

Title: Jesus Said Some \_\_\_\_\_ Things  
Date: March 24, 2024  
Subject: Jesus calls his followers to practice his teachings.  
Scripture: Matthew 5 – 7; Luke 6: 17 through 49 Robertson 54

Did you ever hear somebody say something embarrassing? Did you ever say anything embarrassing?

Would it surprise you that Jesus said some embarrassing things? Not that he was embarrassed by them, but people could be embarrassed. Maybe it would be better to say meddling and intruding. At least, hard to understand and perplexing. Jesus' teachings often were those but also contained encouragement and comfort.

The place this is most noticed is Gospel of Matthew's account of the Sermon on the Mount, so named because it was delivered on a mountainside. In it Jesus contrasts two kingdoms - the kingdom of heaven, also known as the kingdom of God, with whatever else there is - pretenders. Jesus' premise is people who put into practice his teachings and commands will fare well, while people who build their lives on appearances and external religiosity are going to be rudely surprised (5:19, 7:24 – 27).

The profound teachings serve as the expected standards, the foundations for life for his people, from this point forward. His followers are changed on the inside at the core of their being which then is to result in right living.

The Sermon has about 2300 words in 107 verses. If Jesus spoke slowly and deliberately, it would take between 15 and 20 minutes. Luke's Gospel has a condensed version - 33 verses - known as the Sermon on the Plain, as in level ground, not the aircraft. Jesus could have brought something from the distant future into the first century. It would have been amazing and memorable, but would have been a distraction.

Bible scholars disagree as to whether the two sermons are from the same event. They also debate whether Jesus offered the sermon in one setting or if it's a collection of teachings. Luke has some material not in Matthew and about 1/3 of the verses from Matthew are in Luke...but in contexts other than the Sermon on the Plain.

I think the Sermon is an accurate representation of what Jesus gave on one particular occasion. I also think Jesus repeated his messages teaching the same things numerous times.

On this occasion, Jesus sat down and began to teach (Matthew 5:3-12). The first word out of his mouth was "blessed." It's a great word and people want to be blessed. The crowd likely nodded in agreement when they heard the first way to be blessed - "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They certainly felt poor in spirit and downtrodden because they were captives in their own country, subject to the whims of the Roman Empire.

However, Jesus had deeper issues in view than the present political reality. He was looking at matters of the heart, mind and soul. The poor in spirit are those who were humble before God. The blessings continued for those who repent of their sins; remain calm, gentle and patient despite trying circumstances; long for right

standing with God and the lifestyle that goes along with it; spread kindness and compassion; are genuine and honest; are peacemakers; are persecuted; are persecuted and slandered.

Don't think for a minute the crowd failed to notice how Jesus tripped down about being mistreated. Jesus is always honest. He raises the possibility of being persecuted for being one of his followers. But he says that no matter what happens, it's worth it because of what he has planned for those who follow him.

When you read the Sermon on the Plain, you're only half as blessed as it has half as many blessings. This is balanced out by leveling woes towards people who build their lives around present satisfaction.

The Beatitudes begin and end with "the kingdom of heaven" as the reward. Heaven is at the forefront as 20 times Jesus speaks of heaven, kingdom of heaven and your Father in heaven. The last shows how God wants people to have a relationship with him in the present enabling them to experience the kingdom. Then they can look forward to the fulfillment of the kingdom of heaven in heaven with the heavenly Father.

Jesus declared he came to fulfill the law and the prophets. The Old Testament points to Jesus the Christ who would come to bring salvation. Since this is true, he's very serious about a person's relationship to the words of God, since God's word will last forever even as God is forever. He explicitly addresses the practice of God's commands. READ 5:19.

Those who break God's moral law and misrepresent what he desires will be least in the kingdom. It seems like the penalty should be they're out of the kingdom. It isn't. At this point Jesus speaks about people who are in the kingdom. Sad to say some will minimize the need to obey God's commands. They'll say some things aren't important. These people are in error. The result is their status in the kingdom will be lowered.

On the other hand, are those who practice and teach the commands. They desire to follow God and encourage others to follow God closely. These will be elevated in the kingdom. The call to practice God's commands is restated in 5:48. READ 5:48.

This quote is from Leviticus where God tells the Israelites "Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy" (Leviticus 11:44, 19:2). Leviticus uses the word holy more than any other book in the Bible. Who said nothing good could come out of Leviticus? By the way, I heard about a Bible study leader who told his group he hadn't read Leviticus in preparation for the study. He was tired of reading about all the ceremonial washings, etcetera. A man piped up that he knew a doctor who came to know Christ as Savior because of Leviticus. He wanted to disprove the Bible and started reading it. He came to Leviticus with its instructions about mold, mildew and various diseases. The doctor concluded there was no way Moses would have understood those things by himself at that time period. It had to be revealed by God. He turned his life over to Jesus Christ.

Perfect and holy have the meaning of being set apart - set apart from sin and impurity, set apart to God and moral purity. We are to make it our goal to be holy like God, not the same as God. We aren't to be like people who say their goal is to diet... as they shove their 8th piece of pizza in their mouth. We're to take steps to be satisfied with nothing less than striving to be spiritually mature, to be like Christ. Be whole, entire, complete, not lacking. "Adulthood" not children.

Later in the Sermon, Jesus gives what is called the Golden Rule. READ 7:12. Notice, it doesn't say "Do to others before they have a chance to do something to you" as in be the one to throw the first punch. A college guy remarked if he ever got into situation that looked like it might turn into a fight, he'd throw the first punch because he figured he could run faster scared than the other guy could mad.

That's not what it's talking about. Treat people the way we want to be treated whether we're the first actor or responding to the action of the other.

Jesus says The Golden Rule sums up the law and the prophets. Therefore, we don't have to read Leviticus or Ezekiel? Not quite his meaning. Other scriptures echo love as fulfilling God's royal command and as being the most important thing to do. We aren't left in the dark about what loving other people looks like. The Bible gives numerous specific commands and illustrations.

Jesus closes the section (5:21-47) leading up to the call to be perfect by using the word "love" four times. READ 5:43-45a.

The tradition and attitude people found comfortable was to love friends, family and neighbors, to some extent...if they were similar...but hate your enemies. Jesus said we're to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. There's that word "love" again. Love means desiring what is best for the person. Loving an enemy would mean that you want that person to know Jesus as their Savior. Love people the way God has loved us who had been his enemies. Praying for them doesn't mean we ask God to make them sick or worse. It's prayer that God would be active in their lives and bring them to the place of salvation.

Over and over Jesus reminded his listeners "you have heard that it was said." Jesus changes things when he says "I tell you." Jesus presents himself as the interpreter of God's word, of people's world, of how people are to live. It's by the spirit and grace of the commands and not the letter of the law.

We are to treat people with kindness and respect, not as objects. He illustrates by stating it's not merely murder that's wrong but unrighteous anger. It's not only adultery that's wrong, but lust, "a willful, calculated stare that arouses sexual desire" (NIV Study Bible note Matthew 5:28) which includes obscene anecdotes, song lyrics, double meanings, innuendoes, pictures, websites. Retaliation and revenge are to be replaced by desire for reconciliation.

Chapter 6 begins with Jesus issuing more cautions about how we're to live our lives. Don't be like the hypocrites who are concerned about codes of external conduct and how they can impress others. I had mind that Jesus constantly threw around the accusation of hypocrite in the Sermon: "You hypocrites this. You hypocrites that. Here's a hypocrite. There's a hypocrite. Everywhere's a hypocrite." He only used the word four times and didn't point his finger at the crowd, but said "Don't be like the hypocrites...."

Hypocrites live in the lane of externality. They want people to see what they do so they can be praised. Jesus said three times "they have received their reward in full" (6:3, 5, 16). The three areas Jesus addresses are doing "acts of righteousness," prayer, and fasting. Don't parade these around so people can see how good we are and praise us. Instead, we're to be secretive. Give to help those in need but do it in such a way that "your

left hand doesn't know what your right hand is doing.” Obviously, it's a figure of speech that stresses the proper attitude.

We need to merge not doing things to be seen for praise with the command in 5:16 to let our light shine before men so they may see our good deeds and praise our Father in heaven. The purpose of good deeds isn't to be praise gatherers for ourselves but to deflect attention from us and point people to God the Father.

The middle warning about prayer is where Jesus provides what is typically called The Lord's Prayer. 6:9-13. Invite you to look at it. We approach God with the respect and love due him as the loving Father. The prayer part begins with worship. It moves to the desire for God to rule and to reign. It's followed by the acknowledgement that God is sovereign and will do what he will do mingled with the desire for him to be active now. We're to ask for legitimate needs. We lean on God for forgiveness as we admit and confess our sin. We express our desire to be agents of God's forgiveness as we forgive those who've wronged us. Forgiveness is amplified after the formal prayer is done. Is it because we need more guidance in that area? READ 6:14-15.

The prayer as provided in the text ends with the request for protection from temptation and the devil. Some of the translations have an addition to v. 13 based on manuscripts of the Bible that were farther away from the time the Bible was written. The NIV makes it a text note - “for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.” It's an apt reminder of who is in charge and deserves to be worshipped.

Jesus returns to the theme of prayer in 7: 7-11. He exhorts us to keep on asking, seeking and knocking as we bring our requests to the Lord. He reinforces this by comparing the character of human fathers with “your Father in heaven.” Even though human dads are intrinsically evil because they have a sinful nature, they will give bread to a child and not a stone and fish instead of a snake. If human beings can act like that, imagine the goodness of God the Heavenly Father.

The emphasis on the internal not the external extends to how people define wealth and how they use earthly possessions (6:19-24). In God's economy - dollars, euros and pesos don't mean a whole lot since he owns the “cattle on a thousand hills and the wealth in every mine.” It's all his. He loans it to people. He desires for them to invest it in what will bring about a heavenly return.

Too many people are locked into possessing what they're supposed to manage. They wind up serving their possessions rather than using them to serve God. God's prescription is to place our focus on him and deposit treasures in heaven where they aren't subject to inflation, shrinkflation, scimpflation, deflation or any other flation. All deposits are celestially insured.

The emphasis on the internal continues as Jesus states life is more important than the things of life. READ 6:25. Life. Life is what matters. All the other things are just the stuff of life. Don't spend time worrying and obsessing about stuff because your heavenly Father loves, cares and will provide what's necessary. Instead, seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness which is being in a right relationship with him and striving for right living (6:33).

Jesus concludes his sermon by returning to the theme of practicing or not practicing his commands (7:13-27). The first thing is to make sure we've entered the narrow gate which leads to the narrow road. Jesus doesn't say it will be an easy road. Maybe this is why so few choose to take it, but it's the road that leads to life.

There are all sorts of false prophets, imposters in sheep's clothing. They appear to be good but mislead people as to what God says and how to get to him. They claim people can choose their own path, believe whatever they want and do whatever they want because all truths lead to the same place and everybody can determine what's true for them. It's the popular choice, lots of people on the broad road and few restrictions about how to live. It's the easy life.

However, this approach doesn't work even in the physical world. It'd be like one person saying the truth is cows are animals, another says the truth is cows are vegetables, while another says the truth is cows are rocks. All views can't be right.

Travelers on the broad and easy road don't realize where it's headed because the end is out of sight as the road has a massive drop off that leads to eternal separation from God. Jesus proclaims he is the way the truth and the life and nobody gets to the Father except through him (John's 14:6). He promises that all who come to him, who've placed their trust in him, have crossed over from death to life (John 5:24).

Those who've been misled may think they're going heaven. The reality is they have a false claim on Jesus. He says: READ 7:21. They may have been good to people, gone to church, read the Bible, done miracles but they don't have evidence of a changed life. They don't have the beliefs of a Christian. This is evident by the bent of their lives. They desire to serve themselves instead of follow Jesus. They don't desire to practice the moral and ethical demands of a Christ follower.

Jesus gives a closing illustration about two men who build houses. Both men worked hard as they put in long hours under the hot sun. The wise man dug down to a rock foundation. It was tiring work as he moved a lot of earth. It meant more sore muscles and a longer time frame. When the storm hit, the rain fell, the rushing streams thundered down the dry creek bed, and the wind beat against the house, it stood on a rock solid foundation. Jesus says he is the rock upon which people can build their lives. Those who hear his words and practice them will be able to withstand the storms of life because he provides the safe and secure foundation.

The other guy built his house in the sand. It was quick and easy to level, cutting down the time needed to construct his house. He could devote more time to enjoying his house which looked good with some nice landscaping. Then came the rains and the flash flood and the wind. The house was washed away because it didn't have a good foundation. Jesus says this is indicative of the person who hears but doesn't practice his teaching.

We're to live in the light of eternity depending on God's power.