

Matthew 5:1-2

This is Living

The other day Adalee and I had a daddy daughter date at Firehouse here in Covington. As we were sitting there eating she looked at me and said, "Daddy most people don't follow Jesus do they?" With reluctance, I said, "No dear, most people don't." Undeterred she looked over at a man who was ordering his food, pointed and said, "Well he does." I looked at the man and then back to her and asked her, "How do you know that he follows Jesus?" Without hesitation she said, "He's wearing pants and shoes." A little later into our meal another lady walked in and was ordering. Adalee looked at her, got my attention, pointed at her, and with a smile on her face she said to me, "She follows Jesus too."

What is a Christian? Is a Christian someone who reads their Bible, lives a just life, a person who goes to church on Sunday, wears pants when it is appropriate? There is only one answer that describes what a Christian is. A Christian is someone who has been born again, one who has received life when there was none before. Being a Christian doesn't just change one thing about your life, this changes your life completely.

Today we get the privilege of entering what will be a lengthy study here at Oxford. We will begin to study the Sermon on the Mount. Turn to Matthew 5. The Sermon on the Mount is the teaching of Jesus that details what life in his kingdom is like.

Because this text is so important in our lives, we are going to look at it in great detail over the next year or so. This is going to be good and you don't want to miss a Sunday. We get the privilege of seeing the Word change our lives, if we take it.

Before we get too far it is important for us to remember the setting. Matthew is telling us about Jesus. Matthew, the Spirit-filled Apostle, is interpreting Jesus for us. We can't interpret Jesus on our own, we will get it wrong, but Matthew's interpretation of Jesus can be trusted. Why? Because he was there. He saw Jesus raise the dead, heal the sick, die on a cross, be raised back to life, ascend into heaven. He knew what Jesus smelt like. But more importantly he was directly commissioned by the Holy Spirit to tell us what he saw, to tell us who Jesus is. This is exactly what Matthew is doing. He is not just recalling events he is interpreting theologically for us this tremendous time when the Eternal Son became incarnate and came seeking and saving us lost ones.

Jesus has come to remake the world. He has come to reorder the world to himself. Who is he? Love in the flesh. Absolute perfection. Jesus has come to put things back into order. Jesus has come to a broken world to set it straight. The way that he does this is by his life. He comes to live so that he can die and then from death comes back to life all so he can undo our brokenness, undo death and give us life. At the beginning of his

life he comes preaching this message of good news, detailing for us what life looks like in his Kingdom.

## READ TEXT

As we approach the Sermon on the Mount I cannot over emphasize the sheer weight of what we are approaching. This is God's Holy Word given to us for our instruction so that we may know what life is. We would do well to have the habit of the Old Church and approach Scripture on our knees in humility as we hear the very voice of God.

Today in our hearing we have God's Word delivered to us. Most are unaware of how providential this is. Just take a moment to let this sink in - today God has a word for you. Avoid at all cost any superficial thoughts about worship and feel the weight of glory. The Sermon on the Mount confronts any superficial thoughts we have about worship. Read the Sermon and you will see beauty. Read the Sermon and you will feel the weight of glory crushing you under its high demands.

What's so heavy about the Sermon? Everything in the Sermon is just normal for citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven. Some read over the sayings of the sermon and forget that it is a description of all who trust in Jesus. These sayings seems so high and unattainable to us because of the darkness that is all around us. But thankfully he has come to deliver us from the domain of darkness and transfer us to the kingdom of his Beloved Son (Colossians 1:13)

The sayings of this sermon are meant to be lived out. The saying don't just float up to the clouds, they penetrate our hearts and changes us forever. I believe the heart of the Sermon is at 5:13-16. The reason I believe this is how Matthew places the Sermon. Look at what comes before. Jesus begins his ministry, calls the 12, and then Jesus goes back to mission. Matthew wants us to see that Christ wants us to live this life that he is calling us to before others - live on mission.

For most of us this is where we fall off. We are fine to affix a nice saying from the Sermon on our walls but when it comes to actually putting it into practice, when it comes to actually turning the other cheek, forgiving others who spitefully use us. God has called us to this purpose - living out, with all the difficulty and friction that goes with, the Sermon on the Mount.

Jesus has come to begin to bring the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of God is the goal of Scripture, the goal of the entire earth. The world is desperately grasping, desperately looking for men and women who show them what it means to live. Who show them what it means to hope, just look at the election we have just had. What a display of division as both sides blasted the other in a bloodthirsty war of words. Why are people so invested in politics? Hopeful people are misplacing their hope in politics. I read a comment the other day from a leading member of the outgoing administration.

As they were reflecting about what was coming through the incoming president he said, "Now we know how the loss of hope feels." What a fascinating quote coming from a member of an administration that built its platform on two slogans: Hope and Change. Politics can't give everlasting hope. Jesus can and he has come to bring his kingdom, a kingdom that is everything that we could ever hope for and everything that we could ever need. We often talk about desiring revival and I declare that a revival would happen if we would live as we are called, live the Sermon on the Mount.

The reason that Jesus has come was to enable us to live the Sermon on the Mount. Listen to Titus 2:14, [Jesus Christ] *who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works*. What does this mean? It means that Jesus has made a way for us to live the Sermon on the Mount by the self giving of himself for us. Don't miss this. The Sermon on the Mount is a picture of who we already are in Christ as well as who we will be. It is not something for us to attain so much as it is a picture of what our Lord Jesus Christ has come to secure for us. We are told to live this way because this is who we are.

Now that we have come this far lets quickly walk through the Sermon so that we can see what life is all about.

## **1. Life is Only Found in Jesus**

This sermon strikes us because there is nothing else like it on earth. Of supreme importance is what comes first, the Beatitudes. Right away we see a complete reversal of everything that we know. Everything that the world holds dear is confronted in these 8 sayings of Jesus we call Beatitudes. At the base of the Mountain are these statements that reveal the impossibility of this life that Christ is calling us to. Thankfully we have Christ giving us life to continue the climb.

The Beatitudes reveal just how peculiar this life is. This life comes in contact with the world and they play themselves out in real world scenarios. Scenarios like anger, lust, divorce, oaths, retaliation, and how we treat our enemies.

The only way for us to live this life is for life to be given to us. We must receive the life that Jesus has given. There is no life outside of Jesus. Life is only found in Jesus.

## **2. Life is Depending on God For All Things**

We get to chapter six and see that the life that we are called to is nothing more than a life seeking God, depending upon him for all things. As Oswald Chambers said, "Obey God and leave all the consequences to Him."

When the rest of the world wants to call us away we have our Lord calling us to life through the Sermon on the Mount. Look how it plays out. We do things of charity not for attention but to be pleasing to God. When we pray we have an audience of one. When we fast we do so for one reason - God. We know that he is the greatest treasure that we seek. Because we have our greatest treasure we are not anxious.

This is living: Depending on God for All Things

### **3. True Living is Living to Please God**

By the time chapter seven comes we know where we are, we are in the presence of God. Chapter seven is there to remind us that true living is living in the presence of God. What does this mean? It means that we make it our ambition, no matter what, to be pleasing to God. We are living for eternity.

Why we live this way is clear: We are building our house on the Rock. True living is living to please God.

If this is living how much living is going on? Are you living? What is a Christian? One who has life in the Son. A Christian is one who says for me to live is Christ. A Christian is one who looks at the Sermon on the Mount and sees a portrait of themselves and is taking every effort to make the portrait set before them more clearly in their own lives.

Let's live this year. Let's stand and pray together.

Lord you have come to give us abundant life and shown us what it means to live. You have put us in the world for this purpose, please help us to work out this purpose in each moment of every day.

We are helpless apart from your enablement. We are all yours Lord. We cast our entire selves upon your mercies.

Take our lives, enable us to glorify you in all that we say, in all that we do, in our thoughts, in every thing that we are.