

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*.

3. LOVE YOUR ENEMY: HEALING THE HEART TO CHANGE THE WORLD

1. Several Beatitudes relate to forgiveness:

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

“Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they shall be comforted.

“Blessed are the **meek**, for they shall inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness**, for they shall be satisfied.

“Blessed are the **merciful**, for they shall receive mercy.

“Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they shall see God.

“Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they shall be called sons of God.

“Blessed are those who are **persecuted for righteousness’ sake**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

1.1. The last beatitude does not apply to being persecuted only but to any hardship we endure or embrace for the “sake or righteousness”, or “because it is the right thing to do” – “right”, of course, with regards to the attitude of heart taught by Jesus.

1.2. The forgiveness and even the love of enemies in the Sermon of the Mountain requires meekness, mercy, dedication to peace.

2. There is a parallel between the first and the last Beatitude

2.1. Both are promised the kingdom of God, that is both are the way in which God to changes history.

2.2. Jesus applies this to himself by quoting Isaiah’s description of the ‘chosen servant’

12:14 The Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him.

15 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all 16 and ordered them not to make him known. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

18 “Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.

I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim **justice** to the Gentiles.

19 He will **not quarrel or cry aloud**, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets;

20 a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench,

until he brings **justice** to victory;

21 and in his name the Gentiles will hope.”

3. We saw that ‘perfection’ or ‘righteousness’ are not defined by principles or standard, but by the person of Jesus. He is the only ‘perfect’ and ‘righteous’, 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.”

3.1. It is about learning to be ‘sons/daughters’ by the only Son, Jesus

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

- 3.2. Now significantly, this last sentence is found in the section of the sermon that talks about love for the enemy

5: 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.**

4. This is the attitude of the Son in relation to the Father, the imitation of the 'perfection' of the Father, cf. the Lord's Prayer

6: 12 and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
13 And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

- 4.1. Interestingly, the sentences of the Lord's Prayer that Jesus emphasize are those that relate to forgiveness:

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.

5. It sounds as if God's forgiveness depends on whether we forgive others, but in reality it is the experience of being forgiven by God that should change our heart and enable us to forgive others.

18: 21 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times."

23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow

servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. **32**Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. **33**And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' **34**And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. **35**So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

6. The Lord's prayer also suggests why we must not oppose the evil one (person or act)

5:38f "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 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."

- 6.1. It is because the Father himself takes our defense, delivers us from evil/the evil one.

7. Evil is not something we can overcome alone. This is suggested in Luke 23:34: 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.'

- 7.1. It is not a way of diminishing our responsibility in sin, but of recognizing that the only way of fighting evil (in us and in the world) is becoming aware that we are caught in a cycle of evil much deeper than what we can comprehend.

- 7.2. Cf. Romans 7:15-25.

15For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. **16**Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. **17**So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. **18**For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. **19**For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. **20**Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me.

21So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. **22**For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, **23**but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. **24**Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? **25**Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

8. This awareness should help us to be merciful with others and not judge them.

- 8.1. The healthy eye can be understood as the eye freed what blinds us to our complicity with evil

6:22 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!

7: **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**.

8.2. Possessing a healthy eye means that we refrain from judging or condemning others, even when they behave as enemies.

8.3. In this way we ‘remove the log in our own eye’ and can indeed help others to remove the ‘speck’ in their eyes – a whole section of chapter 18 of Matthew’s Gospel is dedicated to fraternal correction.

9. Mercy, forgiveness, love of the enemy are the only worship agreeable to God

5:21“**You have heard that it was said** to those of old, ‘You shall not **murder**; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ **22But 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.

9.1. This is a refrain in Jesus’ teaching

Mt 9: **12**But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. **13**Go and learn what this means: ‘**I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.**’ For I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Mt 12: **7**And if you had known what this means, ‘I desire mercy, and not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the guiltless. **8**For the Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

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.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNTAIN (MATTHEW 5-7)

5:1 Seeing 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.

- **2**For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.
- **3**Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?

- **4**Or 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?
- **5**You 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.

- **8**For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.
- **9**Or which one of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone?
- **10**Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent?
- **11**If 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. **14**For 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. **16**You will recognize them by their fruits.

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

- **22**On 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.