

Seek Ye First



How would you describe the American Dream?

This is what it says in Wikipedia:

*The **American Dream** is a national **ethos** of the **United States**, the set of ideals (democracy, rights, liberty, opportunity and equality) in which freedom includes the opportunity for prosperity and success, as well as an upward **social mobility** for the family and children, achieved through hard work in a society with few barriers. In the definition of the American Dream by **James Truslow Adams** in 1931, "life should be better and richer and fuller for everyone, with opportunity for each according to ability or achievement" regardless of **social class** or circumstances of birth. (From Wikipedia, to read more, [click here](#).)*

For most of us here in America, it has shaped our Christianity. Even though we do not subscribe to the **Prosperity Gospel**, we tend to feel it is our right to live the American Dream.

We don't often articulate it this way but we generally believe that if we do everything right – follow the financial principles of Scripture, spend a bit of time with Jesus, act decent toward to others – our lives will get better and we will achieve financial independence.

Most of the time when we think about God blessing us, we see it in terms of the American Dream – as expressed in the **Declaration of Independence**:

Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness ([click here](#) to read more).

We feel blessed when we have a better life, greater freedom (especially financial freedom), and more happiness.

The Jewish Hope

The Jews of Jesus' day had a dream similar in many ways.

They dreamed of a day when God would send a conquering Messiah who would restore Israel to its former glory and beyond.

From the very rich to the extremely poor, they believed God was going to bless them with power and wealth. They were sure they would soon be able to kick out the Romans and become the dominant civilization. As God's people they would live elevated and extravagant lives making it obvious that their God was the top dog – of course they were especially looking forward to the elevated and extravagant part.

The Real Messiah

Into this expectation, Jesus was born. As He began His ministry, He knew what was expected of the Messiah. He knew He would disappoint many.

Early in Jesus' ministry,

- After performing a number of miracles – turning water to wine, healing numerous people of multiple diseases – including leprosy, and expelling evil spirits;
- After cleansing the Temple – causing the rulers to take notice of Him;
- After gathering a group that He kept close – including a tax collector;
- And after spending an entire night in prayer;

He called 12 of His followers to become His disciples; His inner circle of men who – minus one – would one day build the church. (See [Luke 6:12-19](#).)

On their way down from the mountain that morning they encountered a large crowd coming up the mountain looking for Jesus. He led them to a comfortable place, sat down, and began to teach them.

The discourse that follows is Jesus' most comprehensive presentation of the principles of God's Kingdom. We commonly refer to it as the *Sermon on the Mount*. Matthew's account is most complete (see [Matthew 5 – 7](#).), but we also find much of it in Luke (see [Luke 6:12-29](#), [Luke 11:1-13](#), [Luke 11:34-36](#), [Luke 12:22-34](#)).

While He never criticized or directly pointed out the error in the Jewish Hope of a conquering Messiah, Jesus clearly presented the truth. In this sermon we find Jesus' answer to the Jewish Hope of His day. In doing so, He also speaks to our American Dream.

Finances

At the heart of this passage, Jesus addresses finances. This might seem a bit odd. We tend to compartmentalize our lives into a spiritual part, a practical part, a family part, etc.

Jesus; however, sees us as a whole. To Him, everything is spiritual. And, what we do with our money demonstrates more clearly than anything else what our priorities are.

Reading from Matthew 6:19:

“Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.” ([Matthew 6:19-21](#), NLT)

This makes sense doesn't it? If you spend a lot of money on a car, it becomes special to you. If you love a hobby, you tend to put your "extra" money into that. Maybe you have a special collection of some sort. Perhaps you're focused on your 401k, to make sure you are prepared to retire comfortably.

Whatever you sink our money into, especially money you get that is not earmarked for basic needs, is generally what you value most.

So, how do we store up treasures in Heaven?

In Luke's account, Jesus says this:

"Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven ..."
(Luke 12:33-34, NLT)

Ouch! This is pretty straightforward – and a bit awkward. I can't remember the last time I sold anything in order to help someone in need. But Jesus' statement is pretty clear. He values people more than anything else and He wants us to adopt His values.

In Jesus' world, taking care of people in need is way more important than accumulating things.

Reading on in Matthew:

"Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!"
(Matthew 6:22-23, NLT)

This word picture seems strange to us. But, to the Jews of Jesus' time it was crystal clear. A person who was generous in caring for others was said to have a good, or healthy, eye. And, to have an unhealthy, or bad eye was to be selfish and stingy – having an eye just for yourself and your desires.

This is about how we relate to others. Are people more important to you than things? Or do you feel that if those in need would just get their act together, they would be fine?

Reading on:

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money."
(Matthew 6:24, NLT)

You cannot be completely devoted to more than one thing at a time. You can't serve God while being focused on money and what it can bring you. One or the other will reign supreme. One will overshadow and minimize the other.

The Instructions

Then Jesus gets to the main point by answering two unspoken questions:

1. What are you looking for?
2. Who do you trust?

“That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life – whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn’t life more than food, and your body more than clothing? Look at the birds. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father feeds them. And aren’t you far more valuable to him than they are? Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?”

“And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?”

“So don’t worry about these things, saying, ‘What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?’ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” (Matthew 6:25-33, NLT)

The main point of Jesus’ sermon is this:

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” (Matthew 6:33, NLT)

He says everyone is looking for security. Those that don’t know God look for security in their things. They want to be sure they have enough stuff to see themselves through whatever may come their way. They are trusting themselves .

But, He says, as believers we should not trust in things, must trust in God. He is the only place where you can find true security. If He takes pays this much attention to the birds and the wildflowers, Jesus says, He can be trusted to take care of you.

He is telling you to trust the Father enough to make knowing and following Him your number one priority. And, He promises to take care of your needs.

Is this easy? No; but it is straightforward and simple. There is nothing complicated here. Yet, it feels like the hardest thing in the world to do. In our culture of pandering to ourselves, this feels as foreign as living in the jungles of the Amazon.

Jesus is not asking you to just spend a little time with Him each day. He is not asking you to fit Him into your busy life. He is telling you that your life needs to revolve around Him! Everything else needs to fit around our relationship with God!

He is asking you to put all your resources (energy, time, money) into His hands to be used as He sees fit. He is asking you to trust Him with every aspect of your life – and He promises to take care of you.

The Cost

But, wait, you may be thinking. Didn't Jesus also say we need to count the cost? Doesn't this mean we need to carefully plan for our future? Aren't we supposed to be responsible.

It's true, He did say we need to count the cost. But, when we examine that passage we find things even more difficult. He said:

“If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else – your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.

“But don't begin until you count the cost ...” (Luke 14:26-28, NLT)

He then gives the example of building something and points out it would be ridiculous to build something without seeing if you can afford it. People would ridicule such a person.

He then uses the example of a King considering going to war. If he doesn't consider the costs carefully, he will end up with a humiliating defeat. He then concludes with this statement:

“... So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.” (Luke 14:33, NLT)

This passage is about counting the cost of following Him – not about planning ahead. He is saying it will cost you and me everything. We must put all that we are and all that we have at His disposal to use as He sees fit.

You and I must stop trying to be in control of our lives! You must give God complete control. Jesus says you are either all in, or you're not in at all.

These are Jesus' words, not mine.

This is what I struggle with the most in my life. Do I retain control or do I let it go to God?

I like being in control, yet I know it doesn't often work out very well. And I have to confess, preparing this sermon has been tough. God keeps asking me: “What about you?”

The Invitation

But, here's the thing: It's easy to forget that the Father, and our Brother, Jesus, loves us more than we will ever understand.

Jesus left His home of perfect order and peace, where He was worshiped, to come and live on this earth like we have to live.

He lived His life in harmony with His teaching. He embraced the role of a servant and willingly took the natural consequences of my sin upon Himself, so I would be freed from the penalty of my sin.

His life and death provides you and me with the opportunity to live with Him and the Father for eternity and to enjoy the peace and joy of a place free from the presence and heartache of sin.

Jesus made this invitation:

"Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls." (Matthew 11:28-29, NLT)

As I read this passage and examine the context, I find no conditions to meet. I don't have to be clean. I don't need to bring any of my own righteousness – which is not worth much anyway. I don't have to change or give up anything. I don't even have to be sorry for my sins or want to change. He just asks me – and you – to come to Him and stay with Him.

Perhaps this is the most important point of all. Jesus' words feel like an impossible command to me; but every command is also a promise to make it happen. He is describing what we will grow into if we stay with Him.

Perhaps His intent is for you and I to look at this and understand how far away we are; and, to realize how helpless we are to get there. And then, come to Him and let Him make it happen!

This passage in Romans applies here:

For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law ... We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ ...

For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God's glorious standard. Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. (Romans 3:20-24, NLT)

When Jesus says:

Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.” (Matthew 6:33, NLT)

He is setting you up for this invitation.

“Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls.” (Matthew 11:28-29, NLT)

He is saying to you and me today:

Just come to me with all your dirt, all your hang-ups, your anger and frustration, and your doubts. Stay with me and learn to trust me – I’ll take it from there!

Notes

Text you find in [this color](#) is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing [BibleGateway.com](#). In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

Scripture References

Psalm 37:1-7 (NLT): Don't worry about the wicked or envy those who do wrong. ² For like grass, they soon fade away. Like spring flowers, they soon wither.

³ Trust in the LORD and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. ⁴ Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you your heart's desires.

⁵ Commit everything you do to the LORD. Trust him, and he will help you. ⁶ He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun.

⁷ Be still in the presence of the LORD, and wait patiently for him to act. Don't worry about evil people who prosper or fret about their wicked schemes. (**Psalm 37:1-7, NLT**)

Psalm 147:7-11 (NIV): Sing to the LORD with grateful praise; make music to our God on the harp.

⁸ He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills.

⁹ He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.

¹⁰ His pleasure is not in the strength of the horse, nor his delight in the legs of the warrior; ¹¹ the LORD delights in those who fear him, who put their hope in his unfailing love.

(**Psalm 147:7-11, NIV**)

Matthew 5 – 7 (NLT): One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, ² and he began to teach them.

The Beatitudes

³ "God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

⁴ God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵ God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

⁶ God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

⁷ God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

⁹ God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

¹⁰ God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

¹¹ "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. ¹² Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.

Teaching about Salt and Light

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world – like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

Teaching about the Law

¹⁷ “Don’t misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to accomplish their purpose. ¹⁸ I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not even the smallest detail of God’s law will disappear until its purpose is achieved. ¹⁹ So if you ignore the least commandment and teach others to do the same, you will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But anyone who obeys God’s laws and teaches them will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

²⁰ “But I warn you – unless your righteousness is better than the righteousness of the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees, you will never enter the Kingdom of Heaven!

Teaching about Anger

²¹ “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ (Exodus 20:13) ²² But I say, if you are even angry with someone, you are subject to judgment! If you call someone an idiot, you are in danger of being brought before the court. And if you curse someone, you are in danger of the fires of hell.

²³ “So if you are presenting a sacrifice at the altar in the Temple and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, ²⁴ leave your sacrifice there at the altar. Go and be reconciled to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.

²⁵ “When you are on the way to court with your adversary, settle your differences quickly. Otherwise, your accuser may hand you over to the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶ And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.

Teaching about Adultery

²⁷ “You have heard the commandment that says, ‘You must not commit adultery.’ (Exodus 20:14)

²⁸ But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ So if your eye – even your good eye – causes you to lust, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your hand – even your stronger hand – causes you to sin, cut it off and

throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Teaching about Divorce

³¹ “You have heard the law that says, ‘A man can divorce his wife by merely giving her a written notice of divorce.’ (Deuteronomy 24:1) ³² But I say that a man who divorces his wife, unless she has been unfaithful, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman also commits adultery.

Teaching about Vows

³³ “You have also heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not break your vows; you must carry out the vows you make to the LORD.’ (Numbers 30:2) ³⁴ But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. ³⁵ And do not say, ‘By the earth!’ because the earth is his footstool. And do not say, ‘By Jerusalem!’ for Jerusalem is the city of the great King. ³⁶ Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. ³⁷ Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.

Teaching about Revenge

³⁸ “You have heard the law that says the punishment must match the injury: ‘An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.’ (Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, Deuteronomy 19:21) ³⁹ But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. ⁴¹ If a soldier demands that you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. ⁴² Give to those who ask, and don’t turn away from those who want to borrow.

Teaching about Love for Enemies

⁴³ “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ (Leviticus 19:18) and hate your enemy. ⁴⁴ But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! ⁴⁵ In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. ⁴⁶ If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. ⁴⁷ If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. ⁴⁸ But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Teaching about Giving to the Needy

6 “Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. ² When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do – blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. ³ But when you

give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. ⁴ Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

⁵ "When you pray, don't be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. ⁶ But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

⁷ "When you pray, don't babble on and on as the Gentiles do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. ⁸ Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! ⁹ Pray like this:

Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. ¹⁰ May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. ¹¹ Give us today the food we need, ¹² and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. ¹³ And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.

¹⁴ "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. ¹⁵ But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

¹⁶ "And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. ¹⁷ But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. ¹⁸ Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.

Teaching about Money and Possessions

¹⁹ "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be.

²² "Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. ²³ But when your eye is unhealthy, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is!

²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money.

²⁵ "That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life – whether you have enough food and drink, or enough clothes to wear. Isn't life more than food, and your body more than clothing?

²⁶ Look at the birds. They don't plant or harvest or store food in barns, for your heavenly Father

feeds them. And aren't you far more valuable to him than they are?²⁷ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

²⁸ "And why worry about your clothing? Look at the lilies of the field and how they grow. They don't work or make their clothing,²⁹ yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ³⁰ And if God cares so wonderfully for wildflowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

³¹ "So don't worry about these things, saying, 'What will we eat? What will we drink? What will we wear?' ³² These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers, but your heavenly Father already knows all your needs. ³³ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need.

³⁴ "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Do Not Judge Others

7 "Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. ² For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

³ "And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own? ⁴ How can you think of saying to your friend, 'Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,' when you can't see past the log in your own eye? ⁵ Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

⁶ "Don't waste what is holy on people who are unholy. Don't throw your pearls to pigs! They will trample the pearls, then turn and attack you.

Effective Prayer & the Golden Rule

⁷ "Keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

⁹ "You parents – if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? ¹⁰ Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! ¹¹ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good gifts to those who ask him.

¹² "Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

The Narrow Gate

¹³ “You can enter God’s Kingdom only through the narrow gate. The highway to hell is broad, and its gate is wide for the many who choose that way. ¹⁴ But the gateway to life is very narrow and the road is difficult, and only a few ever find it.

The Tree and Its Fruit

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves. ¹⁶ You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. ¹⁹ So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

True Disciples

²¹ “Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. ²² On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ ²³ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

Building on a Solid Foundation

²⁴ “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. ²⁵ Though the rain comes in torrents and the floodwaters rise and the winds beat against that house, it won’t collapse because it is built on bedrock. ²⁶ But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. ²⁷ When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

²⁸ When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, ²⁹ for he taught with real authority – quite unlike their teachers of religious law. (**Matthew 5 – 7**, NLT)

Matthew 10:28-31 (NLT): “Don’t be afraid of those who want to kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ What is the price of two sparrows – one copper coin? But not a single sparrow can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. ³⁰ And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. ³¹ So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to God than a whole flock of sparrows.” (**Matthew 10:28-31**, NLT)

Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT): Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (**Matthew 11:28-30**, NLT)

Matthew 19:28-30 (NLT): Jesus replied, “I assure you that when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits upon his glorious throne, you who have been my followers will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹ And everyone who has given up houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or property, for my sake, will receive a hundred times as much in return and will inherit eternal life. ³⁰ But many who are the greatest now will be least important then, and those who seem least important now will be the greatest then.
(Matthew 19:28-30, NLT)

Luke 6:12-29 (NLT): One day soon afterward Jesus went up on a mountain to pray, and he prayed to God all night. ¹³ At daybreak he called together all of his disciples and chose twelve of them to be apostles. Here are their names:

¹⁴ Simon (whom he named Peter), Andrew (Peter’s brother), James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, ¹⁵ Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alphaeus), Simon (who was called the zealot), ¹⁶ Judas (son of James), Judas Iscariot (who later betrayed him).

Crowds Follow Jesus

¹⁷ When they came down from the mountain, the disciples stood with Jesus on a large, level area, surrounded by many of his followers and by the crowds. There were people from all over Judea and from Jerusalem and from as far north as the seacoasts of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸ They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those troubled by evil^[a] spirits were healed. ¹⁹ Everyone tried to touch him, because healing power went out from him, and he healed everyone.

The Beatitudes

²⁰ Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said,

“God blesses you who are poor, for the Kingdom of God is yours.

²¹ God blesses you who are hungry now, for you will be satisfied.

God blesses you who weep now, for in due time you will laugh.

²² What blessings await you when people hate you and exclude you and mock you and curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. ²³ When that happens, be happy! Yes, leap for joy! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, their ancestors treated the ancient prophets that same way.

Sorrows Foretold

²⁴ “What sorrow awaits you who are rich, for you have your only happiness now.

²⁵ What sorrow awaits you who are fat and prosperous now, for a time of awful hunger awaits you.

What sorrow awaits you who laugh now, for your laughing will turn to mourning and sorrow.

²⁶ *What sorrow awaits you who are praised by the crowds, for their ancestors also praised false prophets.*

Love for Enemies

²⁷ *“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. ²⁸ Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. ³⁰ Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don’t try to get them back. ³¹ Do to others as you would like them to do to you.*

³² *“If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! ³³ And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! ³⁴ And if you lend money only to those who can repay you, why should you get credit? Even sinners will lend to other sinners for a full return.*

³⁵ *“Love your enemies! Do good to them. Lend to them without expecting to be repaid. Then your reward from heaven will be very great, and you will truly be acting as children of the Most High, for he is kind to those who are unthankful and wicked. ³⁶ You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.*

Do Not Judge Others

³⁷ *“Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. ³⁸ Give, and you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full – pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, running over, and poured into your lap. The amount you give will determine the amount you get back.”*

³⁹ *Then Jesus gave the following illustration: “Can one blind person lead another? Won’t they both fall into a ditch? ⁴⁰ Students are not greater than their teacher. But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher.*

⁴¹ *“And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? ⁴² How can you think of saying, ‘Friend, let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log in your own eye; then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.*

The Tree and Its Fruit

⁴³ *“A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. ⁴⁴ A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thornbushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. ⁴⁵ A good person produces good things from the treasury of a good heart, and an evil person produces evil things from the treasury of an evil heart. What you say flows from what is in your heart.*

Building on a Solid Foundation

⁴⁶ “So why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say? ⁴⁷ I will show you what it’s like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, and then follows it. ⁴⁸ It is like a person building a house who digs deep and lays the foundation on solid rock. When the floodwaters rise and break against that house, it stands firm because it is well built. ⁴⁹ But anyone who hears and doesn’t obey is like a person who builds a house right on the ground, without a foundation. When the floods sweep down against that house, it will collapse into a heap of ruins.” (Luke 6:12-29, NLT)

Luke 11:1-13 (NLT): Once Jesus was in a certain place praying. As he finished, one of his disciples came to him and said, “Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.”

² Jesus said, “This is how you should pray:

“Father, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. ³ Give us each day the food we need, ⁴ and forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation.”

⁵ Then, teaching them more about prayer, he used this story: “Suppose you went to a friend’s house at midnight, wanting to borrow three loaves of bread. You say to him, ⁶ ‘A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.’ ⁷ And suppose he calls out from his bedroom, ‘Don’t bother me. The door is locked for the night, and my family and I are all in bed. I can’t help you.’ ⁸ But I tell you this – though he won’t do it for friendship’s sake, if you keep knocking long enough, he will get up and give you whatever you need because of your shameless persistence.

⁹ “And so I tell you, keep on asking, and you will receive what you ask for. Keep on seeking, and you will find. Keep on knocking, and the door will be opened to you. ¹⁰ For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

¹¹ “You fathers – if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? ¹² Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! ¹³ So if you sinful people know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him.” (Luke 11:1-13, NLT)

Luke 11:34-36 (NLT): “No one lights a lamp and then hides it or puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where its light can be seen by all who enter the house.

³⁴ “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. But when it is unhealthy, your body is filled with darkness. ³⁵ Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness. ³⁶ If you are filled with light, with no dark corners, then your whole life will be radiant, as though a floodlight were filling you with light.” (Luke 11:34-36, NLT)

Luke 12:22-34 (NLT): Then, turning to his disciples, Jesus said, “That is why I tell you not to worry about everyday life – whether you have enough food to eat or enough clothes to wear. ²³ For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing. ²⁴ Look at the ravens. They don’t plant or harvest or store food in barns, for God feeds them. And you are far more valuable to him than any birds! ²⁵ Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? ²⁶ And if worry can’t accomplish a little thing like that, what’s the use of worrying over bigger things?

²⁷ “Look at the lilies and how they grow. They don’t work or make their clothing, yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. ²⁸ And if God cares so wonderfully for flowers that are here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, he will certainly care for you. Why do you have so little faith?

²⁹ “And don’t be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don’t worry about such things.

³⁰ These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already knows your needs. ³¹ Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.

³² “So don’t be afraid, little flock. For it gives your Father great happiness to give you the Kingdom.

³³ “Sell your possessions and give to those in need. This will store up treasure for you in heaven! And the purses of heaven never get old or develop holes. Your treasure will be safe; no thief can steal it and no moth can destroy it. ³⁴ Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. (Luke 12:22-34, NLT)

Luke 12:57-59 (NLT): “Why can’t you decide for yourselves what is right? ⁵⁸ When you are on the way to court with your accuser, try to settle the matter before you get there. Otherwise, your accuser may drag you before the judge, who will hand you over to an officer, who will throw you into prison. ⁵⁹ And if that happens, you won’t be free again until you have paid the very last penny.” (Luke 12:57-59, NLT)

Luke 14:25-35 (NLT): A large crowd was following Jesus. He turned around and said to them, ²⁶ “If you want to be my disciple, you must, by comparison, hate everyone else – your father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters – yes, even your own life. Otherwise, you cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ And if you do not carry your own cross and follow me, you cannot be my disciple.

²⁸ “But don’t begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first calculating the cost to see if there is enough money to finish it? ²⁹ Otherwise, you might complete only the foundation before running out of money, and then everyone would laugh at you. ³⁰ They would say, ‘There’s the person who started that building and couldn’t afford to finish it!’

³¹ “Or what king would go to war against another king without first sitting down with his counselors to discuss whether his army of 10,000 could defeat the 20,000 soldiers marching against him? ³² And if he can’t, he will send a delegation to discuss terms of peace while the

enemy is still far away. ³³ So you cannot become my disciple without giving up everything you own.

³⁴ “Salt is good for seasoning. But if it loses its flavor, how do you make it salty again?”

³⁵ Flavorless salt is good neither for the soil nor for the manure pile. It is thrown away. Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand!” (Luke 14:25-35, NLT)

John 6:28-29 (NLT): They replied, “We want to perform God’s works, too. What should we do?”

Jesus told them, “This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent.” (John 6:28-29, NLT)

John 16:2-5, 33 (NLT): “... the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. This is because they have never known the Father or me. Yes, I’m telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning ... Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” (John 16:2-5, 33, NLT)

Romans 3:20-35 (NLT): For no one can ever be made right with God by doing what the law commands. The law simply shows us how sinful we are.

²¹ But now God has shown us a way to be made right with him without keeping the requirements of the law, as was promised in the writings of Moses and the prophets long ago. ²² We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are.

²³ For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard. ²⁴ Yet God, in his grace, freely makes us right in his sight. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins. ²⁵ For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood. This sacrifice shows that God was being fair when he held back and did not punish those who sinned in times past, ²⁶ for he was looking ahead and including them in what he would do in this present time. God did this to demonstrate his righteousness, for he himself is fair and just, and he makes sinners right in his sight when they believe in Jesus.

²⁷ Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith. ²⁸ So we are made right with God through faith and not by obeying the law.

²⁹ After all, is God the God of the Jews only? Isn’t he also the God of the Gentiles? Of course he is.

³⁰ There is only one God, and he makes people right with himself only by faith, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. ³¹ Well then, if we emphasize faith, does this mean that we can forget about the law? Of course not! In fact, only when we have faith do we truly fulfill the law.

(Romans 3:20-31, NLT)

Romans 6:19-23 (NLT): *Because of the weakness of your human nature, I am using the illustration of slavery to help you understand all this. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must give yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.*

²⁰ *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right. ²¹ And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom.*

²² *But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:19-23, NLT)*

Romans 12:1-2 (NLT): *And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all he has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will find acceptable. This is truly the way to worship him. ² Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. (Romans 12:1-2, NLT)*

Philippians 4:4-7 (NLT): *Always be full of joy in the Lord. I say it again – rejoice! ⁵ Let everyone see that you are considerate in all you do. Remember, the Lord is coming soon.*

⁶ *Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. ⁷ Then you will experience God's peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*

(Philippians 4:4-7, NLT)

Philippians 4:4-7 (the Message): *Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean, revel in him! Make it as clear as you can to all you meet that you're on their side, working with them and not against them. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!*

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life. (Philippians 4:4-7, the Message)

E.G. White Resources

To get some additional insights into the Sermon on the Mount, you may find the book *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings* helpful, as well as the *Desire of Ages, Chapter 31*.