

## The Sermon on the Mount Sermon Series

### Sermon 20

#### Be Perfect As God is Perfect

When Jesus preached the sermon on the mount, the listeners hoped that Jesus would set up a new kingdom that would conquer the Romans. They hoped the Jewish nation would be more powerful and wealthy and honored than all the kingdoms of the world. Jesus disappointed His listeners by preaching about the kingdom of God.

Every kingdom is founded on laws and principles. The kingdom of God is no exception. Jesus said that the kingdom of God is not about pride but about humility. The kingdom of God is not about power but meekness. The kingdom of God is not about selfishness, it is about unselfishness. It is about repentance and forsaking sin.

These concepts were all put before the Jewish nation in the Old Testament in the time of Moses. The principles of the kingdom of God were given in laws. But these laws were misinterpreted by the people. The people looked at the laws in only their most concrete, literal application. By doing this, the people thought to establish their own righteousness according to their own low standard. They thought that by keeping rules and regulations they deserved to go to heaven.

In the sermon on the mount Jesus taught that the laws given to Israel by God were to be applied to the life in the most spiritual and deep manner. Jesus explains the underlying principle in the laws God gave ancient Israel.

Matthew 5:38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.'

This was a law given to Moses and Israel. The people interpreted this as a license or even a command to retaliate. But this law was given as a civil statute for the judges. The judges were not to require more punishment than a crime deserved. If you killed your neighbor's sheep, the penalty was one sheep, not two. So Jesus corrects this misinterpretation of the law.

Matthew 5:39 "But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also.

The spirit of retaliation and revenge is the spirit of Satan. It has no place in the kingdom of God. Do you have angry and vengeful thoughts? How can you overcome them and enter the kingdom of God?

Matthew 5:40-41 "If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. <sup>41</sup> "And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two.

In Jesus' day, the Jews hated the Romans who occupied their country. Often the Roman soldiers forced the Jews to carry things for them for a mile. Jesus not only did not incite a rebellion against the Romans, He told the Jews to submit to their conquerors! Would you do

that if a country conquered and occupied Turkey? Do you see how different the kingdom of God is from nationalism and pride?

Matthew 5:42 "Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away.

Jesus did not mean that you must give indiscriminately to anyone who wants something from you. If that was the case people would ask from you every single thing you have. There was a law in the Old Testament that Jesus was referring to. Let's look at it.

Deuteronomy 15:7-8 "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the LORD your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, <sup>8</sup> "but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs.

The law said that we should help a poor person in their need, not their desires. Many poor people desire money for cigarettes and alcohol. Did Jesus say you should give your money to them for that? No. Many people squander money away on unnecessary things and then they have no money for the rent. Should you give your money to them for that? No. That will not help them. They will continually do that until all of your money is gone and they will not learn to do right. But God did command us to have mercy to those who are in true need.

Matthew 5:43-48 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' <sup>44</sup> "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, <sup>45</sup> "that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. <sup>46</sup> "For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? <sup>47</sup> "And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? <sup>48</sup> "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

There it is, the principle of the kingdom of heaven. It is love. Love does not retaliate. Love does not hate people. Love does not take revenge. Love has mercy on the poor. Love does not seek a divorce. Love does not use God's name in vain. The principle behind all the laws God gave to Israel is love.

Why? Love is the very nature of God. God is good to the evil and to the good people. But if you love only those who love you then you do not have a character like God. You can't enter the kingdom of heaven with that attitude. God is not like that and His kingdom is not like that. No one will go to heaven who only loves those who love them in return. That is selfish. Unselfishness means loving those who do not love you in return.

Jesus is commanding that we love as God loves. We are to be perfect in love as God is perfect in love.

In a previous sermon I mentioned that we generally behave toward others according to how we perceive God behaving toward us. If we think that God is harsh, demanding and anxious to punish, we behave that way toward others. On the other hand, if we believe God is love and behaves mercifully and kindly toward us, that is how we treat others.

Today there are many people in the world doing terrible things to others in the name of their religion. What does that tell us about how they understand God?

How is it with you in your life today? Is love the principle behind your actions? Are you selfish, always thinking about your wants and your desires? Are you a giving person or are you miserly? Are you full of anger and hate? Do you seek revenge?

If you are like this what hope do you have to change? You can try as hard as you want and you will not change by yourself. You need a new principle acting in your life. You must be born again.

1 John 4:7 -13 Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. <sup>8</sup> He who does not love does not know God, for God is love. <sup>9</sup> In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. <sup>10</sup> In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son *to be* the propitiation for our sins. <sup>11</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. <sup>12</sup> No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us. <sup>13</sup> ¶ By this we know that we abide in Him, and He in us, because He has given us of His Spirit.

Look, the Spirit of God living in us. That is the new birth. That is the new principle necessary in our life.

1 John 4:14 And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent the Son *as* Savior of the world. <sup>15</sup> Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.

How do we receive the Spirit of God? When we confess that Jesus is the Son of God. This is salvation.

1 John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him. <sup>17</sup> Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

Are you afraid of the judgment? Then you must be born again. Then you have the love of God in you and you will not fear the judgment.

1 John 4:18 - 5:5 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love. <sup>19</sup> We love Him because He first loved us. <sup>20</sup> If someone says, "I love God," and hates his

brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen? <sup>21</sup> And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves God *must* love his brother also. 1 John 5:1 Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves Him who begot also loves him who is begotten of Him. <sup>2</sup> By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments. <sup>3</sup> For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments. And His commandments are not burdensome. <sup>4</sup> For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world -- our faith. <sup>5</sup> Who is he who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?