

Who Is This Preacher?

Matthew 7:28-29

**A sermon preached by Dr. Calvin Warpula
at the West University Church of Christ,
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The Sermon on the Mount is finished. We have studied virtually every verse of it during the past six months. This is the longest recorded sermon of Jesus in our Bibles and the most famous sermon in the world. I have grown spiritually by studying this sermon afresh. Jesus has motivated me to be a better preacher, but more than that, he has motivated me to be a better person. The words of Jesus challenge me every day as I seek through the renewing of my mind to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. Throughout these six months as we have talked about this sermon, I have been asking myself questions about my heart, my commitments, and my obedience to Jesus Christ. I think that I have become more real, more honest, more penitent, and hopefully, more obedient and more committed to Jesus. I pray that is the same with you.

A Summary of the Sermon on the Mount

Chapter 5

The words of this sermon have covered many subjects. We began with the beautiful attitudes called Beatitudes. We learned about the necessity of being poor in spirit, mourning over our sins, being meek and humble and gentle, hungering and thirsting after righteousness, being single-minded and focused on God, being merciful in dealing with others sins and faults, and of standing for God even if it means being persecuted for righteousness sake. We learned about what it means to be salt and light in our world. We discussed the meaning of a righteousness that exceeds that of the religious leaders and authorities of Jesus' day. Jesus said that he did not come to abolish the law or the prophets but to fulfill them. This means that all the lines of prophetic history converge in him. In other words, he was saying, "I am the Messiah." We then looked at six, powerful contrasting statements where Jesus said, "It has been said to you...but I say unto you." In these six antitheses Jesus shows us that God wants internal righteousness that is deeply rooted in personal love and commitment to God and not just on external, ritual conformity to rules and regulations. Jesus shows us the meaning of keeping

our marriage vows, honoring our word, keeping our hearts free from lust, loving our enemies, and resisting not evil.

Chapter 6

In chapter six Jesus showed us how to pray, how to give help to the needy, and how to fast. The main thing he says is to make sure that our acts of devotional and service are for the eyes and approval of God only. Jesus shows us how to pray in simple language, first for the honor and glory of God, and then for our needs for forgiveness, daily bread, and guidance for our lives. Jesus instructs us to lay up treasures in heaven and to not place our hopes in wealth which so quickly dissipates and will be lost in death and eternity. Jesus tells us not to worry. If God takes care of the birds and paints the flowers, even the morning glories that have more beauty and radiance than King Solomon, how much more will God our Father take care of us, his children? If we will seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, then all other things will be given unto us. We need to live each day for itself and serve God with what we have now instead of fretting over the past or being anxious over the future.

Chapter 7

In the seventh chapter, Jesus tells us not to be in the judging business, but in the doing and living business. We are to look first at our own faults and sins before we start inspecting others. We are to discern what is good and holy and not frivolously throw it away before unbelievers who do not appreciate spiritual values. We must depend on God for everything. If we will keep on asking, we will be given what we need. If we keep on seeking, we will find what is best. If we keep on knocking, God will open doors for us. In everything, we are to treat people right. We are to do to others how we would like to be done to us.

At this point in the sermon, Jesus moves then to the conclusion and he issues a challenge to us to obey him. He says that we are to walk in the straight and narrow way that leads to life because the broad and easy way leads to destruction. Only a few will find life but many will seek the noncommittal, easy paths of least resistance and end up destroyed. We must watch out for false prophets who would lead us away from Jesus and from the truths of God. A good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree brings forth bad fruit. The bad trees will be cut down and thrown into the fire.

The Lord tells us that not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven but only those who do the will of the Father who is in heaven. Jesus says that many will be eternally separated from God because they trusted in false religion, human works, and religious acts but did not listen to God or obey his will. Jesus closes the sermon by telling us about two men who build houses: one

on the rock and one on the sand. The rock builders are those who hear the words of Jesus and obey them; the sand builders are those who hear the words of Jesus but do not obey them. When the storms come, and they will come for both builders, those on the rock will stand firm but those on the sand will crash and perish.

That's a synopsis of Jesus' sermon. It's a beautiful, touching, penetrating powerful message, isn't it? The challenge to us today is to hear what Jesus says and then go and do it. The sermon closes with four stories of judgment and only those who hear and obey Jesus have a relationship with God now and will enter a happy and secure and totally satisfying relationship with him forever in the future life.

What Jesus Did Not Say

I am amazed at this sermon because of what it says and because of what it doesn't say.

He didn't urge them to new forms of religion, to give more money, or to attend services more often. He didn't summon them to a greater commitment to a religious routine. He kept going back to their motives, to what they were deep inside. He said that what mattered to God was their relationship with Him. He said that true religion wasn't a performance; it was a deep reality. . . . Our religion emphasizes ceremonies and attendance, things that don't matter much, and it ignores the weightier matters of what we are deep inside.

[Haddon W. Robinson, The Solid Rock Construction Company: How to Build Your Life on the Right Foundation. Grand Rapids: Discovery House, 1989, pp. 144-145].

The Crowds Were Amazed at the Teaching of Jesus

Now, what were the effects of this sermon on the original hearers? How did they react to these words of Jesus?

Matthew gives us the answer in verses 28 and 29. [Read]

"The crowds were amazed at his teaching." The Greek verb here literally means, "dumbfounded." They probably thought, "Who is this preacher? Where did he get these ideas? They are so original, so insightful, so challenging to what we have always heard and thought. Who is this preacher?"

Matthew says they were amazed at Jesus' teaching because "he taught them as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law."

For Jesus to teach with authority means that he spoke straightforward with passion and conviction. He challenged the religious interpretations and practices of the day. He recited the religious acts of their leading ecclesiastical authorities and told the people that these were not the things that God wanted. He pointed the people to a higher standard of faith and practice than they had ever heard from their teachers in the synagogues and in the Jerusalem temple. They had never heard any man speak like this man.

Jesus was so different from the customary teachings and teachers of that day that the people were amazed literally at him and what he said. How did their teachers teach? We have records of the style of Jewish teaching in the first century. There had been no prophet of God for four hundred years so the teachers depended on a long line of tradition and quotations from respected teachers of the past. Their antiquarian teaching delved into commentaries, searched for precedents, and claimed the support of famous names among the rabbis. Their authority was the authorities they were quoting.

This type of teaching reminds me of some of the commentaries I have in my library. They are filled with copious footnotes citing all the authorities who favor the various interpretations of the verses and words under consideration. This type of commenting can be tedious, boring and mind boggling, and leave one confused and uncertain about what to believe and do.

Jesus did not teach like this. He spoke without quoting anyone. He did not parrot others. He did not quote the authorities. He was the authority. He never quotes the O.T. for proof of his statements. Three thousand times in the O.T. the phrase "Thus says the Lord" occurs, However, Jesus never once says, "Thus says the Lord." Instead, he said many times, "Truly, truly, I say to you."

The only time Jesus quotes the O.T. is to give a background to the practice that he observes or to say that the event that the OT describes is occurring once more. The authority of Jesus is not in the O.T., even though that O.T. is the word of God. Jesus is not a commentator but a legislator. Six times he specifically says, "It has been said unto you, but I say unto you." Jesus speaks of what the Father wants and accepts as though he personally knew God the Father and had come directly from his presence. Jesus speaks of real faith, real spirituality, and real religion, not the sham stuff of pretence, external form only. Jesus speaks with authority when he talks about judgment, destruction, being cast away from God, and the absolute, vital necessity of hearing and obeying his words. The other teachers would try to explain truth by saying, "That is the truth, follow that." Jesus said, "I am the truth, follow me."

Jesus does not speak flamboyantly or bombastically. He speaks with quiet and unassuming assurance and self-confidence. His message is not limited to the Jews of Palestine of the first century. His words are universal. He speaks absolutely as one who knows what he's talking about.

"Jesus taught with authority." That's the key to the power of Jesus' teaching. To be impressed with Jesus' authority meant that they would be impressed with Jesus. This is not just an ethical sermon; it is a Christological sermon, that is, one that centers in Jesus as the messiah of God. Throughout the sermon he points to himself, his authority to speak, his authoritative words, his fulfillment of the law, and his judgment of mankind at the end of the world based on obedience to his words. The teaching of the sermon is built upon the integrity and identity of the teacher. The sermon's ethics are based upon the unique authority of Jesus. We cannot accept one without the other.

The Authority of Jesus, the Son of God

The people would naturally ask, "Who is this preacher? Where did he get this authority and who gave it to him?" Those are the very questions the Jewish leaders asked when this Jesus condemned their hypocrisy, overturned their money-changing tables, and openly challenged their traditions and interpretations.

Who is this preacher? Let's quickly note some significant verses in this gospel that tell who this preacher is.

Matthew 1:16, 20-23-conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, called Immanuel, "God with us"

Matthew 2:1-5a-born in Bethlehem according to a prophesy made by Micah 500 years before, he would be a ruler and shepherd of God's people

Matthew 3:11-17-he would baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire, he was baptized in the River Jordan by John the Baptist. Heaven opened, the spirit as a dove came down, and a voice from heaven said, "This is my son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

Matthew 4:23-25-Jesus preached the good news of God's kingdom. He healed every disease and sickness, he cast out demons.

Matthew 8:23-27-he calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee.

Matthew 9:1-8-He forgave sins and raised to health those paralyzed.

Matthew 9:32-33-he cast out demons and gave speech to the mute.

Matthew 10:7-8-he sent out his disciples to preach the good news of the kingdom. He gave them power to heal the sick, to cleanse the lepers, to drive out demons, and to raise the dead.

Matthew 10:37-38, 40-he claimed our love above all others, he called us to take up a cross and follow him, he said that whoever receives him received God.

Matthew 11:2-6-when asked if he really was the Messiah of God, he said that what he was doing proved who he was. The blind receive sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor.

Matthew 11:25-30-he said he knew all things because he received them from the Father. He said that no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom he was willing to reveal him. He invited all weary and heavy-laden humanity to come to him and he would give them rest.

Matthew 13:37-43-He said that he would send his angels and they would cast out of his kingdom all those that do evil and they will be cast into a place of punishment but the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of the Father.

Matthew 14:19-21, 25-27, 32b-33-he showed that he had the power of creation as he took five small loaves of bread and two little dried fish and fed over 5000 people, and had 12 baskets of pieces left over. He walked on the water and came to the disciples in the middle of the Sea of Galilee. The disciples worshipped him and said, "Truly you are the Son of God." When they landed on the shore, people brought their sick to Jesus and all who touched him were healed.

Matthew 15:29-31-Jesus healed the mute, the blind, the deaf, the lame and the people praised the God of Israel.

Matthew 16:18, 21, 27-28-Peter confessed Jesus as the Son of God. On that confession, Jesus promised to build his church and the powers of the unseen world would never overcome it. Jesus predicted that in the city of Jerusalem he would be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Matthew 17:1-2, 5b, 22-23-at night, on the top of a mountain, Jesus shone like the sun and his clothes became as white as the light. A voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" Jesus again told his disciples that he would be betrayed and killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Matthew 19:28-30-Jesus promised that in the coming new age that he would sit on the glorious throne of heaven and that he would richly reward those who followed him.

Matthew 20:17-19, 26-28-Jesus again predicts his death in Jerusalem, and this time he says it will be by crucifixion, but on the third day he will be raised to life.

Matthew 25:31-34, 41, 46-Jesus says that in the day of judgment that he will sit on his throne in glory and that all nations will be gathered before him. He will separate them into those that are lost without God and those that are saved by

the Lord. He will send the wicked away to eternal punishment but he will welcome the righteous to eternal life.

\ **Matthew 26:27, 63b-64**-at the last supper, Jesus took wine and said that it was his blood of the covenant which was being poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Matthew 26:63-64-during his religious trial, the high priest asked Jesus if he really was the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus answered, "Yes, it is as you say. But I say to all of you in the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Matthew 26:11-26-the judge at Jesus' political trial, Pontius Pilate, said that Jesus was innocent and was delivered up because of the Jewish leaders envy of him.

Matthew 27:54-when Jesus died, there was a great earthquake, and the Romans soldiers who were in charge of the crucifixion, were terrified and said, "Truly he was the Son of God."

Matthew 27:57-66-Jesus was buried in a rock tomb by his friends and Pilate stationed a guard at the tomb lest the body be tampered with.

Matthew 28:1-15-On the third day, Sunday, Jesus is raised from the dead and appears to his disciples. The resurrection of Jesus gives an impregnable foundation for the authority, teaching and deity of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 28:18-20-the final words of Jesus in Matthew-He says, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." He commissions his disciples to go and make disciples by baptizing believers and teaching them to obey all things Jesus commanded them. He promised, "I am with you always, to be with them always, to the very end of the age."

Who Is This Preacher?

Who is this preacher? The gospel of Mathew gives us plenty of answers. He is the spiritual son of God. He is the fulfillment of O.T. prophesy. He is the Christ, the anointed one of God. He has power over nature, disease, demons, creation, and death. This means that Jesus has unmistakable credentials as a teacher sent and endorsed by God. He voluntarily, purposefully, deliberately, and freely died on the cross as a sacrifice for our sins. He was buried. Three days later he arose with the death as the Lord of life and death, time and eternity. He is coming again to judge the world and to separate mankind into two groups: those saved who will enter into a blessed eternity with God and those condemned who will enter into destruction and punishment. He now possesses all authority in

heaven and on earth. He loves all of us and invites all of us to come to him, to learn of him, to obey him, and to follow him in everything.

You can go through the other gospels, Mark, Luke and John, and find these same answers. The Jesus of the Sermon on the Mount is the same divine, supernatural and dogmatic Jesus found in the remainder of the gospels. The book of Acts and the apostolic letters that follow give us the same harmonious and consistent message.

When this sermon ended, the people were driven back to Jesus. Any sermon worth preaching drives us back to Jesus. The essence of Christianity is a relationship with Jesus, not to a code of conduct. Jesus is the only base on which we can build our lives. He is the solid rock that is the same yesterday, today and forever. Built on him, we always know whose we are and who we are.

The text says that the original hearers of Jesus' teaching here were amazed but it is not said that they believed in his doctrine or obeyed his teaching. It's possible to do the same thing today.

Today, You Can Make a Commitment to Jesus

What about you? Are you just amazed at Jesus, just admire Jesus, just like Jesus, or are you willing to make a commitment to him and do what he said? If you will make a commitment to Jesus, he will do for you all that he has promised.

You can accept this Jesus today as your personal Lord and Savior by believing in him, by turning from your sins, and by being baptized in his name to become his disciple. When you do that, Jesus will make you blessed in the sense of the Beatitudes. He will make you the salt of the earth and the light of the world. He will teach you to pray. He will carry you through the cares and problems of this life to an eternity of unbroken fellowship with him. He still says today, "Come unto me all you that weary and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 1:28). Come now while we stand and sing.

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