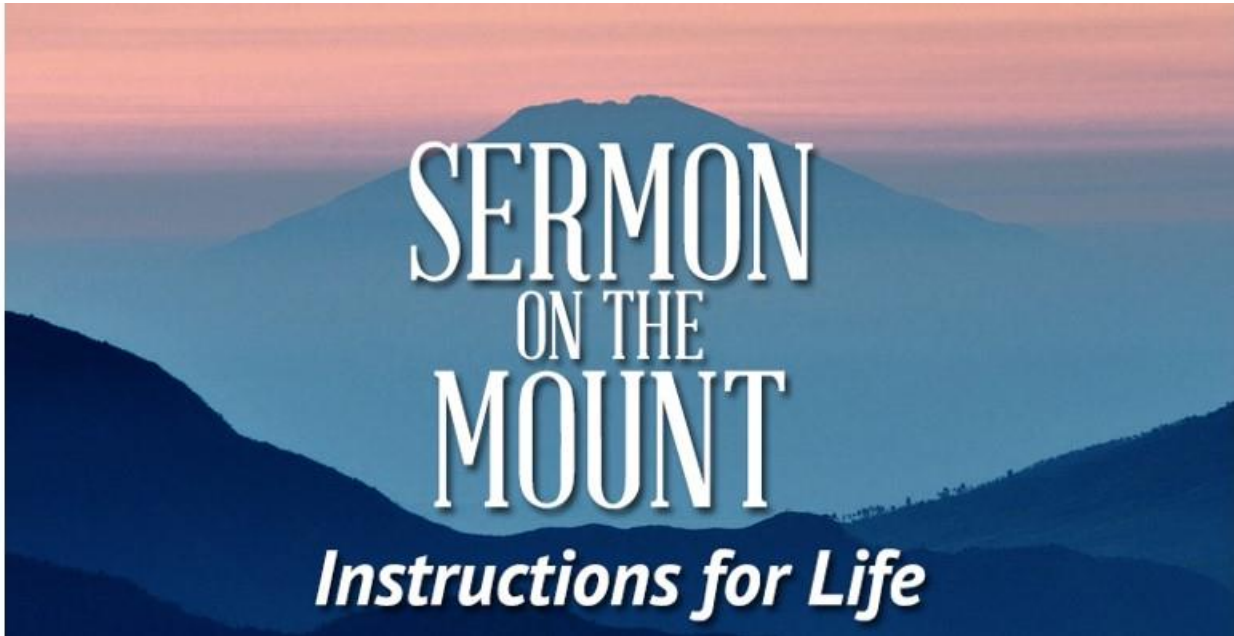


Kingdom-Style Living- The Sermon on the Mount

New Hope Global Sermon 2/9/21



Introduction

Jesus' first message when he began his own ministry in Capernaum was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." His early hearers could understand that phrase because they had kings and knew what obedience to kings meant. But for most of us in the contemporary world, I think the impact of this phrase is like an airplane joke – it flies over our heads (old joke – sorry!), and we just don't get it. Our sermon this week is Kingdom-Style Living, based on the Sermon on the Mount, so first we need to get a handle on this king issue.

Why would Jesus preach "the kingdom of heaven is near"? Because He came as a king and He reigns over the world today as King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Rev.19:16). That's His title in heaven, but it was prophesized in the Old Testament and proclaimed in the New Testament. Psalm 24 heralded:

Lift up your heads, you gates; be lifted up, you ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. ⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle. .
. ¹⁰ Who is he, this King of glory? The LORD Almighty— he is the King of glory.

As you may recall it was this psalm people chanted over Jesus as He rode into Jerusalem right before His death. That ride was prophesized in Zech.9:9, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! . . . See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt the foal of a donkey." Christians celebrate this now on what is called Palm Sunday. But many non-Christians and most nominal Christians don't get the implication of Jesus as King. They are stuck in a watered-down version of 'gentle Jesus, meek and mild.'

Jesus' hearers understood the meaning of a King to reign over them. Over the centuries since then, all kings on earth have definitely not been meek and mild nor benevolent. History is strewn with the wreckage created by evil kings. But Jesus is entirely different. He is the righteous King in the new kingdom of heaven he ushered in and reigns over for all eternity. And, as the reigning King, He sets the rules and the agenda for every member of His Kingdom. His Kingdom-style Living is summarized in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7).

The Authority of the King

In Mt. 5:21ff Jesus establishes His authority to lay down these new rules for living: “You have heard it said. . . but I say to you.” And that authority was clear throughout his lifetime. In fact, all three synoptic gospels note: “He taught as One with authority, not as the scribes (Mt. 7:29, Mk.1:22, Lk.4:32). With that authority came our Lord’s expectation that His followers would do what He said. I believe it was with great sorrow and righteous judgment that at the end of Luke’s account of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said: “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and not do what I say?” Lk.6:46. His true followers obey His words and live like He wants.

So his authority is our context, beloved, as we take Christ’s words in the Sermon on the Mount seriously and ask the Holy Spirit to implant them in our hearts and in our behaviors. Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, a British expositor of the Bible, says: “The Lord Jesus Christ died to enable us to live the Sermon on the Mount. . . He has made this possible for me. . . The Sermon on the Mount shows me the absolute need of the new birth and of the Holy Spirit and His work within” (*Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*, Eerdman, vol I, 1967, p. 18). D.A. Carson agrees: “The more I read these three chapters – Matthew 5, 6 and 7 – the more I am both drawn to them and shamed by them. Their brilliant light draws me like a moth to a spotlight but the light is so bright that it sears and burns. No room is left for forms of piety which are nothing more than veneer and sham” (*Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, Baker Books, 1987, reprinted 2019, p. 13).

C.S. Lewis got it right, in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*, when Lucy heard that Aslan was the lion king who ruled Narnia. “Is he safe?” she asked hesitantly. “No,” replied Mr. Beaver. “But he is good.” A cautionary word to let God’s Words burn into our souls and empower us to live them as we consider the Sermon on the Mount. Obviously, weeks of sermons could be spent on these 3 chapters, but instead I will treat them as a unit and just give a cursory summary of their content as we continue through the Gospel of Matthew as a whole. Let’s consider that summary through the teaching of the Do’s and Don’ts of Christ’s kingdom.

The Do’s and Don’ts of Kingdom-Style Living

Jesus describes Kingdom-style living first in terms of one’s character and relationship with God. It is directly opposite to what the world applauds. Jesus says those who recognize their utter insufficiency, those who are meek, those who are humble, those who yearn for righteousness, those who are merciful, those who are pure in heart and those who are peacemakers are the ones God blesses. These character traits picture the upside-down values of God’s kingdom. And because they are so foreign to our natural ways of living, they require the Holy Spirit to transform us from within. Then, we will be enabled to live them by the power of the Spirit

The Don’ts:

- Don’t defraud others through murder, adultery, divorce, loose oaths, and revenge (Mt.5:21-38).
- Don’t make religion about you – a religion of show for others’ applause (Mt. 6:1-8).
- Don’t store up treasures on earth that captivate your heart (Mt. 6:19-24).
- Don’t worry (Mt. 6:25-34).
- Don’t judge others (Mt. 7:1-6).
- Don’t follow the crowd down the wide path to destruction (Mt. 7:13-14).
- Don’t believe false prophets – you will know them by the fruit of their lives (Mt.7:15-20).
- Don’t live “for God” in your own strength (Mt. 7:21-23).

These Don’ts are a searing light of their own. If we are honest, we continually fall short in obeying them. But the Do’s take our breath away:

- “Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Mt. 5:48). The Message paraphrase: “*Grow up*. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”
- “Love your enemies and pray for those who continually abuse you” (Mt. 5:43-47).
- “Forgive others as our heavenly Father has forgiven you” (Mt. 6:14-15).
- Trust God and seek His kingdom above all else (Mt. 6:33-34), hunger and thirst to be like Him (Mt. 5:6).
- Pray and believe God will answer (Mt.7:7-11).
- “Do unto others as you want them to do to you.” The Message paraphrases this as: ”Ask yourself what you want people to do for you, then grab the initiative and do it for *them*” (Mt. 7:12).
- Build your lives on God’s Words (Mt. 7:24-27).

Living Jesus’ Do’s is not possible on our own! That kind of conformity to Christ’s character takes a life-long transformation. But let’s not get discouraged about this, beloved. My suggestion is that we take a different verse each week and ask God for His work in us to fulfill just that verse. Then share in our zoom time what God did. This way every time we live out one of His Kingdom-style mandates, God can get the glory. He promises to “work in us to will and to act according to his good purpose” (Phil.2:13).

With that promise, I want us to claim two of Paul’s benedictions for the Thessalonian believers:

I Thes. 3:12-13 “And may the Lord increase your love until it overflows toward one another and for all people, just as our love overflows toward you. Then your hearts will be strengthened in holiness so that you may be flawless and pure before *the face of* our God and Father at the appearing of our Lord Jesus with all his holy ones. Amen!”

I Thes. 5: 23-24: ²³ “Now, may the God of peace and harmony set you apart, making you completely holy. And may your entire being—spirit, soul, and body—be kept completely flawless in the appearing of our Lord Jesus, the Anointed One. ²⁴ The one who calls you by name is trustworthy and will thoroughly complete his work in you.”

Jesus makes kingdom-style living possible! PTL

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