38-42

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Retaliation

- W. Wink suggests argues that what Jesus suggests his disciples do in these three examples / illustrations are examples of “**nonviolent direct action,**” = a “practical strategic measure for empowering the oppressed.” (Wink)
- Goal is to find nonviolent ways for victims to:
 - Retain their human dignity
 - While confronting their intimidators with the evil of their conduct

Matthew 5:38-42

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Retaliation

- 1. “if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also;” (NRSV)
 - Being struck on **right** cheek implies being struck with the back of the hand (considered especially insulting, the way a slave might be struck)
 - By turning the other cheek, your oppressor must decide whether to strike you again, but this time as an equal rather than as a slave.

Matthew 5:38-42

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Retaliation

- 2. “if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well;” (NRSV)
 - Taking the cloak was illegal: that would leave a person naked
 - By giving your cloak as well, you would be left standing naked before your creditor and any onlookers, which in the shame / honor society of Jesus’ day would publicly shame the creditor – there were taboos against seeing or causing another’s nakedness (see Genesis 9:20-27)

Matthew 5:38-42

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Retaliation

- 3. “if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile.” (NRSV)
 - The word “forces” here is a technical term for being *impressed into service*, and refers to the Roman military practice of impressing others into temporary service or taking their belongings if needed (Simon of Cyrene was impressed into service to help Jesus carry the cross)
 - Should not be domesticated into “going the extra mile”
 - Offering to go the another mile makes the impressed victim a free “volunteer,” and the coercing soldier must now accept or reject it the offer.

Matthew 5:38-42

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Retaliation

- A possible fourth example / illustration of “**nonviolent direct action,**” = a “practical strategic measure for empowering the oppressed.” (Wink) is in 5:42: “**Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.**” (NRSV)
 - Land was part of one’s ancestral heritage and could not be sold (Leviticus 25:23-24, 34; 1 Kings 21:6)
 - The only way the rich could get more land was to cause peasants to default on loans; then they could get the peasant’s land as part of the debt payment. Schemes to do this were widespread in Jesus’ day.
 - Perhaps Jesus is telling peasants to respond to this oppression by banding together and helping each other from going into debt.

Matthew 5:38-42

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Love of Enemies

■ Background:

- Hebrew scriptures called for love of one's neighbor
- One's neighbor however was defined as a fellow Israelite, and the resident alien.

■ **You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.'** (Matthew 5:43 NRSV)

- "Love" and "hate" in this statement do not refer to emotions.
- "Love" here means "to favor, prefer, select"
- "Hate" here means "to disfavor, neglect"

Matthew 5:43-48

Sermon on the Mount

A Greater Righteousness

■ Love of Enemies

- Jesus rejects the conventional view we should take care of “our own” first. Both the enemy and neighbor should be treated the same.
- It was also common practice at this time for a farmer to pray for the protection of his own animals, and for his rival’s animals to break their legs. Jesus rejects this and says: “**Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**” (Matthew 5:44 NRSV)

Matthew 5:43-48

Sermon on the Mount

Outline

- An Outline of the Sermon on the Mount:
 - 5:1-2: Jesus ascends the mountain.
 - 5:3-12: The Beatitudes.
 - 5:13-16: The mission of disciples of Jesus to change the world.
 - 5:17-48: The fulfillment of the law by Jesus: the greater righteousness demanded of his disciples.
 - Murder, Adultery, Divorce
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 - **6:1-18: Directions on piety.**
 - 6:19-34: Directions on money.
 - 7:1-12: Directions on social relationships.
 - 7:13-27: Warnings.
 - 7:28—8:1: Reaction of the crowds; descent from the mountain.

Matthew 5:33—8:1

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Piety

- This Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus discusses two issues:
 - 1. The proper motive for acts of piety and devotion to God
 - 2. How we should pray

Matthew 6:1-18

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Piety

- **The proper motives for piety**
 - Earlier, Jesus said “let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:16 NRSV)
 - Now he warns against not wanting for ourselves to be glorified as well.

Matthew 6:1-18

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Piety

- **The proper motives for piety**
 - He discusses the primary examples of piety in Jesus' day: almsgiving, prayer, fasting
 - Tobit 12:8: **“Prayer with fasting is good, but better than both is almsgiving with righteousness.”** (NRSV)
 - He does not demand pure motives, but suggests practical ways to keep impure motives to a minimum.
 - If you are tempted to give alms, pray, or fast in order to show off, then do them in private.

Matthew 6:1-18

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Piety

■ How to Pray

■ Background:

- Pagan prayers often had long invocations to the gods, hoping to strike upon just the right phrase to get the god's attention.
 - The gods were called upon with numerous names, to be sure the god was not offended by having a favorite name left out, and the god's numerous qualities were described in the hope of gaining favor through flattery.
 - Example: Catullus' prayer to the goddess Diana lists all the names and qualities of the goddess, concluding with "Hallowed be thy name, whatever name you prefer."

Matthew 6:1-18

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Piety

■ How to Pray

- Jesus is scornful of this practice: **“do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do”**
(Matthew 6:7 NRSV)
- Jesus says:
 - Call upon God as a father.
 - Pray with confidence that God hears you.

Matthew 6:1-18

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Piety

■ How to Pray

■ The Lord's Prayer (the "Our Father")

- Brief invocation

- Six petitions

- Three concerning God (Matthew 6:9-10 NRSV):

- **hallowed be *your* name**

- ***Your* kingdom come.**

- ***Your* will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.**

- Three concerning us (Matthew 6:11-13 NRSV):

- **Give *us* this day our daily bread.**

- **And forgive *us* our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

- **And do not bring *us* to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.**

Matthew 6:1-18

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Piety

■ How to Pray

■ The Lord's Prayer (the "Our Father")

■ **And forgive *us* our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.**

■ Note we should not expect to receive from God what we are unwilling to give to others

■ **And do not bring *us* to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.**

■ Some felt the faithful should strive to put themselves in the face of temptation or trials, for temptations were "spiritual muscle builders" for the faithful.

■ Jesus however suggests we pray not to put in the face of temptation.

Matthew 6:1-18

Sermon on the Mount

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Matthew 5:33—8:1

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Money

- Jesus next gives four sayings on what we should do with money, summarized as:
 - Do not amass wealth on earth (6:19-21)
 - Be generous (6:22-23)
 - Do not try to serve God and money (6:24)
 - Do not be anxious about material concerns, but focus on seeking the kingdom of heaven (6:25-34)

Matthew 6:19-34

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Money

- *First Saying: Do not amass wealth on earth*
(6:19-21)
 - Its best to store up treasure in heaven, since treasure on earth will perish.
 - The way to store wealth in heaven is to give it away on the earth.

Matthew 6:19-21

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Money

- *Second Saying: Be generous (6:22-23)*
 - Uses an image of Jesus' day that the eye (the “**lamp of the body**”) radiates the light of a person's heart, thus revealing the condition of the heart.
 - A “healthy” or “good” or “clear” eye indicates a generous heart.
 - An “unhealthy” or “evil” or “diseased” eye indicates a stingy or begrudging heart.
 - If you are generous with your possessions, it is a sign you have moved into the world of light.

Matthew 6:22-23

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Money

- ***Third Saying: Do not try to serve God and money (6:24)***
 - Most people in Jesus' time felt there was *no* conflict or tension between a life devoted to God and a life devoted to material gain.
 - Jesus disagrees. You cannot have two taskmasters.

Matthew 6:24

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Money

- ***Fourth Saying: Do not be anxious about material concerns (6:25-34)***
 - Does not tell us to be indifferent to life, but rather that we should not become so frantic about it to lose perspective.
 - Jesus paints a picture of how the Father cares for his creatures, and notes: **“If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?”** (Matthew 6:30 NRSV)
 - “the grass of the field” = an image for anything worthless

Matthew 6:25-34

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Money

- ***Fourth Saying: Do not be anxious about material concerns (6:25-34)***
 - Our awareness of God's love for us is what can allow us to cast out our anxiety.
 - Anxiety for ourselves can keep us from being generous with what we have, causing our eye, the "lamp of the body," to grow "unhealthy," "evil," or "diseased," revealing the darkness of our hearts.

Matthew 6:25-34

Sermon on the Mount

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Matthew 5:33—8:1

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Social Relationships

- Jesus next gives four sayings on our relationship to others and to God:
 - On judging others (7:1-5)
 - On casting pearls (7:6)
 - On asking, seeking, and knocking (7:7-11)
 - The Golden Rule (7:12)

Matthew 7:1-12

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Social Relationships

- *First Saying (7:1-5): On Judging Others*
 - We must judge and purify ourselves before we can evaluate another.
 - Once we have judged and purified ourselves, we may then see clearly how to *help* – not condemn – another.
 - The danger of a “judgmental spirit” is that it can strangle love towards another.

Matthew 7:1-12

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Social Relationships

- *Second Saying (7:6): On Casting Pearls*
 - Do not give something valuable (that which is “holy” or a “pearl”) to those who cannot appreciate it.
 - There is in fact danger in doing so.
 - It is unclear here what is “holy,” what is a “pearl.”

Matthew 7:1-12

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Social Relationships

- *Third Saying (7:7-11): On Asking, Seeking, and Knocking*
 - God will give good things to those who ask him (7:11).
 - Jesus does not say here what “good things” we should ask, seek and knock for. However, earlier Jesus said we should:
 - Ask that the kingdom of God come (6:10)
 - Seek first for the kingdom of God (6:33)

Matthew 7:1-12

Sermon on the Mount

Directions on Social Relationships

- *Fourth Saying (7:12):* The Golden Rule “In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.” (NRSV)
 - Love of our neighbor is the “heart and soul” of the law and the message of the prophets.
 - Parallels a statement by Rabbi Hillel in wide circulation among Jews of the time: “What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbor; that is the whole Torah, while the rest is commentary thereon; go and learn it.”

Matthew 7:1-12

Sermon on the Mount

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Matthew 5:33—8:1

Sermon on the Mount

Warnings

- Jesus now concludes the Sermon on the Mount by:
 - urging his disciples to put his teachings into action, and
 - warning of judgment if they do not.
- Jesus confronts the listener with metaphors of alternative choices:
 - The wide or narrow gate (7:13-14)
 - The easy or hard road (7:13-14)
 - False or true prophets (7:15)
 - Bad or good trees (7:17-20)
 - Foolish or wise builders of houses (7:24-27)

Matthew 7:13-27

Sermon on the Mount

Warnings

- The wrong choice has disastrous consequences:
 - Evil conduct – to live counter to the life intended by God – is *inherently* destructive.
- **“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.”** (Matthew 7:21 NRSV)

Matthew 7:13-27

Sermon on the Mount

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Matthew 5:33—8:1

Sermon on the Mount

Crowd's Reaction; Descent

- The crowds are “amazed” by Jesus’ teachings, and follow him as he goes down from the mountain.

Matthew 7:28—8:1

Next Session:

Teaching, Healing, and Calling the Lost Sheep:

**Restoring Life to Others: Jesus the
Healer (8:2—9:35)**

**Great Harvest and Great Dangers: The
Mission Discourse (9:36—10:42)**