The Sermon on the Mount

JUBILEE SERIES

ADULT TEACHER’S MANUAL
FALL 2016
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EDITORIAL

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

by Karen Myers

Perhaps it was an idyllic day—a gentle breeze, a balmy seventy-two degrees, and sunshine, with a protective cloud cover for the hundreds of people who had gathered on the hillside to hear the up-and-coming Teacher everyone seemed to be talking about.

When the crowd became silent, Love Incarnate began to speak: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. . . .” (Matthew 5:3–6).

For several hours Jesus taught the multitude. He spoke of the importance of reconciliation, even putting that before giving one’s gift to God. “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matthew 5:23–24).

In discussing one point of the Law, He went beyond the letter of the Law to deal with the thoughts that caused a person to break the Law: “Ye have heard that it was said . . . Thou shalt not commit adultery: but I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:27–28).

Some of Jesus’ teachings probably seemed difficult to follow. Love one’s enemies? Bless them? Do good things for them? Pray for them? Those things would be easy to do for friends, but for enemies?

He taught the people they should not be as the Pharisees who loved attention and praise for their good works but in reality were hypocrites. Jesus taught humility. People were to give alms, pray, and fast, but not for the attention of others.

Jesus taught about prayer and gave the people a model prayer to follow. After ending the prayer, Jesus emphasized the importance of forgiveness with a startling statement: “If ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14–15).

Jesus taught the people to serve God rather than money. Although people were expected to work and provide for their families, Jesus told them not to be anxious about their daily provisions. “But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33).

Other things Jesus included were not to have a judgmental spirit, to “ask . . . seek, and . . . knock” (Matthew 7:7) when they had a need, and to live by what we now call the Golden Rule (Matthew 7:12). He encouraged them to walk the narrow road that leads to life. Although Jesus forbade being judgmental, He did encourage the people to be fruit inspectors to prevent being deceived by false prophets (Matthew 7:15–20).

Finally, Jesus taught the people that by putting His sayings into practice, they would be building their spiritual lives on the rock in order to withstand the storms of life.

What Jesus taught in the Sermon on the Mount is also for us. To follow these teachings, we need the help of His Spirit as we walk through this life toward our reward in Heaven.

Be blessed.
FOCUS VERSES

Luke 4:18–19
The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

FOCUS THOUGHT
Jesus planted a new kingdom on earth governed by the ethics of the heart.

LESSON TEXT

16 And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.
17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,
18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
20 And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.
21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.
22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s son?
CONTEMPLATING THE TOPIC

The Lord came to establish a kingdom different from any previous kingdom; neither would this kingdom have a parallel with any future kingdom. His kingdom would have no political ramifications. Before the Day of Pentecost, Jewish religion had been bound in the law of Moses, which was “our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ” (Galatians 3:24).

Jesus urged his disciples to pray, “Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10). Through parables, Jesus described some characteristics of this Kingdom. It would have great potential for growth, demonstrated by how a mustard seed grows (Matthew 13:31–32). His kingdom would spread throughout the earth as leaven permeates a batch of bread dough (Matthew 13:33). The only way into this kingdom would be through conversion (Matthew 18:3).

In the parable of the sower, Jesus indicated not everyone who heard about the Kingdom would become a disciple. Some would receive the message initially but would soon turn aside due to “tribulation or persecution,” offenses, cares of this life, or “the deceitfulness of riches” (Matthew 13:18–22). However, those who heard the message, understood it, and received it would bear fruit for the Kingdom (Matthew 13:23).

Living by Kingdom ethics requires discipleship.

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my
word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (John 8:31).

“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13:35).

“Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples” (John 15:8).

SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Scholars suggest that Luke’s writings were designed to reach the Gentiles. Luke portrayed Jesus as the Son of Man, whose mission was to save sinners. (See Luke 9:56; 19:10.) All human beings need a Savior because “all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

When God killed animals to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve, He demonstrated that shedding of blood was necessary to atone for sin. Throughout the Old Testament, animal sacrifices were required for the atonement of sins. The priests were required “to make an atonement for the children of Israel for all their sins once a year” (Leviticus 16:34).

However, when Jesus was crucified on the cross, the blood He shed was that of a sinless man and was sufficient to atone “for the sins of the whole world” (I John 2:2). Jesus offered “one sacrifice for sins for ever” (Hebrews 10:12).

I. THE HOPE OF THE MESSIAH

Hope for meaning in life is something for which all humans search. Hope is the belief that at some point there will be an improvement in the conditions of life and circumstances. The trap individuals often fall into is the belief that they can find hope for meaning in life in the possession of material things. If ever a man had the ability to show the foolishness of this concept, it was Solomon. The writer of Ecclesiastes outlined the folly of this search for meaning “under the sun.” He explored every area of life where he thought he could find hope and came up empty. He looked to work, companionship, political power, wealth, human wisdom, reasoning, education, and even the promise of youth but found that all of it was meaningless.

The appearance of a Savior was the only way for human beings to truly have hope. Even today there are no political, educational, economic, or medical solutions to the spiritual problems deep in one’s soul. Paul clearly established that “men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness . . . are without excuse” (Romans 1:18, 20). Yet individuals have a tendency to suppress the truth about the real condition of their hearts. Because of the human need, God extends salvation through the work of the Cross. Anyone who so chooses may experience the new birth and enter into the kingdom of God.

A. Waiting for the Messiah

Only the Book of Luke gives the account of Simeon. (See Luke 2:25–35.) He was just and devout and had spent his life waiting for the Messiah. By his actions and attitude, this righteous man was obedient to God’s commands and conformed to His will. “It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:26). While he waited, Simeon went about his daily duties, living a righteous life according to God’s law.

When the time came for his promise to be fulfilled, Simeon “came by the Spirit into the temple” (Luke 2:27). God’s timing is perfect. After Simeon arrived in the Temple, Mary and Joseph entered with Jesus. When Simeon saw them, he knew this infant was the Messiah for whom he had been waiting.

The Spirit of God continues to work in the same manner in our times, bringing revelation and illumination to our minds to see certain aspects of what God is doing. As we wait for Jesus’ second coming, we are to go about our daily lives, living according to His precepts in order to be ready for the Rapture.

Anna, a widow, was a prophetess who lived in the Temple and “served God with fastings and prayers night and day” (Luke 2:37). After Simeon had entered the Temple, Anna apparently came into the same area where he was, either as he was blessing Mary, Joseph, and Jesus or immediately after he had finished. When she saw Jesus, she also realized she was seeing the Messiah and gave thanks for this opportunity: “And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and