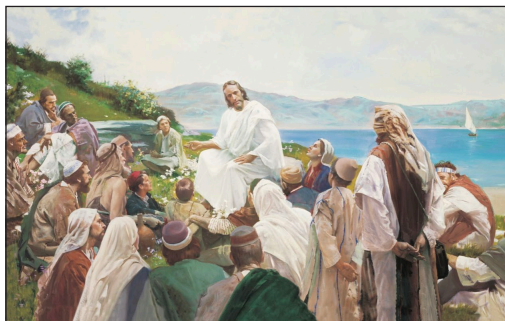




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devoted to the teachings of Jesus and  
His apostles and dedicated to those  
who want to know more about the Bible**

Volume 14, Number 3, 3rd Quarter 2022.

## **GREATEST SERMON EVER!**



Jesus Christ was and is the greatest teacher to ever live on earth. His fame spread to every civilized nation. Even those who did not believe in Him respected His teachings and the life He lived. His most famous sermon, delivered on a mountain in Galilee, amazed those who heard it. You will be able to read “The Sermon On the Mount” (Matthew chapters 5-7) in less than 18 minutes but its truths will challenge you for the rest of your life!

*“Seeing the crowds He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him. And He opened His mouth and taught them.”* (Matthew 5:1-2). As was the custom of Rabbis of the first century, Jesus *sat down* to teach. Sitting down to teach meant the message would be delivered with authority that demanded respect. He *“opened His mouth”* to make a declaration of cardinal principles inspired by God and worthy of welcome reception in their hearts..

The “Sermon On the Mount” is the “touchstone of Christian faith.” Those struggling to find faith are uplifted by its beauty. Those young in the Christian faith are moved by its power and simplicity. Those mature in the Christian faith find Jesus’ teachings deeply profound. Its message never grows old. Those who heard Jesus were *“astonished at His teaching, for He was teaching them as one who had authority”* (Matthew 7:28-29).

The *“kingdom of heaven”* is the core that unites every word and paragraph. These articles will confront, comfort and encourage you as perhaps never before. Your life will never be the same. You will find the mind and spirit of those who submit themselves to the very reign of God. Follow these precepts and you will build your house *“on the rock”* of eternal truth.

— **David Tarbet**, Church of Christ  
New Milford, Connecticut

Scripture quotations from English Standard Version

# YOU CAN BE BLESSED

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*  
— JESUS (Matthew 5:3)

The disciples who came to Him on the mountain had nothing by earthly measure. They were those who were poor in spirit or who mourned, those who were meek or showed mercy, those who hungered and thirsted for righteousness ... but the world would not reward them for that.



Rather, those who live by worldly principles and power punish those who are pure in heart or seek to make peace. His disciples are downtrodden and persecuted for righteousness' sake. This world was not their home, and they were reviled falsely on Jesus' account. What word of hope could the One who was not from the world give those of whom the world was not worthy?

Eight times in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus assured His disciples they could be “blessed.” Blessed? *“Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven ...,”* Jesus told them. Money, power, and influence weren't everything to strive for. It wasn't survival of the fittest after all—and that was good news indeed!

And so it is today. The secular culture would have us believe that being young, rich, and carefree is what life is about, and that if you are not those things, then you don't have any value. The twin spears of *nihilism* (nothing matters so live how you want) and *hedonism* (do what pleases yourself) have so pervaded society that younger generations are completely skewed. These voices are so loud all around us that it is difficult to hear the gentle whisper of the gospel.

The world says it's about what we have, but God says it's about who He is. Not wise, powerful, or of noble birth, God chose the foolish, weak, low, and despised *“to bring to nothing things that are.”* Tired of not keeping up with the world? You no longer need to compete. This good news spoken on that mountain tells us that temporary pursuits will perish, and only things that are eternal will last. While the world assigns you no worth, God tells you that you are greatly rewarded. While our culture dismisses you, Jesus affirms your value and worth. You can be eternally blessed.

— Doug Kashorek, Church of Christ  
Vienna, West Virginia

# SIN BEGINS IN THE HEART

*“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to the judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment”*

— JESUS (Matthew 5:21-22)



Jesus said that disobeying God’s Law begins in the heart. Both the *inner desires* as well as the *physical acts* themselves are sinful. Jesus also said that having sex with someone who isn’t your spouse is against God’s Law, *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart”* (Matthew 5:27-28).

Controlling sinful desires is not easy. The Apostle Paul understood this conflict: *“For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing”* (Romans 7:19). Have you ever felt like that? No matter how much we try, we seem to keep doing those things we don’t want to do, things we know are wrong.

Is there any hope that our attitudes and actions can be changed?

We can turn to God for help! Christians have this promise: *“The Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. . . . The Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God”* (Romans 8:26–27) .

Don’t follow your heart, follow God’s will, and ask for His help in doing what you should be doing and not doing those things that are wrong.

— Phil Stratton, Church of Christ,  
Augusta, Maine

# LOVE YOUR ENEMIES

*“I say to you, ‘Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you can be sons of your Father who is in heaven.’”*

— JESUS (Matthew 5:44-45)

## MY CONVERSATION WITH GOD

**TIM:** “Lord, do you realize how hard and unnatural it is to love my enemies? It is so much easier to hate my enemies and love my friends because it is so comfortable to do. My friends and I can talk behind my enemies backs, make fun of them, look down on them and feel righteous doing it. You want me to change that, love them and pray for them! Why?”

**GOD:** “Tim, do you remember Christian psychologists who did extensive research on people with emotional issues and needed to be hospitalized? They concluded that the majority of people were there because of unresolved sin. This included hating people whom they considered enemies. Do you recall the phone conversation you had with your daughter and how she hated the person who emotionally hurt her sister? For years she held that hatred in. It affected her health and spiritual growth. You see Tim, when you decide to hate someone you add an emotional burden to your life, often without realizing it. That has long-term effects on your mental, physical and spiritual health. This all happens because you decide to judge certain people as not worthy of your kindness and/or attention. My job is to judge people. That’s not your job.



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“Tim, let’s go back to my book for further clarification. I said, ‘*Your Father who is in heaven causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous*’. I don’t play favorites and send the sun only on my followers. Do I? No, I send it to everyone. So neither should you because you never know if your kindness towards your enemies will cause them to want to become my disciples. Remember, you cannot be my son if you don’t practice loving your enemies. If you’re not my son, then on the last day I will not recognize you as my own. You know what that means, eternal separation, no heaven! Your choice Tim.”

**TIM:** “Thank you God for listening and telling me the truth.”

— **Tim Bonzagni**, Church of Christ  
Coventry, Rhode Island

# “RELIGION OR PERFORMANCE?”

*“When you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. . . . And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others.”*

— JESUS (Matthew 6:2-5)



The word “*hypocrite*” has an interesting history. In classical Greek (480–323 B.C.), hypocrite meant “to explain or to interpret.” Later, the term came to mean an “actor.” By the time of Jesus, “hypocrite” meant “one presenting a righteous appearance while hiding the true face of evil”.

Twice in the *Sermon on the Mount* Jesus used the word “*hypocrite*” as a warning to His audience. Their religious leaders were hypocrites, presenting the impression that they were pious while Jesus knew it was only a pretence. Jesus taught His disciples that it was not the kind of religion God desires in His children. Hypocrisy is always shameful, whether practiced by clergy or laity!

Being a true Christian is hard in many ways. Satan is always looking for chinks in our armor. And since we live in a time when public recognition of achievements is becoming one of the foundation blocks to our society, it is tempting for Christians to want to be recognized for all that is done in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus instructs us to be quiet and know that God sees everything we do, and our reward awaits in heaven.

All the rewards and accolades presented to people are just like the people themselves, physical and temporal. The one reward we should strive for is heaven, eternal life with God after death. We do what Jesus teaches knowing that God will be pleased with us.

Religion is the practicing of one’s faith. To believe in all that God has done and continues to do means that we must seek to please Him. Jesus promised: “*Your Father who sees in secret will reward you.*” (Matthew 6:6).

— **Bruce Pierce**, Church of Christ  
Seabrook, New Hampshire

# "OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN"

*"Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name  
Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.  
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."*  
—JESUS (Matthew 6:9-13)



Often referred to as the “Lord’s Prayer,” this is one of the most familiar prayers of all time. It has been repeated by more people at any given time in history. In the Sermon on the Mount our Lord opens this model prayer with an almost incomprehensible proclamation: “*Our Father*”.

God is the Father, and we are His children (Matthew 5:45). As His children, our spiritual goal should be to become “*perfect*” (complete) as God is perfect (Matthew 5:48). Faithful disciples of Christ will be “*rewarded*” by the Father (Matthew 6:4-6) Jesus said: “*Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him*” (Matthew 6:8).

In the Gospel of John chapter 8 essentially three fathers are described (1) earthly biological fathers, (2) God, our heavenly Father, and (3) Satan, the father of lies. During an intense exchange Jesus frankly described His identity, acknowledging the Pharisees were physical descendants of Abraham, but Jesus boldly declared: “*If you were Abrahams children you would be doing the works Abraham did, but now you seek to kill me.... If God were your Father, you would love Me .... You cannot hear My word (because) you are of your father the devil, and your will is to do your father’s desires.*” (John 8:39-44).

These opening words, “*Our Father who is in heaven*” remind us that those who have God as their Father love Jesus. When Jesus finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching, “*for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes*” (Matthew 7:29).

While many can recite the “Lord’s Prayer,” only those who are true disciples of Christ, who love Him and obey His words are actually accurate in addressing God as “*Our Father*”.

— **Jim Buker**, Church of Christ  
Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts



# WORRY GETS YOU NOWHERE

*“Do not be anxious about your life .... Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?”*

—JESUS (Matthew 6:25-34)

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gives a couple of reasons not to worry.

- **WORRY IS UNHELPFUL.** *“Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?”* Worry is a contributor to the cause of many diseases. When you worry it breaks down your immune system and makes you more susceptible to sickness.
- **WORRY IS USELESS.** If you can change the thing you are apprehensive about, change it. If you can't, don't worry about it! Jesus tells us how to overcome worry.
- **PUT GOD FIRST IN EVERY AREA OF LIFE.** *“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”* Worry is a warning light that something has taken the place of God in your life (dating, recreation, job). That person or thing will become a source of worry; you're afraid you will lose it. Every person has to eventually has to decide - who or what am I going to live for? Depending on how you answer this question, worry can plague the rest of your life... or not. If you put God first He will take care of the rest.
- **LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME.** *“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”* It's ok to plan for tomorrow but don't miss today's blessings! You only have to face life moment by moment. The sand in an hourglass goes through one grain at a time.
- **TRUST GOD TO CARE OF THINGS BEYOND YOUR CONTROL** There is only one way to be perfectly safe; that is to be in the hand of God. The ancient king David endured illness, betrayal, threats from his enemies and personal failures. He wrote: *“I sought the Lord and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good!”* (Psalm 34:4-8).
- **INCREASE YOUR FAITH.** Jesus reproved his anxious disciples as *“you of little faith.”* Worry and faith cannot live together in your heart. Read the Bible; your faith will grow! (Romans 10:17)

# THE GOLDEN RULE



*“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets”*

— JESUS (Matthew 7:12)

We are living in a difficult time of division and hatred. Tensions and violence leave a feeling of weight upon us. In times like these we look for truths that can bring us together. God’s truth and wisdom needs to permeate every level of society. We need to get back to Jesus’ “Golden Rule”.

The Apostle Paul referred to an inborn sense of right and wrong (universal moral codes) in his letter to the Romans: *“For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them”* (Romans 2:14-15).

The “Golden Rule” Jesus gave is recognized by people everywhere as the right way to live, the right way to treat our fellowmen. It is one of the most important truths recognized by nearly every major religion. It is a statement that tells us to not simply think about what would be the best for us but rather how we can act towards others in a way that promotes unity, peace and fosters positivity.

The “Golden Rule” has a two fold meaning. In a positive sense, it means that just as we all desire to receive love, gentleness, compassion and kindness, so we should treat others with those same qualities.

In a negative sense, it tells us that just as we would not want someone to treat us badly so we should not do evil, or hateful things to others.

The “Golden Rule” is the essence that brings us together - across civilizations, socio-economic standing, gender, and ethnicity. It’s a fundamental truth, for all time, every culture every neighborhood and in every family. It calls us to love, to cherish, to respect, and to treat others with dignity.

— Nathaniel Hios, Church of Christ  
Kittery, Maine



# SURPRISES AT THE JUDGMENT



*“Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord, Lord’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me ‘Lord, Lord did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me you workers of lawlessness.’”*

– **JESUS** (Matthew 7: 21 – 23)

One day we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give account for everything in our lives (Romans 14:12; 2 Corinthians 5:10). There will be careful examination of all sinful deeds. There will be many surprises on that day.

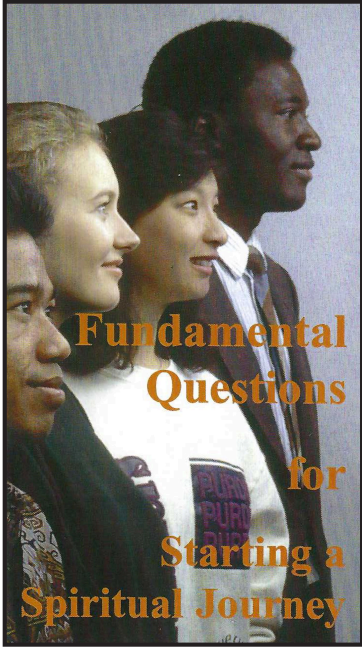
It is true that there are no perfect people. The Scripture says: *“all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory”* (Romans 3:23). However, all of us can be acquitted of charges the Judgment brings against us by putting our obedient faith in Jesus Christ who fulfilled the requirements of God’s righteous judgment by His death on the cross (Romans 3: 24 – 25). Jesus is able to satisfy the wrath of God, to forgive our sins, to declare us justified. *“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8: 1).

At the Judgment, however, there will be some who think they will enter heaven, but actually face condemnation. They will be shocked to learn they will be rejected! Jesus spoke of those who had dedicated themselves to exciting religious practices; who thought charismatic enthusiasm would get them to heaven; that spiritual showmanship would prepare them for eternity. They had performed healings, casting out demons, predicting future events (prophecy) and done many other *“mighty works”* -- *even in the name of Jesus!* However, they did not do *“the will of the Father who is in heaven.”* Christians are not saved by works of merit, but there is no substitute for *obedience* to the Lord’s commands. Religious people must be obedient to the will of God. We can’t afford to be ignorant of God’s will. Each of us must read, study and obey what the Bible teaches.

Those who fail to love their neighbor will be condemned. Those who fail to feed the hungry and clothe the naked will face condemnation (Matthew 25:31– 46). Religious leaders who have taught man-made rules and traditions will be condemned (Matthew 23:13). On that day, there will be many surprises! Are you ready for the coming Day of Judgment?

— **Donny Pierre** , Church of Christ  
Waterbury, Connecticut

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