

The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5, 6 and 7: vv.1-23.
Luke 6, vv.17-46

Accompanied by His twelve disciples, the Lord Jesus comes down from the mountain, but when He gets down to the foot of the mountain, there are thousands of people waiting for Him. Many had come to be healed of their diseases, and they are not disappointed either. The Lord Jesus heals them all of their complaints and infirmities. We read about this in Luke, chapter six.

The Lord Jesus then climbs up again a little way and sits down on the grassy slope. Ah, the people realise at once that Jesus of Nazareth is about to preach once more. The murmur of those thousands of voices stops, it becomes quiet, breathlessly quiet. They all want to hear what Jesus has to say to them.

He speaks so differently from how they are used to hearing the scribes and Pharisees speak. When Jesus speaks they have to listen, for He speaks so plainly.

In our thoughts we too will just go and stand among those Jews, boys and girls. We too would like to hear what He has to say. Who knows, perhaps we can also learn something. No, I ought rather to say, we can certainly learn something from it.

When it has become quite quiet, the Lord raises His head, looks calmly upon the multitude, and begins:

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
 Blessed are ..."

No, children, I am not going further, for you can read the whole sermon in Chapters five, six and seven of the Gospel of Matthew. I am not going to re-write those chapters, for that is not necessary. You just look it up and read it through. Make sure you do. I am not writing this Bible history for you to put the Bible on one side, but on the contrary, you should read the Bible stories over again. It is my intention that you will make much more use of the Bible, and I hope with all my heart that you will have a better understanding of God's word.

That is why I will just deal with a few parts only of the Lord's /"SERMON ON THE MOUNT". Listen then, carefully.

In the Law of the Lord it says: "Thou shalt not kill", but here the Lord Jesus says: "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment." What does the Lord mean by that?

Naturally, we must not kill anybody, and whoever does such a thing is a murderer, and is sent to prison. Nor, however, should we go about with hatred and envy in our hearts, and yet how often that is so. How you often call people names, boys and girls, yes give names and rage and storm. Isn't it true sometimes?

Yes, you often curse your friend or playmate. The next day, or even an hour later, you are playing together again. What about those evil wishes then? Oh, you don't think any more of that, you have forgotten that long ago. Yet the Lord does not forget. God remembers every ugly thought and word, and one day we must give account before an all-knowing God. That is what the Lord Jesus warns the Jewish people - and us also - about.

A little later the Lord says: "Swear not at all".

What does it mean to swear? ... Well then we put our hand up, pointing to heaven, and call God to witness. The Jews did this very often. Saul swore very frequently; David too often took an oath.

Nowadays, when anyone has to come before a judge as a witness, then he has to take an oath. To do this he places his right hand on the Bible and promises to speak the truth "So help me God Almighty". By this he means to show that he will speak the truth and not tell lies. When we thus swear on oath, it is not sinful.

But so often an oath is used when it is not needful. Shall I just give you an example? ...

A boy at school is telling something to his friends who stand around him listening, but they do not believe him. They think that he is lying. The boy notices this, he sees that his friends look incredulous, he sees perhaps a mocking look in their eyes. The story-teller cannot bear that though, no, they have got to believe him, and so he bursts out with: "It's true, God's honour, it's true!"

Children, that is awful, it is wrong, for that too is really an oath. Nobody is infallibly truthful, only God. We are prone to lie. Do you talk like this sometimes? ... Never let such expressions come from your lips, because it is very evil and God dishonouring, and God will see it and search it out.

That is why the Lord says here so earnestly: "Swear not at all". When we say "Yes", then it must mean yes; and when we say "No", then it is no.

We very soon get cross if someone does us harm. Yes if a boy or a girl hurts us by accident, then we let fly, or we stamp or kick. We clench our fists at once. Which of you dares to say that he has never had a fight. Girls too, often hit back or scratch when another hurts them. "Of course!" I hear you cry, "I don't put up with that sort of thing, no fear!" But still... still, you know, it is sinful. Sometimes you then look more like a wild beast than a human being. You stamp and kick anywhere and anything, you are so angry. Do you know though, what the Lord Jesus said here about this? No?

Just read it: "... resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

Yes, but that we do not do. That is quite out of the question. We hit back good and hard. We hate our enemies, but here the Lord Jesus says that we must love our enemies. That is surprisingly difficult. It is much easier to fight, to take revenge, than to go away and ... to FORGIVE!

~~Yes~~ this is what the Lord requires of us.

Do you often pray? And how do you pray then? ...

The Pharisees prayed a great deal. They stood praying for hours at the street corners. Why did they do that? ... Well, they hoped that people would see them. They did it for their own self-glory.

But the Lord Jesus says here that that is not prayer, it is hypocrisy, and tells them not to pray like that.

When we pray, we must not do it before men, but before God. We must pray in secret, so that nobody sees it except God.

We may ask everything of the Lord, everything we feel to need.

Do you do that too?

Above all, ask the Lord to give you a new heart, but you can also pray for temporal things, for food and drink, for clothing, for wisdom in your work. May you have need of the Lord in everything.

The Lord Jesus also spoke about the form of prayer. He gave us an example of how we are to pray. That prayer is known as "the Lord's Prayer" or "Our Father". You know it surely? If not, read it through again.

Shall I tell you something you would all like to become? You would

like to be rich, wouldn't you? When you have lots of money, then you can buy anything which takes your fancy. Perhaps you have sometimes felt jealous of a friend who always has better clothes than you; or who has the best and most expensive toys. You cannot readily tolerate such a thing, and you become dissatisfied.

But do you know what the Lord Jesus says about that here?

"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth". Why not? ... Oh, our money can be stolen by thieves. Our fine clothes can become moth-eaten. And when we die, we have to leave it all behind. Then we can take nothing with us. No, we must lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven. Now, how is that possible? What does that mean? ... It is really quite easy to explain boys and girls.

If we are given a new heart by being born again, then we have far greater cause for happiness than someone who is given a big box of pound notes. Why? ... Well, those pound notes can be stolen, but that new heart cannot be stolen. Those pound notes must be left here when we die, but a heart renewed by grace, we do not have to leave behind.

The Lord Jesus thus warns us too. It is as though He is saying: "Ask not to become rich, but ask Me to give you repentance. That is worth far more."

People who are rich and possess a great deal of money, want to look after it very carefully. They are mortally afraid of thieves. But God will care for His people. They do not need to look after themselves for God will do that, and that is far better, surely?

The Lord cares for the birds of the air. He cares for the flowers of the field. He cares for the fish in the sea and for the beasts of the earth. He will also care for you, if you are brought to fear and serve Him in truth.

When you come home hungry and ask your Mother for a slice of bread and butter, will she give you a stone instead? ... No, of course not ... and if there is in the kitchen a plate with fish on it, and you ask politely "Mother, may I have one?", would your Mother give you instead a poisonous snake? ... Of course she wouldn't!

Here on the mount, the Lord Jesus tells all those people who are listening to Him, but He says it also to you and to me, that God will give good things to those who ask them of Him. Read that carefully "Good gifts". A small child may ask for ^ka wife, but Mother does not give that. Why not? ... Well,

a gift.

Do you sometimes ask the Lord for things which are not good for you? Well, then, it is better that the Lord does not give it, for it would not be for our profit, but for our destruction. Let us not then be grieved if when we ask the Lord for something He does not give it, for perhaps it would not be good for us.

The Lord Jesus spoke about all these things in His "Sermon on the Mount".

Can you see now, that we too can still learn a lot from the words of the Lord Jesus. That is why they are written in God's Word. We can read them over.

Matthew 7 vv.24-29.

Luke 6 vv.47-49.

When at last the Lord Jesus has finished, He goes on to tell a story. Not a fairy tale, but a story to warn the Jewish people. Just listen.

There were once two men, each of whom wanted to build a house. One of them went and laid the bricks on sand. Having built the walls on that loose surface to a sufficient height, he roofed it over and soon afterwards the house was ready. It was a fine large house. The man moved in and was very pleased with his new abode.

The other man also started to build a house. First, however, he dug a trench in the ground. It was heavy work and it made him sweat. At last his shovel hit against ~~the~~ hard rock, which was buried deep under the sand. Oh, the first builder was almost ready with his house while the second builder was still excavating. Perhaps the first man laughed at his companion. At last the second builder could get no more out, and then he started to build. He laid the first bricks on the rock and built the walls thereon. Finally the second builder's house was completed too. It was also a fine, large house. From outside there was no difference between the two.

But what is happening?

Dark clouds are piling up. Lightning flashes down, and thunder rolls. It soon begins to blow hard and to rain. Yes, it rains so hard that the water swirls about in streams. Waves smite against the walls of both houses, and what next? ...

Oh, just look. Suddenly the house which was built upon sand collapses with

a great roar. Nothing is left but a heap of rubble. The first builder is buried by the rubble of his own house. Now, how does that come about?

You can understand how it happened, can't you? The sand was washed away by the water. A huge hole appeared under the walls and so the fine building fell to pieces.

But the other house did not collapse. Why not? ... Well, that could not fall down because it was built upon a rock. Rock cannot be washed away, can it? That was impossible. The rock remained standing and so did the house.

The first builder, who had built on the sand was a silly, foolish builder. The second builder, who had built upon the rock was a wise and very sensible builder.

So you see, boys and girls that was the story, the parable, which the Lord Jesus told to the listening multitude. He had a reason for this. He told them this as a warning. As a warning? ... What for? ... Just listen.

Many Jews thought that they had no need of a new heart. As long as they did not swear, nor steal, and went regularly to God's house, then they expected to earn heaven by so doing. Thus they lived their lives, for years and years, until the end came. So too in our land, thousands of people, and children too, live unconcerned.

Soon though, when death comes, they will find that they have deceived themselves, for they will go not to heaven but to hell. Why? ...

They trust in their respectable lives, and not in the Lord Jesus. No, children, of ourselves we can never merit heaven. The Lord Jesus has done that. He has earned heaven for His people. If the Lord Jesus is our Saviour, then and then only shall we one day come to eternal glory. In the Bible the Lord Jesus is often likened to a rock. Whosoever trusts that Rock and believes in Him shall be saved. Pray God to work that sincere saving faith in your hearts, through the Holy Spirit. That faith is a gift of God.

The Lord Jesus stops speaking. The many hearers are deeply impressed. They think that Jesus of Nazareth has preached this time a very remarkable sermon.

The Lord Jesus then stands up, goes down the mountain and enters Capernaum. Thousands of those Jews also arise and follow Him. They too go to Capernaum. They want to stay near Him and will not leave Him. Perhaps He is

going to speak again, or perhaps another miracle will take place in the city, and that they must see, they want to be present.

Oh, most of them do not believe in Him in truth. Most of them do not see in Him the Messiah, the Son of God, the Saviour. Not at all!

Very many of them follow Him merely out of curiosity. How dreadful that is.

Most of them are foolish builders, and what are you? ...