

"Listen How Jesus Challenges You"

Matthew 5-7

A fighter pilot has to be trained for all kinds of conditions in order to be able to successfully complete his missions. One of the biggest problems fighter pilots face is when they go through clouds or when they make a number of quick turns, it can often 'feel' like they are flying upside down. Their body and their brain are telling them 'you are upside down' but their instruments very clearly indicate they are right side up. Once in awhile a pilot will fatally crash because they didn't trust their instruments.

The Bible of course is our life-guiding instrument. The world around us says 'all you Jesus followers are upside down; you're not doing what the majority of the world are doing. But we have to trust our instrument panel – the Bible - when the world says we're flying upside down. The reality is, we are flying upright and the people who reject Jesus Christ are flying upside down and are heading for a fatal crash if we don't point them to the trustworthiness of the Bible, God's source to live the best life now in preparation for a perfect life in His presence forever.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7, Jesus challenges the hearers of His day to stop following the mis-guided teaching of Israel's religious leaders; particularly the Pharisees. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' manifesto; its His call to the world 'you're flying upside down and I want to show you from God's Word how to be right with God and how to live a life with purpose and joy.' Because the Sermon on the Mount reveals how the majority of people were not satisfied with their 'religion' and as a result were not finding purpose and joy. So, over the summer we're going to Listen to Jesus challenge us in many areas of life. Living for God is not just a religious thing we do occasionally, it changes how we do everything, every relationship we have and every aspect of our life. This morning we want to give you the big picture of Jesus' sermon on the mount so we can better understand how He was challenging the religious authorities of His day and offering people hope, joy and purpose if they choose to follow Him, the author of life's instrument panel – the Bible.

Any time you have a large project you have to break it down in steps or smaller assignments if you want to get it done. Similarly, with the Bible and even passages in the Bible. Matthew has 28 chapters written cohesively in units. Matthew frames his gospel around five major teaching sections. The first here, the sermon on the Mount, Ch. 5-7, followed by 2 chapters of miracles and signs (proving He is authorized to say what he said in the Sermon on the Mount. The next teaching section is Ch. 10-11, Jesus instructs His disciples in Ch. 10 and teaches the crowds various things in Ch. 11. Ch. 12 is more action; the Pharisees oppose Jesus who counters everything they throw at Him. Ch. 13 is another teaching section, the parables. In 14-16 Jesus faces more attacks by the enemy. In 17-20 another large teaching section where Jesus teaches on many subjects. Ch. 21-22 is the triumphal entry and more opposition. The last large teaching section is 23-25. Jesus rebukes the Pharisees (Ch. 23) and then gives His great teaching on His return in ch.24-25. The final 3 chapters all deal with the events around the last supper, crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection. But the book concludes with 3 final verses of teaching from Jesus. Activity, teaching, activity, teaching and so on – that's a general overview of the structure of Matthew.

Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience and his intent was to produce the clear evidence that Jesus is the prophesied Messiah. He begins the book tracing Jesus' genealogy then give us an account of the birth, although mostly the wisemen who honour this new born king. Jesus passes the

test of Satan in the wilderness which is a test of His Messiahship [*‘If you are the Son of God’*] and then His ministry begins with *“repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”* (4:17) followed by the call of James & John, Simon and Andrew.

One of the best things we can do to understand the Sermon on the Mount is read the black verses that surround the red verses! Let’s read 4:23-5:2 and then 7:28-29,

²³ Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people. ²⁴ News about him spread all over Syria, and people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed; and he healed them. ²⁵ Large crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him. Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, ²⁶ and he began to teach them.

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.

By succeeding against Satan’s temptations and healing all kinds of diseases, Jesus proves He is worth listening to. As the Sermon on the Mount finishes the people see a huge difference between Jesus and the religious leaders. This is what Jesus wanted to establish with the Sermon on the Mount

Jesus is The Authority Not Another Opinion **(5:1-2; 7:28-29)**

The crowds were following Jesus, not the Pharisees. You *had* to listen to the Pharisees. *Theirs* was the message you heard when you went to synagogue. *They* were the ones who looked regal and important and stood aloof from the people. *They* taught high unattainable standards according to their laws, which the people assumed were based on The Law of God.

Jesus went to where the people were. He mixed in with everyone. He healed anyone. His teaching was down to earth; rich but somehow attainable. The conclusion made by the people was Jesus taught as one having authority. Implication: the Pharisees did not. They were feared but they weren’t respected. They were mostly unapproachable. Jesus was different. And His message wasn’t just another opinion; it had bite to it; it made sense, it was attainable. And He cared.

Don’t assume this happened by accident. Let’s read 5:1-2 again.

Now ***when*** Jesus saw the crowds, he ***went up*** on a mountainside and ***sat down***. His disciples came to him, ² and he began to teach them.

Jesus deliberately went up the mountainside when the crowds were large. He sat down and taught them because this was the traditional rabbinic teaching position. He might as well have had a sign made; ‘New Rabbi in town, will be teaching on the Mountain at such-and-such time, all welcome to hear what the Bible really says. Jesus was setting down the gauntlet. This was a challenge to the religious leaders. He did the miracles first to bring people together and help them see that He is the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament.

Most of Ch. 5 will be a direct challenge to the Pharisee’s teaching. Six times Jesus clearly says, *“You have heard it said a long time ago . . .”* then He quotes how the Pharisees taught what the Old Testament said, and then says *“But I say to you.”* He deliberately counters His teaching with the

Pharisees and claims His teaching is right. He doesn't say 'God says', He says "I say". Again, challenge language. Jesus presented Himself as The Authority not just one of many opinions.

And that's important for us to remember when we're in discussions with unbelievers who present religious opinions by other teachers and leaders. If it doesn't agree with Jesus and the Bible, it's wrong. He died and rose from the dead proving He was the Son of God. We don't have to apologize for Jesus. He wasn't arrogant or in your face (and neither should His servants) but He was authoritative and clear. When the government passes laws that contradict Jesus and the Bible we must come back with 'But Jesus says' and trust God as we stand our ground. People need Jesus, not opinions.

Jesus begins His teaching with 8 'blessings' (the 9th 'blessing' is an expansion of the 8th). Jesus is clearly alluding to many Old Testament verses and so . . .

Jesus Tells us How We Can be Blessed of God **(5:3-16)**

Why start here? Because the Pharisees had their own version of what it meant to be blessed of God. 'Look at us! We're the blessed ones. We're successful, pious and wealthy. That's what it means to be blessed of God. Too bad you poor people can't be blessed like us.' And so the bulk of Jewish society were led to believe they weren't worthy and that God hadn't blessed them. When we start to look at these more closely next week we'll begin to understand why Jesus' teaching was so appealing. You don't have to "make the Bible relevant"; nor do you have to avoid "preaching doctrine so you can attract people", you just have to show people from Scripture that God says you are valued and a life with Him is attainable and will give you satisfaction. Why were there so many people following Jesus? Because He taught in a way that satisfied you on one hand but also left you wanting more. 'The Pharisees always leave you', Jesus said in Matt. 23:4, feeling more burdened and they are "*unwilling to move them with so much as a finger*". Yet Jesus says in 11:28 "*Come to me all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest for your souls . . . My yoke is easy and My burden is light.*"

Therefore, the poor in spirit, the pure in heart, those who hunger for righteousness and suffer for identifying with Jesus will find satisfaction and will know they are blessed of God. And you are the ones who are salt and light; you are the ones who make a difference in the world.

At this point in 5:17-48 Jesus begins to contrast Himself with the religious teaching of the day and here . . .

Jesus Shows us How Religion Gets it Wrong **(5:17-48)**

Any time there's a new kid on the block teaching the truth, the established religious guys denounce them. This is what the Pharisees did. Jesus said in 5:17,

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 tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be

called great in the kingdom of heaven.²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus' popularity was a threat to the Pharisees who told the people 'Jesus doesn't keep the traditions; He's not following the Law of Moses'. Of course, the exact opposite was true. Jesus said,

We don't do away with the Bible (vv.17-20)

On the contrary He says, I'm here to fulfil every last letter. In Jesus' day the Pharisees had deceived the people into thinking that their traditions were obeying God's Word, but Jesus pointed out time after time they had put their traditions over the Bible.

We still find some of that today, where some churches elevate their traditions over the Word of God, as if they are all authoritative. But mostly we find in our day this lean towards doing away with the Bible or explaining the Bible in a way that denies the original teachings. People today will teach God is a God of love and love, love, love is the answer. Well, God is a God of love but He's also a God of holiness and justice and love is defined as putting God first over yourself; putting God's standards of love over the world's standards.

We who hold to the inspiration and inerrancy of Scriptures find ourselves in the minority. Our world says there are all kinds of genders and sexual options for you but God says in His Word there are only males and females designed for a relationship with their counterpart. The world says we evolved over millions of years, meaning we weren't designed by a Creator God, uniquely loved and created with purpose.

Jesus says, I'm not here to do away with the Bible, instead

We need to live out what it says (vv.21-48)

In vv.21-48 Jesus directly challenges the misguided teaching of the Pharisees who claimed they were teaching the Bible by even quoting parts of it or explaining what the commandments supposedly meant. But Six times Jesus says 'You have heard that it was said', not "It said"; you have heard religious teaching that this is what these passages mean "*But I tell you*" this is what it really says.

If you can't do away with the Bible, then explain it away. That's one of Satan's best strategies. Mix in a little bit of truth with some lies and you spread confusion. No different today.

'*We have heard that it was said*' that all religions lead to God. No, Jesus said I am the way, the truth, the life; no one can come to the Father except through me.

'*We have heard that it was said*' just be a good person and God will outweigh the good from the bad and you'll get into heaven. No, Jesus will say in Ch. 7 that not everyone who says to Him 'Lord, Lord did we not prophesy, drive out demons or perform miracles in your name' [the greatest good works you could do] and Jesus says, 'I never knew you, depart from me you evildoers' because they never accepted Him as their Lord. They were doing good works to make themselves look good to people. It is by grace you are saved through faith and this not from yourselves; it is the gift of God - not by works so no one can boast" [Eph. 2:8-9].

Once Jesus has clarified in Ch. 5 that He's here to tell people what God actually says in the Word, He then deals with the 'good works' that the religious teachers were using as the standard for salvation, whereas Jesus shows us how God wants us to show our love to Him through our good works.

Jesus Explains How Practical Faith in Him is **(6:1-7:12)**

Show your faith through your giving, your praying and your fasting and don't worry about money or clothes or whatever you need. God knows all those things, Jesus says. Seek first His kingdom and these things will come; you'll be provided. Find your joy and purpose in God not the things God created. The health and wealth gospel teaches that we live for what God made [things that won't last forever] not God Himself [who lives forever].

Jesus moves in Ch. 6 from how we should worship and trust God, to Ch., 7 to how treat one another, with a non-judgmental spirit and valuing the things of God over the things that eventually get tossed to the garbage [the pigs were the garbage collectors of their day].

This is why people clamoured to follow Jesus. They were being weighed down with trying to keep all these meticulous laws that their idea of God had become twisted, thinking God was this harsh task master just waiting to pounce on you and make life miserable every time you failed to wash your hands before you ate or didn't pray right or didn't give enough. Jesus frees us from legalism and explains what living a life of faith in Him truly is when you place yourself under His rule and love.

And then at the end of the message He concludes it by

Pointing to Himself as the Only Way to Be Saved **(7:13-27)**

Enter through the narrow gate (7:13) and follow the narrow road of life. The religions of the world teach that the road is wide and it all ends up in the same place. Jesus says no, there are two roads and the wide, popular and easy road leads to your eternal doom. Watch out for the false prophets who deceive you with teaching like that. There is only one ways to build your life and ensure salvation. Build it on that which is solid and can hold you – like the house built on rock – which will stand the storms of life.

²⁴ "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. ²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. ²⁷ The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

Boom.
Drop the mike!
And He walks away.

And the people are left with this challenge; who are we going to follow? Whose message are we going to believe? He teaches as one who has authority and they were amazed at His teaching.

But you can be amazed at what Jesus said and know that He has something worth saying but that still has to be followed up with a decision to follow Him. Is it possible that you're here this morning and you've heard the teaching of Jesus and been amazed by what He says and challenged to follow Him but never actually made that decision? For various reasons you're afraid to leave the popular wide, destructive teaching of your past, your parents or your peers – even though you know better? That road leads to destruction. Jesus offers you true, life-changing, purposeful living for him and for the glory of God. Stop deceiving yourself by only listening to His words and begin to do what He says and finally find purpose and joy.

And those of us who are following Jesus, persevere, hang in there, trust the Instrument (God's Word). Yes, you're flying in a different direction than the world; yes, we're not popular, yes, our government doesn't support us but Jesus is the All-authoritative One and His Kingdom has begun. And we who choose to bow the knee to Him now and obey Him over the religions and cultures of the world will find Jesus satisfies far more than they could anyway.

As we study the Sermon on the Mount we'll be challenged to love God, forgive others, watch our words and our thoughts, love our spouses and pray for those who don't like us. Let's pray we don't just listen to His words but we do what He says.

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