

NEW TESTAMENT



GOSPEL DOCTRINE CLASS

Lesson 8: The Sermon on the Mount: "A More Excellent Way" (Matthew 5)

- Jesus teaches the Beatitudes to his disciples.
- Jesus declares that his disciples are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world."
- Jesus teaches a higher law than the law of Moses.

A study of this lesson will encourage us to come unto Christ by applying the principles he taught in the Sermon on the Mount.

Introduction

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. Matthew 11:28-29

And know ye that ye shall be judges of this people, according to the judgment which I shall give unto you, which shall be just. Therefore, what manner of men ought ye to be? Verily I say unto you, even as I am. 3 Nephi 27:27

The scriptures include many invitations from the Savior. This lesson focuses on the Sermon on the Mount, which contains many invitations from the Savior.

The Savior invites me to:



Look for invitations during the lesson and write them down.

NEXT WEEK:
#9 "Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God" (Matthew 6-7)

Jesus teaches the Beatitudes to his disciples. (Matthew 5:1-12)

Many centuries after the premortal Christ gave the law of Moses on Mount Sinai, the mortal Messiah ascended another mount to proclaim a higher law in a discourse known as the Sermon on the Mount. The first teachings in this sermon are known as the Beatitudes, found in Matthew 5:1-12. The word beatitude comes from the Latin 'beatus', which means fortunate, happy, or blessed. Let's review these teachings:

- **Matt. 5:3** To be "poor in spirit" means "to be humble". It is important that we be humble so that we may be taught by the Spirit. Through activities such as prayer, scripture study, and service to others, we can strive to develop greater humility.
- **Matt. 5:4** reminds us that the Lord provides for us to be comforted. John 14:26-27 and Mosiah 18:8-9 provide examples of comfort.
- **Matt. 5:5** Meekness means that we are to be gentle, forgiving, or benevolent as shown in Mosiah 3:19; Alma 7:23; and Alma 13:28.
- **Matt. 5:6** Jesus promised those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" that they will be filled. Of course, it is up to us to lift our appetites from the things of the world to things of righteousness. 3 Nephi 12:6 clarifies the promise—that we will be filled "with the Holy Ghost".
- **Matt. 5:7** Just as we need mercy from the Lord, we need to extend mercy to others by being understanding of human failures, being forgiving even at times when others may not seem to be worthy of forgiveness or mercy. Alma 42:13-15 reminds us that all mankind are fallen.
- **Matt. 5:8** reminds us that we need to have a pure heart and in Helaman 3:35, we are given instruction on how to purify our hearts—by yielding our hearts to God. Remember too that we must have pure hearts if we are to see God and dwell with him—See Moses 6:57.
- **Matt. 5:9** If we wish to be the children of God, we must be peacemakers in our homes and communities.
- **Matt. 5:10** In this world, righteous people sometimes persecuted. How we should respond to persecution is taught in both Matt. 5:44 and Luke 6:35.

Jesus declares that his disciples are "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world." (Matthew 5:13-16)

Matt. 5:13 Jesus said that his disciples are "the salt of the earth". In modern day scripture in D&C 101:39, he repeated that concept. Salt is useful as a seasoning—bringing out the best and making things flavorful—and as a preservative—prolonging or enhancing usefulness. D&C 103:9-10 adds insight about what it means to be "the salt

of the earth" and how we can be "the saviors of men" by providing needed services such as sharing the gospel and doing temple work.

Matt. 5:14 and 16 remind us that Latter-day Saints can be "the light of the world". When a candle is placed "under a bushel", its light is hidden and its utility is diminished significantly.

As Church members we sometimes put our light under a bushel when we could let our light shine in a way that would lead others to "glorify [our] Father ... in heaven". We have been taught that Jesus is the light that we should hold up in 3 Nephi 18:24.

Jesus teaches a higher law than the law of Moses. (Matthew 5:17-48)

Matt. 5:17-18 Jesus said that he came to fulfill the law of Moses, not to destroy it. The law of Moses had been "given to the children of Israel, ... for they were a stiffnecked people, quick to do iniquity, and slow to remember the Lord their God." It was "a law of performances and of ordinances, ... which [the Israelites] were to observe strictly

from day to day, to keep them in remembrance of God and their duty towards him" (Mosiah 13:29-30). Those who understood the law "[looked] forward with steadfastness unto Christ, until the law [was] fulfilled. For, for this end was the law given" (2 Nephi 25:24-25). Alma 34:13-16 The Savior fulfilled the law of Moses when he atoned

for our sins. After the Atonement, the people were no longer commanded to make animal sacrifices, which had been required as part of the law of Moses to point to the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Instead, the people were commanded to "offer for a sacrifice ... a broken heart and a contrite spirit" (3 Nephi 9:20).

Matt. 5:20 Jesus said that his disciples' righteousness should "exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees". While they focused only on outward appearances of the law, the importance of inner faithfulness was lacking from the "righteousness" of the scribes and Pharisees. If they had observed the law as it was given, they would have recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

"Ye have heard that it was said..." In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus used these words when he referred to commandments that were part of the law of Moses.

"But I say unto you..." Jesus used these words when he taught his disciples his higher law.

Commenting on **Matt. 5:48**, **President Joseph Fielding Smith** said: *"I believe the Lord meant just what he said: that we should be perfect, as our Father in heaven is perfect. That will not come all at once, but line upon line, and precept upon precept, example upon example, and even then not as long as we live in this mortal life, for we will have to go even beyond the grave before we reach that perfection and shall be like*

Contrast these teachings of the Law of Moses and Christ's teachings:

"Ye have heard that it was said" (Law of Moses)	"But I say unto you..." (Christ's higher law)
Thou shalt not kill (Matt 5:21)	Do not get angry (Matt. 5:22) • feelings of anger affect our relationship with God • eliminate such feelings from our lives
Bring a "gift to the altar" / Offer sacrifice (Matt 5:23)	Reconcile with thy brother first (Matt 5:23)
Thou shalt not commit adultery (Matt 5:27)	Avoid lustful thoughts (Matt 5:28, also see Mosiah 4:30 and Alma 12:14)
Perform oaths to the Lord (Matt 5:33)	Keep your word (Matt 5:34-37) Elder Bruce R. McConkie said: <i>"Under the Mosaic law the taking of oaths was so common and covered such a variety of circumstances that, in practice, little verity attended statements that were not made with an oath. ... Under the perfect law of Christ every man's word is his bond, and all spoken statements are as true as though an oath attended each spoken word"</i> (The Mortal Messiah, 4 vols. [1979-81], 2:140)

God. But here we lay the foundation. Here is where we are taught these simple truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ, in this probationary state, to prepare us for that perfection. It is our duty to be better today than we were yesterday, and better tomorrow than

we are today. ... If we are keeping the commandments of the Lord, we are on that road to perfection" (Doctrines of Salvation, comp. Bruce R. McConkie, 3 vols. [1954-56], 2:18-19)

Conclusion

In the fifth chapter of Matthew, the Lord taught a greater law. Those teachings are as applicable and necessary today as they were 2000 years ago. The teachings in the Sermon on the Mount help us "come unto Christ, and be perfected in him" (Moroni 10:32). Strive to apply those teachings in your life. Look at the invitations you listed while studying this lesson and choose one or two that you will focus on during the coming week.

