

Kingdom Living Here and Now

The Beatitudes

By Don Green

sermonaudio.com

Bible Verse: Matthew 5-7
Preached on: Tuesday, June 20, 2023

Truth Community Church
4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road
Cincinnati, OH 45255

Website: truthcommunitychurch.org
Online Sermons: www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm

I invite you to turn in your Bible to Matthew 5 as we enter more fully into our study of the Beatitudes here this evening, a study which will, I trust, be used by the Lord in all of our lives in a profound way. Matthew 5, I'm going to read verses 3 through 10 and then explain what we're doing this evening.

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

The word "blessed" indicates that the person being described is someone who is the privileged recipient of divine favor; God has favored this person with certain spiritual life and certain spiritual characteristics that are central to being a member of the kingdom of heaven. If you do not have these characteristics in your life, you are not in the kingdom of heaven, you are still in the kingdom and under the domain of Satan himself. As we've pointed out, and I'll point out numerous times, no doubt, in Matthew 4:17, if you would turn there with me, we see that at the launch of his public ministry, Matthew summarizes the teaching of Christ with these words, "Jesus began to preach, saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" The kingdom of heaven was at hand because the King was now on earth, King Jesus, and the message of Christ, consistent with the message of John the Baptist, was that people were to repent in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven. When you come to the opening of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5:3, you see the verbal and thematic link, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And in Matthew 7:21, we see the theme of the kingdom of heaven yet again, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven." And so there's this theme of the kingdom of heaven running throughout these chapters, 4, 5, 6, and 7, that's very crucial for us to see as an overview matter, to see that these things are linked all together like links in a chain, not something to be viewed in isolation. Every passage, every text, every

verse needs to be understood in the context of the whole and unless you see the whole, you're not going to understand the individual pieces properly.

Now, and we'll expand on that as we go along here this evening, looking forward to it. Last time, I said that the Sermon on the Mount was a twin call to spiritual life. It was a call to holiness as we see in Matthew 5:6, for example, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." It's a call to holiness, and it's also a call to blessing, to enter into these blessings that the Beatitudes and the rest of the Sermon describes. The call to repentance isn't simply or even properly understood as a call to stop sinning. That's an inadequate way to think about sin and repentance and the holiness of God. The call to repentance is a call to turn from sin to Christ. There's two sides to the coin, you're turning away from sin in order to turn to something else, someone else, to the Lord Jesus Christ. And as Christ makes this call, he extends a promise in the midst of it, "You will be blessed if you do this." This isn't simply a sterile call to change your behavior. That's really almost secondary to it. It's a matter of changing your orientation in life away from sin, away from self, and unto the Lord Jesus Christ with the promise of his blessing.

Now, what we're going to do this evening is take a satellite view, you might say, of the entire Sermon on the Mount so that later we can see the Beatitudes in the broader context, but by way of preparation, by way of introduction, let me just say this so that you can be alert to this and be understanding it as we go along. As you read the Sermon on the Mount, particularly in its entirety, and you see everything that it demands, you'll quickly see that it is impossible to contemplate an unsaved man in any way entering into the various facets of kingdom living. It's utterly impossible, and that will be obvious by the time we're done this evening. The Sermon on the Mount is not a call to self-improvement, it is a call to enter into the kingdom, and the unsaved man, the person who does not have new spiritual life, is utterly unable to meet any facet of what we're going to see here this evening. In other words, the Sermon on the Mount is completely humbling and in one sense it's somewhat like the 10 Commandments in the Old Testament in that it shows us the utter inability of the natural carnal man to in any way approach what God requires to enter into his kingdom. The law, Galatians 3.24 tells us, is a tutor that leads us to Christ. In a similar way, the Sermon on the Mount has the same impact on the unsaved person. It shows the utter impossibility of entering into the kingdom of God as you are. There must be a change. There must be something new given to you and that newness is nothing less than what Scripture calls the new birth, regeneration. You must be born again to enter into the kingdom because there is no way that anyone could approximate this life, let alone meet everything that it requires. And so, again, just as an overview that will be made plain as we go along, the Sermon on the Mount shows us the utter essential requirement of conversion, of the new birth, of living out this life of repentance because we cannot do it on our own. Stated differently, the Sermon on the Mount shows us that Christ must save us if we are to enter into the kingdom of heaven. We cannot do it on our own. Christ saves us. The old man dies and new life begins.

Just a couple of New Testament Scriptures to orient your thoughts on this. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, we read that, "if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has

passed away; behold, the new has come." The Sermon on the Mount describes the newness of life that comes in the repentant man who has been born from above. In Colossians 1:13 and 14, we read, "He rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son." That's Colossians 1:13 and 14. You go from being in the kingdom of darkness under Satan, transferred over to the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of Christ, under the Lordship of Christ.

Now let me just say in passing, make a couple of points. In the old days, you don't hear this teaching quite so much, there was a view of some certain kinds of Bible teachers, the old-line dispensationalists, who would say things like this, C. I. Scofield said that the Sermon on the Mount is neither the duty nor the privilege of the church, and what they believed was that the Sermon on the Mount was describing life in a future kingdom, the millennial kingdom, and therefore had no direct application to people in the church. That teaching, however well intended it may be, was sorrowfully mistaken and misleading. There is nothing in the Sermon on the Mount itself, if you read it on its own terms, that would indicate that, that would limit the application of it that way. There is also the added consideration that all of the themes that you find addressed in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5, 6, and 7, you can see repeated elsewhere in the New Testament.

And beyond that, one of the things that I think is important to know and to take notice of, go to the end of the book of Matthew 28. Matthew 28:19 and 20 we read, "Go," Jesus gives this commission to his disciples as they go out and he says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," call them into my kingdom, and what are we to do with these disciples? We are to "teach them to observe all that I have commanded you." Well, everything that Jesus commanded includes what he taught in the Sermon on the Mount in chapters 5, 6, and 7; it's right there earlier in the same book of the New Testament. And so for all of those reasons, we do not accept that aspect of the old line dispensational teaching. We believe that the Sermon on the Mount, in the language of John MacArthur's old book, describes kingdom living here and now. "Kingdom Living Here and Now," that is the title of tonight's message in honor of Pastor MacArthur, whose 84th birthday was just yesterday. And so kingdom living here and now, this is for us today. We are to understand this today as being applicable to the way that we are to think and to live.

So, with those preliminaries out of the way, let me say this or ask this. Jesus said you must be born again. What is it that the new birth produces? What does new life from God above look like? We are to bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance. What does the fruit of repentance look like? Well, with the verbal links that we've seen in chapters 4, 5, 6, and 7, we have laid out for us in this systematic teaching of our blessed Lord what it is that the new life looks like, what it is that the new birth produces, what it is that we are to aspire after and seek after as believers in Christ, what it is that repentance looks like. And so we're going to see tonight a satellite view of the entire Sermon on the Mount and we're going to see five different aspects of what true spiritual life looks like, and it starts with your character. Point number 1, what does a new birth produce? Number 1, it changes your inner man. It changes your inner man. Do you know something about a new birth, a new perspective, whereas what you once loved you now hate, what you once pursued you

now reject, is there a sense in your heart that you hate, you regret, you turn away from what you used to be in order to embrace something new?

Let me just give you a little sense here in Galatians 5, just for some biblical orientation here, Galatians 5 to set up the contrast of the old man with what we're going to see in a quick overview of the Beatitudes. Galatians 5:19. "Now, the works of the flesh," that is the unsaved man, the old man, the one still in Adam and not in Christ, what is his life like? What cogitates in his mind and in his heart? What is bubbling up from within him, from within her? Verse 19, Galatians 5, "the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God." You will not inherit the kingdom if those things are the mark of your heart and the mark of your life. This is the mark of a man dead in trespasses and sins, who loves the world, who loves the things of the world, who is animated by the power of Satan himself.

Now, that's what in one degree or another, that's what every unsaved man is like. He is dead to the things of God. There is no love for Christ. There is no love for the word. There is no love for the people of God. There is no desire to understand spiritual life. No real desire to glorify God. There is an utter godlessness that marks the unsaved man that he must be delivered from if he is to enter into the kingdom of heaven. And so, beloved, when God saves a man, when God brings the word to bear upon his heart and causes him to be born again, 1 Peter 1:3, there is a radical revolutionary change within the man that starts in his heart, starts in his inner man; you could look at Mark 7:20 to 23 for other aspects of Jesus' teaching on the wickedness of the human heart. There has to be a complete deliverance from that and what happens in the new birth, again point number 1, it changes your inner man, what happens in the new birth, what happens as the fruit of true repentance is that God works into the man, into the woman, a broken heart, a heart that grieves over sin, that is oriented toward righteousness as a priority.

Look at verses 3 through 6 with me of Matthew 5. Matthew 5:5 through 6 again. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." We will see in a few weeks that the poor in spirit means this is someone who recognizes he is spiritually bankrupt. "I have no resources of my own to commend myself to God." He is poor. He has nothing of his own to commend himself to God. Only a person like that will be found in the kingdom of heaven. Anyone who reserves some cherished idea of being a good person, someone that thinks that they are good enough that they can make their way on their own apart from Christ, that's someone who's not saved no matter how long they've spent inside a church, no matter how long they've called themselves a Christian, no matter who their parents or grandparents were, none of those other associations matter. It's a matter inside the heart, how does this man view himself in the presence of a holy God? Is there some aspect of Isaiah saying, "Woe is me, for I've seen the King, I've seen the King of glory, I'm not fit for his presence"? Is there something of the tax collector in Luke 18 saying, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner"? That's the idea of being poor in spirit. Those are the only kind of people that are going to heaven and someone who commends themselves is outside the kingdom.

Verse 3 again, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied." And on it goes. Beloved, all we're calling attention to here this evening for now is the spiritual nature of these Beatitudes, the self-assessment of being spiritually bankrupt, an attitude towards sin that mourns over it rather than joking about it. It's always a very bad sign when someone repeatedly finds humor in joking about sin, whether or not they actually participate in it or not. Sin is a violation of a holy God. Sin is rebellion against a holy God. It is not a place to find humor in. It's not something to trifle with. The man who has been born again from a holy God looks at the darkness and the evil of sin and grieves and mourns over and says, "That violates the character of God. I want nothing to do with that. Even though it still clings to me, I reject it. I want nothing to do with it." You mourn over sin. It's not a source of entertainment in the shows and movies that we watch. It's not something to be lightly jested about. It's not to be jested about at all amongst ourselves. You know, I've been around ungodly pastors in the past that would, you know, the things that would come out of their mouths in the name of humor, in the name of joking was just so repulsive to me. This is not a game. This is serious, serious stuff because this passage of Scripture, the Beatitudes are saying the only people that will go to heaven, the only people who have their sins forgiven and the promise of eternal life are people who have this inward attitude towards sin in themselves. And it's not just an aversion to sin in verse 6, you see it's a positive desire for the good, a rejection of the evil, a desire for the good. Verse 6, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."

Beloved, an unsaved man does not desire this kind of righteousness, this kind of righteousness that is rooted in a knowledge of a holy God and a desire to please him, a desire to glorify him, to know him, to please him as he's revealed in the 66 books of the Bible, and so right from the start, right from the start, the Sermon on the Mount brings a massive collision with the darkened heart of the unsaved man and it causes you and me to examine ourselves and say, what remnants of the old man am I tolerating? Is there an all-out war declared in my heart against sin, or do I have areas of my life that I comfortably accommodate sin, like so many old clothes in the closet that have turned moldy and need to be thrown out? You see, beloved, the new birth and true repentance produce a change in your very character.

In Ezekiel 36, we read God speaking about the coming of the new birth in the advent with Christ, "I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." It's going from something cold and dead to something warm and living. "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules." That's Ezekiel 36:26 and 27. The new birth produces a new heart. God gives a new heart in the new birth, you could say it that way, and the mark, the spiritual characteristics of this new heart is seen in what we find in these eight Beatitudes in verses 3 through 10. We'll study each one of them individually in weeks to come. For now, it's just enough to see in this

satellite view of the Sermon on the Mount that the new birth, true repentance, changes your inner man; it changes you from what you were into something brand new.

I've said it this way on multiple occasions in the past. One of the ways that I know that the time of my conversion was real is that there was this growing awareness after I had been born again of how much I detested the way that I used to be, how much I hated the old Don Green. And I've said it like this, and it's still true, people recoil sometimes at the violent imagery, but if the old Don Green walked into this room and started to assert himself, I would take a ball bat and I would beat him to death because I hate him that much. He does not deserve to live in light of the change that Christ has produced, in light of what Christ saved. He has no right to exist anymore. And I hate what he was. I hate who I used to be so much that I want it to die. There's an element of hyperbole in that but understand that the new man hates the old man. Paul speaks in those terms in Romans 7 when he says, "I do the things I hate and I don't do the things that I want to do." There's a hatred involved for it, not a comfortable coexistence. The idea that a man would be truly saved and would go on comfortably living in sin is a contradiction. It is an oxymoron with the emphasis on moron. This is unthinkable because Christ came to save sinners and he came to save sinners from sin and the man who is truly converted comes to Christ not because he wants permission to continue living in an evil way, he comes to Christ because he truly wants to be delivered from his old way of living, from the Galatians 5:19 to 21 kind of man. He doesn't simply want to be delivered from going to hell, he wants to be delivered from sin itself. Same thing for truly converted women, of course.

These spiritual qualities mark the one that the Sermon on the Mount describes. This is one of the beginning marks of the new birth and so, just by way of gentle application, I ask you, beloved, whether you know something of this kind of inner life. Do you know something of at least desiring to be like this? Of saying, "I hate my old ways of sin. I grieve over the man or woman that I used to be. I really and truly want to please Christ with my life. I want to be like Christ. I want to be with him. I want to please him." Do you know something about that because that's the mark of what the Lord does when he imparts the new birth to someone. Do you know something of a change in your inner man?

Now secondly, as we continue this satellite view of the Sermon on the Mount, what we see is that the new birth, true repentance, number 2, what does it do? It changes you in the world. It changes you in the world and we see this in verses 11 through 16, where it says,

11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. 12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 13 You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. 14 You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to

all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

We see in those opening verses of that section of the Sermon on the Mount that the world rejects people like this and true salvation, the character of a true believer, conflicts with a world of sin. It shines light into the darkness. When the light comes, the rats scatter. The rats don't like the light, mice don't like the light and so they run from it and true disciples, as described here in the Sermon on the Mount, there is a new relationship with the world that takes place. Whereas before the world embraced us and we embraced the world and all of its evil and its philosophies of thinking and behavior, now we've been brought out of the world and now we're on a different side of the battle line. And that can't be avoided. You cannot be friends with the world and be friends with Christ.

Look at James 4 and this is something that really needs to be emphasized to wash away some of the sentimentality and false notions of grace that abide in the minds of some professing believers. In James 4:4, James in his confrontational style, James being a book that reads like a commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, James 4:4 says, "You adulterous people! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God."

In 1 John 2, you don't need to turn there, verse 15, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away along with its desires," it's passing away along with its desires, "but whoever does the will of God abides forever." You adulteresses, wanting to love the world, be accepted and fit in with the world, don't you realize that's opposition to God? Don't love the world, the things that are in the world; its philosophies, its desires, are all contrary to the kingdom of God. We stand apart from the world and shine into it like light, we're like salt that acts as a preservative to it. We'll perhaps discuss that another time.

Let's state it another way that many have said over the years. Where is your home? Where do you live in the aspirations of your heart? Are your desires entirely earthbound with career and relationships and, you know, attainments and possessions here on earth? Or do you have a sense that this world is not my home, that here we have no lasting city, but we're looking for a city whose presence is with God, the eternal city, the New Jerusalem, "That's where my desires, that's where my home, that's where my citizenship is." Do you know something of that because when God causes a man or a woman to be born again, he places in their hearts aspirations that go beyond the world and put us in conflict with the world and therefore we have an effect on the world through the testimony of our lives, the testimony of our lips, and as Noah stood apart from the world as he built the ark and testified thereby of the judgment to come.

As a practical matter of application, I won't expand on this, but I worry about so many things. You're not supposed to worry, I get that. Just stay with me here. I worry about so-

called professing Christians that are just so preoccupied with the political world, so preoccupied with their political rights. To some extent, okay, but as a dominating passion in life, uh-uh, no, that's not right at all because Christians who worry about their political rights to such an extent, they're not seeing themselves rightly or what it means to be in the kingdom of God. We belong to another realm and as Christians we will suffer in this world for Christ, and simply asserting political rights and being concerned with those things, stay with me, in disregard to the character of the Sermon on the Mount, in disregard to the alien nature of being in this world, shows that something very substantial is missing from a view of what it means to be a believer in this world, to be in the kingdom of God while walking among the people of men. You say, "This is all pretty searching." I know, that's the nature of the Sermon on the Mount. Like a temperature probe being put into a roast, the Sermon on the Mount probes your inner heart, probes your inner man, and sees where the temperature is, and sees where there's warmth and what is still cold, and as part of that, it probes your relationship with the world, with unsaved people. And we realize, we recognize, we accept the fact that being in Christ will bring us into conflict with unbelievers and that that is unavoidable for the true Christian. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you on my account," Jesus says.

We can't have it both ways. We can't be thoroughly pleasing to God and thoroughly pleasing to the world. At some point we have to stop sitting on the fence and say which side do you want to belong to? The Sermon on the Mount puts it to you in those direct terms. Christ is, of course, the one who preached the Sermon on the Mount, preached it on a single occasion contrary to what many commentators will tell you. Christ comes to you and says, "Which side of the fence will you fall on? Which side of the fence do you choose? You cannot have it both ways. You cannot be a friend with the world and be a friend with God. Make your choice." Later on in Matthew 10, Christ will drive this point home even more and say, "I've come to set a father against his son, a mother against her daughter," and on it goes, a man's enemies will be the members of his own household.

This comes with the territory, beloved. The faithful disciple cannot excuse himself from that aspect of his commission. It would be like a soldier saying to his commanding sergeant, "No, I don't think I'll go into that battle. That's too dangerous for me." Well, no, it doesn't work that way. You're under command and you will go. For us, it's not simply a question of the authority of Christ to send us where he will, but question of affections. You know, for however grossly imperfectly I live out such things, I can say that my heart desires to please Christ and to be with him in the midst of the conflict. I do want that, however far short I fall. That is where my heart's at. And so, in like manner, I ask you, as the Sermon on the Mount searches you, Jesus searches you through this Sermon, my friends, do you embrace the cost to be light in a sinful world? Do you embrace the reality that friendship with the world is hostility to God and vice versa? This is fundamental to the new birth. This is absolutely essential to understanding what it means to be a Christian and it's why it's such a travesty for churches to blur those lines in an effort to swell their numbers and filling the house with unconverted people by minimizing and avoiding these kinds of themes.

What does the new birth do? What does it produce? It changes your inner man, and it changes you in relationship to the world. Now, moving on. Point number 3 as we move on through the Sermon on the Mount, the new birth, true repentance, does something else to you, it changes your view of God's word. It changes your view of God's word and just for in terms of the section, this is Matthew 5:17 all the way through verse 48, and I'm not going to take the time to read through that whole section here. But in the Sermon on the Mount and in this section of verses 17 to 48, one of the things among many that Jesus does is he shows us the spiritual nature of the word of God, of the commandments of God. And skipping over a very critical portion of Scripture, verses 17 to 20, skipping over that for now to make this point, is that when you've been born again, when you start to grow in Scripture, you realize that the law of God, the word of God, is not simply about the external things of behavior that you do, but the commandments of God not only tell you what not to do or what to do, it also tells you how you are to be, how you are to think, how you are to feel, what your desires are to be. And so in Matthew 5:21 to 22, for example,

21 "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire."

The Jews had so reduced and constricted the commandments of God to say that as long as you have not physically committed the act of murder and actually taken the life of someone else, you have satisfied what God's law requires. Jesus says that is not a proper understanding of the law at all, because the law applies to the inner man, not just the outer man. And so the law of God pierces your heart, pierces your inner man, and says, have you ever been angry with someone in an unrighteous way? Have you ever spoken to someone in an insulting way? If you have, you've broken the commandment of murder, and you're judged guilty by the law of God.

In like manner, Jesus famously says, In verses 27 and 28,

27 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

It doesn't require the physical act to be guilty of the spirit of adultery. Your heart desires, Jesus says. God looks at and says, "Are your desires adulterous? Do you long for that even if you don't act upon it?" And, you know, people growing up in a Christian home or with some kind of spiritual influence might out of fear avoid the physical act but have raging desires and imaginations and fantasies that they dwell on and circulate in their minds and Jesus comes and says, "That's exactly what I'm talking about. That's exactly what the law of God condemns." There is no such thing as being a righteous, celibate homosexual, for example, because the desires itself are corrupt and perverse and contrary to the law of God. And so to say the desires are okay is in direct contradiction to the

teaching of Christ, and in my series on homosexuality, I have a full message about that. If that shocks anyone and someone hears this later and wants to contest it, go first to that series on homosexuality and the message titled, "The Heart of Same-Sex Attraction."

Look, beloved, within the walls of this room we have to understand that all around us so-called evangelicals are compromising on this very point in order to try to make peace with the elements that are behind Pride Month. We cannot go there. We cannot be faithful to Christ and go there. The same thing is true of heterosexual desires. You can't longingly wish that you could be with someone else, someone other than your spouse. You can't righteously desire that under any circumstances and it's the same in the homosexual realm as well. And these kinds of principles become the plumb line upon which you can measure the truthfulness of a teaching, the faithfulness of a teacher, or someone to stay away from. They say, "I can't help the desires." Well, your desires need to be sanctified. You need to be renewed in your mind. Your mind needs to be renewed by Scripture so new desires will flow out of it. Not comfortably say, "I can live in both realms." That's not true. That's unrighteous. Why would a true Christian want to harbor desires for things that God explicitly condemns and forbids? This is unthinkable. This is unthinkable. You say, "Well, I was born that way." Well, I don't agree with that but even if you were born that way, it's just another indication that you need to be born again.

The point of all of this in the context of what we're discussing here this evening is that the new birth, true repentance, changes your view of God's word, and you start to see the spiritual application of it, and you embrace that. You don't fight against it. You embrace it to the point of saying, "I wish I was more like that in my inner man," rather than excusing the corruption that is still in your desires.

One more. How does it change your view of God's word? Verses 43 through 45 of chapter 5.

43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust."

Now beloved, what's your attitude toward those that oppose you? Do they have a place in your prayers? Can you love them? Can you help them? That's not natural in the kingdom of Satan. That's not natural to the Galatians 5:19 to 21 man. This requires a transformation of heart. This is part of what God does and he instills a principle in us that is like unto himself, and just as God sends the rain upon the just and the unjust alike, so there is a desire to do good to those that love us and those who don't. And so, beloved, the question is, in the privacy of your own thoughts, in the privacy of your own heart, do you desire righteousness there, or are you content just with an outward show that might be impressive to men but that God sees all the way through? You see, the new birth produces in the repentant heart a desire to put to death secret sins as well as those which other men can see. It's not simply a matter of what do other people think about me

horizontally, the new birth produces a man who sees himself in the presence of God, who sees himself under the authority and the omniscience of God and says, "I want to be righteous where God sees whether anyone else sees it or not."

So Christ in the Sermon calls us to righteous attitudes, not just righteous behavior. There's the character. There's the relationship to the world. There's the understanding that comes of God's word. Now let's pause here for just a moment for something that I'll probably repeat at the end of the message but already, beloved, you should see that this is far beyond the ability of any man to say, "I'm going to take it up and do that. I'm going to take it up and I'm going to have all of these righteous desires in my heart. I'm going to hate everything in the world. I'm just going to pick up and do that on my own power and I'm going to change the way that I think about God's word." We don't have the power to do that in our unsaved state. We have to be born again. And another way of thinking about it is this is so multifaceted in the searching nature of its reality that it would be like trying to hold 200 baseballs in your two hands. You can't do it. Maybe you could hold one or two for a little while, but these balls are just falling out everywhere because your hands aren't big enough, your arms aren't big enough to hold that many baseballs. You can't keep them all there. Well, the unsaved heart has no capacity, the unsaved heart is not big enough to hold all that the Sermon on the Mount, in the words of Christ, require. You say, "Well, that's humbling." Precisely. That's the whole point. The Sermon on the Mount shows you that you must be born again.

Now, point number 4, along with changing your inner man, changing you in the world, changing your view of God's word, point number 4, the new birth, true repentance, it changes your view of God. It changes your view of God himself and this is all Matthew 6, Matthew 6:1 through 34. Obviously, we're not going to read even most of this but a true Christian gives priority to seeking the approval of God, not man. He wants the approval of God more than anything else and Jesus comes and he speaks to this issue in Matthew 6:1, which is kind of a title verse to what follows all the way through verse 18 when he says,

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

There is a complete reorientation of perspective. The kingdom of God is no place for people to be seeking nameplates for what they've given to this or that ministry because the nameplate is simply for recognition among men. No matter how else you try to shape that in, you can't turn that goat into a sheep and what Scripture says, what Jesus says, is beware of practicing your righteousness before other people so that you can be seen by them, so that they will congratulate you and say, "Oh, what a good person you must be for your giving and your praying and the different things that you do." Jesus warns against all of that and says, "Don't let that be your motivation for the exercise of spiritual disciplines. If you do it for that reason, if you do it seeking praise from men, you have no reward from God. It's the praise of men you want, it's the praise of men you get. That's all the further it goes." God does not honor that.

Jesus tells his disciples to practice their righteousness in secret, in secret, where men cannot see. So, for example, verse 3, it's really hard to skip over any of these verses. Let's go back to verse 2. "Thus," in other words, in light of this principle about not practicing your righteousness before men to be seen by them, Jesus says, thus in light of that principle,

2 "Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward."

Don't call attention to it. Verse 3, "But if you're my disciple,

3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

He says the same thing about prayer in verse 6. He says,

6 ...when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

Your Father who sees in secret, verse 4, verse 6. And in the realm of fasting, verse 17, verse 16, why not?

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

Whether you're giving, praying, fasting, all of these spiritual activities, Jesus says, "Don't display it. Do it privately. Do it unto God and know that your Father sees and that that's enough, that you're seeking that." I have absolutely no use for teachers that go around talking about how they're fasting on this and that day, they fasted because they needed such or that, people that make big displays on social media about their prayer times and their, you know, their cup of Java, closely cropped pictures of their cup of steaming Java and the Bible and their journal beside and, you know, "Here I'm doing my devotions today." Welcome to a modern-day practice so common in our circles that Scripture condemns. "Don't do that," Jesus says, "Don't attract praise to yourself for things that should be done privately before God." It changes your view of things. God did not give us the disciplines of giving and prayer and fasting in order to practice them before each other and congratulate ourselves. These are means of humbling ourselves before him to

seek him and his grace. That's what the new birth produces. It changes priorities. The world versus God.

Look at verse 19.

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

And repentance, the new birth, leads you into a life of trusting God rather than prevailing anxiety. Verses 25 to 34 speak of that. Just look at verses 31 and 32 for the sake of time. Jesus says, after going through how God cares for everything in his providence and therefore he will care for you, he says in verse 31,

31 Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

It changes your whole view of God. The priority is God himself. "If I am right with God, everything else will fall into place." That's what matters to the regenerate heart. It changes a whole view of God so that there's an attitude of humility before God and a responsibility and a desire to serve and to please him rather than thinking God is a cosmic vending machine who you go and pull the right levers to get what you want in the end. It's a complete reorientation of a perspective on God.

Fifthly and finally, it changes your view of final judgment. True salvation, the new birth, true repentance, awakens you to the reality of final judgment and you live life in light of it. It's no longer an earthbound perspective. It's no longer about what happens today or what my goals are for next week, next year, for my career. All of a sudden, everything has been changed, everything is viewed differently in light of the fact that I will one day give an account to my Maker and Creator for my life and that is going to be far more important than anything that happens to me during the frame of my 70 or 80 years. And this pulsates in your mind with a reason to live, something that transcends everything else in life, "I'm going to give an account to God. I've got to factor that in to the way that I live and the way that I think." A true Christian lives knowing that a day of judgment is coming.

Look at Matthew 7:1 and 2.

1 "Judge not, that you be not judged. 2 For with the judgment you pronounce [here it is] you will be judged [you will be judged], and with the measure you use it will be measured to you."

You will be judged. The person who's been born again becomes aware of that and it factors into life. Verses 13 to 14.

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

You say, "There's a judgment coming and according to Jesus," you say to yourself, "there's only a few that are finding, comparatively few, that are finding the narrow gate. Many are going through a broad gate of destruction. That has to change the way that I think and live, the way that I view people, what I say to them, how I communicate to them." And then there's this spirit of self-examination that it provokes as well in light of Jesus' words in verses 21 to 23.

21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?'"

Three times there in that one verse, "in your name," and it wasn't real. It wasn't genuine. It wasn't born out of this relationship that is rooted in being in the kingdom of God. Verse 23,

23 And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.'"

Now look, even a Christian that has a full assurance of their salvation is sobered by those words and realizes and takes into account there is so much at stake. There is so much deception at work, at work in the world and in the church is what I mean by that, and it sobers you. It makes you serious minded and it motivates you to live these things, not simply to give lip service to Jesus, as we read in verses 24 to 27.

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them

It's not the hearers of the law that will be justified, Romans says, but the doers of the law will be justified, by which we mean that true faith will work. True faith has an impact on everyone who is born again and changes them somehow in line with these things that we're seeing from the Sermon on the Mount.

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them

Notice again it's everyone, not simply reserved for a select group in a future kingdom.

24 "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew, that house didn't fall, it had been founded on the rock. 26 And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them, foolish

I made a joke earlier about oxymoron. This is the word from which we get moron.

26 ...everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them [is like a moron, he's] a foolish man who built his house on the sand. 27 And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it."

Because an eternal soul has just been lost and there's no reversing that, there's no accounting for it, there's no mitigating the eternal ruin of someone hearing these words and walking away unchanged.

Now beloved, when you consider the inner man, our relationship in the world, our view of God's word, our view of God, our view of final judgment, I'll just say it one more time: no one lives this way, no one has these kinds of affections in their heart when they're unconverted. No one has the power to become this way. No one can hold 200 loose baseballs in their hand. No one can do that. And so in the satellite view of the Sermon on the Mount, we see that in its totality, we see the need for God to intervene. We needed God to change us, God to save us, God to act outside and upon us, not to try to earn his favor because we can't make ourselves like this in our own power. This requires supernatural power from above. You must be born again. You must be born from above. Jesus said it in Matthew 18:3, "Unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of God." John 3:3, "Unless one is born again, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." And we do not have the power to produce our own birth.

You say, "Well, this is desperate. What shall we do? Who then can be saved?" Precisely. If those questions start to bubble up in your mind, you're starting to see the implications of what Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount. No man can do this. We must have help from God above. What is impossible with man is possible with God. We don't try to do this on our own power apart from Christ. We flee to Christ and say, "Christ, have mercy on me, the sinner! Save me! Help me because I am lost and what will become of me if you do not help me?"

Beloved, am I saying too much when I say this: the professing church today reflects so little of the Sermon on the Mount. I'm speaking broadly, but it's not without application within our own walls. Beloved, many inside church buildings, Sunday to Sunday...let's put it this way, if what Jesus said is true, if the Sermon on the Mount is right, then many people inside a church building Sunday to Sunday are not actually in the kingdom of God because these things mark every true believer. They and they alone is the meaning of those opening eight verses, "Blessed are, blessed are, theirs is the kingdom of heaven." They and they alone, they're the only ones in the kingdom. The only ones. And so many

inside the building are not actually in the kingdom. This is a sad reality but do you know what? The Lord's brought it to our attention, the Lord's brought it to your attention today to make sure that you are in the kingdom. And if you feel convicted and say, "This is not describing my spiritual life at all. I don't know where I've been the past 30 years, but I could not possibly be born again if these things are the marks of a true Christian." Well, if you feel a conviction like that, beloved, don't run. Don't put your fingers in your ears. Don't deny it. Don't brush it off as if this weren't important. This is the most important thing in the universe. If you feel convicted, don't run away, run to Christ and beg him to be merciful to you, the sinner. And if you do, do you know what he'll do? He'll lead you safely into his kingdom.

Let's pray together.

Father, may you help us judge ourselves rightly in response to the truth of your word. May you draw to yourself those that see that they are outside your kingdom, Don't leave them outside, reach your hand out to them and pull them in, we pray. And Father, as we interact with those around us, give us the integrity to speak hard things to those who need to hear them, lest they be like the man whose house fell and the fall was great. Make us instruments, Father, in your mighty, omnipotent hand, make us instruments, vessels of your saving grace to others. Use us for that end. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Thanks for listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find more church information, Don's complete sermon library and other helpful materials at thetruthpulpit.com teaching God's people God's word. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.