

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

1. Having discussed the Beatitudes, in this talk, we are going to work through the rest of Sermon of the Mount. As we saw, the Beatitudes are a map. They are a zoomed-out picture of the advance of God's Kingdom, in the context of the larger story of human history. But the rest of the Sermon on the Mount (*Matthew 5-7*) is not a map, but a microscope. The rest of the Sermon shows us what it looks like as the Kingdom advances bit by bit, each individual human life at a time. How a life looks that is lived by the principals of the Kingdom, and in the power of the Kingdom. Again, these are not rules to be followed. Instead, these are illustrations of how a Kingdom liver will typically act in a given situation.
2. The Sermon on the Mount cuts through the overwhelming noise and pretense and instead addresses the core issues of our existence. We are always trying to treat the symptoms as they pop up here and there, but not the disease. Because that superficial approach is less demanding, less painful. But that is not how the Great Physician works. He goes deep, to the roots of things. The sources of behavior that we rarely look at, much less address. Hatred. Compulsion. Pride. Anxiety. Fear.
3. Before we jump into Jesus's sermon, I want to start by working through a passage that deals with precisely the opposite approach to life, *Matthew 23*. Here, Jesus discusses the approach to morality that many of the scribes and pharisees endorsed, and lived out themselves. Now, by way of context, we can see that many of the religious teachers of Jesus's day, like the rest of humanity, were deeply unwell on the inside.
  - a. What should they have done about that? Clean the inside of the cup! And yet unfortunately they, like the rest of humanity, were in various ways tied in with evil and addicted to it, they were not willing to undergo the radical heart surgery that was needed. And so, instead of cleaning the inside of the cup, what did they do?
  - b. They tackled their sin problem from the opposite direction. From the outside in, instead of the inside out.
  - c. In order to do this, they came up with an elaborate list of rules, and were completely fastidious about checking each and every box on that list. This list was arduous, excessive beyond what the Torah originally intended and commanded, and simply out of the reach of the regular folks who were struggling through with enough day-to-day practical demands and commitments of their own.
    - i. As Jesus put it, *they tie up heavy, cumbersome loads and put them on other people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them. Matthew 23:4*
    - ii. And then these teachers would measure and quantify their righteousness and judge the righteousness of others by how well that list was kept.
  - d. Well, wasn't that extremely arduous, depressing, and time consuming? Wasn't it tougher and so much less satisfying than just tackling the problem head-on? Yep. But sin is always like that. Irrational, foolish, the long and difficult road.
  - e. So, Jesus is discussing that here, in *Matthew 23*. One of the things we see Jesus point out is not just that they heaped up arbitrary and elaborate rules, but that they all the while were neglecting the intention behind the Law...human flourishing, healthy relationships. They were experts at letting themselves off of the hook. As David Guzik points out, in their complicated interpretations of the Law, they both restricted

God's demands of them (as in the case of murder), and took liberties beyond what the Law allowed (as in the case of divorce).

- i. *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former.*
  1. Why in the world do they do something as strange as useless as giving away exactly one tenth of the herbs growing in their kitchen? Because it's easier than practicing justice, mercy and faithfulness.
  2. *You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel,"* points out Jesus.
- ii. As another example, they were big on dietary laws, hand washing, elaborate public prayers, and other ritualistic commands, but made a regular practice of such despicable things as defrauding vulnerable people financially in clever ways that were not technically forbidden. And so, Jesus says:
  1. *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers.*
  2. *What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth, that is what defiles them. The things that come out of a person's mouth come from the heart, and these defile them. For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what defile a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile them."*
- f. Another issue with the approach that they took was that behavior control by brute-force, long term, is simply an impossible task.
  - i. The stuff on the inside, as it always does, kept bubbling up around their safeguards, in all sorts of subtle and disturbing ways.
    1. *So, you must be careful to do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach. Matthew 23:3*
- g. Now, their being hopeless sinners, just like the rest of Jewish society at large, was a major problem for them. Their inability to keep the Law that they were constantly harping on about was a profound threat to their livelihood, their power, their privileged social position.
  - i. Remember, these religious teachers were well off and comfy compared to the regular working-class folks, who were toiling away in the fields and what not, in the hot sun. And this whole pyramid with them on top was all funded by the ordinary people, who were bowing the knee in deference to them.
  - ii. And to boot, as is the unfortunate tendency with humanity generally, these teachers loved being the ones in charge, having the ordinary people listen to them.
    1. *They love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted with respect in the marketplaces and to be called 'Rabbi' by others. Matthew 23:5*
  - iii. The whole arrangement absolutely depended on people seeing them as virtuous and wise. They couldn't let their true inner nature get out to the public. So, what did they do about that? They spent a lot of time managing appearances.

1. Jesus is always calling them out for creating a certain false facade.  
*Hypocrites. Jesus said they were whitewashed tombs.*
    - a. *“Everything they do is done for people to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long.*
  - h. The result of all of this, was that for these religious teachers, the law, which is a helpful thing if approached properly, instead, came to be for them a means of condemnation and oppression. Paul came to the same painful appraisal of his former self when considering his own past ...*Romans 7 Is the law sinful? Certainly not! [It is good.] But sin used what is good [the law] to bring about my death*
    - i. And the law became deadly to those they mentored in their false religion.  
*These are blind guides!* warned Jesus.
4. The Sermon on the Mount is the opposite of all this mess we just read about in Matthew 23. It is Jesus showing people the true meaning of the law. Jesus taught that the law was a good start, but was only a moral minimum, and was always meant as a signpost, to point beyond itself.
- a. That is why Jesus Himself kept the letter of the Law, except in those few occasions where the Law of Love demanded otherwise. But He kept the spirit of the Law perfectly too. And the reason for this difference between Jesus and the religious teachers was because of who He was on the inside. Jesus kept the Law without gritting His teeth, without looking for ways to get off the hook. The spirit of Law was just a natural expression of who He was.
    - i. *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.*
    - ii. That was the issue...the kind of righteousness that they had. A righteousness of externals. “Well, I didn’t do anything wrong.”
    - iii. To that Jesus says, “OK maybe you didn’t, but why didn’t you?” Maybe you didn’t because you didn’t want to lose face in your community, or because you didn’t want to get in trouble with the authorities. Or for any other of a hundred self-serving reasons.
      1. What we see in the Sermon on the Mount is that people who have washed the inside of the cup do the right thing simply because it is good and right to do so. Not because it was commanded of them, or in order to somehow twist the situation to indirectly benefit themselves. Kingdom people deeply love other people, so obviously they are going to do the right thing by them.
    - iv. Jesus always put relationships ahead of rules. Which is why He put the ritual commands of the Law aside when the heavier responsibilities of love, justice, mercy and the like came knocking. Why did this so greatly offend the religious teachers of the day? It was an affront to their whole metric, their whole evaluative, performative system. Their righteousness consisted of obeying each and every rule no matter what, as an iron clad legalism. Jesus quotes *Hosea 6:6* in discussing this issue with them *“I desire mercy and not sacrifice. And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.”*

1. There are plenty of people who don't smoke, don't drink, don't swear, don't watch R rated movies and all the rest of that type of thing but who are just miserable to be around.
  2. Now, on the other hand, there are people who don't do those things who are great to be around.
    - a. What's the difference? What is inside of their cup.
5. We went through this unpleasant bit in Matthew 23 about hypocrisy, legalism, and all the rest because we need to understand that in our efforts to be good, we ourselves are all always tending towards these short-cuts in morality, these shows of false virtue. Sadly, so many people have been deeply harmed, especially in the vulnerable state of childhood, by hypocritical and poisonous Christian institutions and individuals. Because of this, when they start to hear any God-talk at all, automatically and immediately their defenses and sensitizations are in full effect, defenses which were unconsciously erected at an early age in order to protect them against that destructive toxicity that was thrust on them. The tragedy is that these defenses are still up, all those years later, and block the real message of Jesus, of love and of wholeness, from making it past their ears at all.
  - a. Bad news folks, we have all contributed to that. Maybe not in that big dramatic way, but in smaller ways that I might not even realize, am I a hypocrite? As Dallas Willard noted, here is an experiment...try and stop pretending. Just be who you are, say for a week or two. Whatever you are feeling in your heart, give it full expression with your lips and actions. This will humble you very quickly.
  - b. Let's do something radical, exciting, and freeing. Let's leave the whole business of managing appearances aside, of managing behaviors. Let's move beyond legalisms and rule keeping, beyond external methods of control and evaluation. Move into the experience of authentic inner healing and wholeness and righteousness. Until the good stuff just comes bubbling out of us.
    - i. Once that happens, you won't need worrying about damaging people with your false religion. And, you won't need to go around trying to convince people that, despite appearances to the contrary, Christianity really is a valuable, helpful way of life for them to consider. Instead, people will simply notice how you are so profoundly and wonderfully different than society at large your life is, and want that for themselves. They will ask you about it. *A city on a hill cannot be hidden* says Jesus.
      1. Do people ask you why your life looks so different than theirs?
6. What exactly would your life need to look like in order for people to notice and ask about it? Let's now look at what genuine, from-the-inside-out moral goodness looks like, as we work through Jesus's Sermon on the Mount. Is this way of living that He is describing here what I love, what I practice, what I seek? If not, where are the hangups, the tension points? We all have these. So, let's proceed with humility. Let's come under the burn and the challenge of the Master's teaching now, His radical call to inner holiness.
  - a. Jesus starts this portion of His Sermon by getting right to the source of human conflict. He starts with anger, hatred, revenge, unforgiveness, and frustration. Underneath all our superficial pleasantries and good behaviors, are these, the primary drivers of destructive human impulses.

- i. Jesus begins His discussion of these things by revisiting the Old Testament command on murder. *“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’*
- ii. Well, that’s a good start, a moral minimum. Don’t go around killing people. But let’s get to the heart of the issue.
- iii. *But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.*
- iv. We will be judged for harboring anger! Why is that? Because it is a sin to do so. And why is it a sin to do so? Because anger, hatred, contempt, and bitterness are all interrelated, toxic harmful ways of relating to another person.
- v. We can all agree that hate speech is a terrible thing. We all agree it should be a punishable offense. Well, what if you don’t say it aloud, but you harbor hate in your heart? Is that ok? Nope.
  1. A heart that we allow to be filled with hate is an evil heart.
- vi. Until that anger is dealt with, it will always be in there, dangerous, waiting for the right circumstance when our guard is down to spring out and harm the other person.
  1. People are always surprised at wars breaking out, surprised with our ongoing cultural issues with racism, surprised by the brutality of news headlines. “In this day and age...I can’t believe it. Barbaric. I thought we were beyond all of that.” No, we are not beyond it. It was there deep in our hearts, all along, hidden from us.
  2. As Dallas Willard asked, how many murders would happen, do you think, if no one in the world was angry?
- vii. Jesus continues on in helping us understand how to work through difficult relationships.
  1. *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.*
    - a. Love, unity, and relational wholeness are more important than doing religious activities. And in fact, the whole point of our religious activities is that they are supposed to bring you relational healing, not distract you from it.
    - b. So, if you are sitting there Sunday morning and you come to realize there is a relational breakdown going on that you are contributing toward, just stand up and walk out of there. Go and reconcile, Jesus says. Don’t sit there worshiping with that unresolved filth in your heart. And then come back and worship the next Sunday morning, joyful singing in freedom to God with that weight off of your heart.

- c. He is really getting down to it, isn't He here? The core issues. Inner healing. Not a lot of room for hypocrisy or legalism in His approach.
- viii. He continues on with another example in dealing with conflict, *"Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny."*
  - 1. You want to get indignant and on your moral high horse when you have been wronged? Go blow for blow on things and hash it out tit for tat until your sense of fairness is satisfied with someone with whom you have an adversarial relationship? That the way of a fool.
    - a. First of all, that is a miserable and hateful way to be. Not good for your blood pressure, for starters.
    - b. And secondly, Jesus points out that once you enter into that type of battle, you usually end up incurring all sorts of collateral damage that you hadn't even counted on.
  - 2. Instead, Jesus advises, end the war of endless retaliation and blame shifting. Give up on recounting every historical offense and making sure they are all accounted for. Reconcile. In so far as it is up to you, make peace. Don't drag things out, get it over with. Take some stuff on the chin, within reason, to get the thing done. Get on with it and start living with that person in a relationship of goodwill and kindness, as far as that is all in your power.
  - 3. You ask, "didn't Jesus command Christians to keep out of court in this teaching?" Well, that is always preferable, but not necessarily always possible. As we have been saying, Jesus didn't work in terms of commands, or legalisms. This teaching doesn't mean we never get involved in a legal matter where we are advocating for our rights or protecting ourselves from harm. Sometimes those things might be necessary. But throughout the legal process, we still love our enemy. We don't stick it to them as hard as we possibly can in our legal settlement, just to get back at them. We are gracious, kind. We consider if and where there is any opportunity to help them, and we do that when possible. We see them as a precious and important person whom God loves. We appreciate that God is in control, and we accept the legal outcome, regardless of it is favorable or not. Legal action, for Kingdom lovers, is not about getting even or our adversaries getting their just desserts.
- ix. He continues on and talks a little more about how to relate to those who have harmed us, *"You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."*
- x. First, let's have some context. Before the Law, before the Old Testament, what would typically happen with anger?

1. Well, someone would strike your cheek, and you might go ballistic and burn down their house, kill their whole flock of goats or whatever. So, the Law said, what? *“An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.”* Keep it fair folks. Justice is allowed but no elaborate revengeful escalations are allowed. And that’s a start. But it’s not the best way.
  2. “Well, you gouged my eye out, so I guess I have to gouge your eye out now. I really don’t want to, but you know, rules are rules.” Is that what the Law was pointing toward all along? No. It was pointing to mercy, forgiveness. And, Jesus points that out. *But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.*
  3. So, someone has slapped my cheek, which, in that culture, meant that they insulted me. Now, what am I going to do? Insult them back? That would be justice. That would be a start. And it’s better than just flying off the handle entirely. But let’s go beyond the moral minimums that the law requires. If someone is not treating you well, contrary to popular opinion, you don’t have to hit back. You should hug back.
  4. You see, we often really don’t want to be good, we don’t like being good, so we are always looking for the moral minimum. “Well, if I can’t go nuclear on them, can I at least slap their cheek back, Jesus?” “You are thinking about that all wrong,” Jesus says. “When you love someone, you don’t look for the moral minimum required of you during a conflict. Instead, you deeply want the moral maximum, the most amount of good you could them do in each situation!”
  5. Now, Jesus is not telling abuse victims to go on being abused.
    - a. Because allowing yourself to be abused is not good for the victim or the perpetrator.
      - i. Obviously, in unhealthy relationships, we need boundaries and common sense.
    - b. This teaching is not so much about allowing someone to continue to mistreat you, about not having boundaries, as it is about not cutting them off from a relationship with you entirely because they have treated you poorly.
- xi. *If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*
1. Now the background here is that a Roman soldier could order a Jewish civilian to carry his baggage for one Roman mile. Well, why would you ever carry it two then? To graciously help your enemy out.
  2. “Well, I know you only need this thing carried one mile, but I have to take it two miles, because Jesus said so. So, I will drop it off down the road a way but then you will need to carry it back a mile to where you wanted it.” Nonsense. These are illustrations of what a Kingdom liver will typically do, not commands.

- xii. *And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well.*
  - 1. If it ends up that your pain-in-the-butt enemy who just grabbed the shirt off of your back actually needs your coat in a pinch, just give it to them. No strings attached. With kindness and genuine affection.
    - a. You might run out of enemies pretty quickly, if you keep that up for a while.
  - 2. You see, we all agree that being angry with someone is not as bad as murdering a person, but Jesus points out here that not murdering is still very far from loving them. The righteousness of the scribes and pharisees is a million miles from what it would take to heal these profound divides and hostilities that cripple our world and our relationships.
  - 3. Jesus asks these kinds of questions of His followers: “They hit you. You didn’t hit them back, true, but do you wish you could? Did you stew over the wrong you suffered? Do you resent that person in your heart? Do you love him? Do you have a genuine desire to help him and see him flourish?” These are questions of the heart. Not of actions, which are outside, but attitude, which is inside. Our motivations.
- xiii. *Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.*
  - 1. Again, not a legalism, but an illustration. But many people take these as legalisms, which is why they make no sense to us.
  - 2. “Well, He said give to the one who asks, and this addicted gambler is asking to borrow more money from me on his way back to the slot machine, so I will empty my wallet.” Nonsense. That would be harming them by worsening their addiction. And it would be poor stewardship of your money.
  - 3. But say this gambling addict had previously borrowed quite a bit of money from you and lied to about what they were going to use it for and instead squandered it gambling, never paying you back.
  - 4. And now they come to you asking for help because they need help with getting a ride to and from work for the next few weeks. Instead of holding what they had done to you previously against them, you graciously help them out.
- b. Jesus has so far addressed some relational difficulties that we have. Now, He moves on to another deep issue we have in relating to each other. The misuse of sex. *You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’* But it’s no problem to sit around sexually fantasizing about a person? Nope. *I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*
  - i. Now, unhelpful sexual thoughts will come to mind; we will all be tempted. Being tempted is not a sin, we can’t help that. But what do we do at that point? That is the question. And this looking *in order to* lust, is not ok.



Fostering temptation and thinking about how great it would be to jump into the act is not ok.

- ii. But why isn't this type of fantasizing OK? What is so wrong with it?
- iii. Fundamentally, the problem with it is that you are cultivating a desire for someone that is not yours, for something that would be evil to actualize. Namely, getting in bed with that person, who is not your spouse. You are imagining how wonderful and fun it would be, enjoying the thought of it. When actually, to do so would just be destructive and sad, if you could really see the thing for what it actually is.
  - 1. You didn't sleep with them, but what would you have done if you could have gotten away with it, if no one would know, if God Himself would overlook it and refrain from punishing you?
  - 2. We talked about our "wanters" earlier in this curriculum. That is the issue at stake here. What are you doing with your sexual wanter?
  - 3. Are you inflaming its corruption, predisposing and inclining yourself toward evil behavior?
  - 4. Or are you nipping deviant desires in the bud? And replacing them with healthy, respectful desires toward that person? Are you treating them as a whole person, with a history, and their own family, a privacy and sacredness to their sexuality, and all the rest of it? Treating them as a subject, or an object?
  - 5. You see, at times, sin takes a definite form, and expresses itself in a wrong action that we do. But more commonly, sin remains hidden within us, in the form of sinful attitudes that we hide in our hearts.
    - a. Jesus taught that we are morally responsible for what we allow our hearts to become, not just for our actions. Remember, our actions flow from the heart. Cut lust off at the source, advises Jesus.
      - i. *Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. Proverbs 4:23*
  - 6. Don't be fooled by the Devil's lies. Unbridled desire won't ever let you rest. The less you control it, the more it will control you. There is no end to that. The only way out is to break free. Get rid of it. Become the kind of person who finds lust, adultery, pornography, and every other form of disordered sexuality to be what it truly is...ugly and pitiful.
    - a. As you learn to say no to that type of thing, it will have less and less a hold on you. It will become more and more natural, the easy yoke.
    - b. So, instead of giving into lust, practice contentment. Be content with what is yours. Don't spend time indulging longing for things that are not yours.
- iv. Jesus continues on with His discussion of disordered sexual desire, *If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for*

*you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away.*

1. Now, let me ask you, “does a person’s hand ever cause them to sin?”
  - a. No, it doesn’t. Your hand doesn’t cause anything, ever. It just responds to commands that come from inside you.
2. You see, this is a very clever argument that Jesus is using. The self-justifying attitude of these religious teachers was, “well, I never slept with her, so I didn’t commit adultery.” To that Jesus says, “if you think sin is just about what you do or do not do with your body parts, and if you really are serious about sin, then chop them all off and you won’t be able to sin anymore.” He is trying to get them thinking, to see the error in their logic. He is not trying to encourage them to chop off body parts.
3. Would it be impossible to lust after that person without your eyes?  
No, it would not. Sin lives in the heart, not the body parts.
  - a. What, deep in your heart, is causing you to sin? Cut that out, and throw it away. Get rid of this disordered desire you have.
- c. He continues on from sex to another issue of profound evil in our world. Half-truths, deception, dishonesty and all the other games we play. What does Jesus say about that? “Don’t lie to others.” Nope, as He always does, He goes deeper.
  - i. *“Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’*
    1. Yes, the Law commanded that. And yes, that is a good start. If you made an oath, keep it. But what is the real issue? Why are you having to swear these fancy, complex oaths at all?
    - ii. *But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.*
      1. Let’s be done with games, with the fine print. Just keep your word. Be honest and straightforward and clear with each other. Mean what you say, say what you mean.
      2. “Oh, man. I guess Jesus’s teaching means that in a court of law I can’t put my hand on the Bible and swear an oath.” Again, no. No legalisms here.
- d. He then moves on from what we do, and into why we do. Our motivations. When you do something good, when you give to the needy, fast, or pray, are the three examples He gives, don’t *announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others.*

- i. Doing it that way is not giving. It's giving only in order to get. It is self-serving. If you forcefully grab onto recognition and thrust it in everyone else's face, yes, you will get it.
  - ii. But, Jesus continues, *Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.* If all you are doing is using your charity to others as a way to show off, why would you get any other reward?
  - iii. Instead, Jesus says, do your good deeds secretly. Then you can be sure that your motivation is selfless. *Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.*
- e. Let's stop at this point for a minute, and reflect. This is not, at all, life as usual. And as He continues on, it gets even tougher! *Neglecting to store up earthly treasures!* Instead, giving your money and your time and all that away generously, to friends and enemies alike! And doing so secretly, in order to avoid self-promotion! And so on... You can feel people getting nervous. Is this way of life that Jesus has described so far in this sermon a good method for coming into success, power, influence, comfy, easy living? Nope. Often, it is just the opposite. And so, in His sermon, the next thing He does is that He stops and addresses this. He notes that His way of life is about *storing up for yourselves treasures in Heaven*, not about getting ahead in the world. It's not about chasing fleeting and ultimately unsatisfying worldly distractions. Shifting goal posts. An unfulfilled longing. This is about chasing something permanent, fulfilling, and infinitely valuable.
- f. But living this way certainly does put you out there, on a limb, unprotected so to speak. And when we consider just flat out giving up on the way of the world, on this type of relentless, above all self-protectionism as our fundamental mode of existence, and start focusing more on the needs of others, the question arises, "BUT WHAT ABOUT ME!" The worry bells starting ringing on overtime.
  - i. Jesus's solution, as always, is quite radical. *"Don't worry."* Just stop worrying, entirely. Because it doesn't help anything. It only makes things worse. "Be rid of anxiety," says Jesus.
  - ii. Well, how are you supposed to stop being anxious, its not like we are choosing to be that way, not like we find it fun.
  - iii. There is so much anxiety in the world isn't there? So many people caught in its stranglehold. In governments, in financial systems, on the news, in families, in between our ears? Manifesting in a million ways, ruining so many things, causing so much chaos. What is the root of all that anxiety?
  - iv. *"Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?"*
  - v. *"And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What*

*shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.*

- vi. What is the root of all that anxiety?
  - 1. Trying to control things that you cannot control.
  - 2. *Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?*
- vii. So, what is Jesus’s solution?
- viii. Instead, of trying to control things you can’t control, appreciate that God is in control of them, and rest in that. Relax. Breathe. Let go.
  - 1. *Are not five sparrows sold for two pennies? Yet not one of them is forgotten by God. Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Don’t be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows*  
*Luke 12:6-7*
- ix. Here is what Jesus is teaching. We live in God’s world. He is unspeakably good. And what’s going on down here, down to the tiniest details, matters to Him, tremendously. Actually, the grass itself and each little flower and each little bird are carefully cared for and attended to, by God. Those little birds are so beautiful, aren’t they? Not one sparrow in this wide world is forgotten by God, was the teaching of Jesus. Wouldn’t you be the same way, if you had made them, worried about each sweet little creature? God is this way with you, but to an even greater degree, teaches Jesus. God is looking out for you with an exquisite amount of constant tender concern and attention. Each and every hair of your head is numbered.
- x. *Cast all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you. 1 Peter 5:7.* You can be carefree, confident, authentic. That is the beauty of life in the Kingdom.
- xi. But why are so many people anything but that, these days...and instead profoundly anxious, depressed?
  - 1. The most recent survey from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that the share of teenage girls who say they experience “persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness” is now 57 percent.
  - 2. Or consider that Americans are now more likely to die from a drug overdose than from a car accident.
  - 3. Actually, it is entirely rational and appropriate for people to feel this intense despair. It is expected, given their view of the world. If there is no powerful, loving God behind things, then they are all alone, no one is ordering anything, their lives are boring and difficult, and they have to try their best to control and work everything out themselves, which is more often than not working out very poorly for them.
  - 4. And desperate uncertainty always looms...It could all be snuffed out at any moment. Physical pain, illness, unemployment, a car accident...all a moment away. No control over any of it. Old age and death just around the corner for all of us.

5. And if that wasn't enough, just turn on the news! Global warming, violent and non-violent international conflict, an ever-increasing divide between rich and poor, overpopulation, political dysfunction and gridlock, and unmitigated systemic abuse woven throughout our power structures.
6. It is all so terrible and unbearable. As a result, contemporary human life is dominated by fear and escapism. Escapism is the fundamental psychological reality of the modern world.
  - a. As an example of this, look up the unfathomable quantities of medication that health care workers dump on mood and psychological issues year in and year out. We simply cannot cope anymore with life as it presents itself to us. We have turned to chemical coping. Sleep aids, stimulants, depression meds, anxiety meds, alcohol, opiates, marijuana. And all sorts of other kinds of coping as well. Distraction, diversion. Escapism, digital worlds. Whatever it takes. Just don't give it to me straight.
    - i. That is one of the reasons that silence and solitude is so difficult for people today.
  - b. But if we could just come to see the truth of things, we wouldn't be anxious. We would be excited, joyful.
7. Why is it so hard for us to see the tender care of God for His world, to believe it?
  - a. "All men matter. You matter. I matter. It's the hardest thing in theology to believe." — GK Chesterton
  - b. "It is the hardest thing in theology to believe because all sorts of bad things are happening to Christian and non-Christian people alike each and every day! Because God doesn't seem to us to be doing a very good job with this project of His!"
  - c. Well, I can see how you would feel that way. But that is only due to a limitation in perspective. If you could see the entire picture of where your unending life is headed after a few short years of difficulty, and the absolutely miniscule amount of suffering that even the most unfortunate person comes across in relation to that unfathomable eternal bliss, you would have an entirely different perspective.
  - d. *For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 2 Corinthians 4:17*
  - e. Now this momentary suffering is no joke, and God is much more broken up than we are. But there just is no way around the suffering, to get things where they need to end up. So we do have to put up with it for a while.
8. You know, before the big bang, God had you in mind. You specifically. And a plan for your life. A time for you to be born. And to die. Nothing that has happened to you, or will happen to you, surprises Him. It is all a part of that plan. So, rest in that. Don't

worry about the small bumps in the road along the way, painful though they be. In fact, if worse comes to worse, even then, you will be OK. If you lose your job, and your wife leaves you, and you get cancer, and someone drops a nuclear bomb, and all the rest of it, it will be ok. God will take care of you in that, He will more than adequately strengthen, encourage, and comfort you right through all of it, if you will only let Him. The *God of all comfort 2 Corinthians 1:3* And when it's all said and done, everything about your life will end up wonderful. Wait and see.

9. *In this world you will have trouble. But be of good cheer! I have overcome the world,* advises Jesus (*John 16:33*).

**(END OF AUDIO SEGMENT ONE)**

**(START OF AUDIO SEGMENT TWO)**

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- g. Next, Jesus moves on and shifts topics. He notes that all this talk about holiness, and our vigorous efforts in holiness, and living a life of abandoning trust in God, all have a hidden, ever-present danger. Significant efforts in holy living can get all tied up in feeling pretty good about our efforts, all the while looking down on those around us. What does Jesus say about that?
- i. *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*
    - 1. If, in doing your good deeds here and there, you come into the attitude that you are now doing fairly well with things, actually, but gee look at those miserable derelict sinners over there...if you insist on judging others in this way, evaluating them objectively based on their performance, and on what they deserve, and treating them like that, rather than just showering them with unconditional forgiveness and mercy...well, then you will be given the same treatment, by God. You will be judged, based on your performance, and given what you actually deserve, rather than receiving grace and mercy for your faults and shortcomings. You see, you can't have it both ways, judging others but letting yourself off the hook. *Judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. James 2:13.* The realm of mercy or the realm of justice, you choose.
  - ii. He then gives a good example of the way our judgmental and critical hearts often express themselves. *Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*
    - 1. We are we so sensitive and exaggerative of other's faults, even when they are small, and blind to, or at least minimizing, our own, even when they are large.

- a. That is pride, isn't it?
  - b. One thing to notice about pride, is that it constantly tends to deteriorate into insecurity. And why is that?
    - i. Because prideful people are placing their security in the wrong place... Somewhere that is not in fact, secure
    - ii. They can feel, here and there, that their footing is not very sure under them. That they're resting all their weight on shaky ground. On their own successes and abilities.
    - iii. They are constantly feeling the rub of it, the delusion of claiming to be bigger than they actually are. Deep down, sensing the tug of their own inadequacy, of their lacking performance in so many areas. They are always trying to ignore, and to mask that feeling.
    - iv. That is why proud people, and insecure people, are always sort of puffing their chests up, showing off.
  - c. That is what is manifesting here, in this type of judgmental attitude that Jesus is describing. Mostly, we judge because are insecure. We do not feel confident in our own goodness. And so, we criticize someone, verbally or in our hearts, and note that they are below us in some aspect, morally speaking. This makes us feel like a better person, reassures us that at least we are not that bad.
2. This whole issue of insecurity, and the related issue of pride, is addressed hundreds of times in the Bible. It is one of its fundamental themes. Insecurity is so bedrock, so pervasive, so constantly undermining of all of our relationships and all of our efforts in life that we really need to step back for a few minutes and speak to it clearly before moving on.
    - a. What is pride? **Pride** is excessive self-esteem. By the way, you could also have too little self-esteem, and that would be a problem too, poor self-worth. But an excessive evaluation of our importance, our abilities, our accomplishments, and of the inherent rightness of our own perspectives is much, much more common.
    - b. **Humility** is having a realistic evaluation of yourself. Not having too much, too little, self-esteem.
    - c. Now, pride is a tricky thing because it contains a half truth. Actually, the self is important. You are very important! The distortion of pride, though, is that it forgets that other selves, other people, are of much importance as well!
  3. Why do we all tend to have so many issues with this issue of esteeming ourselves properly, objectively?
    - a. For one thing, it's simply somewhat painful and debasing to admit that we are a big mess, underneath all the appearances we put on.

- b. But there are other reasons too. None of us have been loved perfectly. For instance, it is all too common in childhood for our approval and acceptance to be performance-based, rather than free and unconditional. And so that is the love language that we learn, performance-based, we have to earn the love. Really, in so many ways, we have all both profoundly wounded and been profoundly wounded in different ways by our families and others closest to us who should have been the very sources of unconditional love and acceptance. And so, what happens is that we tend to project that performance-based love framework unto God.
  - c. Deep down, beneath all the denial and judgmentalism we try to sooth it with, we just know, we just feel in our bones, that we are profoundly sinful, inadequate. And therefore, we are so suspicious, so emotionally primed to believe, that this performance-based God is just waiting up there to smite us with His hammer of judgment and disappointment, and condemnation. We tend to think of Him as someone who keeps a record of wrongs. As generally somewhat upset with us or disapproving of us, as tough on us. Stern. Hot and cold towards us. We fear Him.
- 4. But as Phillip Yancey noted, “there is nothing we can do to make God love us more. There is nothing we can do to make God love us less.”
  - a. Jesus’s opponents described Him, quite accurately, as *a friend of sinners* (Luke 7:34).
  - b. The dark parts of who and what we are do not cause Christ to turn away in disgust or in anger. Jesus prefers to be around our darkest parts, actually. That is where He can do the most good. Take time, in your silence, to invite Him there. *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.” Mark 2: 17.*
- 5. You don’t need to do the triangle of transformation or anything else in this curriculum to be a friend of God. But you will need to follow the way of Christ in order to flourish, to be free, to be an effective force for good in this world.
- 6. The issue is that we tend to get these two confused, our performance, and our worthiness of love. You are worthy of love, you have worth, just by virtue of what you are, as someone made in the image of God, regardless of what you do or do not do. Jesus spent so much time and effort just trying to teach that. To reassure us about the tender kindness of God, about His unfathomable love for us, despite our profound sinfulness.
- 7. *There is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:18*



8. Forget about punishment. Forget about fear. Forget about guilt. Condemnation. Let it all go. He is our Father, taught Jesus. We are each of us, His immeasurably precious, wonderful, unique, beautiful, little children.
  - a. If only you could see yourself how He sees you. When you take time and spend it with Him, when you invite Him into the little things you are doing, God is just over the moon about it. He furiously longs for a deep, fulfilling relationship with you. He thinks about you and misses you when you are away.
9. To deal with your insecurity once and for all, put your security in the right place. Not in your own hands. Not in amassing enough good deeds or degrees or dollars or Bible studies or social media followers to finally feel good about ourselves, to justify our existence. That is a losing game. You never will. But that's ok. It's ok to be a failure. Because the cross took care of all that. Acknowledge what you really are. And instead of despairing in that, find your security in the tender arms of your Father, who longs to lift you up out of that mess. *James 4:6 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.*
  - a. You know, the Accuser, as the Scriptures refer to him, or "the criticizer" in more modern terms, is always looking for opportunity to be working on our minds and making us feel guilty, unworthy. Estranged from our Father. Because that is an extremely effective strategy for rendering us ineffective in our godly work of reaching out and loving and healing this broken world. In that state, we feel unfit for Kingdom work.
  - b. But when you mess up, don't go on and on feeling guilty about it. It is very counterproductive. And excessively holding onto guilt is just a deep form of pride. "I can't believe I did that." Why not? Just eat some humble pie and acknowledge that you are just the kind of person who would do that type of thing. And the sooner we accept that, and accept that God loves us exuberantly anyway and forgives us completely, humbly asking for His help with who and what we really are, and then move on and get to doing good Kingdom work in this needy world, the better. Guilt only helps if it is moving us away from some sin or error, or helping us to acknowledge something we have done wrong, getting us back on track. Other than that, leave it alone. Guilt and condemnation paralyze us. But accepting forgiveness frees us, mobilizes us.
  - c. I love the end of the 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm. We see David feasting with God. Just warmly enjoying the company of God. And God Himself is the one preparing the table, pouring the cup, anointing his head. David had so much hardship in his life. Brutal difficulty. But he knew the way things really were.

And right in the midst of all of the dysfunction and pain, a lot of which was his own fault, right in the presence of his enemies, David could just sit down and relax and have a feast. *My cup overflows*, David says. With what? *Surely goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life.*

- i. As a child of God, here is the fundamental reality of who and what you are: Someone who has been swallowed up by an infinite Love, by bottomless kindness and goodness, that *will never leave you, nor forsake you.*

10. Coming into this realization leads to deep feelings of gratitude and joy, and a certain light-heartedness, a playfulness in our approach to life. Once you have found that, found true security, you will have become free from the shackles of obsessing and always returning to yourself, of constantly making sure you get what is due to you and of justifying your existence, and will spend most of your time outside the tiny little confines of your worries about your own worth, in wholesome relationships with others.

- a. Once you are no longer having the wrong, inward focused, focal point, the whole big beautiful world around you, and all the wonderful people in it will come into focus, just how interesting and special and important each of them are. You will find your competitive instinct dying down. You will just naturally find yourself enjoying others, rooting for them, very much wanting to help them succeed. Taking more pleasure in their success even, then you would have in your own, say if you were both giving it your all in an athletic competition, for instance.
- b. Now, don't get the wrong idea. A Kingdom person takes care of themselves and their own needs as well. After all, each of us is valuable and important. This is not self-hatred. But the idea is that we don't just look out for number one. Instead, a holy person deeply desires to meet both their own needs, and the needs of those that God has put in their path.
  - i. But what about when push comes to shove, and maybe there is not enough to go around in this instance, and its someone else's needs or your needs?

1. In that case, you would go with their needs.

- c. *Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

*Philippians 2:2-3*

- d. Humbly serve. Whether or not people really listen or pay much attention to you or give you credit. Whether or not the job is beneath your station and rank.
  - i. Yes, you matter, and yes, it would be best if everything that you did was all acknowledged appropriately and fairly, but sometimes it's not. And that doesn't need to get in the way of your helping someone. Actually, it won't get in the way, if it is someone that you deeply care about.
- e. You know there are all sorts of well-meaning Christians really trying to do this type of thing, and the other things in the Sermon on the Mount, but for example these acts of humble service, by brute force, without first having gone through the bother actually obtaining the inner virtue. Without first really and deeply, in humility, acknowledging their own failure and inadequacy. Without first having come to really know the beauty and value of others. And therefore, they perform very poorly in actually serving others, and make themselves miserable in the process.
- f. When Jesus washed the disciple's feet, He wanted to do that for them. Because He loved and valued them, so much more than He loved and valued His own comfort or dignity. *I am gentle and humble in heart (Matthew 11:29)*, is how God incarnate described Himself.
- g. Jesus not only modeled this, He taught it over and over and over, in dozens of different ways.
  - i. *When he noticed how the guests picked the places of honor at the table, he told them this parable: " When someone invites you to a wedding feast, do not take the place of honor, for a person more distinguished than you may have been invited. If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, 'Give this person your seat.' Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted." Luke 14:7-11*
    - 1. In the social situations you find yourself folks, don't presume. Take the low seat. Don't bump and elbow your way into prominence, into the

place of importance and recognition. Let others be front and center. Stay in the background, with the folks deemed insignificant.

- ii. The disciples were so hung up on pride, asking Jesus “who’s the greatest?” disputing among themselves about it. How about when James and John ask Jesus about if they can be the tops dogs in His Kingdom. *Jesus called them together and said, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Matthew 20:24-28*

- 1. “Who’s the greatest, Rabbi?” “Humility is greatness,” says Jesus. The world thinks that true greatness has to do with being talented, being influential, being beautiful. Listen, those things, in and of themselves, are good things. But the reality is that unless they are accompanied by inner humility, such a person is just a selfish, toxic mess beneath the shiny veneer.

- iii. That is why Jesus taught humility as the central fact of Kingdom living, as the very gate itself into Kingdom living.

- 1. *At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”*
  - 2. Does Jesus give the name of a great saint or scholar, a miracle worker or a rabbi, a prophet or a poet?
  - 3. *He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: “Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. Matthew 18:1-5*

4. Now when Jesus says you must become like a little child, He does not mean in the sense of irresponsible or naive, but in the sense that they are the least self-important, and the most unassuming. Forget about being the greatest in the Kingdom, says Jesus, unless you humble yourself and become like little children, unless you stop wondering about how great you are doing, how you measure up, and start see the inherent importance of others, that they are oh so worth your time and service, you cannot even enter the Kingdom. The Kingdom, is above all, an others-oriented type of thing. Children are so fascinating, such a great example, that He gave. One thing about children is that they are not touchy and easy to offend.
  - a. Are you easily offended? From the perspective of the discipleship, that is a big, big problem
11. So that is a word about humility. The advice of Jesus in this sermon is to love and accept yourself despite your faults and failures, as God does. And to inculcate that same merciful, sin-overlooking attitude towards others. That is a much healthier and more permanent way to deal with insecurity than judging others is.
  - a. But thank God that while He loves and accepts big messes, and that is the basis of our self-worth, He doesn't just leave us a big self-centered mess. He is calling us into, helping us into something better. Into the life Jesus describes in this sermon.
- h. Now, where are we at in the sermon? Jesus has laid out His vision of true righteousness, with humility right at the heart of it, and here He takes a step back before concluding His sermon and notes that this is all just so tough for us, isn't it. So very far above the norms and standard of typical human behavior. And so, Jesus acknowledges that:
  - i. *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it."*
  - ii. But, at the same time, He also encourages us not to simply become intimidated with the whole daunting project and give up. He reminds us that indeed merely humanly speaking, this way of life is not possible. But with God, it is. So, ask for His help. He longs to help you as you strive forward in your efforts, as we *agonize to enter through the narrow gate*, as Jesus puts it here. The Father longs to give you the gift of His own inner wholeness, this inner strength, to help you along your way.
  - iii. *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened."*

- iv. *“Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! Matthew 5:7-11*
- i. Jesus then notes that given the high and lofty challenge of His way of living, there are plenty of folks looking for a short cut to inner wholeness, and claiming to have found one. Imposters, fools, and just downright confused and unhelpful folks claiming to be teaching the way of Christ, claiming to be His followers are, and always will be, all around us. Messed up ideas about God and the good life, about who Jesus was, and so on.
- j. So, what does He say about these *false teachers, false disciples*?
  - i. That we should *watch out* for them. *Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.* Be on your guard. Always carefully test what is being put across, against the correct yardstick. Because it’s a very tricky and subtle business, this discipleship that we are involved in. A thousand possible false turns in the road in every direction. But only one *narrow gate*.
  - ii. And what is the correct yardstick? How can you tell if someone is really a disciple, if what they are teaching is really Christianity?
    - 1. If you belong to the right denomination? If your theology is all in proper order? If you were dunked instead of sprinkled, or is it vice-versa?
    - 2. Nope. None of these. Instead of that kind of thing, Jesus says,
      - a. *A good tree bears good fruit.*
    - 3. The yardstick is whether or not their way of life is the way of life is Jesus’s way of life, the way of life that He describes in this sermon. If the inside of their cup is clean, or at least in the active process of being cleaned.
    - 4. How are people supposed to know that you are a Christian? *By this, all men shall know that you are my disciples, if you love one another John 13:35.* The depth of the quality of love on display in the community of Jesus’s disciples is simply not the kind of thing you find anywhere else in the world.
    - 5. It really is as simple, and as profound as that.
    - 6. *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and, in your name, perform many miracles?’ Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’*
- k. And finally, Jesus concludes His ethical teachings in His sermon by summing up the entire moral teaching of the Old Testament in one sentence.
  - i. *So, in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.*
    - 1. Doesn’t say don’t do to others what you don’t want them to do to you. He goes much further than that. Beyond not sinning, beyond legalistic

bare minimums. Into creative, limitless, dynamic, out-reaching, connection-forming love with all those around you.

1. He then concludes the sermon with another warning. *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. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.*
  - i. This sermon we just went through deals with the fundamental struggles of human existence. The Sermon on the Mount is what Jesus Himself lived and what He taught. These teachings of His are just some of many examples He could have given of a Kingdom liver's inner wholeness and goodness coming out and being at work in the world.
  - ii. Now, in dealing with these profound issues, there are all sorts of options floating around out there that are much more comfortable and "feel goody" than the way of Christ. They don't involve this type of radical heart surgery. After all, it is much easier to build your house on the sand. You don't have to drill into all that hard rock. But don't be fooled. When the real test comes, if you do that, you will find everything collapsing around you. Jesus came to show us the way. This sermon is the way.
  - iii. The demands of Jesus appear radical and difficult at first glance. But on closer inspection, they are *the narrow gate*. The one and only true path into freedom, joy, and peace. This is the only way of living adequate to the human condition and the challenges we face in the world we live in.
7. Let's summarize this talk.
  - a. First, the Sermon on the Mount is not a list of rules to be followed, and much of it makes no literal sense if taken that way. Nevertheless, because legalism and hypocrisy is more comfortable for us than the genuine demands of righteousness, we tend to prefer rule following, behavior management, managing appearances, moral minimums, and getting ourselves off the hook. However, this approach is inadequate to the human condition, and the relationships in which we find ourselves. It will not enable flourishing of individuals, or of relationships, and therefore is never successful, in the long-term.
  - b. Second, the Sermon on the Mount, instead, is a series of illustrations of how a life looks that is lived by the principals of the Kingdom, and in the power of the Kingdom.
    - i. A person who has a clean cup inside will commonly, naturally act in the way described in this Sermon, with no great effort involved. It is in fact, the way that they want to act.
  - c. Third, Jesus encourages us to work with God to pull up anger, hatred, sexual lust, pride, anxiety, and fear up by the roots, and to replace them with genuine love for God and others.
    - i. Those filled up with the love of God embrace and live out a radical kind of righteousness that always seeks the good of the other as its highest aim, going well beyond the formal requirements of the Law of the Old Testament, or any other rules we are given.
  - d. Fourth, Jesus taught that our motivations for why we do what we do are the true reflection of our inner character.

- e. Fifth, we need not be anxious about our neglecting of our own interests while living in light of this abundant generosity and others-centeredness, because God will be taking care of our interests for us.
- f. Sixth, we are all profound failures. The wisdom of humility realizes that, and places its security in the unconditional love and acceptance of our Father. This is the gateway itself, into the Kingdom.
- g. Finally, Jesus taught that it is always the great pleasure of the Father to work with us in this inner healing, if we will accept it. That true teachers and disciples live in this way, while false followers of Him do not. And that the way of life described in this sermon is the only approach adequate to the demands and challenges of the human journey.

Father, wash the inside of our cups. Remove the corruption there, and plant the good stuff. Heal our broken minds, bodies, desires, feelings, and wills, even now. So that we can break out of our various bondages, and into freedom. And so that we can serve and love others, effectively working for Your Kingdom, always.

- Amen