

SUNDAY THEOLOGY TALKS

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The Gospel of Matthew: discipleship, healing, and Community

1. *Worship the Lord Your God*: Jesus' stand-off with Power, Greed, and Pride (April 12)
2. ***Blessed Are the Poor***: Jesus' Vision of Flourishing (April 19)
3. *Love Your Enemy*: Healing the Heart to Change the World (April 26)
4. *Upon This Rock*: Faith as Resistance to Idolatry (May 3)
5. *Let Him be Crucified*: The Cross and the Idol of Violence (May 10)
6. *I Am With You Always*: The Eucharistic Presence of the Risen Christ (May 17)

THURSDAYS READING GROUP

“Blessed Awareness: Mindfulness and the Beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew”

1. **Mindfulness and Poverty of Spirit (April 23)**
2. Beatitudes and Inner Unity (April 30)
3. Meekness: Strength, Attention, and Non-Reactivity (May 7)
4. Mercy: Compassion as Attentive Presence (May 14)
5. Purity of Heart: Undivided Attention and Clear Seeing (May 21)

Books

Roger Bretherton, Dr Joanna Collicutt, Jennifer Brickman, *Being Mindful, Being Christian: An guide to mindful discipleship* (2016)

Jon Kabat-Zinn, *Full Catastrophe Living*.

STRUCTURE OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

1. PRELUDE: IDENTITY AND PREPARATION (1:1–4:16)

6. Genealogy and birth of Jesus
7. Visit of the Magi, flight to Egypt, and return to Nazareth
8. Ministry of John the Baptist
9. Baptism of Jesus
10. Temptation in the wilderness.

2. PROCLAMATION OF THE KINGDOM (4:17–11:1)

1. Speeches:
 - 1.1. Sermon on the Mount (5–7)
 - 1.2. Speech on the mission and sending of the disciples (ch. 10)
2. Main events:
 - 2.1. Beginning of Jesus' preaching in Galilee
 - 2.2. Call of the first disciples.
 - 2.3. Healing and exorcisms.

3. GROWING OPPOSITION AND MIXED RESPONSE (11:2–16:20)

1. Speech:
 - 1.1. Parables of the Kingdom (ch. 13)
2. Main events:
 - 2.1. Inquiry from John the Baptist.
 - 2.2. Rejection by Galilean cities.
 - 2.3. Escalating conflicts with Pharisees.
 - 2.4. Key miracles: feeding of the five thousand, walking on water.
 - 2.5. Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi.

4. JOURNEY TOWARD JERUSALEM AND THE CROSS (16:21–25:46)

1. Speeches:
 - 1.1. Speech on community life (ch. 18)
 - 1.2. Speech on the end of times (23–25)
2. Main events:
 - 2.1. first announcement of the passion
 - 2.2. Transfiguration.
 - 2.3. Journey through Judea
 - 2.4. Triumphal entry into Jerusalem
 - 2.5. Temple cleansing.
 - 2.6. Disputes with religious leaders

5. PASSION AND RESURRECTION (26–28)

1. Main events:
 - 1.1. Last Supper.
 - 1.2. Prayer in Gethsemane
 - 1.3. Arrest and trials.
 - 1.4. Crucifixion and burial.
 - 1.5. Resurrection.
 - 1.6. Manifestation to disciples.
 - 1.7. Great Commission.

2. BLESSED ARE THE POOR: JESUS' VISION OF FLOURISHING

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNTAIN (MATTHEW 5-7)

5:1Seeing the crowds, Jesus went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. **2**And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

- **3**“Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- **4**“Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be comforted.
- **5**“Blessed are the **meek**, for they shall inherit the earth.
- **6**“Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they shall be satisfied.
- **7**“Blessed are the **merciful**, for they shall receive mercy.
- **8**“Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall see God.
- **9**“Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called sons of God.
- **10**“Blessed are those who are **persecuted for righteousness’** sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. **11**“Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. **12**Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

SALT AND LIGHT BECAUSE OF NEW FORM OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

13“You are the **salt of the earth**, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people’s feet.

14“You are the **light of the world**. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15**Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16**In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

17“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. **18**For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. **19**Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **20**For I tell you, unless your **righteousness** exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

THE NEW RIGHTEOUSNESS AND THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

21“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not **murder**; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ **22**But I say to you that

- everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council;
- and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.
- **23**So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, **24**leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. **25**Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. **26**Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.

27“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit **adultery**.’ **28**But I say to you that

- everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
- **29**If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.
- **30**And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

31“It was also said, ‘Whoever **divorces** his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ **32**But I say to you that

- everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

33“Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not **swear** falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ **34**But I say to you,

- Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, **35**or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. **36**And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. **37**Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

38“You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ **39**But I say to you,

- Do not resist the one who is evil.
- But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.
- **40**And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic,^h let him have your cloak as well.
- **41**And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.
- **42**Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.

43“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ **44**But I say to you,

- Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, **45**so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

- For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
- **46**For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
- **47**And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
- **48**You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

THE NEW RIGHTEOUSNESS AND RELIGIOUS PRACTICE: GIVING, PRAYING, FASTING

6:1“Beware of practicing your **righteousness** before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Giving

- 2**“Thus, **when you give** to the needy,
- sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others.
 - Truly, I say to you, **they have received their reward.**
 - **3**But **when you give** to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, **4**so that your giving may be in secret.
 - **And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

Praying

- 5**“And **when you pray**, you must not be like the hypocrites.
- For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.
 - Truly, I say to you, **they have received their reward.**
 - **6**But **when you pray**, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret.
 - **And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

- 7**“And **when you pray**,
- do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words.
 - **8**Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.
 - **9**Pray then like this:

“Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name.
10Your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as it is in heaven.
11Give us this day our daily bread,
12and forgive us our debts,
 as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

- **14**For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you,

- **15**but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Fasting

16“And **when you fast**,

- do not look gloomy like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces that their fasting may be seen by others.
- Truly, I say to you, **they have received their reward.**
- **17**But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, **18**that your fasting may not be seen by others but by your Father who is in secret.
- **And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.**

New heart and eyes

19“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, **20**but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. **21**For where your treasure is, there your **heart** will be also.

22“The **eye** is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light, **23**but if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

Money and anxiety

24“No one can serve two **masters**, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.

25“Therefore I tell you, **do not be anxious about your life**,

- what you will **eat or what you will drink**, nor about your body, what you will put on.
 - Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?
 - **26**Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them.
 - Are you not of more value than they?
 - **27**And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life?
- **28**And why are you **anxious about clothing**?
 - Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin, **29**yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
 - **30**But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?
- **31**Therefore **do not be anxious**,
 - saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’
 - **32**For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.
 - **33**But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.
- **34**“Therefore **do not be anxious** about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.

Judging Others

1“Judge not, that you be not judged.

- 2For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.
- 3Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
- 4Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?
- 5You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

6“Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Ask, and It Will Be Given

7“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

- 8For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.
- 9Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?
- 10Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?
- 11If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

The Golden Rule

12“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

13“Enter by the **narrow gate**. For the gate is wide and the way is easy^a that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. 14For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.

A Tree and Its Fruit

15“Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. 16You will recognize them by their fruits.

- Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?
- 17So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit.
- 18A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit.
- 19Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.
- 20Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

Your will be done

21“Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one **who does the will of my Father** who is in heaven.

- 22On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'

- **23**And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’

24“Everyone then who **hears these words of mine and does them** will be like a wise man who built his **house on the rock**.

- **25**And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.

26And everyone who **hears these words of mine and does not do them** will be like a foolish man who built his **house on the sand**.

- **27**And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.”

Conclusion

28And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, **29**for he was teaching them as one **who had authority**, and not as their scribes.

NOTES ON *THE SERMON ON THE MOUNTAIN*

Moses – First Covenant

Infancy story with threatened children:
Pharaoh orders the killing of Hebrew boys

Comes out of **Egypt** with Israel in the
Exodus

Passes through **water**: the Crossing of the
Red Sea

Wilderness testing: 40 years in the desert

Ascends the **mountain** to receive and give
the Law at Mount Sinai

Mediator of the first covenant

Receives **commandments**¹ written on stone

“You shall not murder / commit adultery /
swear falsely...”

External commandments regulating conduct

Israel formed as covenant people

Servant and prophet of God

Jesus – New Covenant

Infancy story with threatened children:
Herod the Great orders the killing of children

Comes out of **Egypt** (“Out of Egypt I called
my son”)

Passes through water: **baptism** in the Jordan

Wilderness testing: 40 days in the desert

Ascends the **mountain** to teach with
authority

Mediator of the new covenant

Proclaims the **law** written on the heart

“You have heard... but I say to you...”

Interior transformation of heart, desire,
intention

Disciples formed as Kingdom community

Son who speaks with divine authority

¹ **The Ten Commandments:**

1. You shall have no other gods before me.
2. You shall not make for yourself an idol.
3. You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You shall not murder.
7. You shall not commit adultery.
8. You shall not steal.
9. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.
10. You shall not covet anything that belongs to your neighbor.

1. To a new 'law' corresponds a new 'righteousness':

5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5:20 For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

6:1 Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven

6:33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

2. The translation 'righteousness' does not always do justice to the Greek *dikaiosune*

2.1. Righteousness has a legalistic flavor: how to be/act in conformity to a law, 'to be in line' with the authority

2.2. Here is more how to be in a truly healthy, flourishing relation with God and with each other.

2.3. It is not about external behavior, but the intention of the heart

2.4. It is not about the letter of the law, but the spirit

2.5. It is about being *like* God

5:48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

2.6. 'Perfection' is no more defined by principles or standard, but by the person of Jesus. He is the only 'perfect', in the sense that he is the only one in whom the Father can find delight

3:17 "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

2.7. It is about learning to be 'sons/daughters' by the only Son, Jesus

5:45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven

3. Jesus demonstrates this by his behavior in the desert

3.1. He is led by the Spirit in a situation of 'poverty', need and rather than 'taking and grasping', or becoming anxious, he waits for the Father to look after him.

3.2. He is the example of the attitudes described in the sermon on the mountain

5:3 Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

6:25 Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life [...] 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you

4. A fundamental clarification on this and on the whole Sermon on the Mount comes from Matthew 11:25–30:

25 At that time Jesus declared, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that you have hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them **to little children**; 26 yes, Father, for such was your gracious will.

- 27 All things have been handed over to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

- **28** Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
- **29** Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, **for I am gentle and lowly in heart** [that is “poor in spirit”], and you will find rest for your souls.
- **30** For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

- 4.1.** Only the Son reveals the Father (v. 27),
- 4.2.** what we learn from the Son is how to be *little children* (25), *gentle and humble in heart* (29), that is “poor in spirit”.
- 4.3.** Practicing the first beatitude means embracing this filial attitude.
- 4.4.** Furthermore, those whom he invites to come to him, *those who labor and are burdened*, are those who live the beatitudes:

- i. those who mourn (because of their exile far from the Lord),
- ii. the meek,
- iii. those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
- iv. the merciful,
- v. the pure in heart,
- vi. the peacemakers,
- vii. those persecuted for righteousness’ sake.

- 4.5.** Only once is there mention of “apostles” in Matthew; the rest of the time he speaks of “his disciples”, that is, those who welcome the call of 11:29: *learn from me*.

- 5.** It can be said that the whole Sermon on the Mountain is a jewel case for the Lord’s Prayer – and that the Lord’s Prayer is a summary of the whole sermon:

Our Father in heaven	God as Father is central throughout the sermon: 5:16 (“your Father in heaven”), 5:45, 5:48, 6:1, 6:4, 6:6, 6:8, 6:14–15, 6:18, 6:26, 6:32, 7:11. The disciple’s life is lived in filial trust.
Hallowed be your name	5:16 that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.
Your kingdom come	The Kingdom is the major horizon of the sermon and must be sought first.
Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven	5:19, 5:48, 7:21: “the one who does the will of my Father”. The only way of doing the will of the Father is by ‘being children’ (5:45). 7:24. Doing God’s will concretely.
Give us this day our daily bread	6:25–34. Do not worry about food, drink, or tomorrow; the heavenly Father knows your needs and provides.
Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors	5:7 (merciful), 5:23–24 (reconciliation), 6:14–15 (forgive others), 7:1–5 (do not judge).
Lead us not into temptation	Here Jesus resisting the temptations enables us to do the same.
But deliver us from evil	5:37 (“deliverance from the evil one” possible nuance), 6:24 (Mammon as enslaving power), 7:15–23 (false prophets, bad fruit).