

This is the Year of Matthew for the Gospel Readings. Where are we?
Matt 5:17-37

Right now we are hearing The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew Chapters 5–7. Gospel Reading for 6 Sundays which started on Jan 30th and continues through Mar 6th.

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' discourse (His Speech or Homily) on the New Law. Jesus is giving us the New Law of the new covenant for this Kingdom He is establishing.

5:17: Jesus says "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill.

The Law not relaxed, but the Law raised to new heights.

Sermon on the Mount began on Jan 30th with the Beatitudes.

- Beatitudes tell us how to attain true happiness.
- In the Beatitudes, Jesus tells us what it is like to be Him. They perfectly describe Him. To be happy we need to become more like Christ.
- They require a Transformation of the Heart to enable us to have a change in Attitude.

Last Sunday we heard about Salt and Light and how we are to be the light of Christ to the world.

This Sunday and next Sunday continue with Chapter 5. 4 Sundays just on Chapter 5 of Matthew.

The Sermon on the Mount begins: "When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain, and after he had sat down, his disciples came to him. He began to teach them,"

This reminds me of a painting in NYC Museum by Claude Lorrain entitled "The Sermon on the Mount".

- Looking very closely you see Jesus on top of the mountain with the Apostles.
- The people are spread around the Hill, pointing, gazing, with stretched hands upward. Listening to His every word; there was a sense of awe.
- You pause and ask how did all these people hear all that Jesus had to say?
- The sheep all have smiles and are at peace.
- A man is trying to climb to the top. A man is holding his heart with his right hand.
- You wonder how did the artist paint such a picture just from the words of the Gospel.
- In this painting, Jesus is not only teaching His Apostles, but the people as well. As the Gospel does for us today.

Before seeing this painting, I had never reflected on all the teachings contained in Matthew Chapters 5-7 as being from the Sermon on the Mount. I thought only of the Beatitudes. But we are seeing this is much more.

“You have heard that it was said to your ancestors,... But I say to you:,

The Law was set forth negatively in the OT: You shall not do this, You shall not do that.

Jesus is transitioning from the focus on an outward emphasis to the Interior Focus of the Heart. He is raising the Bar of the Law.

Jer 31:31: I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah... I will place my law within them, and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

In the old Law OT, you could be Obedient externally. It was easy to be obedient externally. Do not do this, Do that. Simply out of fear, you could obey the law.

Now we are being called to do it for Love for our Father.

Teaching about Anger:

MT 5:21: "You have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills will be liable to judgment.' But I say to you, whoever is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment...

- The same holds for one who has offended another with hurtful words, mockery, or gossip.
- Jesus is showing us the real intent of the Law.
- To truly walk like Him and be holy is not just an external exercise (not kill), but an Internal Transformation (not getting angry in your heart)
- We can only be transformed by the Grace of God. That is why we need the Eucharist, the Sacraments in our lives,

Teaching about Oaths:

MT 5:33: "Again you have heard that it was said to your ancestors, 'Do not take a false oath, but make good to the Lord all that you vow.

- People swore Oaths because they were not trusted.
- In today's Gospel Jesus teaches that one should not be disbelieving or distrustful of one's neighbor when he is habitually candid and sincere.
- "Let your word be your bond - 'yes' means 'yes' and your 'no' means 'no.'

His whole intention is to bring people beyond legalism, which seriously affected the Scribes and the Pharisees and a literal interpretation of rules.

Jesus teaches that minimal obedience is far beneath the dignity of those who love God and neighbor. To strive for less than perfect love is to strive for too little.

True walking with Him is not a matter of external obedience for reward, but internal obedience and conformity to Him and His will out of love.

Jesus makes God's love very precise and challenging. Love is measured by faithfulness to the smallest details.

Our ability to follow it is purely a gift from above. Jesus' life was a model of this fulfillment.

Jesus could say to his disciples not only and not merely,

"Follow my law," but,

"Follow Me, Imitate Me, Walk In The Light Which Comes From Me."

Praise Be Jesus Christ, Now And Forever, Amen!

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