

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Don Maurer

Session: December 21, 2012

Good morning!

Audience Members: Good morning!

And Merry Christmas, Brave Men! It's great to be here. I was impressed when you looked at the website yesterday, the number of wives, especially, that are having medical problems or have prayer requests, and then all the other prayer requests for loved ones and friends. I hope we're all praying for them. Bring any answers to prayer into our group that we can share in the joy of answered prayer. But wow, it just hit me, there's a lot of stuff going on, and we really need to focus on the Lord. Just pray that these women and their husbands can sense the grace of God as they're going through their trials, as they're looking at things very anxiously and realize that their trust is in him, and that regardless of the outcome, he'll see them through. So often we just pray for the healing or whatever the resolution is in worldly terms, but it's the spiritual sense, it's the grace and faith that will get them through. So let's keep them in mind.

Also, Sig gave me this, this morning. Thank you very much. This is kind of like icing on the cake. It's always a privilege to be here and teach, but a nice little thank you is just very nice, so thank you men. Any other prayer requests we have before we get going? Lou, why don't you set tone for us as we set our hearts to the Lord? Thank you.

[MUSIC]

Gracious Heavenly Father, we just thank you that you've seen fit to bring together, that we are here with your Holy Spirit in our midst, that we might be taught your Word, that we might mature in Christ, and that we have this opportunity to come closer to you. We pray that you'll be with the brothers that are not here. Be with Bruce and his wife as they travel on vacation. Bring them back safely. We just, again, can't thank you enough for all that you do, and are doing and will do in the name of your precious son, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen!

Well, Bruce has been talking about this process of justification, sanctification and then glorification. He's mentioned that many times. When you look at sanctification, where we are all in that process right now, I like what Martin Luther says, that sanctification is only caused by the Holy Spirit through the powerful Word of God. It isn't something that automatically happens. It isn't something that we have an event and we're sanctified and that's it. Sanctification starts and it goes through the entire process until the Lord sees fit to bring us home and glorify us in the image of his son Jesus.

As we look at the Sermon on the Mount, that's really what Jesus is giving us insight to, is what we're going to go through in this sanctification process. It's like what Bruce refers to as his first executive staff meeting. Guys, this is who we are. This is where we are going. And this is how the whole system works.

He's told us, Bruce has explained to us that we trust God in these three aspects of his kingdom, who we are, how we are to behave as children of the light, and what are our responsibilities. It really centers on trusting God in all of these areas. A huge part of trusting in God is being able to focus on him; give him

our 100% attention. That's not easy to do. We'll talk about that, all the distractions that we have in our lives that keep us from focusing on God and what the Bible says, "Here's how to focus on God." That's where we really want to mature in Christ and keeping close to him.

We know that the principles of the kingdom and our roles and responsibilities as citizens, as we've been learning over the last months, but then what do we do with all these. Now that we're learning about what God wants us to know in the Sermon on the Mount. I look at it as that we then sharpen our focus. We sharpen our ability to zero in on God. If you start and go back to the Ten Commandments, for instance, when Moses comes down and gives the children of Israel what the Lord has told them, it goes on for several chapters. He keeps saying, "Remember." After he's explained all this to them, about 60 times, he keeps saying, "Remember who the Lord is. Remember what the Lord has done." Keep focusing on the Lord and to trust him and to observe the commands and all that we're to remember.

Look at Deuteronomy 8:3. Moses tells them, "He humbled you, causing you to hunger, then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." Jesus uses that same verse to reply to Satan when he's tempted. That's how important the Word is. That's our food. That's our livelihood. That's our connection with the Father.

It goes to a point that even as the children of Israel grow and are continuing to wander in the wilderness, when we get to Numbers, as Moses keeps explaining to them, "Remember," God gives him this little ordinance you might say, of putting tassels on your garments. In Numbers 15:37-41, the Lord says to Moses, "Speak to the Israelites and say to them, 'Throughout the generations to come, you are to make tassels on the corners of your garments with a blue cord on each tassel. You will have these tassels to look at so you will remember all the commands of the Lord, that you may obey them and not prostitute yourselves by going after the lust of your own hearts and eyes. Then you will remember to obey all my commands and will be consecrated to your God. I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt to be your God. I am the Lord your God.'"

He even gives them a little device. The whole idea is that it's either me or the world. It's either you focus on me or you'll focus on the things that you like, yourself. I think that's what we're going to see throughout the idea of how you focus on God. It's taking the focus off of yourself and putting it on God.

***Sig:** What was the reference in Numbers?*

Numbers 15:37-41. It's a neat little device, that even you think, "Okay, I know you guys are not going to be keeping this in mind all the time, so here's a little something to remember." They're not walking around with a Bible. They don't have the RSV or the NIV. They can hear, remember and keep calling to mind what God has for them. Over 60 times, God tells them to keep remembering.

The main thing is you can't remember if you haven't read. As we're ending up the year, people start looking forward to New Years, and this is when we make all these great commitments of, "I'm going to change. I'm going to stop doing this, and I'm going to start doing that." Losing weight or being more disciplined or liking somebody you haven't liked, or reading the Bible. So much of what we do is say, "Well okay, at the beginning of the year, I'm going to read the Bible." There are a lot of programs out that can take you through the Bible in a year. It's a great commitment if you've never done it. But how few of us do it.

Or even here at the church, we sell this New Testament that John Guest edited, that allows you to go through the New Testament in a year. It's a great help, it's a great instrument, if you're not familiar with it, to give to a new Christian to help them get into the Word. You can't grow unless you're reading the Word. You can't remember unless you've read it.

That's where we want to look at, is that focusing on God is like a three-part process. You have to read the Word, you have to remember it, then you have to commit it to memory, and then you have to meditate on it. That's where we're going to take a lot of today's lesson, looking at memorization, how you commit to memory what the Word has for you.

As a new Christian, I remember one of the pastors I was under, I was probably less than a year old, I had just looked, and he was preaching on Ephesians, and I said, "Pastor George, how do you know so much about Ephesians?" I was just amazed. He had all the stuff. His reply was, very common sense, but blew me over, he said, "Well, Tom, after you've read Ephesians 60 times, you begin to know what it's about. You don't know it all, but you start to get an understanding." I thought, well, 60 times! He was still reading after that.

We need to be reading the Bible. We need to be in it because that is our source of life. That is our bread. When you think of memorizing, one thing that happened to me was I was reading in Genesis, doing a personal study earlier this year. How many times have you read the part in chapter 15 where God has his covenant with Moses? He tells him, "This is what I'm going to do and your people are going to do this," and so forth. I forget, I've had to have read that a number of times, but in verses 13-16, it really bowled me over. This is Genesis 15:13-16. When Abraham fell into a dark sleep, then the Lord said to him, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated 400 years." Okay, that's the exile in Egypt. That's when they go from being a family of Joseph to being slaves.

But, "I will punish the nation they serve as slaves, and afterwards, they will come out with great possessions." That happened. "You, however, will go to your Father in peace and be buried at a good old age." Nice comfort. Here it is, "In the fourth generation, your descendants will come back here for the sin of the Amorites has not yet reached its full measure."

That's what bowled me over. All the stuff about the exile, and all the 400 years, and how he's going to form the nation of Israel out of these exiles from Egypt, but also at the same point, he's timing it because he has a judgment on the Amorites for their iniquities. My gosh, what a plan. Everything God is doing has so many interconnections. It's part of a great plan. It never dawned on me. That's something that's a small little part of a verse that's easy to read over, that for this 400 years, God was using that for Israel, but also he's looking at the Amorites and saying, "Okay, you want to keep going? I'll let you go. I'll let you go 400 years, and then you'll see my judgment on you," and that's what happened. There are no more Amorites.

It's this great plan. It's how God is sovereign, and takes care of everything. I thought wow! I just couldn't get that out of my mind for the next few weeks. I shared it with a good friend of mine who's a teacher, much better than I am, and he had never heard it either. How we read over these things. You can't read the Scripture enough. It's amazing how the Holy Spirit works in us to bring out things, to teach us, to get a deeper meaning of his Word and become closer to him.

Audience Member: *I'd like to say a word of encouragement for people here today that would consider the CLC experience, Christian Leadership Concepts. The heart of it is your points—read the Word, memorize the Word, and meditate on the Word. That is a real challenge, especially for people of our age.*

It is.

Audience Member: *If you want to go deep, and be supported by 11 other men in the process, it's fantastic.*

The fellowship is very key to that. There are a lot of programs, too—and we'll talk about this in a minute—of memorization. I like to leave off and not use the word memorization as much as I like to use the term commit to memory. Memorization tends to think it's a program. The same thing with meditation. I don't like to use the word meditation because then that makes us think of, "I have to get this little rug and kneel down. I have to think of a word or attend a yoga class," or all this stuff that we see out there in the media today to meditate. That's what the Bible keeps using as the word, "Meditate on my Word." We'll go over this, but that's a good suggestion, the CLC.

Audience Member: *Just a quick point. Often times, [UNCLEAR] in our culture when we think of meditation and the worldly visual meditation is usually this thoughtless mantra, but it's only within the last few years I've kind of come to realize that when the Bible calls it meditation, it's actually deep thinking and deep appreciation. It really does reflect, unfortunately our today's young culture, where we want answers fed to us and not have to think about the problem, we just want things to be delivered to us without [UNCLEAR] working at it.*

Yeah. That's a good point. The word meditate can mean many things. It can mean to ponder. It can mean to reflect on. One of my favorite terms for meditation, to meditate, is to chew upon, to chew over, to really get in and grind. Yeah, we don't want to do that today. We want it now. We want to understand things and move on because we're too busy; we've got other things to do. It's really God versus ourselves.

Bill: *The problem is, and I'm speaking about the church [UNCLEAR] that I've come across, they don't know the Bible at all.*

Yeah!

Bill: *They don't read the Bible. They don't have the desire to read the Bible. [UNCLEAR]...*

Oh, I was at a church one time that, when you went through a membership class, then after that, then you were at a home group on how to study the Word. It was like a ten-week course in just getting familiar with the Bible, getting to understand it and feel familiar with it to encourage you then to keep reading on your own. Then after that, there was a ten-week course on how to pray and talk to God and to listen to God.

What do we do at most churches? You're right. People are not reading the Bible. They carry them, but do they know what they're carrying? That's a shame.

Audience Member: *John Guest, years ago, put us on to something, which is really helpful. It's a book, a daily reading, from Scripture Union. Scripture Union has a lot of really good resources. They also publish another document that has, you can read through certain parts of Scripture [UNCLEAR] summarative thing you were just talking about. It gives you all the concepts of Scripture by hitting these particular chapters in a logical sequence, but it's over a period of time. Both those things are really helpful, to me anyway, and I think anybody that really wants to get into the Bible on a regular routine.*

And for those of us that are, we can still use publications like this or like the New Testament I was referring to, to help others to grow in Christ.

Audience Member: *[UNCLEAR] how do we get these people in the Word more? I think one of the biggest things that we do up here is we're all, in a way, being disciplined, by Bruce. I mean, Bruce has [UNCLEAR] discipleship program going on. The one thing that we...are we in turn going out and discipling others? That one-on-one has driven me, whether it's Bruce or some other folks, has driven me in the word more, and then it's doing exactly what he suggests. Are you giving away what's been given to you? God's been merciful in allowing some folks to come in my life. It's curious that, I'm not going to ask a show of hands or anything, but how many in here are mentoring, and of us who are, isn't it curious that God teaches us more through that mentoring process than we ever [UNCLEAR].*

Yeah. The Holy Spirit never rests, does he? He's always working at us.

Bill: *Tom mentioned about Scripture Union. [UNCLEAR]...for those who want to, that's the issue.*

Do I want to?

Bill: *Yeah. I don't think they want to.*

Audience Member: *I would suggest there's not enough attitude of gratitude for what Christ has done. If you don't have that in your heart, you're not going to be looking to grow.*

One of the basics, I think, in reading, is what is said in Psalm 119:9, "How can a young man keep his way pure?" That applies to us. Right? Young men? "...by living according to your Word." As the Psalmist says, "I seek you with all my heart. Do not let me stray from your commands. I have hidden your Word in my heart that I might not sin against thee." I have hidden your Word. How do you get to that position? You've got to read it first. You've got to know. You've got to bring it to yourself and hide it in your heart.

That's why I think, at Christmastime, one of the great lines I like is Mary in Luke 2, after the shepherds get the visitation of the angels and hear all this stuff and they take off to Bethlehem and say, "Hey, here is that baby. Here it is." And then they explain to Mary and Joseph all that they have experienced, and they worship Jesus and they leave. What does Mary do? She treasures it in her heart. It's like, wow!

I can't imagine a young girl, a teenage woman, having gone through the conception and the gestation and then the birth of what God promised her, and this little baby is the Savior of the world. Then she sees this other vindication of it, this kind of like a stamp. This has happened. This is what God is doing. It just had to change her whole life. It's amazing.

And then she looks at her son 12 years down the road as he gets waylaid in Jerusalem and they leave town and all of a sudden, they come back and find that he's with the teachers in the synagogue. She says, "Hey, come on. We're going back to Nazareth." He says, "Well I have to be in my Father's house." Again, she treasures this experience in her heart. It forms her basis with her relationship to God, and she keeps coming back to it and referring to it. It's a treasure. It's not that it's just in her heart, but it's treasured. It's a very great possession.

When we think about how we're to use the Word, I always like the verse of Joshua 1:8, because this is all, again, usually and most memory programs, Joshua 1:8, "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful." I've known that ever since like the first year I came to Christ in a little memory program.

What is amazing, when you think about it and you read it in context, when God tells this to Joshua, four times he tells him to be courageous and strong. In fact, he says be very courageous and strong. At the end of it, he says, "Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged." I think, why does he tell him that? If you're looking at God and he's talking to you, you think, well, that's all the encouragement you need. No, because God has this plan. He's going to go through these experiences. I like to use the term "he's going to have a life of a lifetime." Things are going to be so different, and he has to be courageous, not because those armies that he's coming against are going to be so strong, but can you imagine going into Jericho saying, "Okay. Now let's get the priests out. Let's get the rams horns and let's get people going around this, and we do it once a day, seven days in a row."

I'm sorry; that doesn't make any sense. That's just does not compute to a worldly mind. It takes courage to follow what God says because it doesn't always make sense to you, but it is part of God's plan. He knows what he's doing. That's why you have to trust in him. You trust in him through knowing his Word, knowing him. That's why this class has been so great...when we went through the 28 attributes of God. Boy did we get to know God better through that. You get to know who he is and how we need to be thankful for him. Be courageous and strong and take this word of the law and commit it to memory. Don't let it depart.

Take a look at Psalm 119. It is amazing how much of committing to memory is in the Psalms, and how many times, whether it's David or Asaph or some of the Psalm writers keep talking about commit the Word of God to memory. Going back to Psalm 1, "Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners, or sit in the seat of mockers. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night." He delights in knowing the Word of God, which are the instructions from his Creator, our Creator. He is able to avoid evil or worldly advice because he has the Word of God of in front of him. He's able to avoid doing the wrong thing or to think of himself better than others because the Word instructs him, and the Word directs him to God, not to these other things.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "Meditation lets us to be able to be alone with the Word, and in doing so, it gives us solid ground on which to stand, and it gives us clear directions as to the steps we must take." If you know anything about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, his final step had to be an amazing, courageous step for him, as he was executed just days before World War II ended. Memorizing and committing to meditation on the Word lets us be alone with God. It's just his Word.

One place in his book on temptation, Bonhoeffer uses the example of when we're tempted, it's like God has us out over the pit, and there's nothing there, except the Word of God. That's all we have. We look at ourselves and think, "I have this, whatever it is that's after me, this temptation, this thing I'm trying to avoid. What's there to help me?" It's the Word of God; the living Word of God.

Throughout the Old Testament, God keeps reminding his children, "Remember me. Remember what I've done for you. Remember my great deeds." In Psalm 63, David is rejoicing in what God has done for him personally. He says, "You satisfy me more than the richest feast. I will praise you with songs of joy. I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night. Because you are my helper, I sing for joy in the shadow of your wings." He can take this [UNCLEAR] because he knows God is his helper. He hasn't forgotten what God has done for him.

While we meditate, not only on the Word, we want to keep remembering what are the things God has done for us? We keep remembering, "Wow! Look at the strong hand he did to take the children of Israel out of Egypt, or to defeat all the nations in the Promised Land, to set up Israel." What has he done for me? Look how he's kept us alive. How he's kept us whole. Look at the problems you've gone through, whether it's financial or medical or social. Look at the things that you had to go through and how God has brought you through. It wasn't because of you. I'm not that smart to resolve my problems. But I sure thank God for what he has done in my life, because he loves me and he loves you. He loves us more than we can ever comprehend. Amen!

Getting back to what Bruce has been teaching us. We've been justified. Now we are being sanctified. Which means we're maturing in Christ. As we're becoming more set apart, meditating on the Word of God brings us closer to him and brings us closer to maturity in Christ. As Asaph says in Psalm 77, "I remember my songs in the night. My heart [UNCLEAR] and my spirit inquired will the Lord reject forever. Will he never show his favor again? Has his unfailing love vanished forever? Has his promise failed for all time? Has God forgotten to be merciful? Has he in anger withheld his compassion." Asaph is going through some real problems here. He says, "God's got unfailing love. I think he stopped it for me." It applies to other people, but not for me. "Then I thought to this I will appeal, the years of the right hand to the Most High. I will remember the deeds of the Lord. Yes, I will remember your miracles of long ago. I will meditate on all your works and consider all your mighty deeds."

That's how Asaph gets through his problems. That's how the trials and the negative things in his life are resolved. Not by testing God, not by saying, "Well, what are you doing?" Not by thinking how he thinks. But I'll go back and look at who God is, what he has done, how he loves me, and I'll go forward. I think to meditate on the Word of God is that device which helps us to make our days meaningful as we mature.

Getting back to Bonhoeffer again, when he was asked, "Well, Dietrich, why do you meditate?" He said, "I meditate because I'm a Christian." That's part of being alive in Christ. To meditate on the Word. It brings us closer to him and it matures us in Christ, just like what we read in Psalm 77. Things are not going well, but God is in control.

I also like to think of what King David says when you read Psalm 86:11, "Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth. Give me an undivided heart that I may fear your name." Think about that. Have you ever asked God to give you an undivided heart? I'm sure a lot of us have asked for a heart that loves, loves him, loves others, a heart that's clean, a heart that does not want to sin. But here, David is

saying, “Give me an undivided heart Take whatever is divided and away and make me wholly yours.” What’s the other half of the heart? If one half is God, we’re divided against ourselves. That’s what’s the other half. That’s what wants to take the, as we use that little expression, “Put Christ on the throne of your heart.” Hey, I’m up there half the time myself. I’m distracted by my work. I’m distracted by television. Why I watch TV as much as I do, I’ll never know. If I could spend that time in the Word, I might be worth something.

You look at all the distractions. People, and guys, how many of you are distracted with women? Something that takes our focus from God and puts it back on me. Hey, I like that. It entertains me. It makes me feel good.

I heard this interview where people talk about what makes them feel good. “Going to the movies makes me feel good.” “Having a great party makes me feel good.” This one guy says, “Feeling good makes me feel good.” That’s where we are. Our hearts are divided between God and ourselves. That’s why Paul talks about, “I die daily. I’m crucified with Christ. I’m dead.” This process of sanctification takes me out of the picture and focuses on God. I keep praying, “More of you, God, less of me. More of a heart united for you, and nothing about me, because in you, I have all I need, all I ever want to be, and the joys I can’t imagine.” But in the meantime, hey, I’ve got to resolve this. I’ve got to earn more money. I’ve got to do this. I’ve got to keep going. It’s me. We forget our focus is Christ.

Audience Member: *When you were, Tom, [UNCLEAR] song [UNCLEAR] about have a little walk with Jesus. What went through my mind was a little 40-year walk through the [UNCLEAR].*

Yeah.

Audience Member: *Ten people followed [UNCLEAR] five learned men and said, “I don’t trust that what you said is there,” but Joshua and Caleb said, “It is there.” They saw it 40 years later. So God says take a little walk with me, where you can provide nothing for yourself. He gave them everything. Bring that down to yourself, individually, take a little walk with Jesus and Father God, individually, in your life, daily. As you mentioned, think of the testimony, make your own little testimony list. Testimony is nothing more than glorifying God for what he’s already done. [UNCLEAR] as you, because if he’s done it, he’ll do it. As you mentioned the Amorites, 400 years. They probably thought, “Those dumb Jews.” God said, “Really.”*

Okay. Good-bye.

Audience Member: *Take a little walk with Jesus.*

Good point. That’s right. Let’s have this walk with Jesus. Our fellowship is with the Father and his Son, Jesus Christ.

Sig: *A good friend of mine is a Jew, who became a Christian. I asked her what does the modern-day Jew look for if they don’t believe in the Messiah? How do they see salvation? How do they find redemption? Her answer was, “They do it when they read the Old Testament, and they read that, especially that part in Joshua where it says to do all these things and then you will prosper.” The way to their salvation is on themselves, to strive, to work hard, to be successful. You’ve got to admit, in a lot of ways, most of my Jewish friends are very successful. I haven’t met a Jew who’s living on the street yet, or who’s down and*

out. They really seem to have [UNCLEAR]...

Let's don't go too far down the road.

Sig: *But the point is, they're counting on themselves. So when I read that passage in Joshua, I start to think we fool ourselves, I mean, people will say, "Well, see if America followed God, they'd be prosperous, and all we have to do is obey the law," without realizing the weight and the impossibility of doing that. But then, you see Christ doing this for us. I think even in Joshua is the writer foretelling of Christ or is any of those passages where David even laments [UNCLEAR]... It's not that he's done them; it's that [UNCLEAR]...new Adam [UNCLEAR] who's going to fulfill these things on our behalf?*

That's the truth of that. You can either accept Christ and all that he has done and know the truth, or you can do it on your own in any imaginable way you can and fail. There's only one way, and that's through Jesus Christ our Lord. How many of us, even though we know Christ, still try to do it on our own. How many of us do not step aside and say, "Take over, Lord. It's all you," and get your heart unified, "Unite my heart, O Lord, that I might love you, serve you and be used by you, to the glory of your honor."

Let's close now. Father, we thank you that you've given us the opportunity today to come together. We pray that your Holy Spirit is working in each one of our hearts to know your Word, to commit it to memory, to meditate on it and to think of you and all the great things you have done, and to be able to use the Word that you have given us to channel us through this world as we serve you and are used by you, that it's not us, but it's you and you alone who are worth the glory, and that we are part of your plan. We thank you so much. We look forward to this beautiful Christmas season and the honor to joyfully celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior. Help us not to lose focus on that, but to focus on you and your son. It's in his name we pray. Amen.

MERRY CHRISTMAS!!!