

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

Session: December 28, 2012

Merciful and gracious Father, as we come to the end of another season where we recognize your intervention in the human history for the sake of righteousness, we just pause and say thank you. Father, we thank you for the joy that we've had with our families, with one another. We pray, Lord, that as we move into a new year that our minds would be focused upon you, and that our central thoughts would be how can we live a life that is glorifying to you and enjoy you forever. Be with us now. We trust your Holy Spirit to help us today, guide us into all truth, and that the choices that we make, the judgment that we ensue, would be those that would be pleasing to you, and may it be so for Jesus' sake. Amen.

Brothers it's great to be back with you. I want to thank you again for your kindness to me and Becky before Christmas. You're most gracious. I think, as I told you then, I think I'm overrated. I do appreciate very much your kindness. You've expressed that and I'm learning to accept that. Sometimes that's difficult for me, but I do appreciate it very much, and I extend my gratitude for your graciousness and your thoughtfulness. Thank you very much.

How was your holiday season? One of the things we periodically need to do is just ask ourselves as a matter of review...you come to the end of a year, and in business you always say, "What did you do well? What could you have done better?" all those types of business types of things. But we can also apply that to our spiritual lives, and just do a quick spiritual review of our past life of the past year of 2012 as we move into 2013.

Let's just take a few minutes to check in with each other. What was the Lord pleased to do with you, or is there anything that you would like to share with us of how this particular season or this particular year has been something that has been a cause for your rejoicing and your gratitude? Remember, our attitude as a believer, our motivation is an attitude of gratitude. What are the things that you have been thankful for over the past year or ever during the past Christmas season? Let's just take few moments and check in with each other.

Brian: *I've been thankful because of you, I ended up going back to seminary. One of the biggest takeaways that I've had there is family worship. For a little more than a year now, we've been doing family worship, catechism with the children, and it's just a daily reminder of whose we are, and really, it's incredible to watch the kids grow. It's been a real joy and pleasure to [UNCLEAR]...*

Tell us about your family. I know you have a multiple-aged family group. Tell us how that's working out. Family worship is one of the things that we don't do well in the United States. That's just something...that and meditation, spiritual meditation, not Eastern mysticism...I'm not talking about that...but just meditation on the Scripture. Tell us about your family worship.

Brian: *It's kind of curious. We have an eight-month old, a two-year old, two five-year olds and a nine-year old, so trying to keep them all engaged at the same time is, to say the least, a challenge.*

How are you doing with the eight-month old?

Brian: *He's hopefully sleeping at that point.*

Okay. {LAUGHTER}

Brian: *The two-year old, we just get him to sit, the five-year olds and the nine-year old are engaged. We've made it into a game, to where they all sit down and we do the catechism and they'll stand up, whoever has the answer. It's absolutely incredible how much they get. Their Sunday school teacher came up to me the other day and said, "Brian, it's such a joy to have your daughter in class. She has so much insight into the Scripture." All it is, is simple catechism for children.*

Wonderful. It's a lost art. Catechizing is a lost art.

Sig: *Where are you going to seminary?*

Brian: RPTS.

Sig: *Very good. Wow.*

Great. Thanks a lot, Brian. Somebody else. What's the Lord been doing in your life the past year that is causing you to be expressive of gratitude?

Audience Member: *I have a lot of gratitude as far as my wife is concerned [UNCLEAR]. I've always been like I know a little bit of everything and [UNCLEAR] this and that. I just had an operation several weeks ago when he went into my back twice within two weeks. My wife had to take care of me—a lot of different things. That helped me to see her in a different light. She saw me in my weakness. She saw me crying because of the pain. She saw me struggling. The Lord allowed me to see her strength. That was amazing to me for me to see that. I'm just so thankful what God has done in me through this whole ordeal of going through what I've gone through—a lot of pain, a lot of suffering, in the back. It taught me in my affliction, and I'm grateful and I have a lot of gratitude for that. I thank God for the friends that he has put in my life, like this man right here—his family, his wife, and others—this whole year and years past. I'm grateful for that, and for this Bible study. When I got out of the hospital, I was determined to get here. That's how important it is. I love this fellowship, the environment, the men, everything. I just love it. I'm grateful for that.*

Amen to that. Thank you. In all things God works for good, even those things that we don't understand. Thank you very much. Don, it's good to have you back, buddy.

Don: *Thank you. It's good to be back. Mike and I were talking about this on the way over. My mom said something, and the reason that I wasn't here was because I felt that I needed to be with her and take care of her. A few weeks ago, she said something that really just caused me to tear up and just to reflect on a lot of things. We were talking...I'm a Christmas music, Christmas hymn, fanatic. I still use tapes. I haven't come into the 21st century yet. {LAUGHTER} I have equipment and she bought me that over the years [UNCLEAR] for Christmas and ear [UNCLEAR] and all kinds of stuff to enjoy it. I was telling her how grateful I was. She said, "You deserve it." I just started to tear up. I went over and I hugged her and I said, "No, mom. It's not that I deserve it. It's that you've been so kind to get all that for me." I just started to reflect about what we truly deserve and what God has done.*

Amen!

Don: *His grace. It's just incredible. Whether I'm battling, I'm struggling with that, brothers, with my friend, Aaron, who is just, loves the Lord deeply. The Lord has given him great faith and his wife and son. I say, "Lord, why? Why is he going through all of this?" But I know that we have to remember that none of us have a right...Bruce, as you've said so many times before, anything short of hell is grace. The Lord is really impressing that upon me through all of these things, and just how bountiful his grace has been, and is, to me. It's just absolutely awesome.*

Amen! Thanks, Don. I agree. Amen to that. Anybody else?

Bill: *In 2011, I was afflicted fairly heavily with a neurological problem that basically set me into constant states of vertigo, which made walking or driving and navigating rooms very difficult. After much medical expense and experiments by a neurologist, in March of 2012, this year, I just stopped going back and stopped taking medications because they weren't really affecting change. An interesting thing, it's interesting you watch God's hand. Sometimes it works and you don't even notice it works. Three weeks later, it crossed my thought process that I wasn't having a problem. I guess the blessing is sometimes when God works, he works so quietly in the background; you miss him. Pretty much to this point right now, I've still been symptom free, which really has no explanation from the medical people, but nevertheless, I'm very grateful for it. I think the other thing is there's a lesson. You need to be looking at your life sometimes because you miss God working in it, and sometimes you see him on your shoulder.*

Amen. That's a good reminder Bill. That's why one of the most important questions we as men can ask ourselves every day is what Bill eluded to is, "Lord, what are you doing around me?" That's when we become an aggressive responder. You've heard me teach that over the many years we've been together. Jesus says, "I initiate nothing on my own. I only do those things that I see the Father doing." When I read that years ago in John 5 and John 8, it really struck me that I need to be much more sensitive to seeing what God is doing around me than trying to figure out what I should do and asking him to bless it. Once I began to do that, years ago, it was a tremendous sense of freedom. That's what I'm trying to have us do today is just to look back upon the past year and say what did you see God doing around you that has benefited your life or helped you in your walk with Christ.

Remember, you're no longer in Adam; you're in Christ. That has tremendous implications. We don't understand the significance of what it means to have been in Adam and now we are in Christ. Just an example, Jesus says, "I have overcome the world." Well what does that mean to you and me who are in Christ? That means what? That we've overcome the world. Now at the same time, we are overcoming. That doesn't mean it's complete. You've got to start with the premise that says this, "I'm in Christ, therefore, he says I have overcome the world." What overcomes the world for us is our faith.

Faith is the resource that he gives us to our continuing to overcome. But you have overcome the world. You're an overcomer. You're a supernikao. We need to understand what it means, the significance of being in Christ. That's means you have overcome everything that is antichrist, everything that is anti the kingdom of God, you have overcome that because you're in Christ. It doesn't mean that it's not easy. You're still overcoming and you're going to still need to battle.

In one sense, you're sanctified, but it doesn't mean that your sanctification is complete, because you're still working at it. The Holy Spirit's already done it. Jesus is our sanctification, we're told. If that's true,

and of course it is, then that means what? You are sanctified because you are in Christ. That's something that has happened to you. It's not something you work at; it's something that it is you. Sanctification is something you are; it's not something you do.

At the same time, you're in Christ, you are now continuing to battle. That's part of our sanctification is the battle. But you've got to understand that already, you are sanctified. You are an overcomer. We need to begin to start thinking about acting out our position.

I think I might have told you this some years ago. My second tour in Vietnam, I had a chance to fly support for a brigade of which Norman Schwarzkopf was the Brigade Commander. I was only a Navy Lieutenant at the time. I was on a General's staff with full Colonel's—Air Force Liaison Officer was a Colonel, Artillery Officer was a Colonel. All these other Colonels and I'm just a Navy Lieutenant, which in the Army is the same thing as a Captain.

I had to brief these Brigade Commanders for the missions that I was flying as a Forward Air Controller. We were using Naval gun fire and air support and carriers. One day he called me into his tent. He said, "Mr. Bickel, I want to tell you something." I said, "What's that, sir?" He said, "You don't have the rank, but you have the position. You have the responsibility, but you don't have the title. You need to act out your responsibilities. Act out who you are, not what people say you are. People say you're just a Lieutenant in the Navy. You're just a Captain like the rest of us. But you've got the responsibility of a full-bird Colonel. Act like it." That was a great point, guys.

You see, we need to act out who we are in Christ. You are in Christ. You're no longer in Adam. You and I need to think like who we are and act out our responsibilities. The world may say, "You don't have the title. You don't have the rank," but what you have is you have the position. You are in Christ, therefore, act out your responsibilities. We just need to act out who God says we are.

The real battleground for us, I believe, as men, is this. Who do we believe? Do we believe what the world says about you? That you don't have? Or do you believe what the Scripture says about you? You do have. You do have sanctification because you are in Christ. You do have overcoming. You have overcome the world because you're in Christ. You and I just need to begin to think that way, because when we think that way, we'll begin to act that way.

Bill has a tremendous point that he just alluded to, and that was we need to begin to think about how we see God working around us and who we are in Christ. I hope as we go through...in our next series, beginning next week, we're going to begin a series on the new covenant. In other words, what kind of a relationship does God have with us now that we are in Christ? There's new way of...he has a different arrangement with us than he did with the nation of Israel in the old covenant. We need to contrast the old from the new. Often times, we have a tendency to live in the old covenant by thinking this. If I do this, then God will do that. We make bargains with God. You see, that's the old covenant. What's the new arrangement? We'll take a look at that.

We want to spend some time looking at how is it we can live out our position and our responsibilities of being in Christ and what that means. We'll look at that through the new covenant relationship. We haven't done that in about ten years, so we'll go back and revisit that and refine that a bit.

What I'd like to do today in the remaining time is go to your Bibles and Matthew 5. I just want to give

us a quick overview, a review of the Sermon on the Mount, and then let you ask any questions on Matthew 5, 6 and 7. You may ask your question and Bishop Rogers will give you the answers. {LAUGHTER} Let's take a look at Matthew 5.

Now remember, the setting of this is this is Jesus' first staff meeting with his 12 disciples. He gets them together and he begins to teach them about the kingdom of God. This was foreign to them. This was a standard of excellence that they had never known before. It was really totally foreign to them because he was introducing something that the kingdom is at hand because he's here, and this is what the kingdom looks like.

There are several ways of looking at it. You could take a look at Matthew 5:1-48 and you would see that true righteousness is pictured by Christ. That would be chapter 5. It's the characteristics of the kingdom of God. If you want to know what the kingdom of God, characteristically, looks like, then read chapter 5. You begin to see the true righteousness. Remember now, righteousness means right-wiseness. It means making the right decisions. He's introducing them into a system of thought based upon his righteousness, of how they will begin to make different decisions. You'll see it work itself all the way through the Sermon on the Mount.

Chapter 5 could be classified as true righteousness, pictured by Christ. There's a positive side, which is righteousness is inward. That would be verses 1-16, the Beatitudes. There's a righteousness that is inward. There's a negative, that sin is inward. That would be verses 17-48—murder, adultery, swearing, retaliation and so forth. The positive side is that there's the righteousness that is inward, but the sin is also inward. That's where you begin to see that true righteousness is really pictured in the person and work of Christ, not in you and me.

Then you move to chapter 6—true righteousness practiced by the believers. You would see that in verses 6:1-7:12. In other words, we saw that our true worship, righteousness, was practiced in our worship, in our relationship to God in our giving, our praying and our fasting. It was in our wealth and our relationship to the world, how we manage our wealth, the possessions God gave us. And in our walk and our relationship to other people. You begin to see that this true righteousness that Jesus pictured for us in chapter 5, which is inward, as described in the Beatitudes, now begins to be practiced by us who are kingdom citizens.

Another way of describing this would be chapter 5 is characteristics of the kingdom. Chapter 6 would be characteristics of the kingdom citizen. Then you move to chapter 7—true righteousness proved by various tests. True righteousness is proved by various tests. That would chapter 7:13-29.

You have the character of Christ in chapter 5, the conduct of true believers in chapter 6 and the confirmation of true conversion in chapter 7. That's another way of looking at it. Character of Christ in chapter 5, conduct of true believers in chapter 6 and confirmation of true conversion in chapter 7. Remember in chapter 7, the whole issue there is making wise judgments. Judgment not being a critical attitude to offend somebody, but making discernment between that which is righteous and that which is not righteous. You've got to understand that chapter 7 deals with several different things. One of the ways in which you and I make our judgments is an indication of how we prove ourselves to be kingdom citizens. In other words, you have to be thinking correctly before you act correctly.

One of the ways in which we act is how do we make proper judgments? You'll notice, when you look at

chapter 7, you've got to take things in the right context. Remember, chapter 7 is dealing with our demonstrating the fact that we are truly converted by the way that we make judgments. In other words, how discerning are you? It's a whole chapter on discernment. One of the ways in which you will prove the fact that you are truly a kingdom citizen is by the exercising of discernment.

Notice he gives us several indications of that. One of the things he says that you are to pray for is when you're lacking discernment, what are you to do? You don't go read the latest books. You go to prayer. That's where you get to those expressions seek, ask and knock. This is not just something describing, you take that out of context and say, "Oh, I need to seek, ask and knock." It's in the context of discernment. In other words, when you don't have discernment, what do you do? You pray. You seek. You ask. And you knock. That's the context of those three verbs. It's something that is very, very active. You don't take that out and just apply that everywhere. You've got to understand that in the context of chapter 7, he's saying that when you're lacking discernment, the thing you need to do is to, you need to seek, you need to knock and you need to ask, because God will give the resources to be discerning. That's how we demonstrate our true conversion is by the discernment that we have.

One of my concerns about the church in the United States is what I'm calling our lack of discernment. We go buy the latest thing that comes down the pike. You see, we don't seek enough. We don't ask enough. We don't knock enough. That's the context of those three verbs. It's in the context of asking God to give you the resources to be discerning.

Then notice he talks about two different ways of life. There's a broad way and there's a narrow way. Then he talks about the fact that you've got to be careful about false prophets who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly. They are ravenous wolves. You'll know them by their fruit. He goes on to say that grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes or figs from thistles, are they. You'll know them by their fruit. He's saying a good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. Part of that saying is this. What's the fruit of your life? You see, if you're truly in Christ, there's going to be evidence of that in the fruit that you bear. Any tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. You'll know them by their fruit.

Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," will enter into kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is heaven will enter." He says, "Many will say to me on that day, "Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name? And in your name did not we cast out demons? And did we not in your name perform many miracles? I will declare to them," he says, "I never knew you. Depart from me you who practice lawlessness." You see, in chapter 7, it's this confirmation of the test.

There are a couple of questions we have to ask ourselves in chapter 7 to help us review this, that I think are critically important. The first one is this. When you look at the narrow gate and the wide gate, there's a contrast. Then you look at the fruits. A couple of questions I think will be helpful. The first test is this. Did your confession of faith in Christ cost you anything? Did your confession of faith in Christ cost you anything? Now I'm not saying that you go look for something to say, "Lord, aren't I a martyr." That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is this—there's a narrow way and there's a wide way. Not everybody who says, "Lord, Lord," is going to enter the kingdom of heaven.

You see, when you confess Christ, it's got to cost you something. Now you go to Luke 9:23 and Jesus' definition of disciple. People are always saying, "What's a disciple?" And they'll say, "If you memorize the Sermon on the Mount, you'll become a disciple. If you do these ten steps, you'll become a disciple.

Will you disciple me?” Well, if you want to be discipled, here are the three things you need to learn, according to Jesus, because this is his definition in Luke 9:23, “Anyone who will come after me must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.” Now that’s a disciple. That’s means it’s cost you something.

Now that doesn’t mean that you evaluate your spiritual growth on what you’ve given up. I’m not saying that. All I’m saying, guys, is the road is so narrow, and the road is so wide, and many entered into it who are deceived because of the ravenous wolves who come in sheep’s clothing because we lack discernment. You see, discernment of chapter 7 is the whole theme of that chapter 7. When you don’t have it, pray for it. Ask, seek and knock. Ask yourself the question, “Has my confession in Christ cost me anything?”

In Jesus’ definition of a disciple, he says, “There are there are three things you’ve got to learn.” First of all is self-denial; the character quality of self-denial. Secondly, the character quality of self-sacrifice, “Take up your cross.” And then thirdly, self-submission. Who really runs your life? Self-denial, self-sacrifice and self-submission.

When you look at Matthew 7, you’ve got to ask yourself the question, “Has my confession of the person and work of Christ cost me anything?” You just need to be constantly looking at that. When you begin to think about that, it’s going to help you recognize this. What are the things that I need to learn self-denial. Where are the areas that I need to learn self-sacrifice? What are the areas where I need to learn self-submission? You see, it’s going to cost you something. That’s one of the tests of true saving faith that you see in Matthew 7.

A second test I would offer for your consideration in Matthew 7 would be this. Did my decision for Christ, my response to Christ, change my life? That’s the fruit. You’ll know them by their fruit. Did my repentance and faith, did my embracing the grace of God, the doctrines of grace, however you want to say that, did my response to God’s call, the effectual call on my life, has it changed my life? You’ll know them by their fruit. In other words, you just don’t do the talk; you walk the walk, just not give the talk.

There are a couple of questions you have to ask yourself when you look at the context of Matthew 7. It’s in the context of our discerning, having true judgment. When you don’t have that, you ask, you seek and you knock. One of the things you’ve got to be aware of and discerning is this—you’ve got to be careful of the ravenous wolves who come in sheep’s clothing. You’ve got to look at all the things that the church offers that has nothing to do with spirituality. It has to do with generalities. It has to do with all sorts of things, but nothing to do with the person and work of Christ. You’ve got to be discerning. You see, those verses come right after he says, “Seek, ask and knock.” You’ve got to be discerning. You’ve got to watch out. You’ve got to watch out for these false prophets.

I was in Los Angeles over the holidays with my step-daughter and her husband. I was just flipping through the channels. There must have been at least a half a dozen false prophets on TV. I mean, the things that they were saying, I was just saying, “Where in the world are you getting that?” It had nothing to do with the person and work of Christ.

I happened to watch a Christmas service. The word Jesus Christ was never mentioned. Never mentioned. The place was packed. People had their Bibles open. They were taking notes. But I never heard the Word in 30 minutes, and then I turned it off. I just wanted to count the number of times that I heard the

word Jesus Christ mentioned on a Christmas service. Never heard it.

Now, people, we've got to be discerning. That's Matthew 7—the character of the kingdom, the conduct of the kingdom and then the confirmation of the kingdom citizenship. Part of that confirmation is going to be how discerning you and I are about things that are offered under the name of Christianity. You've got to be careful, you've got to be discerning, about those who come disguised in sheep's clothing. Inwardly they're ravenous wolves. Not everyone who says, "Lord, Lord," will enter the kingdom of heaven, "Only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven will enter." You'll know them by their fruit. You'll know them by their fruit. A couple of tests we have to ask ourselves.

The second one is how is my life changed? Has my life changed? When you look at the doctrine of assurance of salvation in Scripture, that is a ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is not the ministry of man. You and I cannot pronounce somebody as a believer. In our weak, modern evangelism, what we do, basically, after we've done whatever we do, we give them a little mechanism that we give them, we basically say, "Have you prayed to ask Jesus into your life?" "Yes." "Where's Jesus?" "He's in my heart." "Okay, you're a Christian." The assurance of salvation takes about ten seconds. Somebody could walk away... now they may be saving faith. I can't say they're not. But I may not, just at that moment, that they are, either. There's just not enough evidence at that time to say that they are or there's not enough evidence to say that they aren't. You just don't know.

You see, the ministry of the Holy Spirit is confirming that. In a few areas in which we understand the doctrine of the assurance of salvation. Read John 10, one of the great, great passages in all of Scripture. Jesus says, "I'll lose not a one you gave me." Do you realize if you're in saving faith today and you're in Christ, that you in eternity past were God's love gift to the Son? You, personally, are a love gift that God the Father gave to the Son. The Son says back to the Father, "Father, I'm not going to lose one of those you gave me. I'm not going to lose any of the ones that you gave me." That means that he didn't give everybody. But the ones he did, he gave. And you're a love gift. Now is that how you look at yourself? Or are you beaten down because you don't have the titles the world says you ought to have? My goodness, the title you have is this. You are a love gift of God the Father to God the Son.

The doctrine of salvation, the assurance of salvation, involves three things. Increased righteousness. Do you see a change in your life? You're coming here week after week, Friday after Friday, year after year. Some of you have been with us for 17 years—Frank. We've been here for 17 years struggling this, just trying to figure all this out, asking God to be our teacher. What are the changes that have occurred in your life? Are you a better neighbor? Are you a better employee? Do you manage your people more effectively? Do you submit to your authority more graciously? Do you have more gratitude than you do griping? You see, what changes occurred in your life?

You see, one of the evidences you have to take a look yourself according to Matthew 7 is this. What's the fruit of my life? Do I just give lip service to coming here on a Friday? Or has it really changed my conduct with the way that I'm a better neighbor? Has it changed my conduct? Do I invite people to church? Or do I expect the Holy Spirit to do that, and I have nothing to do with it? You see, you've got to ask yourself those questions. Chapter 7 is saying there are some tests there, guys, you've got to take a look at. You've got to be discerning about yourself just as much as you're discerning about the system of the world. Increased righteousness has got to be one. Do I look back upon my life and say, "You know, I used to be that...I'm not perfect now." No, we know that. But that's not a justification or excuse. It's a discerning aspect that says I used to be like this, but now I'm moving in this direction. I've seen some

evidence. There's evidence of what I'm calling increased righteousness.

Righteousness means justice or right-wiseness; making decisions. That's chapter 7. Are you making your decisions differently? That's righteousness. That's because you're thinking differently because of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

The second thing would be this. Scripture promises. Scripture says this, "If you repent and believe, you'll be saved." Have you done that? Have you really repented of your sins and asked God to save you, to give you saving grace to do something you can't do for yourself, and that's to give you a new heart?, take that heart of stone and remove it and give you a new one? Have you done that? The Scripture says, "If that's true, then you're saved, and you do have a saving relationship." I can't answer that for you. That's why you have to be discerning about yourself. At the end of a year, you need to take a discerning review of yourself and say, "Lord, was that a serious commitment I made? Is that something that the Holy Spirit generated in me and caused me to do, and I now have new desires?" What are your desires?

You see, regeneration creates within you a whole system of new desires that you never had before. You've got to ask yourself the question, "Have I really done what the Scripture says?" If not, then you beg for God's mercy, and then you give the most important prayer I think of all of Scripture.

I was asked to give a prayer the other night at a worship service, a Christmas prayer. I was asked, "Dr. Bickel, would you give a Christmas prayer?" I'm thinking, "What in the world is that?" {LAUGHTER} Here's all I said; here's the best Christmas prayer I could think of, "Have mercy on me the sinner." (Luke 18) "Have mercy on me, the sinner." When you say that prayer, that covers everything about Christmas—his entrance into history, his dying on the cross, his resurrection and his ascension. It covers the whole history of the person and work of Christ. That one statement summarizes Christmas because it helps recognize this; that without the birth of Christ, I'm lost. I'm nothing but a hell-bent sinner. But with I say that prayer, "Have mercy on me, the sinner." Notice he doesn't say "a sinner." He's not saying I'm like a group of everybody else. He's saying, "No, it's the," a specific one. It's me. "Have mercy on me, the sinner." That's the greatest Christmas prayer we could ever pray, because it really encapsulates everything about the [UNCLEAR]—his birth, his death, his resurrection, his ascension into heaven. "Have mercy on me, the sinner. Amen." When I finished, people were just stunned. {LAUGHTER} Stunned.

Audience Member: *They won't ask you next week.* {LAUGHTER}

But the best part of it was this. Somebody said, "What do you mean by that?" "Yes!" Then I spent the next hour and a half... {LAUGHTER} ...now I know they won't invite me back. {LAUGHTER}

Scripture promises, guys. You've got to be discerning. After the best of your own discernment, and God's grace, responded to what the Scripture says. Repent and believe. Have you done that?

Thirdly, The work of the Holy Spirit confirms it in you. The work of that Holy Spirit confirms your salvation. You see, I cannot tell you that you're a Christian any more than you can tell me that I'm a Christian. I know that or I don't know it. That's the work of the Holy Spirit. That's John 13 and John 16. The work of the Holy Spirit confirms in you that yes, you are a redeemed child of God who God has regenerated by taking that heart of stone (Ezekiel 36) and giving you a heart of flesh. He's done that. And you know this—sometimes your only defense for your salvation is this, "I know because I know. I

just know because I know.” That’s where you’ve got to be very, very careful in discerning (Matthew 7) about the work of the evil one. (Revelation 12) The great Satan, the great destroyer, was thrown down. The deceiver and the accuser of brethren.

Satan’s greatest ploy against you and me is not causing a tree to fall on your car. That might happen. Somebody says, “Did Satan do that?” I have no idea. But I do know this. He’s going to play on your mind. He’s going to try to deceive you of two things—your worth and your value. “How could God use you, Bruce, with your history? Look what you’ve done. Look what you don’t have.” You see, those are the things that Satan’s going to come along and deceive you. You and I need to go back and remind ourselves to act our position. You may not have the rank, you may not have the title, but you’ve got the responsibility because you have the position. You have the position of being in Christ. Don’t let the evil one come along and deceive you by saying you don’t have enough.

Another thing he’ll do is accuse you. Accuse you of your worth, your value. “How could God use you, Bruce? How could God use you, because of your history? Look what you’ve just done. Look how you think. You’re still dealing with those same old sins you’ve been dealing with since you were a kid. How could you expect God to use you?” You see, you’ve got to fight that. You’ve got to be discerning.

If there’s anything I can leave you with Matthew 7, the whole theme is proper judgment, discernment. That starts with yourself. You’ve got to be discerning about yourself. As you look at your own salvation, men, you’ve got to ask yourself some questions. Did my becoming a disciple of Christ cost me anything? And what changes have I seen in my life as a result of my coming to saving faith as a result of the Holy Spirit? What’s the fruit? Grapes are not gathered by thistles, are they? You will know them by their fruit. Take a look at yourself this year, in 2012, and ask yourself the question, “What’s the fruit of my walk in Christ?”

Well, I guess I didn’t give you time to ask any questions, but let’s pray. Father, our prayer today, and after having studied this most magnificent sermon ever preached, the Sermon on the Mount, we saw that true righteousness is described by Christ, true righteousness is lived out in a life of true believers, and that our conduct is changed because of the true righteousness that is ours, inherited because we are now in Christ and no longer in Adam. Father, our prayer this day is this, as we remember your entrance into history, your redemptive work on the cross and your intercessory work that continues for us right now as you sit at the right hand of God the Father, and we are not left powerless, but we are powerful. Help us understand, Father, that being in Christ means that may not have the title, but we have the responsibility and we have the resources, and we just need to act out our position of being in Christ. So our prayer this day, Father, is this. Have mercy on us, the sinners. All the Brave Men said...Amen!

Happy New Year to all of you!!

Audience Members: Happy New Year!!