



fruits



study guide

Week One – June 4

Sermon on the Mount Discourse #4—BE SALT AND LIGHT



READ: Matthew 5:13-16

SUMMARY: Christianity is essentially a social religion that's impossible to hide, seeking to either make it private or hide it is to destroy it. *"Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Fourth"* is the 19th sermon of the Wesleyan Standard Sermons. It's also the fourth of 13 sermons on the Sermon on the Mount. The fact that 13 of the 44 original Standard Sermons focused on the Sermon on the Mount gives an idea of the importance John Wesley placed on chapters five through seven of Matthew's Gospel. Wesley spends so much time on these three chapters of the Bible because he believed they provide essential teaching from Jesus on "the true way to life everlasting, the royal way which leads to the kingdom."

KEY QUOTE: *"'Ye' Christians are the light of the world,' with regard both to your tempers and actions. Your holiness makes you as conspicuous as the sun in the midst of heaven. As ye cannot go out of the world, so neither can ye stay in it without appearing to all mankind. Ye may not flee from men, and while ye are among them it is impossible to hide your lowliness and meekness and those other dispositions whereby ye aspire to be perfect, as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Love cannot be hid any more than light; and least of all when it shines forth in action, when ye exercise yourselves in the labour of love, in beneficence of every kind. As well may men think to hide a city as to hide a Christian: yea, as well may they conceal a city set upon a hill as a holy, zealous, active lover of God and man."* [11.2]

As we look at, consider, and get in touch with our scripture passage for this week, we'll be considering the points we heard covered in the sermon this week.

1) WE'RE CALLED TO ENGAGE THE WORLD AND STOP NAVEL GAZING

"Christianity is essentially a social religion, to turn it into a solitary religion is indeed to destroy it."

Christianity can't exist without living in association with others. While it's true we're called to times apart – to spend time alone with God – we likewise need to understand we need one another. All too often, if we're not careful, we can become "spiritual navel gazers" – looking out for our own spiritual needs while ignoring the call of God to be people who engage the world.

- What are some ways we become "spiritual navel gazers"?
- What are the dangers of doing so?

2) AUTHENTIC FAITH IS IMPOSSIBLE TO HIDE

"So long as true religion abides in our hearts it is impossible to conceal it, as well as absolutely contrary to the design of its great author... Your holiness makes you as conspicuous as the sun in the midst of heaven."

Jesus makes it quite clear our faith isn't something to be hidden but rather to be lived out and seen. It's not something we keep to ourselves, but rather it's to be shared with others – especially those who've never heard the gospel or have a relationship with Jesus.

- What makes authentic faith impossible to hide?

3) OVERCOME OBJECTIONS TO BEING SALT AND LIGHT

Too often we seek to go through the motions – to do all the right things – but as we do, we do it all with the wrong motives. If we're careful as we do, we come to believe God owes us. The problem here is we're confusing the means for the end, supposing that doing outward works was the religion of Jesus or is acceptable. We need to understand actions without a yielded heart won't save our soul. While being salt and light in the world may not be easy, it's what we're called to be!

- What does it mean to you to be salt and light?
- Do you think we understand the significance of being salt and light in the world?

4) LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE

"Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

We're called to let this be our one goal or purpose in all things – to let our faith be visible so "all who see our good works may 'glorify God our Father which is in heaven.'"

RESPOND:

- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you?
- What next steps do you need to take?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?

Week Two – June 11

Sermon on the Mount Discourse #5—THE MORAL LAW STILL APPLIES



READ: Matthew 5:17-20

SUMMARY: Jesus didn't come to abolish the moral law, but law and gospel "agree perfectly well together." *"Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Fifth"* is the 20th sermon of the Wesleyan Standard Sermons. It's also the fifth of 13 sermons on the Sermon on the Mount. With 13 of the 44 original Standard Sermons focusing on the Sermon on the Mount, we have an idea of the importance John Wesley placed on chapters 5 through 7 of Matthew's Gospel. Wesley spends so much time on these three chapters of the Bible because he believed they provide essential teaching from Jesus on "the true way to life everlasting, the royal way which leads to the kingdom."

KEY QUOTE: *"There is therefore the closest connection that can be conceived between the law and the gospel. On the one hand the law continually makes way for and points us to the gospel; on the other the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbor, to be meek, humble, or holy. We feel that we are not sufficient for these things, yea, that 'with man this is impossible.' But we see a promise of God to give us that love, and to make us humble, meek, and holy. We lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings: it is done unto us according to our faith, and 'the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us' through faith which is in Christ Jesus.*

"We may yet farther observe that every command in Holy Writ is only a covered promise. For by that solemn declaration, 'This is the covenant I will make after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws in your minds, and write them in your hearts,' God hath engaged to give whatsoever he commands. Does he command us then to 'pray without ceasing'? To 'rejoice evermore'? To be 'holy as he is holy'? It is enough. He will work in us this very thing. It shall be unto us according to his word." [11.3]

As we look at, consider, and get in touch with our scripture passage for this week, we'll be considering the points we heard covered in the sermon this week.

1) JESUS FULFILLED THE LAW

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."

While Jesus did "destroy" the system of temple sacrifices—by being the one time for all perfect sacrifice—He didn't destroy the fabric of the "moral law" contained in the Ten Commandments and expanded upon in the Old Testament. We know Jesus came to establish the moral law in its fullness and to make obedience to God's moral law possible by grace through faith.

- What does the statement "We know that Jesus came to establish the moral law in its fullness and to make obedience to God's moral law possible by grace through faith" mean to you?

2) THE MORAL LAW STANDS

“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.”

Wesley engages the Greek language to explain the meaning of verse 18: not one commandment in the moral law will be nullified. We need to understand there’s no contradiction between the law and the Gospel. One isn’t greater than the other—they’re supplementary and complimentary. The law prepares us for and points us to the Gospel by making us aware of our sin. The Gospel leads us to fulfillment of the law by placing our faith in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus and receiving the indwelling of His Spirit.

- How do you see the gospel and the law going hand in hand?

3) OBEDIENCE IS NECESSARY AND POSSIBLE

“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.”

We need to understand those who despise preaching the moral law reject Jesus’ own teaching. God demands “entire obedience” to the moral law. It’s been said, “If we use propriety of speech there is no such thing as a little sin, every sin being a transgression of the holy and perfect law, and an affront of the great majesty of heaven.”

- Do you think we understand the meaning of total obedience to His moral law?
- What does it mean to you?
- Why is it so important?

4) HUMBLE HOLINESS NOT PIOUS RELIGION

“For verily 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.”

The scribes mentioned so often in the New Testament were “men who made divinity their profession.” They were a specific group of Jews who “were only distinguished from others by greater strictness of life, by more exactness of conversation.” Many scribes were Pharisees. They’re combined here “as the most eminent professors of religion.” The righteousness of a Pharisee consisted of three things (Luke 18:11-12): First, “I am not as other men are.” Second, “I fast twice in the week.” Third, “I give tithes of all that I possess.” Some Pharisees were hypocrites. But we shouldn’t assume that of all of them. Hypocrisy isn’t the defining mark of a Pharisee. The defining mark is they trusted in their own righteousness and despised others as unrighteousness.

- How easy is it to fall into the trap of hypocrisy when it comes to the living out of our faith?
- Do you think that we take the time to even consider whether it is present in our faith journey?

RESPOND:

- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you?
- What next steps do you need to take?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?

Week Three – June 18

Sermon on the Mount Discourse #8—LIVING GENEROUSLY



READ: Matthew 6:19-23

SUMMARY: Wesley gives an account of stewardship, gives a call for giving generously to the poor, and warns of the danger of riches for the one who fails to be a faithful steward. *“Upon Our Lord’s Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Eighth”* is the 23rd sermon of the Wesleyan Standard Sermons. It’s the eighth of 13 sermons on the Sermon on the Mount. This sermon focuses on works of piety, works of mercy, and The Lord’s Prayer. The fact that 13 of the 44 original Standard Sermons focused on the Sermon on the Mount gives an idea of the importance John Wesley placed on Matthew chapters 5 through 7. Wesley spends so much time on these three chapters of the Bible because he believed they provide essential teaching from Jesus on “the true way to life everlasting, the royal way which leads to the kingdom.”

KEY QUOTE: *“May not this be another reason why rich men shall so hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven? A vast majority of them are under a curse, under the peculiar curse of God; inasmuch as in the general tenor of their lives they are not only robbing God continually, embezzling and wasting their Lord’s goods, and by that very means corrupting their own souls; but also robbing the poor, the hungry, the naked, wronging the widow and the fatherless, and making themselves accountable for all the want, affliction, and distress which they may but do not remove. Yea, doth not the blood of all those who perish for want of what they either lay up or lay out needlessly, cry against them from the earth? O what account will they give to him who is ready to judge both the quick and the dead!”*

As we look at, consider, and get in touch with our scripture passage for this week, we’ll be considering the points we heard covered in the sermon this week.

1) WHAT CAPTURES OUR ATTENTION?

We tend to chase what we watch. Jesus makes it clear—if we keep our eyes fixed on Him, we develop a life of contentment as we walk in the light. If we allow our eyes to be fixed on the things of the world, then we walk in darkness. When we allow this to happen, it leads us to ungodliness and unrighteousness. We likewise find ourselves lacking peace in our lives.

- Why is it so important for us to assess what captures our attention?
- How easy is it to lose focus? What tends to cause it? What helps you to refocus when it happens to you?

2) HOARDING THE TREASURES OF THIS WORLD OFTEN INDICATES A BROKEN WANTER

Jesus wants us to understand those who lay up treasures for themselves on earth aren’t singularly fixed on God. They’re keeping score with the wrong scorecard. Jesus’ command here doesn’t forbid providing for necessities like food, shelter, and clothing for ourselves and our household. It also doesn’t forbid saving “what’s needful for the carrying on our worldly business so that we’re not in debt. It likewise doesn’t forbid us seeking to provide for our families in the event something might happen to us. But saving—hoarding—beyond this is forbidden by Jesus.

It's been said: "If you aim at 'laying up treasures on earth' you are not barely losing your time and spending your strength for that which is not bread... You have murdered your own soul."

- What does this quote mean to you?
- In what ways do you see our "wanters" being broken in our day and age?
- How would you share with someone the difference between laying up treasures in heaven versus laying up treasures here on earth?

3) VIEW WHAT YOU HAVE AS A STEWARD—NOT AN OWNER

Jesus' warning is to those who desire riches and deliberately seek to attain them. See the parable of the rich fool. We live in a day of unbridled greed and broken "wanters." We've forgotten to be content with having enough to meet our needs, and we get consumed with unrealistic wants. Jesus doesn't tell us we need to sell all that we have, but He does warn us we need to make sure our possessions don't own us.

- Do you think we understand all we have comes from God and we're only stewards?

4) CHECK YOUR STANDARD OF HAPPINESS

Jesus warns us where our treasure is, that's where our hearts will be. If we're not careful, we can fall into the trap of finding our happiness in things, possessions, money, and the like. We likewise can fall into the trap of placing our trust in these things as well, believing they're our security. We're called to check our standard of happiness and determine on what it depends.

- What would you say your happiness depends on?
- How do you determine your standard of happiness?

5) REMEMBER THE POOR

We're taught time and again in God's Word to remember the poor. This goes hand in hand with being a good and faithful steward of all God has entrusted to us.

- Do you think we understand the need to care for those who are less fortunate?
- Where/how has God called you to do so?

RESPOND:

- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you?
- What next steps do you need to take?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?

Week Four – June 25

Sermon on the Mount Discourse #10—DO NOT JUDGE



READ: Matthew 7:1-12

SUMMARY: Jesus warns against several of the main hindrances of Christianity (such as judging others and casting pearls before swine) and concludes with the Golden Rule. *"Upon Our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the Tenth"* is the 25th sermon of the Wesleyan Standard Sermons. It is also the tenth of 13 sermons on the Sermon on the Mount. The fact that 13 of the 44 original Standard Sermons focused on the Sermon on the Mount gives an idea of the importance John Wesley placed on Matthew 5-7. Wesley spends so much time on these three chapters of the Bible because he believed they provide essential teaching from Jesus on "the true way to life everlasting, the royal way which leads to the kingdom."

KEY QUOTE: *"This is the law and the prophets.' Whatsoever is written in that law which God of old revealed to mankind, and whatsoever precepts God has given by 'his holy prophets which have been since the world began', they are all summed up in these few words, they are all contained in this short direction. And this, rightly understood, comprises the whole of that religion which our Lord came to establish upon earth."* [23]

As we look at, consider, and get in touch with our scripture passage for this week, we'll be considering the points we heard covered in the sermon this week.

1) DO NOT JUDGE

One of the easiest traps we can fall into is judging another. It's been said caution is needed at every stage of the Christian life. Jesus raises the question of how is it we can see the speck in someone's eye and not see the plank in our own. While Jesus is making an exaggeration here, His point is clear: we need to look at our own lives and where we fall short before we go and look for the shortcomings in others.

- Why do you suppose it's so easy for us to pass judgment on another?
- What steps do you need to take to guard against doing so?

2) DON'T WASTE TIME ON A HARD HEART

It's been written: *"As God's people, we are privileged to handle the 'holy things' of the Lord. He has entrusted to us the precious truths of the Word of God, and we must regard them carefully. While it is true that we must carry the Gospel 'to every creature', it is also true that we must not cheapen the Gospel by a ministry that lacks discernment – ex: Jesus refused to talk to Herod, and Paul refused to argue 'with people who resisted the Word.'*

“The reason for judgment then, is not that we might condemn others, but that we might be able to minister to them. Notice that Jesus always dealt with individuals according to their needs and their spiritual condition. He did not have a memorized speech that He used with everybody. He discussed the new birth with Nicodemus, but He spoke of living water to the Samaritan woman. When the religious leaders tried to trap Him, He refused to answer their question. It is a wise Christian who first assesses the condition of a person’s heart before sharing the precious pearls.”

(The Bible Exposition Commentary. Copyright © 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing, and imprint of Cook Communication Ministries. All rights reserved. Used by permission.)

This by no means gives us an excuse for not sharing the Gospel with others, but it does call us to discern the timing, seek the Holy Spirit’s guidance, and to pray.

- Have you ever tried to share the Gospel with someone who was closed to hearing?
- How did you handle the situation?
- Why is discerning the timing and seeking the Holy Spirit’s guidance so important?

3) PRAY FOR GOD TO MOVE

It’s been written: “Why did our Lord discuss prayer at this point in His message? These verses seem to be an interruption, but they are not You and I are human and fallible; we make mistakes. Only God can judge perfectly. Therefore, we must pray and seek His wisdom and direction. ‘If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God.’

“Young King Solomon knew that he lacked the needed wisdom to judge Israel, so he prayed to God; and the Lord graciously answered. If we are to have spiritual discernment, we must keep on asking God, keep on seeking His will, keep on knocking at the door that leads to greater ministry. God meets the needs of His children.”

(The Bible Exposition Commentary. Copyright © 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing, and imprint of Cook Communication Ministries. All rights reserved. Used by permission.)

- Ultimately, it’s the Holy Spirit who opens the human heart and readies one to receive Him. What does that statement mean to you?
- Do you think we understand the importance of prayer and seeking God’s guidance and wisdom?

4) LOVE OTHERS AS JESUS WOULD

Jesus concludes this passage with what we know as the ‘Golden Rule.’ It’s been said that: *“This great truth is a principle that ought to govern our attitudes toward others. It only applies to believers, and it must be practiced in every area of life. The person who practices the Golden Rule refuses to say or do anything that would harm himself or others. If our judging of others is not governed by this principle, we will become proud and critical, and our own spiritual character will degenerate. Practicing the Golden Rule releases the love of God in our lives and enables us to help others, even those who want to hurt us.”*

(The Bible Exposition Commentary. Copyright © 1989 by Chariot Victor Publishing, and imprint of Cook Communication Ministries. All rights reserved. Used by permission.)

- Do you think we understand the importance of loving others as Jesus did and would?
- What makes it difficult?

RESPOND:

- What do you hear the Holy Spirit saying to you?
- What next steps do you need to take?
- Who do you need to tell?
- How can the group help?