

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

Session: March 30, 2012

...your presence. We're grateful, Lord, that you've redeemed us from the system of this world. We just ask, Lord, that your Holy Spirit today would guide us into all truth, and to that end, we thank you in Jesus' Name. Amen.

We just finished...I think Dale said that we had 45 messages on The Function and Formation of the Church. I trust that series was help for us to understand the beauty of the church, the necessity of the church, and that we do not need a new paradigm for the church. God has given us one that we just need to be obedient to. Rather than trying to create a new system, we just need to be obedient to the system that God has already established, known as the body of Christ or the local church.

I want to give you an illustration today before we get into the Sermon on the Mount, which is really the Christian manifesto. It's really our document of grace. It's our understanding of how we are called to live life as a kingdom citizen. The Sermon on the Mount really describes for us the character of the Kingdom of God and the conduct of the persons who are citizens of the Kingdom of God. It's about the witness of the Kingdom of God and the witness of the citizens of the Kingdom.

To make that transition before we sit down at the feet of Jesus when he called his disciples to himself and began to teach, I want to give you an illustration that kind of summarizes where we are with the Function and the Formation of the Church.

There are two systems in this world. One is the system of the Word of God, the Scripture, and the other is the system of this world. Paul tells us in Romans, "Do not be conformed to the system of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Let me give you a quick illustration, historically, of what's going on in our country as it relates to the sufficiency of Scripture. There was a time when we started here, when the standard of the Scripture was the Word. What happens is every successive generation, about every 40 to 50 years, the populace, the churchmen, will take a position that will basically say, "We need to be in the world. We don't want to offend people." So what happens is they move the standard here. The standard is the Word, but because of our lack of understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture, one generation sets the standard here.

They raise their children according to where the standard is. Where's the standard? It's now here as opposed to there. So the next generation comes along and what do they do? They do the same thing. And now this generation has the standard of Scripture here. They whittle it down a little bit. They play with it a little bit. We want to make sure that we don't offend people. We need to be politically correct. They do all the things that every successive generation does with the Word.

Then what happens in the next generation? The next generation takes the same position that their parents did in the previous generation, is they keep moving the Scripture closer to the system of the world. Eventually, what you have is you now have the Scripture now becoming conformed to the system of the world, rather than having the world be conformed to the system of the Word.

That's why it's so important, friends, that we're committed to the sufficiency of Scripture. There are two standards. It's here and it's there. Paul says, "Don't do what I just described. Don't be conformed to the system of the world. Don't take the Scripture and conform it to the world. We are called as Kingdom citizens to take the world and conform it to Scripture." Now that's our battleground.

The real issue, in my judgment, is the illustration I just gave you, which is the sufficiency of Scripture. Is Scripture sufficient for all the things that we need for life and godliness? Or do we have to take the Scripture and mix a little bit of it with the world so that we come up with a system that is politically correct and everybody likes it?

As we move into the discussion of the Sermon on the Mount, we're going to see a lot of things that are absolutely contrary to the system of this world. It's absolutely critical that we understand a little bit of the historical background of the timing of this particular sermon that Jesus gave as we look at it. You have that and your handout. I call your attention to our handout today. We want to look at some things related to the Sermon on the Mount because it really is going to be a description of the Kingdom of God and the witness of the citizens of the Kingdom.

Let's first of all take a look at the historical background. Matthew's Gospel breaks a long silence that followed the ministry of Malachi, which is the last book in the Old Testament. The silence extended for about 400 years. During that time, God had withdrawn his voice, written voice, from the nation of Israel. For four centuries, God shut out his people to his written Word. Again and again, often times, he always had promised the coming of a Messiah.

There was a believing remnant of people who were eagerly awaiting the coming of the Messiah because they believed God's Word and they held to that. They were known as the remnant. The majority of Israel did not believe in that, but there was a believing remnant who for those 400 years kept waiting for the coming of the Messiah. It's at that point that the book of Matthew picks up the thread that was dropped by the prophet Malachi.

The purpose of the book of Matthew's Gospel, in primary, is to present Christ as the fulfiller of the promise of the coming Messiah. That's why you'll notice the word "fulfill" occurs 15 times in the book of Matthew. That's why there are more quotations in the book of Matthew from the Old Testament than any others. In fact, let's see, there are 53 quotations from the Old Testament in the book of Matthew. There are 76 references to Old Testament passages in the book of Matthew. There are a total of 129 references or allusions to the Old Testament in the book of Matthew. Matthew refers to 25 of the 39 Old Testament books. The word "fulfill" is used at least 15 times to bridge that gap between the silent 400 years to introduce the coming Messiah.

The position with Matthew's Gospel occurs in the Scripture really relates to its character and to its content. Coming right after the Old Testament, at the beginning of the New Testament, it really is there for sort of a connecting between the Old and the New Testament—the old covenant and the new covenant. It's really what you could call a transitional book in the sense of it bridges the gap from the book of Malachi in the Old Testament prophecies related to the coming Messiah and the introduction of the fulfilled coming Messiah.

In the book of Matthew, God is dealing with his Old Testament saints, the Old Testament people, and Matthew presents the Lord Jesus as Israel's Messiah.

***Audience Member:** My experience, a real contradiction in Word and beliefs. I had a student from Indonesia who was Muslim. He was actually raised with a Christian atmosphere, belief. He went to college, I became a confidant because he found out in college, [UNCLEAR]...so he emailed me and he said, "What should I do?" I said, "Don't let the world change you; you change the world." [UNCLEAR]...a lot of confusion with all of this, but she was more Christian than she was Muslim.*

We'll see what happens. The Sermon on the Mount is going to expose a lot of us, one way or the other. You're either a citizen of the Kingdom or you're not. There's not a third element. We'll see that as Jesus

takes us into Sermon on the Mount.

Let me continue to help you understand. We've got to understand why the book of Matthew contains the Sermon on the Mount and the timing of it. The book of Matthew really opens with the sentence...if you turn to Matthew 1. You'll notice, the very first sentence in Matthew 1, it starts with "the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."

The book of Matthew is not a chronological story of the life of Jesus. What Matthew has done, is he's taken various incidents in the life of Jesus and puts it together in the book under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit to describe Jesus as the fulfilled Messiah, the King of kings, the Lord of lords, and the King of the Kingdom of God. So it's not a chronological book. We need to understand this very first sentence, "the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham."

You'll notice there that the seven times Christ is addressed as the Son of David. And ten times all together, you're going to find that title, Son of David, used to describe Christ in the book of Matthew. He's also described as Son of Abraham.

It's important that we understand the two differences, because the Son of David refers to Christ and his throne as the King of kings and Lord of lords. The Son of David means he sits on the throne. The Son of Abraham means he's on the altar of sacrifice. So you see two things in the very first statement that Matthew is penning. He is the King and he's also the sacrifice. He's on the throne and he's also on the altar. You'll see that in those two phrases—Son of David and Son of Abraham.

Matthew is primarily a Jewish book and presents Christ as King. Just to help you understand the other Gospels, Mark is primarily a Roman addressed book and presents Jesus as a servant. Luke is primarily a Greek-written book, and presents Christ as man, and John is a universal book and presents Christ as God. When you look at the gospels, they flow this way. Matthew presents him as King, Mark presents him as servant, Luke presents him as man, and John presents him as God.

When somebody says, "Where should I start reading the Scripture," one of the best things, I think, we can do is take them to the book of John because you introduce Jesus Christ as God himself. He is the God man, so start there.

I think I told you years ago, when I was traveling in Europe with a friend of mine from the Naval Academy, and he was not a believer. We spent six weeks on Eurorail passes going all over Europe. One day on the train, between Spain and Switzerland, he says, "Can you give me something to read?" I just gave him my New Testament and I said, "Why don't you just read the book of John. Read it as a story."

He had a Catholic background; was a churchman. But he was not a believer. During those six weeks, he read the book of John. When he finished, he said, "What else could I read?" I said, "Why don't you read it again, and this time, write down any questions you have. That'll give us something to talk about on the train." So he started reading the book of John and he started asking questions. We just began to talk over the six weeks about the issues that he raised from the questions he had reading the book of John.

We were at a bed and breakfast in Copenhagen, Denmark, and we were talking about it and he was reading and I was trying to go to sleep. He woke me up and he said, "Bruce, something has happened to my life. I said, "What is that, Mike?" He said, "I think God is calling me to saving faith." So we prayed there at that moment on the floor and the bed of a bed and breakfast in Copenhagen, Denmark. My friend, Mike, was granted the grace of God unto saving faith just by reading the book of John. I didn't lead him into the Kingdom. All he did was I answered his questions because he began to realize, he said, "Bruce, I never realized that Jesus is God. He really is God, isn't he?" I said, "Yes, he is, Mike. That's

why I wanted you to read the book of John.” You see, Matthew tells that he’s a King. Mark tells you that he’s a servant. Luke will tell you that he’s a man. But John will tell you that he’s God.

Mike Minter now has been pastoring Reston Bible Church for the last 32 years. We came back from that trip. He went on to Bible college and started a church in Reston, Virginia, and he’s been the sole pastor there. This is 32nd year.

You see, God’s Word is sufficient. It will do what it is accomplished to do. We just don’t need to water it down. People, we just need to be committed to the sufficiency of Scripture. You can handle it with grace, you can handle it with sensitivity, you can handle it with power and conviction and passion, but you don’t need to change it. Let the Scripture do its work. The Holy Spirit’s job is to guide us into all truth. We don’t need to make it happen. We just teach to the point of understanding not agreement. You don’t have to get people to agree with you. You just want them to understand it. They have to deal with the agreement issue between themselves and the Lord. You can’t manage that. But the one thing you can do, folks, is you can teach them to the point of understanding. All I did was answer his questions. I never said, “Do you agree with me?” He came to the fact of agreement because of the work of the Holy Spirit in his life as he was confronted with the truths of the sufficiency of Scripture. That’s what’s going to happen to us as we study the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew 5-7.

Let’s take a look now at the timing of this. Now right into the middle of the fourth chapter. I want you to turn to Matthew 4, and we see this in verse 17. We need to understand the timing of this. “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.’” That’s Matthew 4:17.

The fourth chapter closes us by telling us, “And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them. And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan.” (Matthew 4:24-25)

Some people wondered why was Jesus doing all these miracles before he preached his great sermon, the Sermon on the Mount. This occurred before the Sermon on the Mount. Some people have said, “Why did he do that?” Let me give you a couple of suggestions as to why he did this first. First of all, it should be noted that these miracles of healing followed his teaching in the synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom. You’ll see that in verse 4:23. He only did these miracles after he preached in the synagogues, in the church, after he preached about the Kingdom of God. Then he conducted these miracles. So there’s a matter of timing.

Secondly, these miracles of healings were an essential part of his Messianic credentials. You can find that in Isaiah 35:4, 6. In other words, by his fulfilling these ministries of healing, he was demonstrating the fact that he was the Messiah. The believing remnant understood that.

The first thing that he was doing, he only did the miracles after he taught about the Kingdom of God, and he did it to fulfill some of his Messianic credentials, which the prophet Isaiah had prescribed centuries ago.

There’s a third reason why he did this before he preached the Sermon on the Mount, and that was these miracles of healing made way for his fuller preaching of the Kingdom of God, and made the people in a position to want to listen. In other words, it disposed the people to give attention to what he was going to say because his words were now validated by his miracles because it manifested his divine power and his gracious mercy. In other words, they wanted to come and listen to what he said because these

miracles were authenticating the fact that he was the arrived Messiah.

Now we come to the timing and the preface of the Sermon on the Mount. Go to Matthew 5 please, “¹Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying.” Now the preface of the Sermon on the Mount is a very short one. I just read it for you.

There are certain things that we need to understand that can be very helpful. First, we notice that he was not speaking from a holy mountain. In other words, this was not one of the mountains of Zion. It was just a common, ordinary, [UNCLEAR] hill in the area where he was living and preaching at the time. It wasn't anything that was directly related to the holy mountains of Zion.

I think what he was doing was intimating that there's no distinguishing holiness of place anymore, under the Gospel, as there was under the law. You see, under the law, the holy mountain was the mountain where the Ten Commandments were given. Jesus is just preaching on a common, ordinary hill, and I think he's demonstrating the fact that now holiness is wherever you are. It's just not on some holy location. So we see a picture here of his intimating something that there's no distinguishing holiness of place under the Gospel as there was under the law, but that it is the will of God that men should pray and praise him anywhere, anytime, any location, as long as it's decent and convenient. You see, there's an illustration here. It's really significant for us to understand why he didn't go up to Mt. Zion.

Here's what Matthew Henry said, “Christ preached this Sermon, which was an exposition of the Law, upon a mountain, because upon a mountain the Law was given: and this was also a solemn promulgation of the Christian Law. But observe the difference: when the Law was given the Lord came down upon the mountain, now the Lord ‘went up’ into one; then He spoke in thunder and lightning, now in a still small voice; then the people were ordered to keep their distance, now they are invited to draw near—a blessed change in the whole manifestation of how Christ communicated!” What you see there, guys, is a contrast between Law and grace. You see, just in those first sentences, there's a contrast between Law and grace. When the Ten Commandments were given, people were encouraged to stay away. When Christ speaks, he draws them to himself. We're going to see the illustration of this as we move through these commandments, as we see the Beatitudes over the next couple of weeks.

What about the audience? We need to take a look at who was the audience to whom he was speaking. When you do a careful study of all the gospels of Christ, it reveals that his ministry had several different applications. First of all, it was to the afflicted people of the world. You'll notice in verses 4, 23, 24 and 25, the reason that Jesus is now going to preach to them is because he had been taking care of the afflictions of the world, and those people were drawn to him and they now wanted to hear what he had to say because of what he had done for them. So first of all, he had a particular reference to these [UNCLEAR] dealing with downtrodden people and afflicted people of the world.

Secondly, he had a particular interest in reference to his own immediate disciples. The disciples came to him. So his twelve disciples in the midst of this mass of people came to him and he began to teach. There's a third element, and that is there's a general bearing upon the people at large. In other words, he had a concern for those who were afflicted, he had a desire to teach his twelve, and then there was a message for the whole world in general. You see that just in the audience who came to hear him speak that day.

What we see here is, he's drawing and illustrating these three distinctive features of his own public ministry. The Puritan, William Perkins, said this of the Sermon on the Mount, “It may justly be called the key to the whole Bible. Here Christ opens the sum of the Old and the New Testaments. It is the longest of all of Jesus' discourses recorded in the Scriptures. He began his public ministry by insisting

upon repentance. (Matthew 4:17) Here he begins to enlarge what would that mean. What does repentance look like and what does repentance mean and how is it illustrate or manifested in a response by us? He shows us what repentance really is and what are its fruits. What are the fruits of repentance? It really is a very practical, common sermon when we look at it.”

As we’re told at the beginning of Chapter 5, it’s his disciples who he taught. It is equally clear that in the closing verses—look at Chapter 7, the last couple of verses of Chapter 7—that the sermon was spoken to the hearing of the multitudes. So what you have is the multitudes are hearing something and he’s directing it to his disciples. This is essentially his first staff meeting where he gets his staff together and begins to tell them. Notice what he doesn’t do. He doesn’t come up and say, “Here’s our strategic plan.” He gets his disciples and begins to say, “Here’s what it means to repent. Here’s what it means to understand the Kingdom of God. Here’s how you enter into the Kingdom. And here’s how you become a Kingdom citizen. And the real issue is not what you do, it’s who you are.” He says, “Follow me and I’m going to teach you what it means to be a Kingdom citizen.”

Now the masses heard this. As we work our way through this, you’ll understand why there were other listening ears besides his twelve disciples.

***Audience Member:** I think it was [UNCLEAR] first word, that when he saw the crowds, because this was the first assembly of large crowds, you know, that Jesus heard, become more popular, that the teaching, he was struck with compassion, that that was his motivation, that when he saw humanity and he was just struck with such compassion in the exercise of a [UNCLEAR] to walk downtown [UNCLEAR] and try to see the crowd through Jesus’ eyes and I think about the compassion that he had for humanity, [UNCLEAR]...*

That’s a good point. You see, it was really his vision of the multitudes which inspired our Lord’s action at this time. He saw the multitudes and that’s what prompted him to do something. So he went up on this hill, and then he refers to his disciples. The crowds gathered around him, but he was addressing it to his disciples. I think [UNCLEAR] the method together, we begin to see a very unique thing here: that Jesus impacts the multitude by working with a few. You see that? He changed the world by working with a few. He combines the art of compassion. He begins to instruct his twelve disciples, and he’s the one who turns [UNCLEAR] to change the world and multitudes.

You see, that’s one of the things that we talked about in the Function and Formation of the church about having qualified church leaders. You see, you work through the leadership of the organization. Jesus is now beginning to say, “Yes, I have compassion for the masses, but the way the masses are going to be impacted is because of what I’m going to build into you.” That’s discipleship. It’s producing that depth of growth that we talked about when Carl taught us the difference between growth and expansion.

We see a picture right here of the twelve being involved in all the masses, and he’s really directing it to twelve; the rest just might hear a little bit about it. But what he’s really doing is saying, “I’m going to train these twelve and turn you loose on all the masses.” There’s a great principle of ministry we see there. You see, we turn the qualified people, the people that have been trained, we turn them loose on the masses. That’s why the mission of the church is the same for every local body, and that is what? To equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. That’s the church’s role. Not to do it, but to equip the saints to do it. That’s what you see right here in the Sermon on the Mount. That’s our illustration. That’s exactly what Paul is saying when he says this, “To equip the saints to do the work of the ministry.” Jesus calls his twelve disciples together in the midst of the multitudes for whom he had compassion, and he said, “I’m going to equip you to do the work of the ministry.” There’s the illustration of the local church right there in the Sermon on the Mount. That’s a very powerful image for us.

What God's people talk about, what is the mission of the church? Spend all of this time on hiring consultants and sitting around on weekend retreats trying to figure out what should we do, what should we be. The answer is this: Equip the saints to do the work of the ministry. And turn them loose. That's the role of the church.

Carl: Can it also be said that he was also, as he was teaching his disciples, if you'll notice he met the needs of the people first. He met the needs first with his compassion, and then he taught them the Word.

That's how you see the miracles occurring first. He had great compassion for the multitude and the problems in their lives. Now he begins to deal with the nurturing of their souls after he had taken care of their physical ailments they had.

There's a wonderful flow when you see the picture of how this works together. Moved by great compassion. So we see the principle of equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry, and that's what he does with his disciples.

Whatever he said to them was said in the context of the intent of the crowd. Look at Matthew 9:36, "He was moved with compassion for the multitudes." You see, Jesus was moved with compassion. What is one of our motivations for evangelism? Not conversion. It's compassion. You see that? Our motive for evangelism is not conversion. We can't convert anybody anyway. You're not going to change anybody's life. What's your motive for the sharing of the person and work of Christ? It's not to get another notch on your belt, to convert somebody. It's because your heart is moved by compassion because you see they're lost in their sin, and they're doomed for eternity. You see, that's what you see in Jesus' picture here in the Sermon on the Mount. He's moved with compassion. So he begins to tell them about two things, "Here's the Kingdom of God. This is what awaits you. But I've got to tell you, this is how you enter the Kingdom."

You see, the great motivation for evangelism is not conversion. It's compassion for the lost. If your church doesn't have compassion for the lost, there's something wrong with it. You need to pray for them to have compassion for those who are lost. That's exactly what Jesus did. He was moved by compassion for the lost.

Audience Member: I think that's summarized in that statement that you've heard many times, people don't care how much you know until they know how much you care.

Good statement. But do you understand what we see here? His motive for preaching was compassion. That ought to be our motive for evangelism, is compassion.

Brian: The thing about his compassion, too, is we as a modern church, we don't tell our people to repent, we just tell them to believe. Out of compassion, we should be sharing with people the truth of repent and believe, and we don't really do that anymore because people aren't truly repentant; they're not getting to the point of wanting to be disciples, so this whole process [UNCLEAR] created here isn't working.

That's a very good point. How often do you hear a sermon where somebody says repent? We just say invite Jesus into your heart. There's a huge difference. That may be what a person does [UNCLEAR] invite him into their life...that may be their point of saving faith. I don't know that.

I was talking with a group of Christian leaders the other day and we were talking about this very issue that Brian just brought up about repentance. One of them said this, "You know we ought to get rid of the word repentance because it's too aggressive and too hard. We probably just ought to use the word

change.” [UNCLEAR]...the world. Jesus’ first words were this, “Repent! For the Kingdom of God is at hand.” You see, that’s the missing message. How many times do you hear that in the pulpit? We don’t hear that.

Audience Member: *Part of it is you’re repenting from something, and I think some of the thinking that’s missing is [UNCLEAR] preaching about sin.*

Absolutely.

Audience Member: *We’ll pick common ones [UNCLEAR] politically correct, like pornography. That’s still politically...we can say that and it’s okay. But there’s a lot of other sins that we don’t want to offend anybody so we don’t want to talk about it so why repent if we’re not going to [UNCLEAR].*

Stand by, folks, you’re going to hear a whole list of things {LAUGHTER} [UNCLEAR] that we need to repent from.

First of all, you see, one of the things that we’ve got to understand, guys, is this. We’re got to understand what repentance really is. Jesus is going to teach that on the Sermon on the Mount. He’s going to tell you here are the fruits of repentance. You see, there are fruits of repentance. When somebody says, “I repent,” we ought to say, “What are the fruits of that?” That may take some time for those fruits to become evident, but there’s got to be fruits of repentance. We’re going to see that in Chapter 7. There are things to confirm our true repentance. As we look at the positioning of all of this, it’s going to be critical that we understand that his first message really was “Repent! For the Kingdom of God is at hand.”

Let me just go through, as we wrap this up, I just want to give you the overview of this today, and then we’ll begin next week by looking at the Beatitudes. We’ll start working through those one by one. This is going to take us some time. We’re going to take our time because we’re just trusting the Lord will return in his timing and hopefully we’ll be discussing him when he does return.

Audience Members: *Amen!*

I’m going to be serious now for a moment. I’ve been serious for the whole thing, but I’m going to be personal now. There’s a requirement that we need to remember, and it’s based upon some of the things we’ve already touched upon in our discussion of this so far.

In order for the Sermon on the Mount to be understood, the person must have the mind of Christ. To understand the Sermon on the Mount, you’ve got to have the mind of Christ. That comes at the moment of saving faith. When God gives you the Holy Spirit as a deposit, you now have the mind of Christ. In other words, if you don’t have the mind of Christ, this sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, is going to be very, very frustrating, because all it does is it’s going to set a standard that you cannot achieve in your humanness. It’s going to expose our humanity and it’s going to expose the fact that I do not have the strength in my own resources to live up to the standard. If you don’t have the mind of Christ, it’s going to be very, very frustrating. It’s going to be very, very difficult because it’s going to be very, very tempting for you to think, “I just can’t do that.” And that is true. You can’t do that.

My point is this. For this really to become something that’s meaningful, you have to examine your own life and say, “Have I put Jesus first as a teacher? Or have I put him as my Savior?” You see, if Jesus is only your teacher, if he’s only a teacher, then you’re going to have a very frustrating time with the Sermon on the Mount because you’re going to be called to live to a standard that the teacher has given you that is impossible for you to achieve, and it’ll be nothing more than frustrating.

There's a great tendency in our culture today to say that Jesus is a great teacher and we forgot, first of all, that he's a better Savior. You see, he has to be your Savior first before he can be your teacher. I don't know where you are in your own relationship to the Lord. There comes a time, brothers, when you're going to have to ask yourself the question, "Is Christ just a teacher? So I can learn good things and I will receive certain blessings? So if I follow the principles of Scripture, my life is going to improve." Or have you really said this, "I'm a sinner. I live in a land of unclean lips. Have mercy on me because I'm a sinner. God will you save me? Will you do what I can't do myself?"

You see, Christ, first of all, has to be your Savior before he can be your teacher. When he's your teacher, you'll begin to realize this: he didn't come just to me how to live my life. When he's your Savior first, you begin to realize that he came to teach me how to become the man that he's teaching me about. But that can't happen unless he's your Savior first.

All I'm asking, guys, is you've got to examine your own life. It's time that you do that. Now I'm not asking you to raise your hand. I'm not asking you to walk an aisle. I'm not asking you to say a prayer. All I'm saying is plead your case before a merciful God, and if you're not in Christ today, ask him to take your heart of stone which is not sensitive to spiritual things, rip it out of your life, and give you a heart that's sensitive to spiritual things and give you saving faith. If you don't have this, the Sermon on the Mount is going to be the most frustrating thing you've ever heard, because you've made him only your teacher and not your Savior.

So brothers, you need to take an examination of your own life. You've got to realize this. That our depraved mind, our deceitful heart and our diabolical attitudes are an offense to God, and as a result of that, my listening to the Sermon on the Mount without Christ as my Savior is going to be very frustrating and very, very debilitating because I will not be able to live up to it. [UNCLEAR] So unless Christ is your Savior, this is going to make no sense. So guys, examine your life. Where are you today? If you're not in Christ, ask God to do a work of grace and give you a new heart for him. Because if you don't, this is going to make no sense to you. Don't say Christ is just your teacher. Don't make that first. First of all, he's your Savior. Then he becomes your teacher.

Let's pray. Father, if you've been a Word of grace in any of our brothers' lives, we just pray that you would help us be honest with ourselves. Help us just to realize that it's impossible for us to live according to the standards of which you call us in the Sermon on the Mount. It's not until we are able to say that I have no resources of my own, it's not until the point that we can say I need to get rid of my conceited self-righteous idea that I can live a Christian life just with God's help. Lord, you have to allow us to go even deeper, to break the neck of our stubborn ignorance so that we'll be willing to come to receive the blessings of your grace, and Jesus will teach us the real bedrock of his Kingdom is poverty, not possessions, not decisions for Christ, but a sense of absolute futility because of my depravity. It's not until the point that we individually can say I just can't do it, God, would you do it for me. Father, if there's one here today who needs your saving faith, would you be pleased that they respond to a work of grace in their lives, that you would draw them to yourself and change their hearts. We desire, Father, to have you be our Savior, and to that end, I pray that you would do that for those who are honest with themselves to realize that they don't have Christ as their Savior. You see, it's the beginning of being poor in spirit, and recognizing our spiritual bankruptcy that there's nothing that I have to offer to please God at all save the person and work of Christ, and may it be so for Jesus' sake. [UNCLEAR]...and all the Brave Men said...Amen!!