

Hymns: 66 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus 67 Wonderful Words of Life
Scripture: Psalm 119:1-12; 19:7-14

Big Idea: Understand the teaching of Jesus

Is everybody awake? Whoever is asleep, raise your hand. It's important that you stay with me today. Otherwise, you could really get the wrong idea. Let's get started.

Matthew 5

[27] Ye have heard ... it ... said by them of old ...,

Thou shalt not commit adultery:

[28] But I say unto you,

*That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his **heart**.*

The **heart** (meaning the soul the inner part of man). That's where sin actually happens in the heart.

*[29] And **if** thy right eye offend thee,*

pluck it out,

and cast it from thee:

*for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and **not** that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

*[30] And **if** thy right hand offend thee,*

cut it off,

and cast it from thee:

*for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and **not** that thy whole body should be cast into hell.*

[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.

The scribes and Pharisees went to great lengths to appear like they followed the **letter** of the law. That wasn't good enough. The letter of the law is not good enough. We already said it. It's the **heart**. Jesus Christ taught and fulfilled the **spirit** of the law.

We're just getting warmed up here. Who said those words? If you have a red-letter edition of the Bible, the words are in **red**. The answer of course, is Jesus Christ.

You may recall, we're doing a study of dispensations in order to understand the Bible better. We just finished a six-sermon sub-series on John the Baptist. We saw what a key figure he was as he identified not only the Messiah, the bridegroom, (we're the bride) but also himself as a **friend** of the bridegroom.

Today we're moving on to Jesus Christ. This sub-series will focus on Jesus' teaching and His role in the Dispensation of Law as well as His role in the transition to our present dispensation.

The more I study the Bible, the more I'm struck with how modern-day Christians are utterly devoid of understanding of Jesus' teaching. This includes mainline churches, seminaries, and tragically even most fundamentalists.

As a young Christian, seeking God's truth, I was perplexed by the passage just read and many others. I finally threw up my hands and determined that I would stop trying to understand difficult aspects of Jesus' teaching and focus on other areas of the Bible that were clear – especially the writings of the Apostle Paul. That decision served me well over the years. After decades of study, I'm no longer perplexed by these difficult passages.

I've learned that we must **take great care** with Jesus' words if we are **ever** to understand them. Unfortunately, great care is not something we see much of from the pulpit these days. More likely is parroting the teaching of men. I assure you, you will not get that here. With that introduction, let's move deeper into this **chasm of confusion**.

Jesus was teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum (John 6:59) early in His ministry. He went up there first. Capernaum is on the north shore of the lake of Galilee about 30 miles from where He grew up in Nazareth. Betsy will actually be standing where Jesus taught in just a few weeks. Isn't that exciting?

Let's explore a little deeper into what was going on then at that location:

John 6

*[42] And they said, Is [] this [not] Jesus,
the son of Joseph,
whose father and mother we **know**?*

That verb form for the word *know* here is *present, indicative, active* meaning they know these people in the present. In other words, during Jesus early ministry around Galilee, His step-father, whom they just named, *Joseph* was alive.

Still in the same general location and time-frame we read this:

Matthew 12

[46] While he [that is, Jesus] ... talked to the people, ...

There was a crowd that surrounded Him as He taught in a building – likely a synagogue.

*[47] Then one said unto him,
Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand [outside],*

They were trying to get in through the crowd that thronged Him as He was teaching.

desiring to speak with thee.

[48] But he answered and said unto him ...,

Who is my mother?

and who are my brethren?

[49] And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said,

Behold my mother and my brethren!

*[50] For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven,
the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.*

That's some pretty strange and heavy stuff.

By the way, this incident was recorded in **all three** of the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). It must be pretty important. Jesus ignores His family and lowers their status to beneath that of His disciples. Why did He do that? Here's a clue:

Luke 9

[57] And it came to pass, that,

as they went in the way,

a certain man said unto him,

*Lord, I will **follow thee** [wherever] thou goest.*

[58] And Jesus said unto him,

Foxes have holes,

and birds of the air have nests;

but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.

In other words, be sure to consider the cost. You had better like sleeping under the stars and living with the wildlife. To follow me, you cannot be encumbered with stuff. We all have lots of stuff.

[59] And he said unto another,

Follow me.

But he said,

*Lord, suffer me first to go and **bury my father**.*

[60] Jesus said unto him,

Let the dead bury their dead:

but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.

There's that priority again – spiritual over physical.

[61] And another also said,

Lord, I will follow thee;

*but let me first go **bid them farewell**,*

which are at home at my house.

That sounds like a pretty reasonable request – to let loved ones know he's leaving and

say goodbye to them.

*[62] And Jesus said unto him,
No man,
having put his hand to the plough,
and looking back,
is fit for the kingdom of God.*

Jesus' family knew He had left home to execute the mandate of His **earthly ministry**. This is a key phrase: *earthly ministry*. We need to keep that in mind. He was resolute in that single mission: to minister to and then redeem fallen man. Anyone following Him must join Him. He had **no tolerance** for **anything** or **anyone** that would hinder Him in accomplishing this. He **demand**ed this level of commitment.

Of course, **what** He demanded from His followers, He demanded also from Himself. He practiced what He preached. He would not be distracted by family matters. Perhaps his stepfather, Joseph, had just passed away or was on his death bed when his mother came to Him that day. Remember the man talked about burying his father. While He loved His family, His mission superseded them.

I believe this is when Joseph died. That's why Jesus' mother and brothers traveled 30 miles to tell Him something. I believe Joseph had either just died or was on his deathbed.

While we're on the topic of Jesus' relationship to His family, here are two more incidents. First,

Luke 11

*[27] And it came to pass,
as he [that is, Jesus] spake these things,
a certain woman of the company lifted up her voice, and said unto him,
Blessed is the womb that bare thee,
and the [breasts at] which thou hast [nursed].*

Here's that family thing again – referring to His mother. How did He respond? He again changed the focus from the **physical** to the **spiritual**.

*[28] But he said,
Yea rather,
blessed are they that hear the word of God,
and keep it.*

This verse must be particularly troubling to those branches of Christianity that seek to elevate Mary. Fundamentalists often overreact in the opposite direction toward her. In any event, Jesus had no place for this kind of thing.

Then secondly, in John 7:5 we learn that even Jesus own brothers did not believe in Him. His own brothers who grew up with Him, did not believe Him. And what about His neighbors?

Matthew 13

[54] *And when he was come into **his own country**,
he taught them in their synagogue,
insomuch that they were **astonished**, and said,
[Where did] the **wisdom**,
and [...] **mighty works** [of this man come from]?
[55] *Is not this the **carpenter's son**?
is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, ...
[56] *And his sisters,
are they not all with us? ...***

He came from a blue-collar family. He didn't go to seminary. Where did he learn so much about the scriptures? He wasn't a priest or even a Levite. Where did He get this power to work miracles?

[57] *And they were **offended** [by] him.
But Jesus said unto them,
A prophet is not without honour, [except]
in his **own** country,
and in his **own** house.*

As we saw, His **brothers** didn't believe in Him and neither did his neighbors.

Now let's move on to another very familiar **difficult** passage:
(Just hang on a few more minutes. We're about to unravel this thing.)

Matthew 19

[16] *And, behold,
one came and said unto him,
Good Master, what **good thing shall I do**,
that **I** may have eternal life?
[17] *And he said unto him,
Why callest thou **me** good?**

Jesus was directing him to the way, but this went straight over this guy's head.

*there is **none** good but one,
that is, God:
but if thou wilt enter into life,
keep the commandments.*

Jesus just told him no one but God can live up to that standard.

[18] *He sai[d] unto him, Which?*

*Jesus said,
Thou shalt do no murder,
Thou shalt not commit adultery,
Thou shalt not steal,
Thou shalt not bear false witness,
[19] Honour thy father and thy mother:
and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.*

Note He omitted the first four commandments regarding loving God and he sort of omitted the tenth one. Here's the response of the clueless, overly confident, self-righteous young man.

*[20] ...
All these things have I kept from my youth up:
what lack I yet?*

Well aren't you good? Sorry pal, only Jesus could say that, but Jesus didn't challenge him.

*[21] Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt **be perfect**,*

... that's the standard. Recall, that Jesus had just told Him there's only one good.

*go and sell [w]hat thou hast,
and give to the poor,
and thou shalt have treasure in heaven:*

There's that **physical** vs. **spiritual** viewpoint again.

*and come
and follow me.*

*[22] ...when the young man heard **that** saying,
he went away sorrowful:
for he had **great** possessions.*

*[23] Then said Jesus unto his disciples,
Verily I say unto you,
That a rich man shall hardly enter into the **kingdom of heaven**.*

*[24] And again I say unto you,
It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle,
than for a rich man to enter into the **kingdom of God**.*

Note this side note. You may have noticed one verse up He said *kingdom of heaven* and the next verse *kingdom of God*. They're used interchangeably. That's they way I

view them also as I read the scriptures. Others try to make a distinction. That's okay too.

*[25] When his disciples heard it,
they were **exceedingly amazed**, saying,
Who then can be saved?*

Of course, we realize that compared to people of **that** day, we live **better** than kings. We are **very** rich – probably richer than that young man. Even by present-day standards we are far wealthier than the average person on this planet. Have we given up **all** of our riches? That's what Jesus told him to do. I haven't. Neither have you. What's the solution here? Are we **all doomed** and locked out of the kingdom of heaven because we have riches?

*[26] But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them,
With men this is impossible;
but with God **all things** are possible.*

Now here's another obscure answer from Jesus. What is He saying? Just to add a little more fuel to the fire, here's something else along that line:

Luke 14 Jesus said,

*[33] So likewise, whosoever ... forsaketh **not** all that he hath,
he cannot be my **disciple**.*

Okay, let's relax and take a breath. We're done with the hard part. We've have just dug a really deep hole. Now, we're going to begin climbing out of it.

Here goes. None of us can be perfect. Jesus said that. That was the standard the rich man was trying to meet – this self-righteous, young man. God in His grace provided a different way. His Son **was** perfect and imputes that perfection to those who believe in Him. Regarding that second verse that speaks of discipleship. Discipleship is **not** salvation. This is another huge area of confusion. We're not getting into that today.

What did Jesus say was the purpose was for His coming to earth as a man?

Mark 10

*[45] For even the Son of man came ...
to **minister**,
and to **give his life a ransom** for many.*

Luke 9

*[56] For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to **save** them.*

Luke 19

[10] For the Son of man is come

*to seek
and to **save** that which was lost.*

John 12

*[47] I came not to **judge** the world,
but to **save** the world.*

... and finally just as the angel of the Lord proclaimed even at His **birth**:

Luke 2

*[10] And the angel said unto them,
Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.
[11] For unto you
is born this day
in the city of David
a **Saviour**,
which is **Christ** the Lord.*

That's pretty clear. He came to provide the way for man to be reconciled to God. What's not so clear is that **ministering** aspect – specifically His **teaching**. Why is that? Here are eight reasons:

1. Heavenly/spiritual point of view – we saw that in the first passage He had disregard and almost disdain for body parts, the flesh as compared to the spiritual.
2. Singleness of heart – we saw that **with** His family and those people wanting to follow Him. He was resolute in His mission.
3. Intentionally taught so the people would **not** understand – you'll see that in a future message.
4. Parsed words. Watch out for **if!** Again, in that first passage the flesh was not the problem but instead it's the **heart of man** that's the problem. He said, **if** your eye offends thee, **if** your hand offends thee. It's not those things that are offending you. It's what's going on in here – directing those body parts. It's futile to cut those things off. There's nothing inherently wrong with them.
5. Used double-meanings
6. He frequently used metaphors. He especially liked "I am." – life, way, bread
7. Some of His statements had limited scope: context, context, context
8. He evaded questions by not answering directly. We saw an example of that today.
– frequently He answered questions with questions.

Next time, we will explore more examples associated with these points, but we need to bring today's message to a close.

Application

A month ago, Billy Graham passed away at age 99. Just last week we learned that Barbara Bush died at age 92. We also learned of a tragic, rare, aircraft failure that took the life of Jennifer Riordan at just the age 43. We do not know **when** we will pass on to eternity, but we **can** know the **way** to get there.

While Jesus was unclear about many things, He was **crystal clear** and **consistent** about this **one fact**. He did the difficult work. He paid the price, the ransom, for the debt of sin that we owe. We need simply to **believe**. Sadly, the same crowd that does not understand the difficult teachings of Jesus makes difficult the clear and simple teachings of Jesus as well. What a shame.

What is the way to heaven? That's the question the Thomas asked Jesus.

In John 14, we read:

[6] *Jesus saith unto him, **I am the way**, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.*

How does man come to the Father?

John 3

[15] *... whosoever **believeth in him** [shall] not perish, but have eternal life.*

John 11

[25] *Jesus said unto her [Martha, Lazarus' sister],*

I am

*the resurrection,
and the life:*

*he that **believeth in me**,
though he were **dead**,
yet shall he live:*

[26] *And whosoever liveth and **believeth in me** shall never die. ...*

If you believe in Him, you are not eternally lost. You will be with Him in heaven.

The Apostle John sums it up this way John 20. Why did he write the Gospel of John?

[31] *But these are written,
that ye might **believe** that Jesus is the Christ,
the Son of God;
and that **believing** ye might have life through his name.*

At age six, I believed in Him and was saved. I thank God that the message of the Gospel is
so simple,
so pure, and
so clear

that even a child can understand and be saved. Abraham believed God and it was counted to him for righteousness. I trust that each of you believe God and trust Him for your salvation as well.

Benediction

Now unto the King eternal,

*immortal,
invisible,
the only wise God,
be honour and glory
for ever and ever.
Amen. (I Timothy 1:17)*

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