

# Blessed

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Last week we began a new sermon series based on Matthew 5 – 7 – what we commonly the *Sermon on the Mount*.

This statement, found in the bestselling daily worship book, *My Utmost for His Highest*, provides an insight that helps us understand the big picture of this passage:

*The Sermon on the Mount is not a set of rules and regulations – It is a picture of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is having His unhindered way with us.*

**(My Utmost for His Highest, July 25)**

This passage paints perhaps the clearest picture of what a life connected and committed to Jesus looks like. And in this description, Jesus points most often at actions that demonstrate where we are headed.

But, you may be thinking: “Aren’t we saved by believing in Jesus and not by our actions?”

And you are 100% correct! But; the fact is, if we really believe it, our actions will be impacted. They are the proof that we believe in Jesus and accept God’s authority in our lives. They are the evidence for everyone to see that God is at work in our lives.

As we discovered in our study of Romans, our actions, or our works are the result of God’s gift of grace. Our actions will never make us deserving our His Grace, nor will they save us.

So what should we do when we find our actions are not in accordance to Jesus’ words?

Do we try harder to make our lives look right?

No, that is a sure recipe of disaster. That’s where Satan would like you to focus because He knows you will fail there.

We need to come closer the Jesus. The closer we are to Him, the more our lives will take on His principles of action.

When Jesus was asked by the people what work they needed to do in order to be acceptable to God – they were focusing on their behavior, Jesus replied:

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

In other words, there wasn’t some new thing they had do, not some more work they were unaware of; they were to draw close to and trust Jesus.

The work is to focus on Jesus – all the time!

## The Beatitudes

Jesus began this sermon with a passage we call the Beatitudes. They sound very spiritual. They read beautifully and seem pleasant and reassuring; except the last verses dealing with persecution.

What we don't often realize; however, is that these verses describe the life cycle of a Christian. They describe the thoughts and actions of a person who is growing closer to Jesus. They show the progression of our focus changing from just trying to please ourselves to living in a way that honors God.

With this in mind, let's read them through. Then we'll briefly examine each one.

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.*

*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

*"Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth.*

*"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

*"Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

*"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

*"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.*

*"Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:3-12, CSB)*

## Blessed Are ...

Blessed is an interesting word. As we discussed last week, here in America, we often equate being blessed in terms of the American Dream ([click here](#) to read that sermon). We feel most blessed when we gain a better life, greater freedom (especially financial freedom), deeper comfort, and more happiness. And these are certainly things that should make us thankful; but God's blessings are much broader than that. They even may seem unpleasant to us at the moment.

The word that is translated "blessed" in this passage can also mean well-off, fortunate, and happier. Let's keep this in mind as we briefly look at each of these statements.

Beginning at [Matthew 5:3](#):

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs." (Matthew 5:3, CSB)*

You are well-off, fortunate, and should be happier when you're poor in spirit – recognizing your true condition of sinfulness and helplessness to do anything about it apart from God.

It's only when you understand the best you have to offer is worth a pile of dirty rags (see [Isaiah 64:6-7](#)) and that your best efforts are useless that you will turn to God and learn to depend on Him (see [Romans 3:9-31](#)). It is only as you turn to God that you have any chance of salvation.

While discovering our true condition is not especially pleasant, it is the only path to salvation and will take us to a better place where we will be well-off, fortunate, and much happier!

Reading on:

*"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted."* ([Matthew 5:4](#), CSB)

This statement almost feels like an oxymoron – a complete contradiction of feelings. It sure doesn't feel like you are well-off, fortunate, and happier when you're mourning. It feels like Jesus is saying you're happier when you're sad.

While the comfort of Jesus in every sad situation is a blessing, this is referring more specifically to feeling bad due to our sinful condition – being sad because our sin has caused others, and especially Jesus, so much pain.

There is real comfort in knowing you are forgiven. When you have really blown it, yet feel the loving forgiveness of the person you hurt, you know you are well-off, fortunate, and much happier.

Your Christian walk really takes off when you recognize your sinfulness and come to Jesus for forgiveness and cleansing.

Next, Jesus said:

*"Blessed are the humble, for they will inherit the earth."* ([Matthew 5:5](#), CSB)

You're well-off, fortunate and happier when you're humble because this means you have a right standing with God.

You can only be humble as you recognize your true condition of sinfulness and experience God's forgiveness and cleansing – which means you stand before God as if you had never sinned.

This means you do not have an exalted view of yourself – you see yourself as you really are. But, you also understand and rest in the fact that God loves you and accepts you anyway – just as you are. Your salvation cost God the death of His Son, so you are extremely valuable to Him.

You also start seeing other people through the eyes of God's love. You begin to understand and accept that every person is worth the death of God's Son. You adopt His values and see people as more important than things or ideologies.

Jesus went on:

*“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”*  
([Matthew 5:6](#), CSB)

You are well-off, fortunate, and happier as you long for your life to be more in harmony with Jesus. The new attitudes and desires He has given you are being translated into a new way of living.

Righteousness is most literally translated as “right living” – not “right feeling”. Your connection with Jesus is bringing you beyond just wanting to do better; it’s making real changes in the way you live your life. This is where other’s begin seeing the reality of your relationship with Jesus. This is the proof that your relationship with Him is real.

Then, Jesus said:

*“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”* ([Matthew 5:7](#), CSB)

You are well-off, fortunate, and happier as you become more interested in showing mercy than in administering justice. You understand the mercy you have been shown, and because of your thankfulness, you seek to extend that same mercy to others.

Punishing those who break the law is no longer the dominate thought. You become more concerned about bringing people to redemption than making them pay for their mistakes.

You are becoming more and more like Jesus. Which is the next point Jesus makes:

*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.”* ([Matthew 5:8](#), CSB)

You are well-off, fortunate, and happier when your heart is pure. You will know that Jesus is at work in you because the purity is a result of His love and power, not your own efforts. You will be at peace with God and trust Him with child-like faith.

He then said:

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.”* ([Matthew 5:9](#), CSB)

You are well-off, fortunate, and happier when you are working towards peace rather than stirring up trouble. Settling arguments and finding peaceful solutions to major conflicts are important and valuable, but are rarely effective long-term.

The most effective peacemakers are those who are helping others find peace with God. This is one of the greatest needs of our time, and will can all be a part of this. In fact, this is something we will be doing as we draw closer to Jesus.

When you have found peace with God, you live with a joy and security unavailable in any other way. When you are at work helping others find this peace, you are fulfilling your role as a follower of Jesus.

And finally, Jesus said:

*“Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs. “You are blessed when they insult you and persecute you and falsely say every kind of evil against you because of me. Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven. For that is how they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:10-12, CSB)*

You are well-off, fortunate, and happier when you are persecuted ... This certainly doesn't seem right. But, if you are given a hard time for living right and following Jesus, people are noticing and are being forced to think about their lives.

There will be many who do not like the contrast between Jesus' purity found in you and the evil found in them, so they will work against you. But, there will be others will come to Him as a result of the soul-searching your life in Jesus will produce in theirs.

More people come to God and make deep commitments to Him during times of hardship and persecution than any other time. God takes the hate and trouble Satan sends your way and turns it into a real blessing for many others.

## The Lifecycle

So here we have the lifecycle of Christian growth. It shows a general pattern that all Christians, who stay with Jesus, will see taking place in their lives.

Unlike life cycles we're generally familiar with, this one does not need to end in a downhill slide and death. This is the process Jesus walks through with us to prepare us to live with Him forever.

To quickly summarize this process:

1. **Poor in Spirit:** You understand your need and helplessness.
2. **Mourn:** You are sorry for the pain your sinfulness has caused, especially to Jesus.
3. **Meek/Humble:** You recognize that everybody is crazy important to God, including yourself.
4. **Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness:** You want your life to reflect God's goodness and grace.
5. **Merciful:** You look for ways to help people giving them the same breaks you like to get.
6. **Pure in Heart:** You are attracted to things that are good, beautiful, wholesome, and loving.
7. **Peacemakers:** You look for ways to help people come to God for the peace that is found only in Him.
8. **Persecuted:** You do not shy away from those who would make fun of you or hurt you because of your life in Jesus.

To say this summarizes the entire Christian life would not be correct. These are markers that you pass by as you grow in Jesus. The path you take through these markers are as unique as you are – they may not even be in the exact same order.

## Where are You?

I don't know where you are in this process. Do you know? Are you not really on this track yet? Are you just getting started? Do you find yourself somewhere near the middle?

Wherever you find yourself, the course of action is the same. Every part of this is driven by God's love and cleansing power. He is the one who makes all this happen in your life. This is not a result of your own effort and work. This only happens as you stay connected with Jesus.

Remember what Jesus said about your work:

*"This is the only work God wants from you: Believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:29, NLT)*

This brings us back around to a place we often come to – the invitation Jesus extends:

*"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)*

Jesus invites you to come to Him and to stay with Him. This is where your spiritual life begins and where it needs to live.

It doesn't matter where you are – or if you have even begun. There are no conditions, just come and stay. Just step into life with Him and walk with Him letting Him lead.

Loving you and teaching you, making something beautiful out of whatever mess your life may be in, is Jesus' specialty – it's where He shines – it's His favorite thing to do.

It's the only thing that will bring you through this world into the next one.

It's the only way to find peace and lasting joy.

And it all begins by coming to Him and letting Him do His work.

Don't miss out! Do it today!

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## 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.

## Previous Sermons in this Series

- July 20, 2019: [Seek Ye First \(The Sermon, Part 1\)](#)

## Scripture References

**Exodus 33:18-34 – 34:8 (NLT):** *Moses responded, “Then show me your glorious presence.”*

<sup>19</sup> *The LORD replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before you, and I will call out my name, Yahweh, before you. For I will show mercy to anyone I choose, and I will show compassion to anyone I choose.”* <sup>20</sup> *But you may not look directly at my face, for no one may see me and live.”*

<sup>21</sup> *The LORD continued, “Look, stand near me on this rock.”* <sup>22</sup> *As my glorious presence passes by, I will hide you in the crevice of the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by.* <sup>23</sup> *Then I will remove my hand and let you see me from behind. But my face will not be seen.”*

### A New Copy of the Covenant

**34** *Then the LORD told Moses, “Chisel out two stone tablets like the first ones. I will write on them the same words that were on the tablets you smashed.”* <sup>2</sup> *Be ready in the morning to climb up Mount Sinai and present yourself to me on the top of the mountain.* <sup>3</sup> *No one else may come with you. In fact, no one is to appear anywhere on the mountain. Do not even let the flocks or herds graze near the mountain.”*

<sup>4</sup> *So Moses chiseled out two tablets of stone like the first ones. Early in the morning he climbed Mount Sinai as the LORD had commanded him, and he carried the two stone tablets in his hands.*

<sup>5</sup> *Then the LORD came down in a cloud and stood there with him; and he called out his own name, Yahweh.* <sup>6</sup> *The LORD passed in front of Moses, calling out,*

*“Yahweh! The LORD! The God of compassion and mercy! I am slow to anger and filled with unfailing love and faithfulness.”* <sup>7</sup> *I lavish unfailing love to a thousand generations. I forgive iniquity, rebellion, and sin. But I do not excuse the guilty. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children and grandchildren; the entire family is affected – even children in the third and fourth generations.”*

<sup>8</sup> *Moses immediately threw himself to the ground and worshiped.* (**Exodus 33:18-34 – 34:8**, NLT)

**Psalm 24:1-6 (NLT):** *The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it. The world and all its people belong to him. <sup>2</sup> For he laid the earth's foundation on the seas and built it on the ocean depths.*

*<sup>3</sup> Who may climb the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? <sup>4</sup> Only those whose hands and hearts are pure, who do not worship idols and never tell lies. <sup>5</sup> They will receive the LORD's blessing and have a right relationship with God their savior. <sup>6</sup> Such people may seek you and worship in your presence, O God of Jacob. (Psalm 24:1-6, NLT)*

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

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

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

*<sup>7</sup> 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 37:10-11 (NIV):** *A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. <sup>11</sup> But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity. (Psalm 37:10-11, NIV)*

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

*<sup>8</sup> He covers the sky with clouds; he supplies the earth with rain and makes grass grow on the hills.*

*<sup>9</sup> He provides food for the cattle and for the young ravens when they call.*

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

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

**Isaiah 51:1-9 (NLT):** *"Is anyone thirsty? Come and drink – even if you have no money! Come, take your choice of wine or milk – it's all free! <sup>2</sup> Why spend your money on food that does not give you strength? Why pay for food that does you no good? Listen to me, and you will eat what is good. You will enjoy the finest food.*

*<sup>3</sup> "Come to me with your ears wide open. Listen, and you will find life. I will make an everlasting covenant with you. I will give you all the unfailing love I promised to David. <sup>4</sup> See how I used him to display my power among the peoples. I made him a leader among the nations. <sup>5</sup> You also will command nations you do not know, and peoples unknown to you will come running to obey, because I, the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, have made you glorious."*

*<sup>6</sup> Seek the LORD while you can find him. Call on him now while he is near. <sup>7</sup> Let the wicked change their ways and banish the very thought of doing wrong. Let them turn to the LORD that he may have mercy on them. Yes, turn to our God, for he will forgive generously.*

<sup>8</sup> “My thoughts are nothing like your thoughts,” says the LORD. “And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. <sup>9</sup> For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so my ways are higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts. (Isaiah 51:1-9, NLT)

**Isaiah 61:1-3 (NLT):** *The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me, for the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted and to proclaim that captives will be released and prisoners will be freed. <sup>2</sup> He has sent me to tell those who mourn that the time of the LORD’s favor has come, and with it, the day of God’s anger against their enemies. <sup>3</sup> To all who mourn in Israel, he will give a crown of beauty for ashes, a joyous blessing instead of mourning, festive praise instead of despair. In their righteousness, they will be like great oaks that the LORD has planted for his own glory. (Isaiah 61:1-3, NLT)*

**Matthew 5:3-12 (the Message):** *“You’re blessed when you’re at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.*

<sup>4</sup> *“You’re blessed when you feel you’ve lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.*

<sup>5</sup> *“You’re blessed when you’re content with just who you are – no more, no less. That’s the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can’t be bought.*

<sup>6</sup> *“You’re blessed when you’ve worked up a good appetite for God. He’s food and drink in the best meal you’ll ever eat.*

<sup>7</sup> *“You’re blessed when you care. At the moment of being ‘care-full,’ you find yourselves cared for.*

<sup>8</sup> *“You’re blessed when you get your inside world – your mind and heart – put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.*

<sup>9</sup> *“You’re blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That’s when you discover who you really are, and your place in God’s family.*

<sup>10</sup> *“You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom.*

<sup>11-12</sup> *“Not only that – count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens – give a cheer, even! – for though they don’t like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.”*

(Matthew 5:3-12, the Message)

**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, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them.*

## The Beatitudes

<sup>3</sup> “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

<sup>4</sup> “God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> “God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

<sup>6</sup> “God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

<sup>7</sup> “God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup> “God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup> “God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup> “God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

<sup>11</sup> “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. <sup>12</sup> 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

<sup>13</sup> “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.

<sup>14</sup> “You are the light of the world – like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> 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. <sup>16</sup> 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

<sup>17</sup> “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. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> “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

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that our ancestors were told, ‘You must not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment.’ (Exodus 20:13) <sup>22</sup> 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.*

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

<sup>25</sup> *“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. <sup>26</sup>And if that happens, you surely won’t be free again until you have paid the last penny.*

### Teaching about Adultery

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

<sup>28</sup> *But I say, anyone who even looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. <sup>29</sup>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. <sup>30</sup>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

<sup>31</sup> *“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) <sup>32</sup>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

<sup>33</sup> *“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) <sup>34</sup>But I say, do not make any vows! Do not say, ‘By heaven!’ because heaven is God’s throne. <sup>35</sup>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. <sup>36</sup>Do not even say, ‘By my head!’ for you can’t turn one hair white or black. <sup>37</sup>Just say a simple, ‘Yes, I will,’ or ‘No, I won’t.’ Anything beyond this is from the evil one.*

### Teaching about Revenge

<sup>38</sup> *“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) <sup>39</sup>But I say, do not resist an evil person! If someone slaps you on the right cheek, offer the other cheek also. <sup>40</sup>If you are sued in court and your shirt is taken from you, give your coat, too. <sup>41</sup>If a soldier demands that*

*you carry his gear for a mile, carry it two miles. <sup>42</sup> Give to those who ask, and don't turn away from those who want to borrow.*

### Teaching about Love for Enemies

<sup>43</sup> *"You have heard the law that says, 'Love your neighbor' ([Leviticus 19:18](#)) and hate your enemy. <sup>44</sup> But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! <sup>45</sup> 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. <sup>46</sup> If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. <sup>47</sup> If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. <sup>48</sup> 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. <sup>2</sup> 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. <sup>3</sup> But when you give to someone in need, don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. <sup>4</sup> Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you.*

### Teaching about Prayer and Fasting

<sup>5</sup> *"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. <sup>6</sup> 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.*

<sup>7</sup> *"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. <sup>8</sup> Don't be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! <sup>9</sup> Pray like this:*

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

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

<sup>16</sup> *"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. <sup>17</sup> But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. <sup>18</sup> 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

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

<sup>22</sup> “Your eye is like a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is healthy, your whole body is filled with light. <sup>23</sup> 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!

<sup>24</sup> “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.

<sup>25</sup> “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?

<sup>26</sup> 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? <sup>27</sup> Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?

<sup>28</sup> “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, <sup>29</sup> yet Solomon in all his glory was not dressed as beautifully as they are. <sup>30</sup> 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?

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

<sup>34</sup> “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. <sup>2</sup> For you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged.

<sup>3</sup> “And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? <sup>4</sup> 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? <sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> “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

<sup>7</sup> “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. <sup>8</sup> For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.

<sup>9</sup> “You parents – if your children ask for a loaf of bread, do you give them a stone instead? <sup>10</sup> Or if they ask for a fish, do you give them a snake? Of course not! <sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> “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

<sup>13</sup> “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. <sup>14</sup> 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

<sup>15</sup> “Beware of false prophets who come disguised as harmless sheep but are really vicious wolves.

<sup>16</sup> You can identify them by their fruit, that is, by the way they act. Can you pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? <sup>17</sup> A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit. <sup>18</sup> A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. <sup>19</sup> So every tree that does not produce good fruit is chopped down and thrown into the fire. <sup>20</sup> Yes, just as you can identify a tree by its fruit, so you can identify people by their actions.

## True Disciples

<sup>21</sup> “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. <sup>22</sup> 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.’ <sup>23</sup> But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

## Building on a Solid Foundation

<sup>24</sup> “Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock. <sup>25</sup> 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. <sup>26</sup> But anyone who hears my teaching and doesn’t obey it is foolish, like a person who builds a house on sand. <sup>27</sup> When the rains and floods come and the winds beat against that house, it will collapse with a mighty crash.”

<sup>28</sup> When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. <sup>31</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> 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. <sup>29</sup> 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. <sup>30</sup> 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)

**Matthew 25:31-46 (NLT):** “But when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit upon his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup> All the nations will be gathered in his presence, and he will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup> He will place the sheep at his right hand and the goats at his left.

<sup>34</sup> “Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world. <sup>35</sup> For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home. <sup>36</sup> I was naked, and you gave me clothing. I was sick, and you cared for me. I was in prison, and you visited me.’

<sup>37</sup> “Then these righteous ones will reply, ‘Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? <sup>38</sup> Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? <sup>39</sup> When did we ever see you sick or in prison and visit you?’

<sup>40</sup> “And the King will say, ‘I tell you the truth, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’

<sup>41</sup> “Then the King will turn to those on the left and say, ‘Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. <sup>42</sup> For I was hungry, and you didn’t feed me. I was thirsty, and you didn’t give me a drink. <sup>43</sup> I was a stranger, and you didn’t invite me into your

home. I was naked, and you didn't give me clothing. I was sick and in prison, and you didn't visit me.'

<sup>44</sup> "Then they will reply, 'Lord, when did we ever see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and not help you?'

<sup>45</sup> "And he will answer, 'I tell you the truth, when you refused to help the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were refusing to help me.'

<sup>46</sup> "And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous will go into eternal life."  
(Matthew 25:31-46, NLT)

**Luke 6:20-29 (NLT):** Then Jesus turned to his disciples and said,

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

<sup>21</sup> *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.*

<sup>22</sup> *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. <sup>23</sup> 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

<sup>24</sup> *"What sorrow awaits you who are rich, for you have your only happiness now.*

<sup>25</sup> *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.*

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

### Love for Enemies

<sup>27</sup> *"But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you.*

<sup>28</sup> *Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. <sup>29</sup> If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. <sup>30</sup> Give to anyone who asks; and when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. <sup>31</sup> Do to others as you would like them to do to you.*

<sup>32</sup> *"If you love only those who love you, why should you get credit for that? Even sinners love those who love them! <sup>33</sup> And if you do good only to those who do good to you, why should you get credit? Even sinners do that much! <sup>34</sup> 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.*

<sup>35</sup> “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. <sup>36</sup> You must be compassionate, just as your Father is compassionate.

### Do Not Judge Others

<sup>37</sup> “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. <sup>38</sup> 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.”

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

<sup>41</sup> “And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? <sup>42</sup> 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

<sup>43</sup> “A good tree can’t produce bad fruit, and a bad tree can’t produce good fruit. <sup>44</sup> A tree is identified by its fruit. Figs are never gathered from thornbushes, and grapes are not picked from bramble bushes. <sup>45</sup> 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

<sup>46</sup> “So why do you keep calling me ‘Lord, Lord!’ when you don’t do what I say? <sup>47</sup> I will show you what it’s like when someone comes to me, listens to my teaching, and then follows it. <sup>48</sup> 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. <sup>49</sup> 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 6:20-29, 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.”

<sup>2</sup> Jesus said, “This is how you should pray:

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

*<sup>5</sup> 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, <sup>6</sup> ‘A friend of mine has just arrived for a visit, and I have nothing for him to eat.’ <sup>7</sup> 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.’ <sup>8</sup> 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.*

*<sup>9</sup> “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. <sup>10</sup> For everyone who asks, receives. Everyone who seeks, finds. And to everyone who knocks, the door will be opened.*

*<sup>11</sup> “You fathers – if your children ask for a fish, do you give them a snake instead? <sup>12</sup> Or if they ask for an egg, do you give them a scorpion? Of course not! <sup>13</sup> 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.*

*<sup>34</sup> “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. <sup>35</sup> Make sure that the light you think you have is not actually darkness. <sup>36</sup> 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. <sup>23</sup> For life is more than food, and your body more than clothing. <sup>24</sup> 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! <sup>25</sup> Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? <sup>26</sup> And if worry can’t accomplish a little thing like that, what’s the use of worrying over bigger things?*

*<sup>27</sup> “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. <sup>28</sup> 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?*

*<sup>29</sup> “And don’t be concerned about what to eat and what to drink. Don’t worry about such things.*

*<sup>30</sup> These things dominate the thoughts of unbelievers all over the world, but your Father already*

knows your needs. <sup>31</sup> Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and he will give you everything you need.

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

<sup>33</sup> “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. <sup>34</sup> 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? <sup>58</sup> 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. <sup>59</sup> And if that happens, you won’t be free again until you have paid the very last penny.” (Luke 12:57-59, 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)

**Romans 5:3-11 (NLT):** We can rejoice, too, when we run into problems and trials, for we know that they help us develop endurance. <sup>4</sup> And endurance develops strength of character, and character strengthens our confident hope of salvation. <sup>5</sup> And this hope will not lead to disappointment. For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.

<sup>6</sup> When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. <sup>7</sup> Now, most people would not be willing to die for an upright person, though someone might perhaps be willing to die for a person who is especially good. <sup>8</sup> But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. <sup>9</sup> And since we have been made right in God’s sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God’s condemnation. <sup>10</sup> For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. <sup>11</sup> So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.

(Romans 5:3-11, NLT)

**Romans 12:1-21 (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. <sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> Because of the privilege and authority God has given me, I give each of you this warning: Don't think you are better than you really are. Be honest in your evaluation of yourselves, measuring yourselves by the faith God has given us. <sup>4</sup> Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, <sup>5</sup> so it is with Christ's body. We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other.

<sup>6</sup> In his grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. <sup>7</sup> If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. <sup>8</sup> If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

<sup>9</sup> Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. <sup>10</sup> Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. <sup>11</sup> Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. <sup>13</sup> When God's people are in need, be ready to help them. Always be eager to practice hospitality.

<sup>14</sup> Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them. <sup>15</sup> Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. <sup>16</sup> Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all!

<sup>17</sup> Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. <sup>18</sup> Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone.

<sup>19</sup> Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God. For the Scriptures say,

*"I will take revenge; I will pay them back," (Deuteronomy 32:35) says the LORD.*

<sup>20</sup> Instead,

*"If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads."*

*(Proverbs 25:21-22)*

<sup>21</sup> Don't let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good. *(Romans 12:1-21, NLT)*

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

<sup>6</sup> Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. <sup>7</sup> 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)

**James 1:2-4 (NLT):** Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. <sup>3</sup> For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. <sup>4</sup> So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing. (**James 1:2-4**, NLT)

**James 2:12-13 (NLT):** So whatever you say or whatever you do, remember that you will be judged by the law that sets you free. <sup>13</sup> There will be no mercy for those who have not shown mercy to others. But if you have been merciful, God will be merciful when he judges you. (**James 2:12-13**, NLT)

**James 3:17-18 (NLT):** But the wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere. <sup>18</sup> And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness. (**James 3:17-18**, NLT)

**1 John 1:5 – 2:11 (NLT):** This is the message we heard from Jesus and now declare to you: God is light, and there is no darkness in him at all. <sup>6</sup> So we are lying if we say we have fellowship with God but go on living in spiritual darkness; we are not practicing the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we are living in the light, as God is in the light, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from all sin.

<sup>8</sup> If we claim we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and not living in the truth. <sup>9</sup> But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness. <sup>10</sup> If we claim we have not sinned, we are calling God a liar and showing that his word has no place in our hearts.

**2** My dear children, I am writing this to you so that you will not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate who pleads our case before the Father. He is Jesus Christ, the one who is truly righteous. <sup>2</sup> He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins – and not only our sins but the sins of all the world.

<sup>3</sup> And we can be sure that we know him if we obey his commandments. <sup>4</sup> If someone claims, "I know God," but doesn't obey God's commandments, that person is a liar and is not living in the truth. <sup>5</sup> But those who obey God's word truly show how completely they love him. That is how we know we are living in him. <sup>6</sup> Those who say they live in God should live their lives as Jesus did.

## A New Commandment

<sup>7</sup> Dear friends, I am not writing a new commandment for you; rather it is an old one you have had from the very beginning. This old commandment – to love one another – is the same message you heard before. <sup>8</sup> Yet it is also new. Jesus lived the truth of this commandment, and you also are living it. For the darkness is disappearing, and the true light is already shining.

<sup>9</sup> If anyone claims, “I am living in the light,” but hates a fellow believer, that person is still living in darkness. <sup>10</sup> Anyone who loves a fellow believer<sup>[c]</sup> is living in the light and does not cause others to stumble. <sup>11</sup> But anyone who hates a fellow believer is still living and walking in darkness. Such a person does not know the way to go, having been blinded by the darkness.

(1 John 1:5 – 2:11, NLT)

**Revelation 7:14-17 (NLT):** ... Then he said to me, “These are the ones who died in the great tribulation. They have washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white.

<sup>15</sup> “That is why they stand in front of God’s throne and serve him day and night in his Temple. And he who sits on the throne will give them shelter. <sup>16</sup> They will never again be hungry or thirsty; they will never be scorched by the heat of the sun. <sup>17</sup> For the Lamb on the throne will be their Shepherd. He will lead them to springs of life-giving water. And God will wipe every tear from their eyes.” (Revelation 7:14-17, NLT)

**Revelation 22:1-4 (NLT):** Then the angel showed me a river with the water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb. <sup>2</sup> It flowed down the center of the main street. On each side of the river grew a tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, with a fresh crop each month. The leaves were used for medicine to heal the nations.

<sup>3</sup> No longer will there be a curse upon anything. For the throne of God and of the Lamb will be there, and his servants will worship him. <sup>4</sup> And they will see his face, and his name will be written on their foreheads. (Revelation 22:1-4, NLT)

## 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.

## Other Resources

*My Utmost for His Highest*, by Oswald Chambers, *Am I Blessed Like This?* (July 25): Blessed are ... (Matthew 5:3-12)

*When we first read the statements of Jesus, they seem wonderfully simple and unstartling, and they sink unnoticed into our subconscious minds. For instance, the Beatitudes initially seem to be merely soothing and beautiful precepts for overly spiritual and seemingly useless people, but of*

*very little practical use in the rigid, fast-paced workdays of the world in which we live. We soon find, however, that the Beatitudes contain the “dynamite” of the Holy Spirit. And they “explode” when the circumstances of our lives cause them to do so. When the Holy Spirit brings to our remembrance one of the Beatitudes, we say, “What a startling statement that is!” Then we must decide whether or not we will accept the tremendous spiritual upheaval that will be produced in our circumstances if we obey His words. That is the way the Spirit of God works. We do not need to be born again to apply the Sermon on the Mount literally. The literal interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount is as easy as child’s play. But the interpretation by the Spirit of God as He applies our Lord’s statements to our circumstances is the strict and difficult work of a saint.*

*The teachings of Jesus are all out of proportion when compared to our natural way of looking at things, and they come to us initially with astonishing discomfort. We gradually have to conform our walk and conversation to the precepts of Jesus Christ as the Holy Spirit applies them to our circumstances. The Sermon on the Mount is not a set of rules and regulations – It is a picture of the life we will live when the Holy Spirit is having His unhindered way with us. (My Utmost for His Highest, Am I Blessed Like This? – July 25)*