

# Rightly Dividing the Gospels

—Installment 38—

The Sermon on the Mount

—Part 12—

Single-Minded Service

~ 28 A.D., after Passover

Near Capernaum by the Sea of Galilee

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## I. Brief Review of Overview of the Sermon on the Mount

- A. We are treating Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount conjointly with Luke’s Sermon on the Plain
- B. Audience
  - 1. His disciples, whom he particularly addressed in a public setting among multitudes
    - a. That is, those whom he was preparing to receive and enter his kingdom
- C. Theme
  - 1. The kingdom and its distinctive qualities

## II. Covered so far

- A. Beatitudes ..... (Matt. 5: 3–12; Luke 6: 20–26)
- B. Salt and light..... (Matt. 5: 13–16)
- C. Relationship of Jesus’ Doctrine to OT and Traditional Doctrine..... (Matt. 5: 17–48; Luke 6: 27–36)
  - 1. We considered the meaning of Jesus’ declared purpose to fulfill the OT
    - a. Fulfillment of the OT means satisfying its objective—leading to Christ and the NT
  - 2. We showed that he meant for his commands in this sermon to be applied to Christians .....vv. 19–20
    - a. These commandments pertain to the subjects of the kingdom, i.e. Christians
    - b. Those given in this instructional phase could be obeyed without abrogating the OT law
- D. The Distinctive Doctrines of Jesus ..... Matt. 5: 21–48
  - 1. In this section we saw Jesus modify existing OT doctrines in characteristic ways
    - a. Expanding their scope by spiritual application
    - b. Restricting their permissions in light of underlying spiritual principles
    - c. These modifications make NT law considerably higher than OT law
- E. Simplicity and Purity in Service..... Matt. 6: 1–18

1. As the previous section showed Jesus' concern with the roots and causation of sin, this section shows him concerned about the roots and motives of Godly service
  - a. Almsgiving
  - b. Prayer
  - c. Fasting
2. Unlike the six commands of the previous section, Jesus' purpose here is NOT to modify the OT commands
  - a. We see that he carries the OT commands intact into the NT, but with a new characteristic focus akin to that he brought to those commands he did modify
    - i. Interested in the spiritual roots (motive and manner) underpinning the acts
3. Spiritual character of the acts
  - a. Manner: Sincerity vs. ostentation (i.e. displayed as spectacle)
  - b. Motive: Seeking God's praise, not man's
4. God's reward vs. praise of men
  - a. Secrecy
    - i. It is not always necessary, desirable or even possible to conceal good works; but when it is appropriate to do so, we should do them in secret and thereby avoid the temptation to seek the praise of men
5. Problematic prayer
  - a. Vain repetition
  - b. Much speaking
6. The Model Prayer

### III. Single-Minded Service.....Matt. 6: 19–34

- A. He continues the theme of pure service with a discussion of single-mindedness, in which he contrasts earthly anxiety with the security of heavenly treasures
- B. Lay not up treasures
  1. Both "lay <not> up" and "treasures" are translated from forms of the same Greek word
    - a. Lay up— 2343 θησαυρίζω *thesaurizo*: gather, store, accumulate, hold in reserve
    - b. Treasures— 2344 θησαυρος *thesauros*: the things stored in a storehouse or treasury
      - i. We know this Greek word from its use to mean a treasury of words, which we anglicize to spell as thesaurus
    - c. Alternate translation: "Don't store the things stored in storehouses."
  2. Corruption of moth and rust, loss to thievery
    - a. Moth
      - i. In the ancient world, clothing was comparatively costly because of the large amount of labor involved in harvesting the wool and flax, cleaning, dyeing, spinning, weaving and sewing. Quality of clothing was a strong indicator of wealth and status, even more than today.

- (i) Achan's stolen "goodly Babylonish garment" .....Josh. 7: 21
  - (ii) The rich man was clothed in purple ..... Luke 16: 19
    - 1. This refers to Tyrian purple, the royal hue prized for its beauty and colorfastness, but extremely costly to produce
      - a. A single garment might require harvesting ten thousand or more sea snails, the Spiny dye-murex, from the Mediterranean sea
    - (iii) Garments were given as princely gifts ..... II Kings 5: 5; Judges 14: 12–19
  - ii. Modern chemical pest control was unknown, and moths could rob a man of large amounts of his wealth
- b. Rust
- i. The ancient world did not have banks, paper money, or electronic money. Although barter was much more prevalent then, money was preferred then as now, for its flexibility and portability. All money was in the form of metal coins and difficult to store securely. Frequently men resorted to burying their money, exposing it to rust.
    - (i) Achan buried his ill-gotten wealth .....Josh. 7: 21
    - (ii) The unwise servant buried his master's talent..... Matt. 25: 25
- c. Thievery
- i. "Break through" may refer to the practice of digging through an earthen wall, thereby circumventing the barred door
- d. Jesus points out the irony of these unreliable stores of value: the colorfast garment moth-eaten, the money rusted and stolen
- i. This universal experience of loss is used as a metaphor of spiritual decay .....Jas. 5: 1–3
  - ii. They who store only this world's goods cannot help but lose them, and with their lost treasures, their own souls..... Mark 8: 36
3. He urges the storing-up of true and lasting treasure: treasure in heaven
- a. This alludes to the eternal quality of heavenly reward
    - i. In the previous section we noted that God's blessings include both unmerited gifts (redemption, salvation) and rewards for service (almsgiving, kindness)
  - b. Even if the worldly gain were in some sense greater, the heavenly reward would be the more valuable for its durability
    - i. We should choose wisely about what we store
4. The heart follows the treasure
- a. All men have concern for their stores
    - i. House, cars, clothing
    - ii. Tools, toys
    - iii. Investments, savings
  - b. This becomes a choking care..... Luke 8: 14
    - i. And a drowning lust.....I Tim. 6: 9

5. Like several of the doctrines in this sermon, this principle — store not — is meant for judicious application
    - a. Some have applied it strictly
      - i. E.g., Franciscan monks, who take vows of poverty after the example of St. Francis of Assisi
    - b. The apostles did not
      - i. They granted the property rights of their converts even as they encouraged charity..... Acts 5
      - ii. Paul says “I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity” ..... Philip. 4: 12 (NAS)
    - c. And the Bible encourages modest wealth-building ..... Prov. 10: 5
      - i. When honestly acquired and properly framed with contentment, thanksgiving and generosity
    - d. But in our wealthy and materialistic culture, do we Christians apply it at all?
  6. This is a serious matter
    - a. Covetousness is cause for withdrawal ..... I Cor. 5: 11
    - b. And for loss of salvation ..... Eph. 5: 5
  7. Q: Where is your heart? What occupies your thought and imagination? Where is your treasure store?
    - a. If we invest and store in the things of God, our heart will follow that store to heaven
- C. Vision as metaphor for affection
1. As vision fills the mind, so affection fills the heart
    - a. Dark spiritual vision leads to increasing darkness, and light to increasing light..... John 3: 19–21
  2. Whoso beholds the light of God knows the relative value of heavenly and earthly treasure
    - a. He sees clearly both realms
  3. Whoso beholds both light and dark is double-minded
    - a. His mind is polluted and unstable, and he cannot receive the Lord’s blessing ..... James 1: 6–8
      - i. Peter on the sea “saw the wind boisterous” ..... Mark 14: 30
    - b. Indeed, he cannot understand them ..... I Cor. 2: 14
    - c. He becomes effectively blinded ..... Rom. 1: 21–25
- D. Two masters
1. Jesus implies here that man is framed to serve, not to direct..... Gen. 2: 15
    - a. O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps..... Jer. 10:23
    - b. Many suffer the delusion of self-direction (“I am my own man”)
      - i. But all serve a master, witting or not, acknowledged or not
  2. But he declares plainly that none can serve two masters
  3. We must choose between God and mammon
    - a. Mammon: Aramaic word for wealth
      - i. Jesus uses it here in the personified sense of a false god

- (i) Mammon teaches us to hoard and covet riches
    - (ii) God teaches us to share and lightly esteem them
  - ii. And he demands our undivided allegiance
- E. Anxiety (uneasy care)
1. Take no thought (KJV), do not be anxious (NAS), do not worry (NIV)
    - a. The Greek conveys a sense of distraction caused by doubt or double-mindedness
      - i. Alternate translation: “Don’t be distracted by your life and possessions.” ..... Luke 12: 29
  2. He again draws contrast between the value of earthly and heavenly providence
    - a. Mammon supplies mere food; God supplies life
    - b. Mammon supplies mere clothing; God supplies the body
    - c. Mammon is unreliable hence worrisome; God is reliable hence peaceable
  3. Birds: examples of trust in God
    - a. They make only tiny stores (“store not nor gather into barns”)
      - i. They do not serve mammon at all
      - ii. Yet God feeds them
    - b. “Do you not greatly excel them?”
      - i. This means that God’s care for us is much greater than his care for birds
  4. Feebleness of anxiety
    - a. It cannot stretch bones or years
    - b. It can add wealth, but only unreliably
    - c. If you can’t do the least, why do you worry about the rest?..... Luke 12: 26
    - d. Trust in God adds life and peace
  5. Lilies of the field
    - a. Simple flowers are arrayed by God with a splendor briefly exceeding Solomon’s legendary attire
  6. Grass in the oven
    - a. The same ground cover so splendidly clothed is shortly sacrificed to a perfectly mundane purpose: the firing of a clay oven
  7. O ye of little faith
    - a. Jesus used this term of reproach for his disciples on four occasions
      - i. It is the only such term repeatedly applied to them, and his frequent recourse to it suggests that it is a characteristic problem
        - (i) Arguably only for the original disciples; but really for all disciples
      - ii. Unlike the transient grass, God has built us for eternity
        - (i) It is little faith to doubt his providence for us relative to birds and grass
  8. Gentiles seek

- a. Jesus' disciples were all Jews, and this conveyed the sense that only someone who doesn't know God could doubt his providence

9. Your Heavenly Father knows

- a. This is the cure for anxiety
  - i. Heavenly: he knows your need
  - ii. Father: he feels your need
    - (i) Cast your care upon him..... I Peter 5: 7
      - 1. He cares for you (and instead of you)
        - a. And he cannot be choked by care

10. Seek ye first

- a. The kingdom is the proper object of our care
  - i. This command reinforces the point that the sermon is meant for application by Christians
  - ii. Seek first to enter it
  - iii. Then seek to serve its interest
    - (i) This interest may be summarized as righteousness
- b. Set your affection on it
- c. Be careful for it

11. All these things will be added

- a. God will provide the rest: food, clothing, shelter

12. Tomorrow

- a. Seek the kingdom today
- b. God will take care of tomorrow

F. Peace in God's care

- 1. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost..... Rom. 14: 17
- 2. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace ..... Rom. 8: 6
- 3. Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee ..... Isa. 26: 3