



MATTHEW 5; LUKE 6

SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND PLAIN

Jesus Teaches the Higher Law

Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is arguably the most influential sermon to "the history and character of Christianity."¹ Evidence that this message was very important to Jesus is found as we find portions of Matthew's account scattered across the Gospels of Mark and Luke, in the Sermon on the Plain, and at the Nephite Temple.² The repetition of the message, and the care in recording it, is one of the ways we know how important the message was to Jesus. The texts often overlap, yet they are still individualized for each audience and setting. Each difference will be pointed out as we go through Matthew's account verse by verse.

Matthew's Gospel draws regular parallels from the OT. One of those emphasized in Matthew 5–7 is the fact that Jesus gives this sermon on a mountain. Moses received God's Law on a mountain, but his people refused it, and received the Mosaic Law instead. Jesus was the premortal Jehovah, the Law Giver. Now He is back on a mountain in a sacred setting and gathers His most trusted disciples to teach the higher law again. The Sermon was given as

spiritual training for disciples, and this time, they received it. The audience in Matthew and 3 Nephi are those who have chosen to follow Jesus—covenant makers, if you will.

Book of Mormon Parallels with the Sermon on the Mount

It should not surprise us that Jesus chose to teach His higher law to other prepared Children of Israel. Those gathered at their temple in Bountiful—nearly a *year after* the great destruction affiliated with Jesus’ death (compare 3 Nephi 8:5 with 10:18–19)—were saved because they were repentant and “more righteous,” or in other words, prepared to learn the higher law (3 Nephi 9:13). The Nephite record offers higher Christology by augmenting the messages of Jesus’ divinity. We find these NT parallels outlined by John W. Welch focusing on “the Sermon at the Temple” as a sacred and covenant temple text: “I invite readers to ponder the prospects of the exceptional view of the Sermon that the Book of Mormon presents to us, for that view has far-reaching implications.”³

THE BEATITUDES

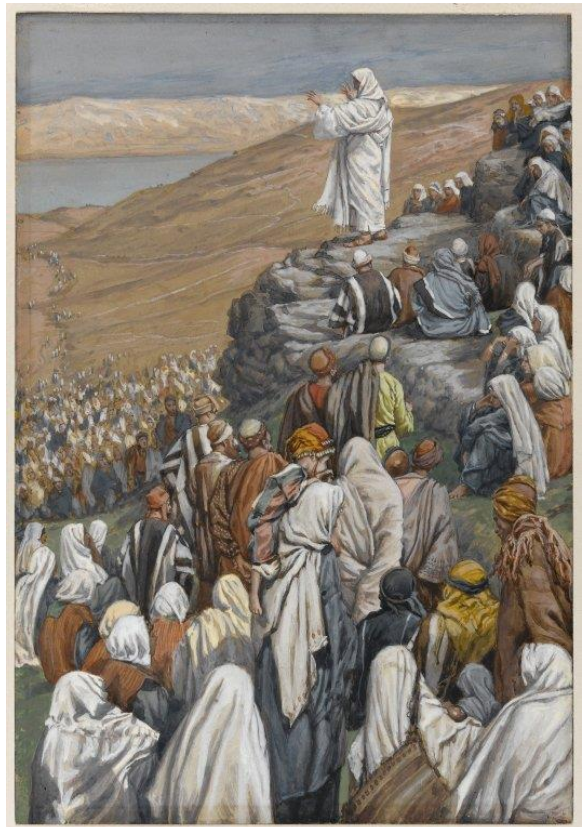
Matthew 5:1–12; Luke 6:17–23

Second only to the Torah, Jews of the late second temple period (the time of the New Testament), knew their Psalms. Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and Plain echo the Psalms by beginning with, “blessed.”⁴

Setting

Matthew 5:1 “*mountain*”: Before the sermon begins in Matthew, Jesus escapes from the crowd by climbing up or “into” a mountain, followed by His closest disciples. (Matthew uses “disciples” for the twelve apostles). Contrast this private setting of believers to the shorter Sermon on the Plain.

Luke 6:17–20 “*plain*”: Luke places the “Sermon on the Plain” after an enormous crowd has gathered from great distances to seek Jesus’ healing. However, when the teaching begins, Luke 6:20 says, “Looking up at His disciples, Jesus said . . .”



The Sermon of the Beatitudes by James Tissot. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

(Berean Study Bible or BSB). Perhaps He addressed only believers who were *ready* for the higher law in both settings.

Beatitudes

Matthew 5:2 “he opened His mouth”: The JST of this verse includes a 75-word addition, which follows 3 Nephi 12:2, *almost* verbatim. It begins with the familiar phrase, “blessed are they,” and then refers to those who have: (1) faith in the Lord and His messengers, (2) been baptized, (3) received the promised fire and the Holy Ghost for a remission of their sins, and (4) remained humble.

Mt 5:3-11 “*blessed*”: in English Bibles, “blessed” can come from two different biblical words:



Sermon on the Mount by Henrik Olrik.

1. **Adjective:** “*makarios* / blessed,” usually translated as “fortunate, well, happy or blessed.” However, by studying the 50 uses in the NT, across 11 books, including Matthew 5 and Luke 6, the word “*makarios* / blessed” takes on additional meaning. Often the authors of the NT and early Christian disciples used the word to refer to a *future* state of divine blessedness, a future heavenly state (i.e. the pure in heart will see God). This is the way it is in the Beatitudes. The word is “exalted and exalting.”⁵
2. **Verb,** “*eulogeo* / blessed” as in “thank, praise, or to invoke a blessing.” This is addressed to God requesting blessings upon us; “he blessed, and brake, and gave . . .” (Matthew 14:19). Luke used, “*eulogeo* / blessed” twice, once from angel Gabriel and once from Elizabeth, both referring to Mary as one who has received special *blessings* from God, “. . . blessed art thou among women. . .” (Luke 1:28, 42)

The Sermon on the Mount lists eight beatitudes (or future promised blessings), while the Sermon at the Temple includes thirteen (3 Nephi 12:1–11), and the Sermon on the Plain only has four (Luke 6:20–22). Looking at different biblical translation options help to understand the original meaning of this new law of the Gospel.

MATTHEW 5:3–12

3. Blessed *are* the poor in Spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 Blessed *are* they that **mourn**: for they shall be comforted.
- 5 Blessed *are* the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 Blessed *are* they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
- 7 Blessed *are* the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- 8 Blessed *are* the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
- 9 Blessed *are* the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
- 10 Blessed *are* they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my name.
- 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

LUKE 6:20–23

20. Blessed *be ye* poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.
- 21 Blessed *are ye* that hunger now: for ye shall be filled.
Blessed *are ye* that **weep** now: for ye shall laugh.
- 22 Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you *from their company*, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake.
- 23 Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.

3 NEPHI 12:3–12

- 3 Yea, blessed are the poor in spirit **who come unto me**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 4 And again, blessed are all they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- 5 And blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- 6 And blessed are all they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness, **for they shall be filled with the Holy Ghost**.
- 7 And blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- 8 And blessed are all the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- 9 And blessed are all the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God.
- 10 And blessed are all they who are persecuted for **my name's** sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- 11 And blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake;
- 12 For ye shall have great joy and be exceedingly glad, for great shall be your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you

Differences: High Christology

The minor differences in settings, order, and content suggest that Jesus shared similar ideas in different sermons. Interestingly, in Luke we find four parallel “woes” following the four “blessed” states (see below). The Book of Mormon adds “and” several times, which can be argued as evidence of ancient language usage in the form of punctuation. More significantly, it also adds statements to encourage the disciples to turn to God for help and healing. We must come unto Christ when poor in spirit, and receive the Spirit when hungering after righteousness. In 3 Nephi 12:10, Jesus’ *name* is emphasized rather than “righteousness sake” in Matthew 5:10. These significant additions, in addition to the five extra beatitudes in 3 Nephi 12:1–2, turn one to Jesus as the Savior, which changes the text to high Christology.

Definitions

Matthew 5:3 “poor in Spirit”: (used together only here in NT): NT uses “*ptochos/poor*(adj.)” 34 times to mean: reduced to beggary, asking alms; destitute of wealth, influence, position, honor; lowly, afflicted; destitute of the Christian virtues and eternal riches; helpless, powerless to accomplish an end; lacking in anything that respects their spirit.

“*pneuma/ Spirit,*” 385 times in NT: 1.) a movement of air or wind; breath of nostrils or mouth; 2.) the spirit, i.e. the vital principal by which the body is animated; the rational spirit, the power by which the human being feels, thinks, decides; the soul; 3.) a spirit, a life giving spirit; a human soul that has left the body; a spirit higher than man but lower than God, i.e. an angel; used of demons, or evil spirits; of God, i.e. God’s power and agency; the disposition or influence which fills and governs the soul of any one; the efficient source of any power, affection, emotion, desire, etc.

Matthew 5:4 (Luke 6:21) “*pentheo/mourn*” is used 3 times in NT: mildness of disposition, gentleness of spirit, meekness.

Matthew 5:5 “*praios/meekness,*” is used 4 times in NT: mild, gentle, meekness toward God as that disposition of spirit in which we accept His dealings with us as good, and therefore without disputing or resisting, the opposite to self-assertiveness and self-interest. It stems from *trust* in God’s goodness and control.



The Sermon on the Mount by Dante Gabriel Rossetti ca. 1861. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

Love God + Love Neighbors: God’s Spirit Fills us to Bless Humanity

Similar to Moses’ Ten Commandments, where the first four commandments deal with our relationship with God and the last six with our relationship to our fellow humans, so too are the Beatitudes. The first four beatitudes focus on our need for God’s help and relationship to Him. We need God when we are poor in spirit, mourning, and meek. Then when we hunger after Him, we receive the strength to be merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and to endure persecution.

TEN COMMANDMENTS (EXODUS 20:3–17)

1. No other gods
2. No graven images
3. Do not take the Lord’s name in vain
4. Keep the sabbath day holy
5. Honor your father and mother
6. Do not kill
7. Do not commit sexual sin
8. Do not steal
9. Do not bear false witness
10. Do not Covet

Love God

Love Others

BEATITUDES (JST)

1. Poor in spirit who come unto me
2. Mourn = Comforted
3. Meek = inherit
4. Hunger for Righteousness = filled with Spirit
5. Merciful
6. Pure in heart
7. Peacemakers
8. Persecuted for God

BEATITUDES WITH OLD TESTAMENT PARALLELS

Matthew 5:4 = Isaiah 61:2

Matthew 5:5 = Psalm 37:1

Matthew 5:6 = Psalm 107:4–7

Matthew 5:7 = 2 Samuel 22:26

Matthew 5:8 = Psalm 24:3–4

Matthew 5:9 = Genesis 13:8

Matthew 5:10–11 = 2 Chronicles 36:16

Matthew 5:6 The transition verse between spiritually needy and a restoration of spiritual strength comes as we hunger and thirst after God. The Book of Mormon adds a key addition at this transition. God strengthens us by filling us “with the Holy Ghost” (3 Nephi 12:6). Seeking and receiving the Holy Spirit evokes the gift and change.

Matthew 5:7–11 The last four beatitudes allow us to serve others. Positioning “persecution” as the last state of blessedness enhances it. It “provides the greatest opportunity to triumph over hate and fear and to love one’s enemies . . . the last point the Lord made before the injunction to be perfect.”⁶

Sermon on the Plain: “Woe”

Luke 6:23-26 “*Woe*”: Jesus’ Sermon on the Plain detours from the Sermon on the Mount by aligning its four beatitudes with four “woes.” Rewards and judgment will both come in heaven, where opposition will still apply.

BLESSED (LUKE 6:20–22)

Poor

Weep

Hunger

Hated

WOE (LUKE 6:24–26)

Rich

Full

Laugh

Socially accepted

Luke’s record of Jesus’ Sermon is like a “Reader’s Digest” version, and no longer runs alongside, until it returns to discuss the need to love your enemies. Yet, many missing sections are found in Jesus’ teachings tucked elsewhere in Luke’s Gospel. This realistically portrays Jesus’ returning to important, well thought-out messages when speaking to a new audience.

TEACHINGS FOR A HIGHER ORDER

Covenant Making

Matthew 5:13–16

Matthew 5:13 “*Salt*” was very precious in the ancient world.⁷ Temple sacrifices were salted as a sign or symbol of the covenant (Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19; D&C 101:39). Also salt, like fire, was a purifier. Salt crystals can lose their flavor and preservative capabilities in moisture. Jesus builds on this image to invite His disciples to make covenants. He asks them to bless and preserve the earth. If they do not, they will be as useless salt. (*We find a similar discussion between Jesus and His disciples in another setting: Mark 9:49–50 and Luke 14:34–35.*)

Matthew 5:14–16 “*light*”: In the ancient world, light came from the sun, moon, stars, fire, or God (Exodus 13:21). Fire was used in sacrifices as the purifier, which is also the Spirit’s role in our lives, it acts “as a fire is burning.”

Jesus’ combining of the topics of salt and light together points to “the theme of men making themselves sacrifices to God.”⁸ Sacrifice and sanctification come from the same roots. In Latin, sacrifice meant to make sacred. Jesus introduces the new change from offering a blood sacrifice, to a sacrifice of one’s heart.

Salt, light, and earth also evoke the theme of creation. John W. Welch sees this as part of the new higher law for covenant disciples to make:

Instead of the old imperative, "Let there be light" (Genesis 1:3), Jesus now issues the new injunction, "Let your light so shine before this people, that they may see your good works" (3 Nephi 12:16). Just as the Creator looked at the creation and pronounced his works to be good, Jesus now invites each disciple to become a creator of "good works," that when they are seen, men may glorify God. With this, Jesus is forming a new heaven and new earth, a new creative act and new creation.⁹

Jesus calls His disciples to radiate His light to the world, on a candlestick. Jesus is the light of the world, and Christians can reflect or hold up His light. In addition to not hiding one's light, this also communicates to get more of His Light, or strengthen one's testimony, to offer a witness that will shine so brightly that it cannot be hidden.



The Sermon on the Mount by Jan Brueghel the Elder, 1598. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

Lower and Higher Law Explained

Matthew 5:17-19

Matthew 5:17 “fulfilled”: The word “*pleroo/fulfil*” in Greek meant: 1) to fill up, 2) to render full, i.e. to complete; 2a) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim; 2b) make complete in every particular, to render perfect; to carry through to the end, to accomplish, carry out.¹⁰ Many ancient Jews viewed the Laws of Moses (written and oral) as the source of salvation. Jesus attacked that falsehood by teaching that He was the source of Salvation. Later He taught the Nephites, “I am the Law” (3 Nephi 15:9). The old Law of Moses was fulfilled in Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection.

The new law and covenant were a restoration of the higher law (D&C 84:23-27). The Christ’s restored attention on the inward state of one’s heart. The medium for this change is the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is essential to being

born again. With the higher or Melchizedek priesthood available again, so was the gift of the Holy Ghost. Jesus compares the old and new laws from verses 21–48.

Matthew 5:18 “*until*”: The text does not explain when the law is going to be fulfilled. Only in 3 Nephi’s parallel account do we find a helpful explanation saying that it was Jesus’ mortal life, atonement, death, and resurrection that fulfilled the Law of Moses. Unlike the earlier sermon in Galilee, by the time Jesus came to the Americas, Jesus rightly emphasizes fulfillment and the need to keep Jesus’ commandments..

MATTHEW 5:18–20

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.

19 Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach *them*, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

20 For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

3 NEPHI 12:18–20

For verily I say unto you, one jot nor one tittle hath not passed away from the law, but in me it hath all been fulfilled. 19 And behold, I have given you the law and the commandments of my Father, that ye shall believe in me, and that ye shall repent of your sins, and come unto me with a broken heart and a **contrite spirit**. Behold, ye have the commandments before you, and the law is fulfilled.

20 Therefore come unto me and be ye saved; for verily I say unto you, that except ye shall keep my commandments, which I have commanded you at this time, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.

John 2:24–25 “*He knew*”: The “sign” of cleansing the temple is marveled at, but not understood yet. John describes Jesus in control as the omniscient creator (JST: “He knew all *things*”), even if His people do not recognize Him.

3 Nephi 12:19–20 “*contrite*” is not used in the NT (but four times in the OT). It meant “to grind down to powder.” A contrite heart should be broken and ground down to dust to be a new disciple. Our will must be broken to receive the will of the Father in our hearts. If we live the first three beatitudes and are poor in spirit, mournful, and meek we will develop a contrite spirit. Here the Sermon at the Temple emphasizes the *law of obedience and sacrifice* more than the Sermon on the Mount.

Prohibition Against Anger

Matthew 5:21–22

Matthew 5:21–22 “*but I say unto you ...*” Jesus quotes the most heinous sin of the Decalogue, Ex 20:13, and then adds its higher law. The outward deed of intentional killing is now the inner feeling of anger. Matt 5:22 is altered

by the JST to match 3 Nephi 12:22, by taking out “without a cause.” Disciples must sacrifice their anger and contempt to come to the Lord’s altar. Under Moses’ Law, the penalty was physical death; now it is spiritual death. Jesus refers to the “counsel,” which was the Sanhedrin or Jewish leadership body (70 male leaders plus the high priest). It is also good to recall Jesus’ reminder of the reality that there is a “hell/*gehenna*.”

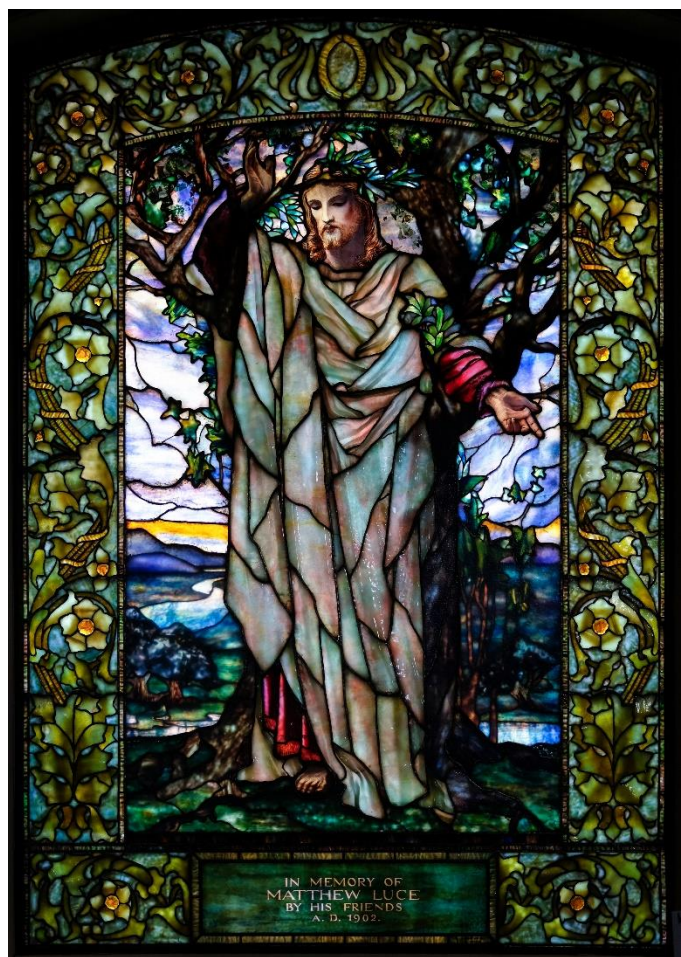
Reconciliation Needed Before Proceeding

Matthew 5:23–24

Matthew 5:23–24 “*leave thy gift ...*”: Before we cry to the Lord, He asks us to reconcile our differences with our fellow humans. Healing is needed for both parties. Reconciliation also requires a sacrifice of our pride. This may explain why sometimes we don’t receive answers from God. Jesus’ counsel also applies to our sacrament participation.

Higher Law of Chastity

Matthew 5:27–28



The Sermon on the Mount. Stained glass window, 1902 Arlington Street Church, Boston. Photograph by Sharon Mollerus.

Matthew 5:27–28 “*lust*”: The second most damning commandment from the Decalogue is adultery. Jesus’ new higher law again asks us to control the condition of our hearts. Joseph Smith probably had no idea how Satan would sexually tempt in the 21st century, but the principle offered in the JST covers everything. (The JST addition at the end of 28 is not footnoted because it is found in 3 Nephi 12:29–30.) “Behold, I give unto you a commandment, that ye suffer none of these things to enter into your heart, for it is better that ye should deny yourselves of these things, wherein ye will take up your cross, than that ye should be cast into hell.” (The Lord repeated this again in D&C 63:16)

Matthew 5:29–30 “*pluck it out*”: Mutilating the body was extremely offensive to the Jewish culture. Jesus probably shocked them into realizing the vileness of the sin. The JST adds an additional verse of explanation, “And now this I speak, a parable concerning your sins; wherefore, cast them from you,

that ye may not be hewn down and cast into the fire.” Interestingly, 3 Nephi 12:30 has none of these last verses as the shock treatment wasn’t needed.

Marriage Covenants Not Dissolved Except for Fornication

Matthew 5:31–33

Matthew 5:31 “*divorcement*” Deuteronomy 24:1 states the Mosaic Law of divorce. But by the time of Jesus, it had been contorted to destroy the marital relationship. At the time men alone initiated divorce, for either a “*Religious duty*” or a “*just cause*” (all of the causes were heavily debated by the rabbis). In either case, it left the woman in dire straits.

MAN’S RELIGIOUS DUTY

(the man didn’t have to return the bride price)

IF

For The wife committed adultery

Fed her husband untithed food

Had marital relations while “ritually unclean”

Failed to fulfill a vow

Her voice is heard from outside or by a neighbor

Shoes lie under the bed

HANBAND’S JUST CAUSE

Lived ten years of childlessness

Wife burning her husband’s toast or dinner

Speaking in public, or nursing a child or spinning
(which included standing in her front doorway)

If he found another fairer than she

A change of feeling

Matthew 5:32 “*porneia/fornication*”: means *all* sexual sins. In the Greco-Roman world at the time, divorce among the wealthy was rampant.¹¹ The rate was lower for Jews, but rabbinic law did not allow a divorced wife to return to the marriage. The sanctity of marriage is God’s priority—yet many generations have lost God’s perspective. This is another example of Jesus’ tearing down the false traditions that permeated His culture to restore the original, Edenic law.

In the current restored church, we are not living Jesus’ preeminent law either. We do not live in an Edenic perfect world, and believe that God honors all members of the church who live their covenants with full fellowship, whether divorced or not. This includes making the highest temple vows.

Oaths Sworn by Saying Yes or No

Matthew 5:33–37

Matthew 5:33–36 “*swear not at all*”: It appears that Jesus references Numbers 30:2, which teaches to fulfill all your oaths. The OT taught not to swear by God (Exodus 20:16; Leviticus 19:12). Jesus asks us to speak only truths. Notice that when Jesus wanted to teach something, He quoted the scriptures. The same is true when angels come—

they often quote scripture. Perhaps when we look for answers to our prayers, we should first look in the scriptures. Here Jesus cites Isaiah 66:1; Deut. 23:22, 35; and Psalm 48:2. Everything created by God should be hallowed and treated with respect. Even verbal abuse of God’s creations is inappropriate. Many, if not all, “swear-words” fall into this category. Outside of “taboo” words, even phrases like “for heaven’s sake!” or “oh my word!” are inappropriate biblical references. Purity includes sanctifying all things that God has created.

Matthew 5:37 “*logos/communication*” as used in John 1:1, for the “word,” can also mean: “discourse, decree, reason, divine plan, council, etc.” Jesus is trying to develop a holy people. To join Him in His work, we must watch what we say every hour of every day.

Love even Enemies

Matthew 5:38–46; Luke 6:27–36

Matthew 5:38–39 “*turn to him the other*”: In the old law, an “eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Exodus 21:24), the Israelites learned an elementary form of God’s plan. These laws help keep order. But Christ’s higher law leads to a Zion society where we learn to love everyone. The hardest people to love are those who abuse and spitefully use us. Jesus showed us how to do that as Isaiah 66:1 prophesied. Jesus endured “the smiters,” and gave His “cheeks to them that plucked off the hair” without retribution—He asks us to do likewise.

Matthew 5:40; Luke 6:29–31 “*let him have . . .*”: Jesus references Exodus 20:26, “If thou at all take thy neighbour’s raiment to pledge, thou shalt deliver it unto him by that the sun goeth down.” This practice must have developed into law suits. We too live in a society plagued with lawsuits. Jesus asks us to forgive, avoid contention, and be generous with all. Generosity is essential in the Lord’s Law (even to robbers, the poor, and solicitors). A cloak or the outer garment is the most valuable piece of clothing. These acts of mercy speak of charity as Paul taught in 1 Cor 13. The verb used is a “lifelong pattern.”¹²

Matthew 5:41–42 “*compel*”: In a culture where social hierarchy reigned, and 1/3 of the populations were servants or slaves, lower-class people were forced to do work for others regularly. Jesus rises above the social order to ask disciples to live a form of love that even extends to serve those who compel us. The JST change reads: “whosoever shall compel thee to go with him twain, thou shalt go with him twain,” not the extra mile.

Matthew 5:43–44; Luke 6:27–28, “*love*”: Jesus’ higher law takes loving your neighbor to a new level. The word choice is the most noble use of love, *agapao*, often translated as “charity” in the KJV. Christian disciples are not only good to their friends and neighbors, but also pray for their enemies who “spitefully use you” (JST). Jesus is citing OT scriptures like Numbers 10:35, and Deuteronomy 30:7 (but there are other OT scriptures that emphasize loving your enemies too: Leviticus 19:18; Exodus 23:4; Proverbs 25:21; Deuteronomy 14:1). Jesus is also preparing them for the “new” commandment to love as Christ loves (John 21:34).

Matthew 5:45–46 “*children of your Father*”: To be included among God’s children, we must love our enemies. The JST chastises those who love “*only*” their friends. Jesus wants us to love those who do not reciprocate.

Matthew 5:46–47 “*publicans*”: Appropriately, these two verses on loving publicans are not in 3 Nephi 12, as publicans only relate to the Jewish world. Instead, 3 Nephi explains fulfilling (rendering complete, to accomplish) the law.

MATTHEW 5:46–47

For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so?

3 NEPHI 12:46–47

Therefore, those things which were of old time, which were under the law, in me are all fulfilled. 47 Old things are done away, and all things have become new.

Transition to a Higher Order

Matthew 5:48 “*teleios/perfect*” means “complete, finished, consummate human integrity and virtue, adult, etc.” The injunction, “be ye therefore perfect,” did not mean be 100%. The ancients did not even have that number. Perfect meant towards an end. Something was perfect when it was finished. Or it was perfect if were *good enough* for its purposes. With this commandment Jesus had several things in mind. It involves the idea of becoming like God. As Joseph Smith taught, we are “instructed more perfectly,” or more like God in temples.¹³

The “second” Gospel of Mark, or “secret” Gospel of Mark, was prepared “for the use of those who were being perfected.” The copy was read “only to those who are being initiated into the great mysteries”¹⁴ The scriptures mentioned many people who had perfect attributes in the scriptures: Seth, Adam (D&C 107:43).

In 3 Nephi 12:48, we see the post-resurrected Jesus adding, “I would that ye should be perfect even as I” alongside “or your Father.” The Lord does not add His name in Matthew, even though He was a perfect man. Not until His mission is finished did He include: “even as I.” He invites us to strive for becoming complete or whole, finished in this covenant making setting. Some see Jesus’ commanding us to be perfect in the intent of our hearts. Through Christ’s grace and Spirit, we have power over our intentions. In 1831 the Lord observed, “ye are not able to abide the presence of God now, neither the ministering of angels; wherefore, continue in patience until ye are perfected” (D&C 67:13). I see this as completing our mortal missions. It is only then, that we can live with God.

And with that, Matthew 6 ends, and the Sermon on the Mount continues next week. ❖

Header Image: *The Sermon on the Mount* by Carl Bloch.

ENDNOTES

¹ John W. Welch, *Illuminating the Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount* (Provo, UT: Foundation of Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 1999), 3. “It would be hard to overstate the value of the Sermon on the Mount in shaping Christian ethics and in conveying to the world the teachings of Jesus and of early Christianity. It is known as the Great Sermon, . . . an “unparalleled address,” and thousands of books and articles have analyzed it extensively and minutely. It stands unsurpassed as the sermon of the Master par excellence.”

² Just looking at the NT, we find repeated messages from the Sermon on the Mount. For example, in addition to Matthew 5, we find: “the salt of the earth” in: Mark 9:49–50 and Luke 14:34–35; the “light of the world” in Mark 4:21 and Luke 8:16. The repetition shows their importance and gives perspective to finding similar passages in 3 Nephi 12:17–18 and 12:21–22. To further your own study of these parallel passages, use a synopsis or harmony of the Gospels. My favorites are: Kurt Aland, ed., *Synopsis of the Four Gospels: Greek-English Edition* (Stuttgart, Germany: German Bible Society, 1984); and Steven and Julie Hite, *The New Testament with Joseph Smith Translation* (Orem, UT: Veritas Group, 1994).

³ Welch, *The Sermon*, 5. Welch offers “a Latter-day Saint interpretation of the Sermon that sees it in the context of a sacred temple experience, for that is the setting of Jesus’ Sermon at the Temple. Seeing the teachings, instructions, doctrines, and commandments of the Sermon on the Mount in this way—in connection with the ceremonial stages and ordinances of covenant making—opens new insights into a unified meaning and comprehensive significance of the otherwise segmented Sermon on the Mount.”

⁴ “Blessed” begins Psalm 1:1; 28:6; 31:21; 32:1–2; 33:12; 40:4; 41:1, 13; 65:4; 68:19; 72:18–19; 89:15; etc.

Other messages included in the Beatitudes are found in: Isaiah 61:1–2; Psalms 107:4–7, 9; 24:3–6; Leviticus 2:13; Numbers 18:19, etc.

⁵ From the New Testament Commentary Conference, January 26, 2019. John W. Welch’s presentation on “Blessed.” The talk will be available on line at: <http://www.byunewtestamentcommentary.com/conferences/26-january-2019-in-the-beginning-were-the-words/>.

⁶ Kent Jackson, and Robert Millet, eds., *Studies in Scriptures vol. 5: The Gospels* (SLC, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 239

⁷ In the Roman world, salt was an expensive form of trade and currency. Making it was legally restricted which raised its value. The Roman military were paid partially in salt. Our English word soldier and salary stem from this tradition.

⁸ Jackson and Millet. *Gospels*, 5.241.

⁹ Welch, *Sermon at the Temple*, 47.

¹⁰ The definition of “fulfill / pleroo” in Greek continues: 2c) to carry into effect, bring to realization, realize; of matters of duty: to perform, execute; of sayings, promises, prophecies, to bring to pass, ratify, accomplish; to fulfil, i.e. to cause God’s will (as made known in the law) to be obeyed as it should be, and God’s promises (given through the prophets) to receive fulfillment.

¹¹ David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2002), 73–74.

¹² Kent Brown, *New Testament Commentary: Luke* (Provo, UT: BYU Studies Press, 2017), 339.

¹³ Joseph Smith, *History of the Church*, 2:312

¹⁴ From Clément’s writings around 200 AD.