

# **THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT**

Stephen Kaung

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## **PREFACE**

These four messages were delivered by Brother Stephen Kaung in the winter of 2002 at Alhambra, California. They are printed here as spoken with minimal editing done for clarity.

The spiritual burden of the speaker was given at the beginning of the first message: "I believe that the Sermon on the Mount is well known in a sense, but yet it is very little understood. What does the Lord really say to us? How should we respond to His word? I think it is very important for us to know because it has much to do with our daily living and much to do with our readiness for His return."

The viewpoint of the speaker is especially encouraging: "The Sermon on the Mount is a description of the life of our Lord Jesus. He has come to this earth and He has lived it once. Now He wants every one of us to live in the same way. He is teaching His disciples. He is not trying to condemn us. He is trying to bring us to the place

where all the potentials of that life may be fully realized.” May the Lord use this booklet to bless the readers whose hearts seek Him and whose eyes look upon His Kingdom!

## A HEAVENLY LIFE

*Matthew 4:23-5:2—And Jesus went round the whole of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom, and healing every disease and every bodily weakness among the people. And his fame went out into the whole of Syria, and they brought to him all that were ill, suffering under various diseases and pains, and those possessed by demons, and lunatics, and paralytics; and he healed them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, and Decapolis, and Jerusalem, and Judaea, and beyond the Jordan. But seeing the crowds, he went up into the mountain, and having sat down, his disciples came to him; and, having opened his mouth, he taught them.*

*Shall we pray:*

*Dear Lord, as we gather together our hearts are full of gratitude. We want to thank Thee for this opportunity. We thank Thee that Thou art always mindful of us, that Thou should gather us*

*together to hear Thy word. Dear Lord, we ask that Thou will speak to us. May Thy word truly be life and spirit to us. We commit ourselves to Thee. We pray that Thou will open our understanding, Thou will grant to us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that we may truly know Thee. And to know Thee is eternal life. We praise and thank Thee because we know that Thou art here with us and Thy Spirit is here to do Thy work. We just commit this time totally into Thy hand and may Thy name be glorified. We ask all in the name of our dear Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

We do thank the Lord for gathering us together. I always feel that every time God's people come together it is the mercy of God. We know that our Lord is coming soon, and He is preparing us for His return. So we thank Him for this opportunity, and we just look to Him that He will speak to our hearts, that we may be prepared, ready for Him.

The so-called Sermon on the Mount is recorded in Matthew 5, 6, and 7. I believe that the Sermon on the Mount, is well known in a sense, and yet it is very little understood. What



does the Lord really say to us? How should we respond to His word? I think it is very important for us to know because it has much to do with our daily living and much to do with our readiness for His return.

## **THE THEME OF MATTHEW**

In order to understand what the Sermon on the Mount really teaches, first of all, we need to understand the theme of the gospel according to Matthew. Probably, most of us know that the gospel according to Matthew is centered upon our Lord Jesus as King, and that He came into this world to set up His kingdom on this earth.

Truly our Lord Jesus is the Savior of the world. His very name *Jesus* means “He shall save His people from their sins.” Notice that it says, “He shall save *His* people from their sins.” It is *His* people; He is coming to save His people. So He is King, and He came into this world to save His own people from their sins. He is not only the King of the Jews; He is the King of all those whom He has called to Himself.

When our Lord Jesus was judged by Pilate, as recorded in John 18, Pilate asked Him, "Are You the King of the Jews?"

Our Lord Jesus answered, "I am the King. I was born for that very purpose. But My kingdom is not of this world. I came to bear witness to the truth, and those who are of the truth hear Me."

We know that our Lord Jesus is the King, but His kingdom is not of this world. He is bringing the kingdom of the heavens upon this earth. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them are given the right to be the children of God. All who believe in Him are born, not of this world, not of man's flesh, not of man, but of God.

In other words, our Lord Jesus came into this world to gather a people out of every tribe, every tongue, every nation, unto Himself to be His own people, and He is to be their King. When our Lord came into this world, the world rejected Him, but in God's mysterious way, when the world crucified Him on the cross, there on the cross He accomplished the work of redemption. He redeemed a people unto Himself. We may say

that heaven invaded the earth. Heaven came upon this earth and then drew a people into that kingdom. By the grace of God, we who are saved, we who have received the life from above, we became the sons of the kingdom.

## **THE LORD SPEAKS IN PARABLES**

In Matthew 13, our Lord Jesus spoke to us in parables. In the first parable He said, "The sower went out to sow the seed." The sower is none other but the Lord Himself, and the seed is the word of the kingdom. Some seed fell along the wayside. In other words, there are some people whose heart is like the wayside. It has been trodden and hardened. And the birds will come and pick up the seed.

Some seed fell into stony ground and it came up very quickly. But because there was no root, when the sun shone upon it, it withered. Then some fell into thorny ground. It does get root but when it grows up, it was killed by the thorns. So it does not bear fruit.

But thank God, some seed fell into good ground, and patiently it begins to grow and bear

fruit, a hundred fold, sixty fold, and thirty fold. When our Lord Jesus came into this world, He was the sower and He sowed the word of the kingdom. When the word reached the hearts, there were some who received the word of the kingdom into their hearts.

Then our Lord Jesus continued with the second parable. In the second parable the Lord said that the man went out and sowed the seed in the field. The man again is our Lord Jesus, but the seed here in the second parable is different. It is no longer the word of the kingdom. The seed here is the sons of the kingdom. Those who have received the word of the kingdom into their hearts have become the sons of the kingdom, and the Lord sowed them in the field. But the field here is not the same field as in the first parable. In the first parable the field is the heart, but in the second parable the field is the world. In other words, God sowed the sons of the kingdom in this world.

But the men slept. “Men” here is plural. It is not the singular number “man” who sowed the seed. Who are these men? These men slept; they

were not watchful. They are the servants of the Lord, but they were not watchful. While they were sleeping the enemy came and sowed bad seed—the tare, the darnel—in the same field. In the beginning it was not noticed. Gradually, when these seeds began to grow and bear fruit, then there was a great difference. As the wheat grows and is full of fruit, it will bend down. The darnel also bears a kind of black seed but it will stand straight.

At that time the servants of the Lord began to notice the difference. So they came to the Master and said, “Did You not sow only the good seed? Why are there all of these bad things?”

The Master knows. He said, “The enemy did it.”

Then the servants said, “Should we go out and take them out?”

“No,” the Master said, “do not do that, because their roots have already intertwined, and when you root out the darnel, you will root out the wheat too. Let them grow until the

harvest time and the angels will come and separate them.”

Through these parables we understand that our Lord Jesus came into this world to sow the seed, the word of the kingdom, and those who receive these words become the sons of the kingdom of the heavens. Our Lord sowed them into this world to be a testimony to the world until the day shall come when the kingdom of the heavens shall publicly appear on this earth and everything will be clear. So the purpose of our Lord in coming into this world is not just to save some people. He wants to bring them into His kingdom and train them, so that one day when His kingdom shall appear on this earth, they shall reign with Him.

In Colossians 1 there is this word: “He has delivered us out of the power of darkness and has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love.” So we need to understand one thing, that we are not only being saved, but we are put into the kingdom of the heavens. And having been put into the kingdom of the heavens our Lord will teach us what kingdom living is and

how to live in that kingdom. Even though we are on earth, our life is from above, so we should live a kingly and heavenly life upon this earth. That is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about.

## **LUKE'S ACCOUNT**

In Matthew 4 we find that our Lord Jesus was preaching, and people came from all directions to hear Him. Great crowds followed Him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judaea, and beyond the Jordan. When our Lord saw the crowds, He went up into the mountain.

Usually, when the crowds came to our Lord, He was moved with compassion because He saw them as sheep without a shepherd. So He would go out to them, preach to them, and heal them. But on this particular occasion, instead of our Lord going forward to the crowd, He retreated to the mountain and sat down, and His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and spoke to them.

According to the tradition of the Latin Church, the mountain is the Horns of Hattin. It is situated between Mount Tabor and Tiberias

about seven miles from Capernum. The Horns of Hattin is the top of the mountain. When you descend from the mountain, there is a lower level, but when the Lord spoke Matthew 5-7, He was at the top of the mountain. His disciples came to Him and sat down, and He opened His mouth. In other words, the discourse in Matthew was given at the top of the mountain and He spoke these words to His disciples. Even though the crowds gradually came up and they also heard these words, He did not address these words to the crowd. He addressed these words particularly to His own disciples.

After He finished speaking these words, according to Luke 6:12-20 it says, “And it came to pass in those days that he went out into the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when it was day he called his disciples, and having chosen out twelve from them, whom also he named apostles: Simon, to whom also he gave the name of Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip and Bartholomew, and Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon who was called Zealot, and Judas brother of



James, and Judas Iscariote, who was also his betrayer; (notice v. 17) and having descended with them, he stood on a level place, and a crowd of his disciples, and a great multitude of the people from all Judaea and Jerusalem, and the sea coast of Tyre and Sidon, who came to hear him, and to be healed of their diseases; and those that were beset by unclean spirits were healed. And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power went out from him and healed all. And he, lifting up his eyes upon his disciples, said, Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God."

In Luke 6 our Lord first called twelve disciples to be apostles, and then they descended from the mountain to a level place. There a crowd of disciples and a great multitude of people gathered to Him, and He lifted up His eyes at the disciples and spoke.

There are similarities in Matthew and Luke in the words, yet there are differences. In Matthew the words are deeper and more mysterious because He spoke them to His disciples, maybe to those who were being

chosen. In Luke 6 He is still lifting up His eyes and speaking to the disciples but there are crowds of disciples and great multitudes there. In other words, in Luke, even though He directed His speech to His disciples, yet He had the crowds also in mind. They seem to be similar, yet they are different.

## **THE CHARACTER AND NATURE OF THE KINGDOM**

What does the Lord really say in the so-called Sermon on the Mount? When you read Matthew 5, 6, and 7, what is your impression? What do you think the Lord is trying to say to you? And how should you respond to His words?

Usually we think of the Sermon on the Mount as our Lord Jesus giving us a new law, the law of the kingdom of the heavens. Moses gave the law to the children of Israel for them to keep. If they kept the commandments they would be God's people and God would be their God. So people have said that when our Lord Jesus spoke the Sermon on the Mount, He was giving a new law, the law of the kingdom of the heavens. He gave

these laws for us to keep, and by keeping them we will be citizens of the kingdom.

Now, the question is: can anyone keep the words in the Sermon on the Mount? If you have never tried you may think that you can. But if you really study the Sermon on the Mount, if you really take these words to heart and you really want to do whatever the Lord has commanded, do you think you can do it? Many have tried, but the more you try the more you feel it is beyond you. By our natural life we will never be able to fulfill these words. Then why are these words given? What is really the meaning of these words? I think this is something we really need to grasp.

We believe that the Sermon on the Mount is not a new law. It is not a law for us to keep because this is humanly impossible. There is only one person who has kept these words and that is our Lord Himself. When He was in this world, He literally fulfilled every word that He has spoken; He is all-righteous. But aside from Him, there is no one who is able to keep these words. What are these words? What is the real

meaning behind these words? What do these words really tell us?

In the Sermon on the Mount, we believe that the Lord is telling us what is the character, the nature of the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens is so very different from all the kingdoms on this earth. In what way is it different? The kingdom of the heavens takes its character from the King of the heavens. Our Lord demonstrates to us who He is and what He is. When He was on this earth, He brought the heaven upon this earth. He lived a heavenly life upon this earth and this is what the kingdom of heavens is like. In other words, the kingdom of the heavens is characterized by the King Himself. He expresses Himself. It is a description of His life. That is the way He lived on this earth, and that is the way all the sons of the kingdom shall live.

## **THE DEMONSTRATION OF THE HEAVENLY LIFE**

These words are not given as law to be kept; these words are the description of a life. It shows us what this heavenly life is like, and if we live

by that life then we will live in this way. So it is a matter of life. It is a matter of grace. The Sermon on the Mount is not a law; it is grace. God has given us His own life. Our Lord Jesus Himself is our life; He lives within us. If we allow Him to live out through us, then this will be the way that we live. So the Sermon on the Mount is not to be taken as a law to be kept but rather as grace to live.

We thank God that His life is in us, and with these words before us we know how we should live by that life on this earth. This is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about. But we are not as pure as our Lord Jesus. We do have this life within us, and this life has a new nature that is heavenward. If we follow this nature, if we develop this nature, we will have the same heavenly character as our Lord Himself. Unfortunately, we still have our old life within us. With that old life we will never be able to perform the words in the Sermon. There is only one way to live out these words, and that is to live by the new life given to us. That new life has been proven. It has been demonstrated on this earth. When our Lord was on earth, He

demonstrated to us what this heavenly life is like, and that is what the kingdom of the heavens is like. It has been tested and proven to be true. But the requirement is that you have to live by that life.

## **ENTERING INTO THIS LIFE**

How do we enter into this life? How can we live by that life and not by the old life? This is where the cross must work in us. The cross has to work in our lives to put that which is of the flesh to death so that this new life may be able to take over. This is why our Lord Jesus said, "If you want to follow Me, you must deny yourself, take up your cross daily, and follow Me."

We are His disciples. We are to learn of Him. We are to be yoked together with Him. In Matthew 11 our Lord Jesus said, "Yoke with Me and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest in your soul."

We are not only saved; we are called to be disciples. We need to learn of Him, see how His life works. But then we realize there is that old life within us. That Adamic life is still there, and

it tries to live the old way. But thank God, He has given us the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. So whenever our old life begins to raise its head, the Holy Spirit within us will remind us because the anointing within us will teach us in all things—big things and small things. Whatever He teaches is true, and if we obey His teaching we abide in Christ.

Thank God, He has not only given us a new life but He has given us the Holy Spirit, and He is within us, teaching us. Every believer has the Holy Spirit dwelling in him or her, teaching us daily. We need to listen to His small voice.

When we obey the Holy Spirit, our old man, our flesh is being put to death, and the new life within us is given the opportunity to live. At the same time, the Holy Spirit arranges our circumstances. He is the One who orders our environment. To a believer nothing comes by chance because we are so precious to the Lord. So the Holy Spirit will arrange our daily life. There is a meaning behind whatever happens to us. The Holy Spirit tries to use these things to bring our old man, our flesh, to death and to

release the new life within us. So we need to learn.

We need to deny ourselves. Denying ourselves is very simple. It means: "I do not know you." Peter denied the Lord and said, "I do not know Him." But unfortunately, he denied the wrong person. He should have denied himself. But he said, "I do not know You." He denied the Lord.

How often we do the same thing. Whenever our old man rises up, we should tell him, "I do not know you" and take up the cross and follow the Lord. By doing that the Holy Spirit can begin to do the work of transformation in our lives. He will gradually transform us from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit. So this is the way we enter into this heavenly life.

## **AN ENCOURAGEMENT**

When you read the Sermon on the Mount, if you are honest, what is your feeling? Probably your feeling is one of being condemned. The more you read the Sermon on the Mount, the more condemned you become. Why is it so? It is



because you take the Sermon on the Mount as a law. You try to keep it yourself and you find it is beyond you. But this is not the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount. The purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is actually an encouragement. It shows us how wonderful is the life God has given to us, or to put it more clearly, how wonderful the Lord is in us. So it encourages us to discover Him. It encourages us to lean upon Him, to trust in Him. If we really trust in Him this is the result. That is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about.

I hope every brother and sister will see the Sermon on the Mount with a different viewpoint than they had before. Do not allow the Sermon on the Mount to condemn you but rather let it encourage you, knowing that with man it is impossible; with God all things are possible. If we can have this kind of attitude as we read the Sermon on the Mount and there is something lacking we look to the Lord and say, "Lord, with me it is impossible but with You it is possible. I want to put my confidence in You." So may the Lord help us.

*Let us pray:*

*Dear Lord, how we want to praise and thank Thee because You love us so much. You have not only given Your life to us but You show us by Your word how wonderful is that life, how practical is that life, how livable is that life. So dear Lord, we do ask Thee to enable us to really lean upon Thy life and let Thy life be released from and through us that Thy name may be honored and glorified. Again we commit ourselves to Thy word and may Thy Holy Spirit lead us into all truth that Thou may be honored and glorified. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.*

## A KINGLY CHARACTER

*Matthew 5:1-12—But seeing the crowds, he went up into the mountain, and having sat down, his disciples came to him; and, having opened his mouth, he taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed they that mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed they who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed the merciful, for they shall find mercy. Blessed the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed the peace-makers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed they who are persecuted on account of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens. Blessed are ye when they may reproach and persecute you, and say every wicked thing against you, lying, for my sake. Rejoice and exult, for your reward is great in the heavens; for thus have they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

*Matthew 5:20—For I say unto you, that unless your righteousness surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of the heavens.*

*Matthew 5:48—Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

*Shall we pray:*

*Dear Lord, our hearts do bow before Thee. Thou dost love us so much, and Thou dost love us to the end, to the uttermost, for which we are grateful. As we have gathered around Thyself this morning, we pray that Thy love will once again open our hearts. May Thy love fill our hearts. May Thou open our inner eyes that we may see Thee, that we may see Thy beauty and Thy glory, that we may be attracted to Thee. May we open our hearts and allow Thee to fill us, that Thy name may be honored and glorified. We trust Thy Holy Spirit to open Thy word to us and lead us into Thy truth. We ask all in the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*

Thank God for gathering us together again. We are especially thankful to the Lord that He

should invite us to His own table once again to taste His love. His love is really sweet.

When our Lord Jesus gave the so-called Sermon on the Mount, He went to the mountain and His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and began to teach them. The Sermon on the Mount is addressed to the disciples of our Lord Jesus. Even though a great crowd also gathered around Him, yet our Lord Jesus addressed Himself only to His disciples. As a matter of fact, only His disciples were able to hear such words.

Thank God, we who believe in the Lord Jesus are not only children of God, but He has given His own life to us. At the same time, we are also being called to be His disciples. Only His children could be His disciples because it is an inward thing, not an outward imitation. Since we have His life in us, we are able to learn of Him because this learning is an inward learning. So our Lord Jesus opened His mouth and began to teach His disciples.

We have said that our Lord Jesus is not giving a new law. The Sermon on the Mount is not a

new law for people to keep, because in a very real sense there is no one in the universe who can keep the words of the Sermon on the Mount. Of course, there is one Person and that is the Lord Himself.

The Lord Jesus is not trying to give us a new law to keep. He is trying to show what His life really is. We have already received that life, and He wants to demonstrate to us what that life can do for you and for me. He is the King of the kingdom of the heavens, and He is the personification of that kingdom. If you want to know what the kingdom of the heavens is, look at the Lord Jesus because He is the kingdom of the heavens. The kingdom of the heavens expresses His life, what His life really is. So here our Lord is trying to help us to see how we can live a life of heaven upon the earth. He has already given us His own life. Now He is trying to show us what that life is able to do. If we live by that life He has given to us, we will live the kingdom life. We will live a life of heaven upon the earth.

Actually, the Sermon on the Mount is a description of the life of our Lord Jesus. He has come to this earth and He has lived it once. Now He wants every one of us to live in the same way. He is teaching His disciples. He is not trying to condemn us. He is trying to bring us to the place where all the potentials of that life may be fully realized.

So we are here as His disciples learning our Master, and it is a gradual and progressive process. Do not expect that you will be complete and perfect in one day. It takes a lifetime for us to learn our Lord Jesus. So let us be encouraged. We may experience many failures, but thank God, through failures we learn. And gradually we come to know what that life really is. Let God be glorified.

## **THE BEATITUDES**

The discourse on the mount begins with the Beatitudes. Eight times the Lord said, "Blessed are those..." Maybe you will find nine times, but usually we call it eight blessings because the eighth and the ninth ones are put together.

The word *blessed* in the original Greek means “happy.” Who are those who are really happy? “Happy are those who are poor in spirit.” How very different this is from the world! In the kingdom of this world happiness is found somewhere else, not in what we have seen described here. But this is the true happiness. This is a happiness that comes from above, and this is a happiness that is bubbling forth from within. This is a happiness that is given by God, and when God sees us in this state He is happy. The kingdom of the heavens is totally different from the kingdom of this earth. What the kingdom of this earth may consider as happy, in the kingdom of the heavens it is sorrow. But what the kingdom of the heavens considers as happy, the kingdom of the world will not understand because the kingdom of the heavens is totally different from that of the earth.

In these Beatitudes the emphasis is not on doing; the emphasis is on being. It says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek.” Here the emphasis is not on doing; it is on being. You are a person who is poor in spirit. You are a person



who mourns. You are a person who is meek. Here the emphasis is on being and not on doing because in the sight of God being is more important than doing. In other words, what you are is more important than what you do. You do because of what you are. Everything comes from within your being. It is not something that is being put on or added upon you. It is something that comes from within. It is the outflow of life. It is character.

When you read the Beatitudes, immediately you see a picture before you. You see the picture of our Lord Jesus because this is what He is. When He was on the earth, this is what He demonstrated to us.

God has given that very life to each one of us, and that life has once been demonstrated in the life of our Lord Jesus. This life has been given to you and to me. The Lord is trying to teach us to let that life live, and if you allow that life to live you will find the same thing that you find in the Beatitudes. What is important here is Christian character.

Some people take the Sermon on the Mount as Christian ethics, especially the liberals in Christianity. They love the Sermon on the Mount. They do not care about the other parts of the Bible because they say the Sermon on the Mount gives us the Christian ethics. It is higher than we can find in the world, and it is Christian ethics that we should look forward to. We should try our best to arrive at such high moral standards. In other words, we use our natural life and try to educate it, cultivate it, develop it, improve it, until we begin to arrive at such Christian ethics.

What is Christian character? Christian character is not an improvement of our natural life. It is not trying to beautify our flesh. Christian character is from a new life. God has given us a new life, and this new life has a new nature. If we follow that new nature and cultivate it, then that new nature will develop into a new character. This alone is Christian character. Why? If you consider the Sermon on the Mount as Christian ethics and you try to arrive at it by your own effort, you may achieve something externally. For instance, you may appear to be very humble.

I remember when we were young we tried to be humble. The way we tried was by bending our body as if we are very humble. But when you bend your body, actually in your heart you are telling people, “See how humble I am.” So it is hypocritical. It is not real. It is just imitation. It is something completely outward.

The Sermon on the Mount is not Christian ethics. The Sermon on the Mount is Christian character. It shows the nature of this life. So let us from the very beginning lay hold of this truth. It is not something that you try to achieve by your natural strength. It is turning to the life that is given to you and allowing that life to develop into Christian character.

### ***The Poor in Spirit***

The Lord said, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.” This is so opposite to the concept of the world. In the world it is said, “Blessed are those who are rich in soul because they can do everything.” We say some people are very dynamic, very charismatic. Some people have real power. They are either rich in position, rich in wealth, or rich in

influence, or rich in learning. We say these people are blessed because they will gain. But in the kingdom of the heavens you find, "Blessed are the poor in spirit."

What does "poor in spirit" mean? Poor in spirit does not mean "poor spirit." Some people have a very bad spirit.

What do you mean by "poor in spirit"? Look at our Lord Jesus. In Philippians 2:6-8 it says that our Lord Jesus, being in the form of God, He is equal with God, and yet this is not something that He tried to grasp at because He is God. He is one with God, equal in glory, yet the Bible tells us that He emptied Himself. Of course, He could not empty Himself of His deity because that is what He is, but He emptied Himself of all the glory and honor that was related to His deity. He emptied Himself and He took upon Himself the form of a bonds slave instead of the form of God. He took upon Himself the form of a bonds slave, and being in the fashion of a man He humbled Himself. He was obedient to the Father, even unto death, and that the death of the cross. This is poor in spirit. Actually, He was rich, and yet He

laid aside His riches to become poor in order that we might be enriched. This is humility. This is true humility.

The Bible tells us: “God gives grace to the humble and He rejects the proud.” Naturally, we are all proud. It is only through the dealing of the Lord that He shows us that in our flesh there is no good. How we think we have good! If we are not perfect, at least we have some good, and because of that we are boastful of ourselves. But when the light of God comes upon us, He will reduce us to zero. And when we are being reduced to zero, we come to the place of being poor in spirit. In other words, before God we realize we have nothing. We are nobody, and God is to be our all and in all. Humility opens the way for us to be filled with the fulness of God.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit because theirs is the kingdom of the heavens.” The kingdom of the heavens belongs to them. So this is the first “blessed.”

***Those Who Mourn***

“Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.” The mourning here is not mourning for ourselves. Naturally, if we are not proud of ourselves, then we will develop a kind of self-pity. We feel that we are not as good as other people and we develop an inferior complex. We begin to pity ourselves, and we become mournful and moody. This is not what is meant here.

“Blessed are those who mourn,” is what our Lord Jesus was while He was on earth. In Isaiah 53:3-4, it says that He was a Man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. He bore our grief and carried our sorrows. In other words, He was not sorrowful for Himself. He was not having grief for His own reason. But because He is love, He is full of compassion. And when He looked upon this world, He wept. Because He loved us so much, He knows that we are not in the right place, and He is grieved for our sake. That is being mournful.

We should not try to pity ourselves but we should be filled with the compassion of God. And

we should be so sympathetic to the world. Because of this we shall be comforted.

### ***The Meek***

“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Our Lord said in Matthew 11:29: “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest in your souls.”

Our Lord Jesus is the meek one. What do you mean by meekness? Meekness means “selflessness.” He was selfless, and because He was selfless He could yield Himself completely to God. There was no opposition within Him against God, and He was able to carry out the will of God.

In Matthew 12, Matthew quoted the words of Isaiah 42: “Behold my servant, whom I have chosen, whom I have anointed . . . He shall not strive or cry out, nor shall any one hear his voice in the streets.” This is what our Lord Jesus is. He never strives, yet He gained the earth.

You remember Abraham and Lot and how Abraham allowed Lot to choose whatever he felt

was the best land. Abraham did not strive. But after Lot left, God said to Abraham: "You look to the east and west, north, and south. Whatever you can see is yours." Even the part that Lot chose, God also gave to Abraham. He was meek, and because of his meekness he inherited the earth. You do not need to strive for yourself; God will give it to you.

"Blessed are the meek." Being meek does not mean you are weak. Actually, there is great strength in meekness because you have the strength of the power of God.

### ***Those Who Hunger and Thirst After Righteousness***

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." Some people feel they are very righteous, but this is self-righteousness. This is the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. If you really seek for true righteousness, you will be filled. God will fill you with it.

In Hebrews 1:9 it says that because our Lord Jesus loves righteousness more than anybody else, God has anointed Him with joy above all



else. When our Lord was on earth, how He sought righteousness! In everything, He did right in the sight of God, and because of that, He was filled. So we need to be hungry and thirsty after true righteousness. We humble ourselves, realizing that we have no righteousness of our own, but Christ is our righteousness.

### *The Merciful*

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.” God loves mercy not sacrifice. One day when Matthew, the publican, gathered his fellow publicans to have a feast with the Lord, the Pharisees began to criticize the Lord Jesus for eating with the sinners and publicans. Our Lord Jesus said, “God loves mercy not sacrifice. I come to seek the sick not the well.” When our Lord was on earth, He was so merciful.

What is mercy? Mercy is showing love and giving grace to those who are undeserving. God has given us mercy. He has shown so much mercy to us. Should we not also be merciful to others? In one of the parables our Lord Jesus told, He said that a servant of his owed him so much. When he begged for mercy, the master

had compassion on him and forgave all his debt. But when he went out from the presence of his master, he saw a fellow servant who owed him only a little bit. He held onto his neck and said, "Pay." When his fellow servant asked for mercy, he would not give it. He put him into prison. When the news came to the master, he called his servant back and said, "I forgave you so much and yet you do not forgive." So he threw him into prison because he did not show mercy.

We have been forgiven so much. How can we not forgive those who have sinned against us? If we do not forgive, even our prayers will not be answered. Mercy glories over judgment. One day, when we shall be judged at the judgment seat of Christ, if we have shown mercy to others, it will glory over judgment.

### ***The Pure In Heart***

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." God looks upon the heart and not upon the appearance. What is meant by "pure in heart"? Pure in heart is more than having a clean heart. Pure in heart means there is such purity. In other words, you are not double minded; your

eye is single. If your eye is single, then your whole body is light. If your eye is double, then great is the darkness.

When our Lord Jesus was on earth, how pure He was! In His heart there was no one but the Father. He did not consider Himself. He only said, "Is it the Father's will?" If it was the Father's will, even if it meant death and the death of the cross, He would accept it. He drank that cup because He is pure in heart. He saw God all the time. And we who have the life of the Lord will allow that life to grow until all our double mindedness is cleared out, until we have no ulterior motive before God. We love Him because of Himself. Then we shall see Him with such clarity.

### ***The Peacemakers***

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God." Look at our Lord Jesus. He is the Prince of peace. He came into this world to bring peace. On the cross He has made peace for the Jews and Gentiles. He is the peacemaker. And God wants us to be peacemakers. To be peacemakers does not mean to compromise. Our

Lord Jesus never compromised but He made peace between man and God. He made peace between the Jews and the Gentiles. We also should follow His footsteps. Then we show ourselves as the sons of God.

### ***The Persecuted***

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, because this is the way they persecuted the prophets.” Because of the righteousness of God, our Lord Jesus would not compromise. How He suffered because of that! And we should follow His footsteps. The life within us will give us the strength to endure and to suffer for the sake of righteousness. That righteous life will not allow you to do the same thing as the world is doing. Other people may do it but you cannot because you have the life in you. We who are the Lord’s must practice righteousness because God is righteous.

Our Lord added one more. He said, “If you are being persecuted by the world because of My name, rejoice and exult for your reward is great in the heavens.”

The world rejected our Lord. And we who follow Him should go out of the gate and suffer together with Him, suffer for the name of the Lord, and suffer for the sake of righteousness. This is a demonstration of the strength of life.

At the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord has given us these Beatitudes. He showed us who He is and what He is, and He said, "You have My life in you. Let that life live out. Then you are really in that blessed position."

## **SALT AND LIGHT**

Patiently and by faith we will inherit our inheritance by the grace of God, by the working of the Holy Spirit, and by the working of the cross in our lives. And when we begin to demonstrate that kind of Christian character, this is the testimony of the kingdom of the heavens. We will be as salt and as light. Salt will prevent corruption. Even though the world may look down upon us, yet they do not know that it is Christians who are keeping this world from total corruption. It is the Christians who are slowing down the process of total corruption.

We Christians serve a purpose in this world. We are keeping this world from total corruption.

We are to be the light of the world to shine upon the darkness, to expose what is in darkness, and to show what real light is. This will become our testimony on this earth. This is how the Sermon on the Mount began. It is a blessed life.

## **THE LAW OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Then it is followed by this statement of the Lord: “Unless your righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

What is the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? In a sense, the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is something that is respected by the world. At the time of our Lord Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees were models for the people because they had a righteousness. What was their righteousness? Their righteousness was the righteousness according to the law.

When Paul was Saul, he said, "According to the righteousness of the law I am perfect." The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is the righteousness of the law, but it is the righteousness of the letter of the law. They tried to keep every letter of the law, but in keeping the letter of the law they violated the very spirit of the law. In the eyes of the world they were very righteous, yet their righteousness was hypocritical. So our Lord said, "You scribes and Pharisees are hypocrites because you keep everything external. There is nothing inward in you." Because it was an external righteousness, it was just a kind of behavior. It was not a character. It was not real. It was hypocritical. Because of that, they became very arrogant and critical of people. Such righteousness is harmful instead of helpful.

So the Lord said, "Unless your righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of the heavens." And the Lord used five illustrations to explain it. He took two illustrations from the Ten Commandments, two illustrations from the statutes and ordinances,

and one illustration from the tradition of the fathers. He used these illustrations to show them what the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was and what the righteousness that surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was.

## **THE SPIRIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

We will just take the principle without going into details but you will see the difference there. The righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees is all outward; it is human effort. And whenever it is of human effort, all that can be reached is outward correctness. There is nothing real within it. But the righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees comes from within. It is of the heart. It is the result of the life, and because of this, it is living and real. That is the difference.

The Lord is trying to teach us that the Sermon on the Mount is not a law; it is grace. It comes from within. It is the overflow of the life. It is supernaturally natural, and therefore there is no evil in it.



## **BE PERFECT**

At the end of Matthew 5 our Lord concludes with this statement: “Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Because we have such a life within us, how can we live in an ordinary, common way? Because of the life the world has, they have a manner of life. But we have a new life in us. Can we live the same, common way as the other people? If that is the case, then how can we show that we have another life? With this new life of Christ in us, He expects us to be extra-ordinary. For a Christian to live an ordinary life is a shame because having this life in us God expects us to be extra-ordinary. So do not be content to say, “Well, I am as good as other people.” If you are as good as other people, you are shameful because you should be extra-ordinary. God is perfect and He wants His children to be perfect. You say, “How can I be perfect as God is perfect?” God is perfectly perfect. Our perfection is relative.

## **WALK IN LOVE**

Let me use an illustration in I John 1:7: “If you walk in the light as God is in the light, you

have fellowship with one another, and the blood of God's Son Jesus Christ cleanses you from all sin."

God is light. He dwells in light. He is perfect light. He is a hundred candlelights. There is no darkness in Him and there is no turning in Him. That is God. But the Bible says, "If you walk in light..." What is that light? In verse 5 it says, "God is light." In other words, you who believe in the Lord Jesus have the light of life in you. That life in you is light. It will shine.

When you first believe in the Lord Jesus, you have that life in you and that life has a nature of light. Even though that nature of light in you is the same nature as "God is light" you only have one candlelight. He is a hundred candlelights. You have one candlelight, but if you walk in that one candlelight, your fellowship with God will be uninterrupted. The degree of light is a hundred degree difference, but the nature of light is the same. Even though you know the light only a little, if you walk in the light of life, there is no hindrance between you and God in fellowship. As you fellowship with God, then the blood of

Jesus Christ God's Son cleanses you from all sin. Because of your fellowship with God, then your life grows a little bit more, and you begin to see a little bit clearer. You begin to see what is of God, what is not of God. You see things that you have not seen before.

Now what do you do? You walk in two candlelights. Your fellowship with God is uninterrupted, and you grow a little bit more. Your light grows a little bit more, and you have three candlelights. You see clearer now than before. Can you still walk in two candlelights? If you walk in two candlelights, your fellowship with God will have problems. You need to repent, and the blood of Jesus Christ will cleanse you. Then you follow the three candlelights, and your fellowship with God again is so wonderful. That is the way we gradually grow in life. So, be ye perfect because God is perfect.

How we praise and thank God! First of all, He put His life in us, and gradually that life shines. He cannot do it all at once. We could not stand it. We would be dead. How lovely He is! How gently He treats us! Gradually, as our life begins to

grow, more light is given and we follow that life. Gradually, a new character is being built. We are transformed from glory to glory by the Holy Spirit until we are conformed to His image. That is the kingdom of the heavens.

*Shall we pray:*

*Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee because Thy kingdom is real. Thy kingdom is an inward reality. Thy kingdom is of life, and how glorious is that life! We thank Thee for dealing with us so gently. Thou art leading us step by step until we are conformed to Thy image. Lord, show mercy again upon us. Lead us to the place where You are that we may see Thee and we may be like Thee. In the name of our Lord Jesus. Amen.*

## A HEAVENLY LIFE LIVED ON EARTH

*Matthew 6:1-15—Take heed not to do your righteousness before men to be seen of them, otherwise ye have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens. When therefore thou doest alms, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may have glory from men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand does; so that thine alms may be in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee.*

*And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites; for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets so that they should appear to men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy chamber, and having shut thy door, pray to thy Father who is in secret, and thy Father who sees in secret will render it to thee. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as*

*those who are of the nations: for they think they shall be heard through their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like them, for your Father knows of what things ye have need before ye beg anything of him. Thus therefore pray ye: Our Father who art in the heavens, let thy name be sanctified, let thy kingdom come, let thy will be done as in heaven so upon the earth; give us to-day our needed bread, and forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors, and lead us not into temptation, but save us from evil. For if ye forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father also will forgive you yours, but if ye do not forgive men their offences, neither will your Father forgive your offences.*

*Matthew 6:19-25—Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust spoils, and where thieves dig through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust spoils, and where thieves do not dig through nor steal; for where thy treasure is, there will be also thy heart. The lamp of the body is the eye; if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body will be light: but if thine eye be wicked, thy whole body will be dark. If*

*therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and will love the other, or he will hold to the one and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. For this cause I say unto you, Do not be careful about your life, what ye should eat and what ye should drink; nor for your body what ye should put on. Is not the life more than food, and the body than raiment?*

*Matthew 6:33—But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you. Be not careful therefore for the morrow, for the morrow shall be careful about itself. Sufficient to the day is its own evil.*

*Shall we pray:*

*Dear heavenly Father, we do thank Thee that Thou does gather us together unto Thy beloved Son. We believe that Thou art with us and Thou alone can satisfy our hearts. We bow ourselves before Thee and look to Thee to speak to us. We pray that Thou will open our hearts to Thee and open Thy word to us, that Thy word may fall into good ground that will bear fruit patiently, a hundred fold unto Your glory. Lord, we confess*

*that we are far from what Thou dost want us to be, and yet we want to tell Thee that we are willing. May Thy Holy Spirit work within us and bring us to the place where Thou art. May Thy will be done in us as it is in heaven, and we will give Thee all the glory. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.*

The so-called Sermon on the Mount was spoken by our Lord to His own disciples, to those who have not only believed in Him, but have also answered His call. It is to those who have given themselves to the Lord and allowed the Lord to teach them, to transform them, and to conform them to His own image. The Sermon on the Mount is not a new law for us to keep. The Sermon on the Mount is of grace. Our Lord first gave His life to us and then He began to tell us what that life is.

## **THE HEAVENLY MAN**

The Sermon on the Mount is actually a description of the life of our Lord Jesus. He is the heavenly Man who has come upon this earth and has lived a heavenly life. He came to set up His kingdom upon this earth, and He is drawing a



people unto Himself to transform them as He is. These will be His kingdom. These are the people of the kingdom of the heavens. They are the sons of the kingdom of the heavens.

So we do praise and thank the Lord that He is not trying to impose upon us a heavy burden, as if He is setting up a very high standard and then telling us to try and arrive at it. Instead of that, He gives us His own life and then tells us how glorious and how powerful is that life. If we only allowed His life to live out through us, that will be the way we will live. So it is a matter of grace. It is a matter of life. It is a matter of the growing of life, and that is what the Sermon on the Mount is all about.

## **TRUE BLESSINGS**

The Sermon on the Mount begins with the Beatitudes. There, the emphasis is on our being rather our doing because the Lord said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." The Lord Himself is the personification of the Beatitudes because this is the way He was when He was upon this earth. He was poor in spirit. He was equal with God but

that is not something He grasped at. He emptied Himself and took upon Himself the form of a bonds slave. And being in the fashion of a man, He was obedient to the Father even unto death and that the death of the cross. That is the meaning of “the poor in the spirit.”

Naturally, we are all rich in our souls. We think we have a lot in us. We think we can do a great deal. We are proud of ourselves. Humility is something beyond us, and it takes the life of the Lord Jesus within us to be humble because His life is a humble life. It is a life that is emptied of self. And because His life is within us, He is calling us to be like Him by the working of the Holy Spirit and the working of the cross in our lives. We are gradually being emptied of ourselves, and as we are being emptied then we are being filled with the life of the Lord Jesus. It is then that we are truly blessed, that we are really happy in the Lord. So the Beatitudes are a description of the life of our Lord Jesus. And the Lord is telling His disciples: “This is what I want you to be. This is the way you will live upon this earth, and you shall inherit your heavenly inheritance.”

## **SURPASSING RIGHTEOUSNESS**

Also in the Beatitudes, the Lord Jesus tells us that unless our righteousness surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees we cannot enter into the kingdom of the heavens. What is the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? It is a righteousness according to the letter of the law because the scribes and the Pharisees tried to keep every letter of the law. Yet, in doing that they violated the very spirit of the law. Their righteousness is something man-made; it is only an outward appearance. There is no reality within them. They may be dead right, and yet it is legalistic. It gives them great pride, so they boast of their own righteousness. They are hypocritical, superficial, and yet they are critical of other people. Their righteousness makes them very proud. In the sight of God, the Bible says that our own righteousness is as filthy rags. It cannot cover our nakedness and is wholly rejected by God. So as disciples of the Lord Jesus, our righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and of the Pharisees.

What is our righteousness? What is that surpassing righteousness? It is something that comes out from within. It is a matter of life. By the grace of God this life begins to express itself, so it is of the spirit and it is of life. It is above the letter. It is beyond what the letter demands. It goes to the very heart. It is the outflow of the life within. Our Lord used five different illustrations to show us the righteousness that surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

## **A HIDDEN LIFE**

In Matthew 6 we see that this chapter can be very clearly divided into two parts. Chapter 6:1-18 deals with this matter of doing all things in secret. In other words, it tells us of a hidden life. As sons of the kingdom of the heavens, we have a hidden life. We have a life that is not seen by the world, yet that life is the very source of what the world can see. In the second part, from verses 19-34, it shows that this kingdom life is a life of faith.

We who are the sons of the kingdom of the heavens have a hidden life because it is heaven living upon the earth. So there is a heavenly part

that is not seen by man; it is to be seen by God alone. Oftentimes, we Christians tend to live purely a wholly, outward life. It is as if there is not that inward or hidden life within us. It is as if we are just living before man instead of living before God, but as God's people we need to remember that we have a hidden life.

In Psalm 91:1 it says, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High abides under the shadow of the Almighty." We need to live in the secret place of the Most High. If we live in the secret place of the Most High, then we will abide under the shadow of the Almighty. This is the secret of our strength in this world. There is one thing that we really need to seek. We need to seek to live in the secret place of God. Daily we should have that abiding communion with the Father who is in heaven. The more we develop that secret life with the Lord, the more powerful we are able to live on this earth. It gives us the only strength that can live according to the will of God.

When our Lord Jesus came to this world, for thirty years He lived a hidden life. We do not

know much about those thirty years, but what communion He had with His Father during those hidden years! How much He developed His life before God and men! After those thirty hidden years, when He came forth to the public, there was such power, such strength there.

We who are the sons of the kingdom of the heavens need to develop a hidden life with God. We need to seek His face and live a life that is face to face with God. That kind of hidden life will give us the power to live upon this earth.

## **THE DIMENSIONS OF LIFE**

In Matthew 6 our Lord Jesus began with an exhortation: "Take heed not to do your righteousness before men to be seen of them. Otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens." In Matthew 5 the Lord said, "Your righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and of the Pharisees." Here He is still talking about righteousness, but with this righteousness He is dealing with the motive. The motive of our being right is for God and not for men. Then He uses three illustrations. First it is giving alms, and

that is our relationship with the world. The second is prayer, and that is our relationship with God Himself. The third is fasting, and that is in relation to ourselves. In other words, you see the three dimensions of life for us who live on this earth. We are related to man, we are related to God, and we are related to ourselves.

### ***Related To Man***

How are we to live on this earth? How are we related to the world? The Lord said, "Give alms." Giving alms is considered righteousness because our God is the great giver. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. And when God gave His Son to us, He gave everything to us. He who has given His own Son to us, will He not give us all things? So our God is a great giver. That is what God is.

As God's people, God wants us to have that spirit of giving. Naturally, we are all receivers. We want to receive, receive, and receive. We are very stingy in giving because we are so self-centered. But as God's own people, He wants us to have that spirit of giving. But what is the

motive behind our giving? As a matter of fact, all that we can give is what He has given to us.

He wants us to give in such a way that we do it in secret, that we do it not for the sake of being seen by man whether we are helping people or giving to people. When the world gives, they want people to know about it, they want to proclaim it, and they will let everybody know about it. "What a generous giver that person is!" They want to have some kind of memorial. And the Lord says, "If you give in such a way, you already have your reward, and your reward is earthly. You will not receive reward in heaven."

Therefore, when God's people give, we need to do it in secret. Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Is it possible? Is it possible for you to give with your right hand and your left hand does not know it? Of course, literally it is impossible. But it is possible. It means that you do not dwell upon what you give. Do not be so self-conscious of what good you have done because you do it for the Lord and you do it unto the Lord. You do it by the grace of God. There is nothing you can boast about. You



do not expect to be known by man, or for it to be broadcast, because you do it in secret. Your heavenly Father who is in secret sees it, and then He will reward you from above.

Our righteousness is not for man to see. We are not expecting people to praise us. Our righteousness is for God to see, and our Father who is in heaven will reward us. That is in relation to man.

### ***Related To God***

Then our Lord Jesus mentioned prayer. Prayer is also considered a righteousness. Now if all that we pray for is asking the Lord to give us this and give us that, do you think there is any righteousness in it? If our prayer is like this, we are praying like the nations, the Gentiles. But we who are the children of God have a heavenly Father who loves us and cares for us. He knows what we need. Before we ask He already knows what we need and is ready to give because He loves us so much.

How should we pray? The Pharisees and the scribes loved to pray in the synagogues. They did

not pray in private; they liked to pray in public only. When they walked down the street and came to the corner of the street, where they could be seen by more people, they prayed long prayers. The Lord said, "They have their reward." Their prayer does not reach heaven.

Our Lord told us a parable about two men who entered into the temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and he went into the temple, up to the front and lifted his eyes. He said, "God, I thank You because I fast twice a week. I give one tenth of my income." Then he looked at the publican who was behind him and he said, "I am not like that person, a sinful man." That is the way he prayed.

Then the publican entered into the temple, way at the back. He dared not lift up his eyes. He beat his breast and said, "Oh God, have mercy upon a sinner." The Lord Jesus said, "When they go home, the publican is more righteous." The Pharisee was not praying; the Pharisee was reporting.

How easy it is for us to be like that! Often, our prayer is like reporting to God how good we

are. Instead of being grateful to God, it is as if God needs to be grateful to us. And the Pharisees prayed long prayers. Yet in their lives, in their hidden lives, they did terrible things!

Thank God, we have a Father who loves us. We have a Father who cares for us, and before we even ask, He knows what we need. So the Lord said, "When you pray, enter into your closet, shut the door, and pray to your Father who is in heaven. And your Father who is in secret hears you." Our prayer is for God to hear. Our prayer is to express our dependency upon Him. Our prayer is to show that without Him we can do nothing. Our prayer is a communion with our heavenly Father. And our prayer is that His will may be done in us as it is in heaven.

Again you find our Lord Jesus is teaching us in what we call the Lord's prayer. Actually, it is the prayer the Lord teaches the church to pray. Of course, our Lord Jesus does pray that way, and He teaches us how to pray: "Our Father who art in heaven." Prayer is based on relationship. We pray as children of God to our Father who is in heaven because there is a relationship. There

is a confidence. There is a prayer with faith. It is not just babbling. We are praying with faith from within us because we know our Father. Even if we pray wrongly He will answer rightly. When we pray, we do not just pray for ourselves because prayer is a righteousness. We are doing something right before God.

Our Lord Jesus said that first of all pray: "Hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." In other words, we should not be self-centered in our prayer. We should pray for God's name, for His kingdom, and for His will. His name is honored in heaven but His name is not hallowed upon the earth, and we should have this burden. We should take the interest of God as our interest and pray that His name would be honored all over the earth. Of course, if we pray truthfully, we want His name to be honored in our own lives, that we will not bring shame to our God, that the name of God may be honored in us. When people look at us, when people are in contact with us, they can see God in our lives, and glorify God, and let His kingdom come. That is to say, we let the kingship of Christ be upon

us. We put ourselves under His rule and let His will be done in us on earth as it is in heaven. This should be the way we pray.

Is this the way that we pray? Or is our prayer just for ourselves or for our families? How large is our scope of prayer? What is the priority in our prayer? If we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these things shall be added unto us.

Then, after we have prayed for God's interests, then we can pray for our needs. "Give us this day our daily bread." It shows that we depend upon Him for our daily bread, not for the bread for tomorrow but for our daily bread.

Once I read a book on the sermons of Zinzendorf. When he preached on the Lord's prayer, he feels, "Give us this day our daily bread" is our spiritual bread. It is not the natural bread but the supernatural bread to nourish our spirit. And surely we need that.

"Forgive us our debts as we forgive others." This is the food for our soul. Our physical body needs bread, and for the welfare of our soul, we

need to have forgiveness. So we ask the Lord to forgive our debts, to forgive our sins, but on the condition that we forgive others.

Today, we find a condition among many of God's people: they have an unforgiving spirit. When our brothers and sisters sin against us or they owe debts to us, that is to say that they do something which is as a debt, we will not forgive. And because we have an unforgiving spirit, God will also not forgive us.

Before we believed in the Lord Jesus, when we repented and asked the Lord to forgive our sins, He forgave everything. His blood cleansed us from all our sins. But there is a difference after you become a child of God. If you want God to forgive your sins and your debts, there is a condition. God wants you to forgive others. If you do not forgive others their debts or their sins, God will not forgive your debts or your sins. This is the difference, and this is something we need to remember. We have to learn to forgive from our hearts. We who have been forgiven so much, how can we hold on to what our brothers and sisters owe us?

You remember the story of Peter. One day he came to the Lord and said, "Lord, if my brother sins against me seven times and I forgive him, do You think that is enough?" And the Lord said, "I do not say seven times; I say seven times seventy." This is something we need to learn. If we forgive others, then our soul will be healthy.

"Lead us not into temptation, and deliver us from evil." That is for our spirit that we will not enter into temptation, but rather be delivered from the evil one. So this is a prayer that the Lord teaches us to pray.

"Pray in secret" does not mean that we should not pray in public. Corporate prayer is very important. We need to have our private prayer in secret, but we also need to pray in public. But praying in public does not mean that we come out of our closet. We are tempted to do that because when we pray in public, probably we are very conscious of the people around us. And because we are conscious of their presence, unconsciously we try to pray in such a way that will be more beautiful to impress other people. If we do that we are like the scribes and Pharisees.

Our righteousness does not surpass their righteousness. So even in public prayer, may the Lord deliver us from being conscious of people. In our spirit it is as if we are in the closet, and there we commune with our Lord. We pour forth our hearts before Him.

### ***Related To Ourselves***

Then our Lord Jesus tells us about our relationship to ourselves, and that is fasting. What is fasting? In the Scripture we are told that fasting is to afflict our soul. In other words, we have such a burden or we are faced with such a crisis that we deny ourselves to the extent of giving up our legitimate food so that we may concentrate on praying before the Lord. So it is an afflicting of our soul. It is between us and the Lord. It is not for people to see.

When the Pharisees fasted, they purposely put on an outward fashion, which told people that they were fasting. People would praise them and say how pious they were. The Lord said, "Don't do that." When you fast, wash your face and comb your hair because you are fasting



before the Lord. And the Lord will see it in secret and answer your prayer.

So this section is on a hidden life. We need to have a hidden life before the Lord. We live for God and our motive is pure. Our heart is in heaven.

## **A LIFE OF FAITH**

Then the Lord began with the second part on this matter of the life of faith. Kingdom life is a life of faith. Oftentimes, we think only a very few chosen people should live a life of faith, but this is a misunderstanding. According to the word of God, every believer, every disciple of the Lord, every son of the kingdom is to live a life of faith. Why? God has already called us out of this world. He has translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love. So far as the world is concerned, we who live in this world are strangers and sojourners. We are just passing through. We are aliens so far as the world is concerned.

Abraham sojourned in the land of promise and he lived in tents. In other words, he realized that he did not belong to this world, so he lived

in tents. It was only temporary; he was just passing through. He was looking for that city with foundations, whose architect and constructor is God. Now this is a life of faith.

Every believer is to live a life of faith. We are not earth dwellers; we are heavenly people passing through this world. To live a life of faith is the only way for such people to live. So let us correct our concept. Oftentimes our concept is that a chosen few are living a life of faith by having no other business or occupation and are looking to God to supply their needs. But those who have their own occupation and are supplying their own needs do not need to live a life of faith. This is wrong. Every believer, every one of us is to live a life of faith because we are a heavenly people. Our heart is in heaven.

## **TREASURES**

To live a life of faith begins with: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon the earth.” What is the treasure? In the original it is “treasures”—plural number, lots of treasures. Sometimes we think treasure is money, so we interpret this verse to say, “Do not lay up for

yourselves your money on this earth because there are the moth, the rust, and the thieves." But actually it is more than money. Treasures include everything that you love, everything that you depend on, everything that you trust in, everything that means life to you. It can be money, it can be fame, it can be position, or it can be people. Maybe your grandson is your treasure; he is your life. If we lay up our treasures for ourselves upon this earth, we will find our heart is where our treasure is. We will be bound by our treasures, and our heart will be on earth instead of being in heaven. So the emphasis is not the treasures; the emphasis is on the heart. God wants our heart.

In Proverbs it says, "My son, give Me your heart, and then you will delight in My ways." Why is it that we do not delight in God's ways? It is because our heart is somewhere else. If our heart is given to the Lord, then our eyes will delight in His ways. What the Lord really wants is our heart. Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. It is for this reason that God commands us to lay our treasures in heaven. That is to say, we offer what we consider as

treasures to God, just like Abraham, who offered his only son Isaac to God. That which was his treasure he was willing to offer to God. And because he did that, he looked for that city with foundation. He was not being tied down by anything on this earth.

When you hear this word, do you find it very difficult? “Ah, the Lord wants all my money. If I give up all my money, how can I live?” Don’t worry about that. This is not what the Lord is after. The Lord is trying to deliver you from anything that ties you down. The Lord wants you to give yourself totally to Him so that your heart is in heaven. Your heart is with God. That is what God is really after. What God will do with your treasures is up to Him.

You remember the rich young man. He came to the Lord with such sincerity: “Good Master, what can I do to inherit eternal life?”

The Lord looked at him. The Lord loved him and said to him, “Keep the commandments.”

“What commandments?”

“Honor your parents, and so on.”

The young man said, "I have kept them from my youth." He kept the letter of the word, but he violated the spirit of it because he was very rich. His riches had captured his heart, and the Lord wanted to deliver him.

So the Lord said, "Sell all that you have, give to the poor, and come follow Me." He could not do that. By himself he could not do it.

Immediately following, there was another rich man—Zachaeus, the tax collector. He was an older man and probably richer than this young man. But when the grace of God came upon him, without being asked, he said, "I will give half to the poor. Whatever I have done wrong I will pay four fold." That is grace.

So do not be afraid. Just give your all to the Lord. Lay it up in heaven. Then you are a steward. Do whatever the Lord wants you to do.

You remember the story of C. T. Studd. He is one of the seven missionaries from Cambridge that went to China. He was a millionaire, but he was led by the Lord to give up everything he had.

He went to China, later on to India, and finally to Africa. God greatly used him.

Another person that I know is Lady Ogle. When I met her, she was a millionaire, but she lived for God. She said, "All that is mine is the Lord's. I am only a steward."

Brothers and sisters, that is what we are. Whatever the Lord has given to us is His. It is up to Him to decide. But thank God, His grace is always sufficient. So do not try to lay up treasures for yourself upon this earth.

### **PRACTICAL ADVICE**

I will give a few more practical words. Does it mean that you have to give everything to the Lord and not provide for your family? Certainly not! The Bible tells us very clearly that we should provide for our family. Does it mean that you cannot put aside something for your retirement? Certainly not! The Lord does not want you to depend upon people's charity because that does not glorify God. Does it mean that I do not need to work anymore? Certainly

not! If you do not work, you do not eat. That is what the Scriptures teach.

Remember, it is the heart. We are to be single of eye and not double minded. Our problem is that we are double minded. We love God and we love mammon. Mammon is wealth. It may be represented by money or other things, and we try to serve two masters. It is impossible. A man cannot serve two masters. You either love the one or hate the other. You either hold on to the one or let go of the other. The Lord makes it very clear to us. A man cannot serve two masters.

What are we going to do with mammon? Mammon should not be our master; it should be our servant. We should use the unrighteous mammon to prepare for our eternal life. That is the way it should be, and that will release us so that our heart may be in heaven.

## **SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM**

Then it follows with verse 25: "For this cause I say unto you, do not be careful about your life, what ye should eat and what ye should drink; nor for your body what you should put on. Is not

the life more than food, and the body than raiment?"

Why do we worry about eating, drinking, and raiment? It is because our heart, our treasures are not in heaven. The more you hold on to your treasures, the more you worry about what you eat, what you drink, and what you will be clothed with. There is no end to your anxiety. The more treasures you have laid up for yourself, the more worried you become. But if you lay your treasures up in heaven and your heart is with God, then you do not need to worry about what you eat, what you drink, and what you will be clothed with. Why? The Lord said, "Look at the birds." This look is not just casting a glance. It is intense looking. Look how our heavenly Father takes care of the birds. How much more precious you are than these birds! Consider carefully the lilies of the valley. How beautiful, how glorious the Lord has clothed them! Then look at the glory of Solomon. It is here today; tomorrow it is thrown into the fire. God gave the lilies such clothing. How much more you are than the lilies! Do not be anxious about these things. Your heavenly Father knows



it. When your heart is in heaven, then you know your heavenly Father knows everything. You can trust Him.

So the Lord said, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you."

Brothers and sisters, this is the way we should live. We should seek the kingdom of God. We should seek His righteousness. And if we do seek, all these things shall be added to us. If we do not seek the kingdom of the heavens and His righteousness, we have to seek all these things ourselves, and we will be anxious about them.

What is living in the kingdom of the heavens? What is the kingdom life like? The kingdom life within us is a life that lives in heaven even though our body is on earth. So may the Lord help us.

*Let us pray:*

*Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee because Thy words are not law. Thy words are grace. We praise and thank Thee that Thou hast already given us that life, and that life is in us, and Thou*

*art going to draw out that life, that it may glorify Thy name. Lord, we want to ask Thee that Thou will continue to teach us that we may really live out that life for Thy glory. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.*

## A DISCIPLINED LIFE

*Matthew 7:1-6—Judge not, that ye may not be judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you. But why lookest thou on the mote that is in the eye of thy brother, but observest not the beam that is in thine eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Allow me, I will cast out the mote from thine eye; and behold, the beam is in thine eye? Hypocrite, cast out first the beam out of thine eye, and then thou wilt see clearly to cast out the mote out of the eye of thy brother.*

*Give not that which is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them with their feet, and turning round rend you.*

*Matthew 7:13-14—Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide the gate and broad the way that leads to destruction, and many are they who enter in through it. For narrow the gate and*

*straitened the way that leads to life, and they are few who find it.*

*Matthew 7:21-29—Not every one who says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of the heavens, but he that does the will of my Father who is in the heavens. Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied through thy name, and through thy name cast out demons, and through thy name, done many works of power? and then will I avow unto them, I never knew you. Depart from me, workers of lawlessness.*

*Whoever therefore hears these my words and does them, I will liken him to a prudent man, who built his house upon the rock; and the rain came down, and the streams came, and the winds blew and fell upon that house, and it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And every one who hears these my words and does not do them, he shall be likened to a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand; and the rain came down, and the streams came, and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell, and its fall was great.*

*And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as having authority, and not as their scribes.*

*Shall we pray:*

*Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee once again for gathering us together. We thank Thee for Thy amazing love toward us. Thou dost love us and love us to the very end. We praise and thank Thee for giving us Thine own life, and Thou dost desire that we should have it abundantly. We come to Thee. We open our hearts to Thee and ask Thee that Thou will once again speak to us. Lord, unless Thou dost speak we are as if dead, but Thy words are life and spirit to us. So we just humbly ask Thee to give us understanding, give us vision, give us revelation that we may be brought into the reality of Thy word, that Thy word truly will become our very living, that Thou may be glorified. Lord, we desire that Thy will will be done in us as it is in heaven, and may Thy kingdom come. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.*

The Lord really loves us and He will not let us go. He wants to bring us to where He is. The Bible tells us in the so-called Sermon on the Mount that when the crowds came to the Lord, our Lord Jesus went up to a mountain. By this very action He was trying to tell us that we have to go to a higher plane. He sat down and His disciples came to Him, and He began to open His mouth and teach them. As our Lord sat down, it indicates to us that what He is going to say is based upon His finished work. You do not sit down until your work is done. Our Lord Jesus sat down and that shows us that what He is going to say to us is on the foundation of His finished work of redemption. And He addresses Himself to His own disciples.

Notice here that these are not only the believers. Of course they are believers but it is more than just believing in the Lord as their Savior. These believers are disciples. That is to say, they answered the call of our Lord Jesus. They followed the Lord. They put themselves under the Lordship of Christ Jesus, and they came to the Lord to learn of Him. So what the Lord is going to say to them is to train them as

His disciples. The purpose is that they may be as He is.

## **A HEAVENLY LIFE**

In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord is not giving us a new law. It is not like Moses giving the law to the children of Israel, and if they keep the law they will be God's people and God will be their God. The Sermon on the Mount is not a new law. Our Lord Jesus is not giving us a higher law to keep and if we keep it then we will be the sons of the kingdom of the heavens. Neither is the Sermon on the Mount the proclamation of Christian ethics, as if our Lord Jesus is giving a higher moral standard for us to imitate. It is not so.

We believe that the Sermon on the Mount is of grace. He has already given us His own life and He is trying to tell us what that life really is. He tells us all the potential that is in us. It is all there, and it needs to be expressed. It needs to be released.

## **A SPIRITUAL REALITY**

What is the kingdom of the heavens? The kingdom of the heavens has its geographical and historical sides, but basically, the kingdom of the heavens is a spiritual reality. The kingdom of the heavens is none other than the kingship of our Lord Jesus. He has His kingship over His own people. The kingdom of the heavens is what our Lord Jesus is. And the kingdom of the heavens is where His people are being transformed to be like Him. This is the reality of the kingdom of the heavens.

## **A HEAVENLY LIFE ON EARTH**

What grace the Lord has poured forth, that He should not only give us His kingly life, but He wants that kingly life to be developed into a kingly character. When that character is manifested, there is the kingdom of the heavens.

Our Lord Jesus began His word to us with the Beatitudes. We have already said that the emphasis is on being and not on doing. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of the heavens." When you manifest the poor in



spirit, you are in the kingdom of the heavens, and you are the kingdom of the heavens. Thank God, His life is already in us, but His character needs to be developed within us in order that the kingdom of the heavens may become a reality to us. We say again that the words in the Sermon on the Mount are a description of our Lord Jesus. That is what He is. While He was on earth He lived such a kingly life. He lived a life of heaven upon this earth, and this is the way that He wants us to live.

Our Lord Jesus came not to destroy the law and the prophet; He came to fulfill it, that is to say, to fill it to the full. The law may demand certain things but grace will bring us far above what the law demands. The law can only touch the outward appearance, but the life and grace of our Lord will touch our inward life. So that is why our righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees is external. They may be outwardly correct, and yet there is no inward reality. They may keep the letter of the law but they violate the very spirit

of the law. So our righteousness must surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees.

## **SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM**

Our Lord Jesus said to us, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added to you." How do you seek the kingdom of God? What do you mean by seeking the kingdom of the heavens? Seeking the kingdom of the heavens simply means that you want to be like He is. You are not satisfied just having His life in you. You are not just content to know you are going to heaven. You want to be what He is. You want to have His character in your life. This is what is meant by seeking the kingdom of the heavens. If you really want to be what He is, allow His life to really take hold of you, then naturally it will be followed by His righteousness. First of all is the being, and then you have the doing. If you are like Him, then you will act like Him, and your actions will not be something that is put on. Your actions will be something of the overflow of life. This is His righteousness.

## **THE HIDDEN LIFE**

In a Christian life or a kingdom life, there is that secret part, that hidden part because we are living that heavenly life upon this earth. Therefore there is a heavenly, hidden part. That is the very source of our life upon this earth.

On this earth there are three dimensions. There is a relationship with the world, with man, there is a relationship with God, and there is a relationship with ourselves. These are represented by the righteousness in giving alms, in praying, and in fasting. But in whatever area it may be our motive is towards God and not just towards man. When we are giving alms, we should do it in secret. It is for God to see, not for man to see. And our reward is in heaven, not upon this earth. A Christian life is not lived for man. A Christian life is lived unto God. Therefore we must cultivate a hidden life. We should live a life that is face to face with God. And if we have that hidden life, then our life towards men will glorify God.

The same is true with prayer. Prayer is unto God. Prayer is seeking the will of God. Prayer is

to glorify God. Therefore when we pray, we should go into the closet, close the door, and pray to the Father who is in secret. And our Father who is in secret will hear us, and He will reward us. When we pray, we should pray first for the kingdom of God and for His will, and then we should pray for our needs, whether our needs are spiritual or soulical or physical.

When we are fasting, we should always do it as unto the Lord, not to try to draw attention from the people. So it is very important. To live that kingdom life, there must be a hidden life. The stronger the hidden life, the stronger will be our testimony on this earth.

## **A LIFE OF FAITH**

All who live in the kingdom of the heavens live a life of faith. We mentioned before that the life of faith is not just for a chosen, special few. The life of faith is required of all of us because we are a heavenly people upon the earth. We are strangers and sojourners. The world is not our home. We are just passing through, so our life on earth should be symbolized by living in tents. We do not get our roots deep into this earth. In

order to deliver us from being earthly, the Lord said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." On earth there will be moths, there will be rust, and there will be thieves. But in heaven there are no moths, no rust, and no thieves. The Lord wants to deliver us.

## **TREASURES**

What are our treasures? Treasures include everything that means life to your soul. In other words, treasures are things that you look upon as most precious, that you really depend on, that you will not let go, whether it is riches or position or some people. The Lord wants to set us free. He wants us to lay these treasures in heaven, to give ourselves and all that we consider as treasures to Him and let Him have the right over them. We are on earth as stewards of His gifts and we are to be faithful to whatever He wants. That is the way we are delivered from serving mammon. We serve the Lord Jesus. He alone is the One whom we serve. If we live such a life of faith, then we do not need to worry about what we should eat, what we should drink,

or what we should be clothed with because we know our heavenly Father knows everything. If we seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, then all these things shall be added to us. What a life that is!

## **THE THEME OF MATTHEW 7**

Matthew 7 gives us the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. When we read Matthew 7, probably the first impression it gives us is that the Lord touches upon a number of things, as if they are not related. It gives you the feeling that you are reading Proverbs—here a little, there a little, here a line, there a line, here a precept, there a precept, as if they are all unrelated. But as you really study it you find there is a theme that goes through it. The theme is that the Lord wants His disciples to live a disciplined and obedient life. And if we live such a life, what will be its consequence? The consequence is the reward of the kingdom of the heavens.

### ***Judge Not***

*“Judge not, that ye may not be judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged; and*

*with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you" (Matthew 7:1-2).*

We all are tempted to judge. That is a temptation with which we are always being tempted. So far as our natural man is concerned, we like to judge because it gives us a kind of feeling that we are superior.

What is meant by "judge not"? It does not mean you should not discern. We need to have the spirit of discernment because if we cannot discern, we cannot choose. If we cannot discern, we do not know which way to go. And if we do not discern, we are not able to help anybody. There will be no ministry at all. But judging and discerning are two different things.

### ***Condemn Not***

In Luke 6:37 it says, "Judge not." Then it is followed by: "Condemn not." The judging here is condemning people. It has the spirit of being judgmental. It is being critical. It is looking down upon people, and in a sense, it is an arrogant spirit.

One brother said, "When you are saying something about people, what is your inward feeling? If you are saying something bad about someone, are you feeling mournful inside or are you feeling joy? When you are judging a person, are you trying to criticize him or are you trying to restore him? It depends upon our inward sense. If we judge our brother or our sister with a bad feeling, we are criticizing them. We are looking down upon them. If we judge in this manner, we will be judged. Not only will our Lord judge us, but He will allow other people to judge us likewise because with what measure we mete to others, it will be measured to us. According to Luke 6, when it is measured back to you, it will be pressed down, shaken together, and overflowing. In other words, you will get a worse judgment.

In John 8, one morning the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman to the Lord who had been caught in adultery. They asked Him, "What shall we do to her? According to the law of Moses, she should be stoned to death." So they tempted our Lord Jesus. They knew that our Lord Jesus is love, so they wanted to challenge



Him. If the Lord said, "Let her go," they would say, "Our Lord violated the law of Moses." If our Lord said, "Stone her to death," they would say, "Our Lord does not have love and compassion." So when they brought that woman to the Lord, they put her to public shame. What was the reaction of our Lord? He bowed Himself down. He did not even look at the woman. He did not say a word, but He used His finger to write on the earth. We do not know what He wrote. People are very anxious to know what He was writing.

Those men pressed Him. "What do You say we should do to that woman?"

Our Lord raised Himself up and said, "Anyone that has no sin cast the first stone." Then He bowed down again. He would not even look at these men. He felt shame for these men. And one by one they left, from the oldest to the youngest. Then our Lord raised Himself up again: "Where are your accusers? Has no one condemned you?"

The woman said, "None." But there was One there who could have condemned her, and that is our Lord Himself.

The Lord said, "I will not condemn you. You go free." In doing that He was thinking of Calvary; He was going to bear the sins of this woman. How full of mercy is our Lord Jesus! He would not condemn. But how quickly we, who are sinners, judge and condemn!

### *Examine*

The apostle Paul tells us in I Corinthians 4:3-5: "But for me it is the very smallest matter that I be examined of you or of man's day. Nor do I even examine myself. For I am conscious of nothing in myself; but I am not justified by this: but he that examines me is the Lord. So that do not judge anything before the time, until the Lord shall come, who shall also both bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and shall make manifest the counsels of hearts; and then shall each have his praise from God."

This word "examine" is a little lighter than the word "judge." Examine is the first step. After

you examine, then you judge. The apostle Paul said, "It is a very small thing for me to be examined by anybody or by the day. I do not even examine myself because the one who really examines me is the Lord."

Do not try to judge because there are many hidden things, things of the heart we do not know. We have to wait until the Lord reveals these things. When we come to the judgment seat of Christ, then every hidden thing of the heart will be exposed and each will receive His praise from God.

If we try to judge others, actually there are many hidden things we do not know. There are things of the heart that we do not know. We can only see the outward appearance. Only God knows the heart. So our judgment would not be accurate. Judgment is God's government. It is God who judges and only His judgment is just. So wait until that day, then everything will be clear. Everything will be judged accordingly. This does not mean that because Paul said, "I do not even examine myself," that we should not know who we are.

### ***Self-Introspection***

In I Corinthians 11, the Bible says, “If we examine ourselves, then we would not be judged.” Is there any contradiction here? Not at all, because there is a self-examination which is introspection. If we try to examine ourselves by ourselves, such an examination is futile because we do not even know ourselves. We do not know our heart. So self-introspection is unprofitable.

There are two results that come from self-introspection. Either it will so press you down that you become negative, or it can so elate you that you become proud of yourself. It is only in His light that we see light. That is Psalm 36: “In your light we see light.” We should bring ourselves into His light and not try to examine ourselves by our own light because our own light is darkness itself. He is the light of life, and as we bring ourselves to His light of life, then in life we begin to see light. This will be helpful to us. We need to be careful not to judge others because God loves mercy not judgment.

### ***Playing the Hypocrite***

There is another reason. If we judge other people, we are actually playing the hypocrite. The Lord tells us that if you profess to see the mote in the eye of your brother and do not see the beam in your own eye and say to your brother, "Let me cast out the mote from your eye," are you not playing the hypocrite? Because you have the beam in your eye, how can you see clearly? Maybe the mote in your brother's eye is a reflection of your beam. You are not only playing hypocrite; you have no way to help your brother. You are the one who needs help. Every time you see something in your brother, the first thing you should do is go to God and ask Him if there is a beam in your eye. Probably what you see in your brother is only a tiny little reflection of what you really are. You are so much worse than your brother and you are the one who needs to repent and ask the Lord to remove the beam from your eye.

After the beam has been removed, then you can see clearer and that is when you are able to minister to your brother. That is where discernment comes in. Spiritual discernment is

an important thing in our Christian life. It does not come from mental knowledge. It comes from your own experience because you have experience in yourself. You have been dealt with by the Lord and you have been delivered from it so your eye is clear. You can see very clearly, and you are able to help your brother. That is where ministry comes in.

Again we need to be careful because who the Lord addressed are individual believers. As individual believers we should never try to judge people. But this does not apply to the church because the Bible tells us very clearly that the church is to judge evil in it because there is a governmental side there. What the Lord is trying to deliver us from is that judgmental spirit, and this requires discipline. We need His discipline. We know that discipline is not a popular word today, especially among the young generation. But without discipline we would never grow up. We would never mature, and the character of Christ would never be able to be formed in us. So it is very important that we as disciples be disciplined. If we are not disciplined, how can we say we are His disciples?

### ***Discernment***

This is followed by another statement: “Give not that which is holy to the dogs, nor cast your pearls before the swine, lest they trample them with their feet, and turning round rend you” (Matthew 7:6).

This speaks of discernment. We should not judge, but we must discern. What are the things that are holy? The “holy” are the words that our Lord has spoken to us. The whole Sermon on the Mount is the holy thing because we are being sanctified by these words. We are being separated from the world. We are delivered from the earth, and we are totally for God, for heaven. So the words in the Sermon on the Mount are the holy thing.

Do not give the holy thing to the dogs. Who are the dogs? The dogs here represent those people in the world, the unbelievers, because they are unclean. If you try to share the Sermon on the Mount with them, will they appreciate it? Probably they will take advantage of it. What the world needs is the gospel of pure grace; that is to

say, if you come to the Lord you will be forgiven. That is the gospel that they can understand.

To put it another way, what the people in the world need is the gospel according to Luke because there the Lord said, "You go and tell them of the forgiveness of their sins. Preach the gospel that their sins may be remitted." That is what they need and that is what they can understand. If you try to share the gospel of the kingdom with them, what the gospel according to Matthew teaches, the natural man, the man of flesh and blood will not understand it. They consider it as folly, and they will take hold of it and try to beat you. So here you need discernment. When you are sharing with people, you need to know what kind of things they can understand, and that will help them.

### *Spiritual Experience*

"Cast not your pearls before the swine." What are the pearls? Pearls represent experience. They represent our spiritual experience because that is how the pearl is made. It is the experience of the oyster. The sand enters into its being and the oyster cannot get it out. So he begins to



secrete something to cover it. Layer upon layer he covers it. Out of his pain comes forth a pearl. So it speaks of spiritual experience, the experience of the Sermon on the Mount. Now do not cast it to swine.

What does swine represent? According to Leviticus swine has cloven hoofs but do not chew the cud. So *swine* here probably represents “professional Christians” or “carnal Christians.” They have cloven hoofs but they do not chew the cud. When you share with a carnal Christian your experience of the Sermon on the Mount, they will not be able to accept it. Therefore, you need discernment. Otherwise, if you do not discern, not only will they not appreciate it, they will turn on you. So you see the balance between “judge not” and “having discernment.” Now you will say that is very difficult.

## **HARD SAYINGS**

That is why it is followed by this: “Ask, and it shall be given to you. Seek, and you shall find. Knock, and it shall be opened to you.” You remember once our Lord Jesus used five loaves and two fishes to feed the five thousand and

afterwards people tried to follow Him. The Lord began to tell them, "I am the bread of life. Eat My flesh and drink My blood and you shall have life in you." Not only the crowds but many of His disciples said, "This is a hard saying. We do not understand." And they left without following the Lord. So the Lord turned to His twelve disciples and said, "Do you also want to leave? You may." The Lord never forces anybody. Thank God for Simon Peter. He said, "Lord, You have the words of life, and we know You are the holy One. Where shall we go? We are caught." Thank God for that!

When you listen to the words of the Sermon on the Mount, will you not have the same kind of reaction? You will say, "This is a hard saying. Who can do it?" Will you also depart? You need to ask and it shall be given to you, because to you it is impossible. And the Lord does not require it of you. He will do it. If you just ask He will give it to you. Keep on asking, keep on seeking, and keep on knocking, and it shall be opened to you.

The Lord said, "If your children come and ask for bread, will you give your child a stone? If

your child comes to you and asks for a fish, will you give him a serpent? You who are evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the good things to them that ask of him.”

In Luke 11:13, what are “the good things”? The Holy Spirit. He will give the Holy Spirit to you. In other words, the Lord knows you are not able to do these things. He does not require these things from you. He requires these things from Himself. His life is in you, and He is well able to do these things. Only let the Holy Spirit work in your life. Let the Holy Spirit illumine you. Let the Holy Spirit arrange the circumstances to discipline you. The Holy Spirit is responsible to transform you and conform you to Christ. Just let the Holy Spirit do His job and then you will be all right. Everything is grace. He is well able to do it, to keep you to the very end, and to present you glorious with joy to Himself.

## **ENCOURAGEMENT**

This is followed by an exhortation. *Exhortation* in Greek includes two meanings—on the one hand, “encouragement” and on the other

hand, “warning.” Whenever you find exhortation in the Bible, there is the encouraging part and the warning part. The Lord used two parables for the encouraging part. One is: “Enter into the narrow gate.” The other is: “Build your house on the rock.” These are two encouragements.

### ***The Narrow Gate***

Having heard these words, the Lord said, “Enter in through the narrow gate, for wide is the gate and broad the way that leads to destruction, and many are they who enter in through it. For narrow the gate and straitened the way that leads to life, and they are few who find it.”

Why is it that the Lord encourages us to enter in through the narrow gate? It is a gate that few find, and yet the Lord encourages us to enter into it. You remember once our Lord Jesus said, “It is easier for a camel to enter into the needle’s eye than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom.” Whether this is literal or symbolic, I think the meaning is the same. If you try to put a small thread through a needle’s eye it is difficult. I cannot do it. For a camel to enter the needle’s

eye is absolutely absurd. Some people say that the needle's eye is symbolic because in the old days within the city gate there was a small gate or a small door. Sometimes, the city gate was closed but that small door was still open. For a camel to get through that small door called "needle's eye," that camel had to be stripped of all its load. Then he had to be pushed and pulled and barely did he get through. So what is meant here is very simple. We have to be stripped of all our load and then enter into the narrow gate.

You have to do violence to yourself to enter into the kingdom. In Matthew 11 we are told: "From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of the heavens is to be taken by violence and the violent seize upon it."

Violence! What does it mean? It does not mean to do violence to other people. It means to do violence to yourself, to deny yourself. Deny yourself is to do violence to yourself. We usually love ourselves, and here the Lord says that you have to do violence to yourself. You have to deny yourself, strip off everything that is of yourself. Then you are able to enter into the narrow gate.

You cannot enter the narrow gate carrying all the loads with you. When you enter into the gate of the kingdom of heaven, you are stripped of yourself and only the life of the Lord will go through. Not only that, after you enter the narrow gate, you find there is a straitened way. In other words, you bear your cross daily and follow the Lord, but it leads to life.

In the way of the world, the gate is broad, and many are traveling in it but it leads to destruction. The life and the destruction here do not refer to eternal life or eternal death because that is already settled. Matthew does not deal with this. When we believe in the Lord Jesus, we receive His eternal life. And because it is eternal life it is eternal. We will never lose it because it is a gift of God. God is not like man who repents. What He has given He will never take back. Eternal life is ours. So one day we will enjoy that life to eternity. We have already passed through death into life.

The life and the destruction here is within the scope of the kingdom of the heavens. In other words, one day when the kingdom of the

heavens shall publicly appear upon this earth, those who enter the narrow gate and walk on the straitened way will reign with Christ for a thousand years. And that is enjoying life.

Those who do not enter the narrow gate and do not walk in the straitened way but choose to walk in the way of the world, there will be destruction. And the destruction does not refer to eternal destruction. It is to be kept out of the life of the kingdom of the heavens. It is just like the five wise virgins who entered into the marriage feast and the five foolish virgins are kept out of the marriage feast. This is for a thousand years when the kingdom of the heavens shall publicly appear on this earth.

After that coming age comes to an end and eternity comes, those who are saved will all be in New Jerusalem. If we allow the words of the kingdom of the heavens to work in our lives, then when the kingdom of the heavens shall publicly appear on earth, we will enjoy life with our Lord Jesus. That is our hope. That is an encouragement.

### ***Building On the Rock***

The same is true with building on the rock. The rock is the word of the Sermon on the Mount. If we keep it, if we do it, if we obey it, not by our own strength but by His grace, if we follow what the word says, when the wind comes and the rain falls, when the storm is raised up, it will stand. So these two parables refer to encouragement.

### **WARNING**

#### ***False Prophets***

There are two other parables that speak of warning. In the kingdom of the heavens, there will be people who are like false prophets. They will put on sheepskin, but in their hearts they are ravening wolves. They will come in and try to preach or say something different from what our Lord has said. They will say something to try to please our flesh. They will come and say, "You can have both worlds. You can believe in the Lord Jesus but you need not follow the Sermon on the Mount. And you will still be rewarded." If such false prophets come into our midst, how



are we going to discern? See the fruit. Fruit is the concentration or the maturity of life; not by acts, it is by the fruit. See what that life will bring forth. Then you know who are the real ones and who are the false ones.

### *Lawlessness*

Then there is another class of people. They are not the false prophets. They are people who come to the Lord and say, "Lord, Lord." They are real believers. They are not only real believers, but they are zealous for the Lord, and they are zealous for the Lord's work. They say, "Lord, Lord, have we not cast out demons in Your name? Have we not prophesied through Your name? Have we not worked many works of wonder through Your name?" Certainly these people feel that they should be rewarded with the kingdom, but to their surprise the Lord said, "Depart from Me, I never knew you, workers of lawlessness." Can it be lawlessness when you are really preaching in His name, when you are casting out demons, when you work wonders in His name? Demons are cast out; wonders are being done. How can it be lawlessness?

What is lawlessness? Lawlessness simply means they do not do the will of God. They are doing works of the Lord, yet on their own. They do not seek the will of God and do not follow God's will. So the Lord said, "These are workers of lawlessness. I do not know you." It means: "I do not approve of you. Depart from Me." In other words, they will have no part in the coming kingdom of the heavens.

What is important is that the Lord is not expecting us to do anything for Him. The Lord wants us to submit to His will, and if we submit to His will, then He will reward us with the kingdom.

After our Lord finished speaking, the people who heard it said, "He spoke differently; He spoke with authority." Why? It is because He is the personification of His own words. His word has authority; His word has power. So let us trust in His word; yield ourselves to His word, and let the Holy Spirit work it out in our lives.

*Let us pray:*

*Dear Lord, we want to thank Thee for Thy grace. Thou dost not require anything from us but Thou dost require Thyself in us. Thou art in us and Thou dost desire to express Thy life. Do teach us how to yield ourselves to Thee, to be taught of Thee, to be disciplined by Thee, that we may be brought to the place where You want us to be, that Thy kingdom may come and Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. May Thy name be hallowed. We ask in Thy precious name. Amen.*

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