

# JESUS

THE LIFE THAT CHANGED THE WORLD | WEEK TWO

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT



## TWO BIG PURPOSES

Last week we saw how Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. It happened in front of a large crowd on the shore of the Jordan River, and God's booming voice said, "This is my dearly loved **son**, who brings me great joy." If that wasn't enough to get people excited, Jesus started going around doing miracles to heal people with all kinds of different problems. So, it's no wonder huge crowds started following Him everywhere He went (Matthew 4:25).

How would you rank the top moments in the ministry of Jesus? He did so many amazing things and taught so many profound truths that it's impossible to rank them in order by importance. This eight-week study will work through some of the highlights of Jesus' ministry, culminating in His death and resurrection.

One day, Jesus went up on a **hillside**, sat down with His disciples, and began to teach. (That's why we call it the **Sermon on the Mount**.) It was time to make it perfectly clear what Jesus was *really* about. He wasn't just here for the miracles, and it wasn't just about the big crowds. He had an important message for people to hear.

But before we get to that, let's do some math. Can you explain the following equation:

$$\sum_n \frac{1}{n^s} = \prod_p \frac{1}{1 - \frac{1}{p^s}}$$

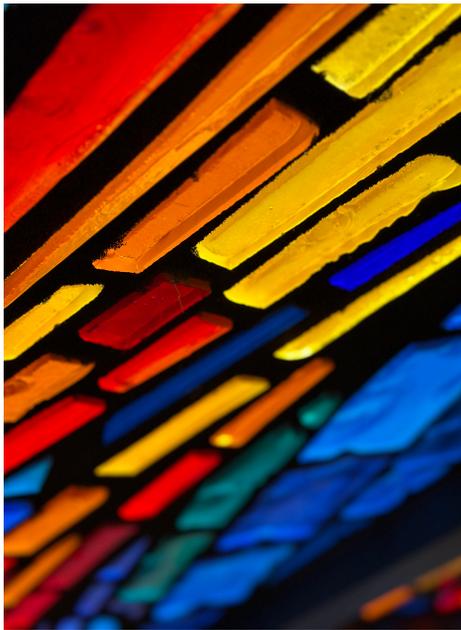
This equation relates natural numbers on the left to prime numbers on the right, and is always true with a number greater than one. Exciting, huh?

Well, what Jesus taught on the mountain was kind of like a really hard math problem—in two ways.

**First**, Jesus' teaching was *brilliant*. It was **challenging**. You had to slow down, think carefully, and ask, "*What does this mean for my life?*"

**Second**, Jesus' teaching was **impossible to do perfectly on our own**. Even if you tried your hardest every single day, left to yourself, you're not going to get it right. So, let's take a deeper look at these two aspects of the Sermon on the Mount.





## Jesus taught us what God really wants from us.

Jesus' sermon painted a picture of what a truly **loving, kind, humble, and God-pleasing life** looks like. It's way different than normal! God wants more than just showing up to church or following rules on the outside.

God cares about:

- Our **inner** thoughts, not just our outward actions
- **Loving** others, even when they don't deserve it
- Our **genuine** relationship with Him, not what everyone else thinks about us
- How we **trust** Him, even when we don't know what's going to happen

This is actually what the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament were all about... you know, those rules God gave the Israelites when Moses went up on a **mountain**? Jesus was here to fully explain what God *really* wants everyone to do—like a better version of Moses!

Let's get a feel for this in **Matthew 5:38-48**.

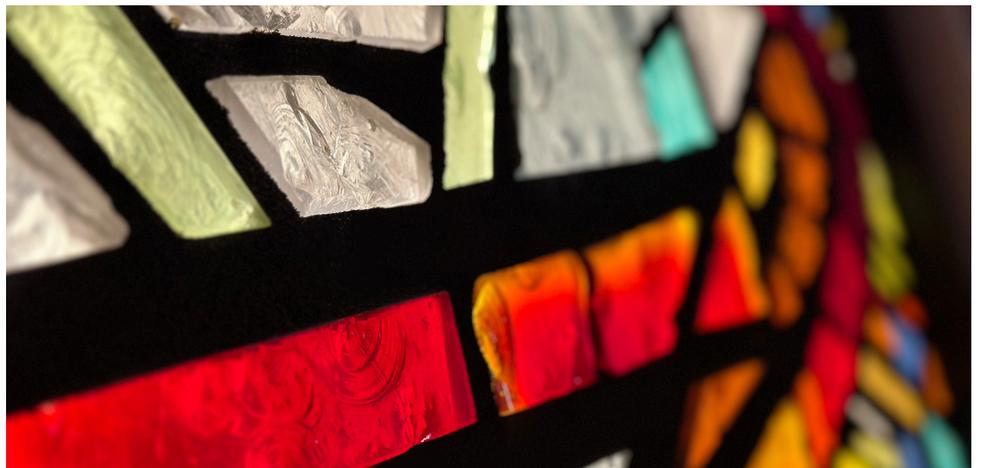
## We can't live this way perfectly, so we need Jesus.

We should try *very* hard to follow Jesus' teachings—but if we're honest, we'll quickly realize we can't do it perfectly. **Not even close.**

Don't hold grudges? Never look at someone with lust? Make everything you say perfectly honest? Give even more to the person who sues you in court? Pray for the very people who hate you? Keep your acts of service a secret? Yeah, this sermon is super-intense. And that's the point.

Martin Luther said the Sermon on the Mount shows us how sinful we are and drives us to rely more and more on the perfect righteousness of Jesus. Luther was simply talking the same way the early church leader, Paul, talked. Let's read **Romans 3:19-24**.

The Sermon on the Mount shows us how much we need Jesus, the only person who ever lived perfectly. Because of Him, we are forgiven, loved, and saved. So, as we study the Sermon on the Mount, it's easy to get discouraged, but remember... the flip side is that we realize and celebrate all the more how much we've been **forgiven** in Jesus. ❤️



IMAGINE YOU'RE GOD, AND THE PEOPLE YOU CREATED COULD HAVE A GREAT LIFE OF JOY IF THEY JUST FOLLOWED YOUR RULES. BUT, YOU ALSO KNOW THEY'RE NOT CAPABLE OF FOLLOWING THEM—NOT EVEN CLOSE. WHAT WOULD YOU DO? TELL THEM YOUR RULES? SEND THEM TEACHERS OF YOUR RULES? WHAT ELSE COULD YOU DO?

## FOUR BIG IDEAS FROM JESUS' SERMON

### 1) Something new was starting in the world.

Jesus' sermon started with the **Beatitudes**—a word that comes from the repeated word "**blessed**" (in Latin: *beatitudo*).

Jesus wasn't giving boring rules or reading fortune cookie slips—He was announcing a new reality, and it was **Good News!** He said that those who do what is right but are **poor, sad, left out, mistreated, insignificant, or made fun of**—God values *them* in an amazing way! And because of that—everything was about to change!

Let's read **Matthew 5:1-16** and then watch this 6-minute video about it: <https://bibleproject.com/videos/the-beatitudes/>

## 2) The heart of the ten commandments.

At first glance, it's like, "No duh, Jesus. Everyone knows we shouldn't kill someone." But Jesus said there's a deeper meaning and heart behind that simple command. God wants **more** from us than just avoiding the worst actions. God wants us to **care deeply about others** and actively seek what's best for them.

Let's read **Matthew 5:21-24**.

When the people first heard Jesus say this, they were **shocked**. Jesus said that even **angry words**, insults, or calling someone names put you in danger of hell?! Yikes! That felt way too extreme!

But Jesus was serious. And if you think about it, it's obvious. It would be ridiculous to say that by beating someone within an inch of their life but *not* killing them, we've really followed God's *intentions* for our lives. Jesus was saying that God's commands point to something much bigger than just their surface meaning. God cares not just about what we do with our hands, but what's going on in our **hearts**.

## 3) The amazing depth of real love.

When Jesus talked about someone **slapping you on the cheek**, He wasn't talking about a serious fight. Back then, a slap like that was a way to **insult or embarrass** someone in front of others. And yes—ouch—those kinds of moments can still hurt today.

But what's important is that Jesus didn't say, "*Get revenge!*" and He didn't say, "*Pretend it doesn't matter.*"

Instead, He taught us to respond with a generous **love and respect**, even when it's hard. But why? Why would we respond like that? Well, Jesus explained it at the end: this is the way God loves those rude people, and it's the same way God loves us.

Matthew 5:48 ("be perfect, even as God is perfect") might be better translated, "be fully complete, even as God is fully complete." The idea was: God's love is fully complete—**there's no one His love leaves out**. He doesn't just love people who are good or worthy enough.

This truly is a profound understanding of love—and we see it in action on the **cross**. As the early church leader, Paul, said, "Our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son **while we were still his enemies!**" (Romans 5:10) His love truly and completely goes to everyone everywhere.



## 4) The hidden value of secret faithfulness.

Jesus knew something about people—we really like being seen as a "**good person**." It feels good when others notice us! That's why it can be tempting to show off every good thing we do, like saying, "*Hey, look at me!*" (I mean, isn't that what social media was created for???)

But Jesus warned that doing good things **just to be noticed** can be dangerous. God doesn't want us to love attention more than we love **Him or other people**.

One example Jesus gave was **prayer**. In His time, some people made a big show of praying loudly and often in front of crowds so everyone would think they were super holy. Jesus said that's not the point at all. What matters is praying honestly, even when **no one else is watching**.

Let's read what Jesus says about this in **Matthew 6:5-13**.

That's powerful. How often do we ask, "How many times do I have to ask God? Doesn't God already know what I need? Why do I need to pray?" Jesus' simple prayer answered these questions. It's not about rubbing the lamp to get the genie to do what we wish, nor is it about telling God something He doesn't already know. It's about coming before God **privately** and **humbly**, **trusting** in His will, and **admitting** how much we really need Him.

# THE ULTIMATE SERMON

There's so much more in the Sermon on the Mount—what we read today is **less than half of it!** Jesus also taught us:

- To fix our **own mistakes** before judging others (take out the log in your eye first)
- To be careful not to chase after money or **selfish** desires (trust God who provides for birds)
- To live by the **Golden Rule** (treat others the way you want to be treated)
- To watch out for **fake** religious leaders (good actions are the fruit of a truly godly person)

Jesus ended His sermon with a powerful picture. He said that if you build your life on **fake or shaky things**—like pretending to be religious—your life will fall apart when hard times come. But if you build your life on **His words**, follow the *true* meaning of God's commands, and live with real faith and honesty, your life will be like a house built on **solid rock**—strong enough to stand no matter what happens.

That's the kind of life Jesus wants for us—and for our world. But let's be honest. No matter how hard we try, we're not going to be able to build a life on solid rock ourselves. And that's why the best part of the Sermon on the Mount is that it's a picture of what Jesus has done for us.

When Jesus prayed, He didn't show off—He often went **alone** to talk with His Father. And Jesus didn't chase money, comfort, or popularity—He lived for **God's Kingdom**, even when it cost Him everything. When people **mocked Him, hurt Him, and nailed Him to a cross**, Jesus didn't fight back or get revenge—He responded with **love and forgiveness**.

So, the Sermon on the Mount shows **how perfectly Jesus lived for us**. He lived out the true spirit and meaning of the Ten Commandments. His love was perfectly complete—reaching to everyone, everywhere.

And here's the best part: **God accepts us**—not because we get everything right, but because of everything **Jesus already did**. You can try and build your own identity, reputation, and self-worth on what a good person you are (and your good reputation), but it will never be enough. Your self-esteem will always be crashing down on constantly shifting sand.

But because of what Jesus has done for us, we have a foundation for our life. Nothing can shake us. Nothing can take away God's love for us. That's called grace. And it's pretty amazing.

Jesus' best sermon wasn't anything He said out loud. It was Him dying in agony on the cross for us. Let's build our life on that rock. ❤️

