

The Golden Rule
Sermon on the Mount
Matthew 7:12–14
Westwood Church
5.23.21

INTRO

Good morning!

- Gratitude to Westwood
 - You ministered to me and my family for months
 - You've had us into your homes
 - Jeff and Dave and Allen have been real encouragements—so have Alex and Ben and many others
 - Opportunity to preach
 - Letting me cross the divide
 - East side/West side
 - Baptism
 - Being prayed for here every Sunday
 - Faithful, unfaithful, etc.
- At Church of the King we've been studying the Sermon on the Mount
 - Ben is closing it out this morning across town
 - And this morning what I want to do is use the summary statement of the Sermon on the Mount, and use it as a lens to get a picture of the sermon on the whole, and what kingdom living looks like—what it means to obey everything Jesus commanded—that is what the Great Commission says, after all.

READ THE PASSAGE (MATTHEW 7:12–14)

LET'S PRAY

- Gratitude to Westwood
- Church of the King

- As we come to the Word, give me wisdom, grace, humility, and boldness to speak Your truth with clarity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

SO...SO WHAT?

Look at the first word of today's passage. What is it?

So. So...what?

So = THEREFORE. What's the therefore there for?

This is the ultimate therefore in the whole of the Sermon on the Mount. It has to do with everything that came before. To understand it in context, we need to have the whole of the Sermon on the Mount in view. If you have a Bible, keep it open and flip over to Matthew 5. And just keep your finger on the Scriptures as we walk through them together.

So, let's start this morning by putting ourselves in the shoes of the people who came to Jesus in the wilderness.

Who came? And why?

You came to Jesus. You came because you were poor, sick, lame, hungry, oppressed. You were seeking freedom and happiness. And Jesus healed you of your diseases. And then He sat down and He said this.

Real freedom and real happiness? It's not about not being poor. It's about being the right kind of poor.

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

It's not about not being sad. It's about being the right kind of sad.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

It's not about being strong, it's about being the right kind of humble.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

It's not about food, it's about being the right kind of hungry.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

It's not about having the power to get yours, but having the freedom to be merciful.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

It's not about being clean, even. Sure, some of you were lepers. Unclean! But it's really about being pure in heart.

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

It's not about being able to stand up for yourself, but about being able to make peace.

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Real happiness and freedom is not what you think it is. You think it's about your circumstances. You think it's about freedom from being oppressed. But it's about having a joy or blessedness that can't be taken away from you, no matter what they do. Real blessedness belongs to those who are persecuted, even. So long as they're persecuted for righteousness sake.

Real happiness and freedom looks like embracing the Kingdom of Heaven. It looks completely different. Tastes completely different. It's salty. It's bright. *You are the salt of the earth, the light of the world.*

It's otherly. It's embodying a righteousness that puts all the fraud poser religious leaders, with their cheap standards and cheap self-help advice and fluffy dog stories to shame. These people who look good on the outside. *A righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees.*

Real happiness and freedom, looks like actually dealing with your heart, with the inside of the cup. Not just the letter of the law, but the spirit of the law. It's not about not committing murder. It's about everything in you that moves in the direction of murder. And adultery. It's about dealing with your anger, with your lust, with your wandering heart and eyes and temptation to be unfaithful to your spouse. It's about being truthful in your speech, and generous when wronged. It's about loving the people that are hard to love, not just the people that are easy to love. Loving people who can't give back to you, or won't—even your enemies.

Just like Your Father in Heaven does. Yes, you're to *be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect*.

This is the way. The straight and the narrow. And on the straight and the narrow you're going to be tempted to take the off-ramps. You have to hold fast to it. There are ditches on all sides of the road. Because it's hard.

The first ditch you're going to be tempted by is hypocrisy. Real heart righteousness is hard, so we're going to fake it and perform it for others to see. You're going to be tempted to embrace a false spirituality. We're going to be loud and proud about giving to the poor and praying and fasting. No, you do those things before your Father in Heaven. Because He's there, and He sees, and He's watching. And your hypocrisy doesn't cut it with Him.

So when you give, give in secret.

And when you pray, don't heap up empty words like the pagans who don't know God. But pray to your Father in Heaven, who hears, who wants what's best for you. Own Him as your Father.

And when you fast, fast in secret.

Because you have a Father that sees and knows. Don't live for the praise of men, live for the praise of God.

The next ditch is going to be worldliness. If I can't be fake spiritual, forget it. I'll just swerve into crass materialism. No. *Where your treasure is, there your heart will be. Don't store up treasures on earth. Store up treasures in heaven. Because you can't serve two masters. It's going to be money or God.*

Oh, that's scary. If I stop worrying about and being ruled by money, what's going to happen??

No, no. Don't worry about the money of it all. Don't be anxious. Don't worry about tomorrow. Because if you serve God? He's a good Father, and He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, and He loves His children. There's nothing to be afraid of when you're one of His children. When you're tempted to forget it, just look at the flowers and the birds and remember that you're more important than they are.

Whew, done, easy, right? No, because there's another off-ramp you're going to want to take. Another way to avoid the hard work of dealing with yourself: judgmentalism. And there are two sides to that coin.

One side is you're going to take this teaching and start applying it to everyone but yourself. And if you can just sit and apply it to everyone else, you'll be good. You'll get to feel good about yourself. You'll have removed a thousand splinters out of peoples eyes while successfully ignoring the log in your own eye. And Jesus says no, that doesn't work. You can't begin to see clearly enough to help your brother unless you're first dealing with yourself.

Okay, fine. I'm going to go light myself on fire and proclaim all this stuff to mockers and scoffers and maybe I'll get beat up enough by them that I'll feel better about not dealing with myself. No, *don't cast your pearls to pigs.*

Keep to the center of the road.

Jesus, this is hard. Yeah. It's really hard. So pray and ask for help. *Ask and it will be given. Seek and you'll find. Knock and it'll be opened.* Because you have a good Father who wants these things for you. He knows it's hard. And He's made a way for you to walk in obedience.

So keep to the center. Keep to the straight and narrow. It leads to life. Destruction is easy. This is hard. And lots of people jump off. But don't do that.

And here's a rule for you to follow. A little shorthand trick for obeying everything I've had to say to you today. It's a summary of everything the Law and the Prophets have ever had to say:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

The Spirit of the Law

Okay, so we've worked through the whole of the Sermon on the Mount together. Do you feel like you've got handles?

And now we're back to Do unto others. Jesus came to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. And this is His summary of all the Law and the Prophets.

Which means it's also a summary of what Jesus said in this sermon, right? Because He's basically teaching us how to fulfill the Law and the Prophets. How to have a righteousness that surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees.

In another place, Jesus gives an answer to the two greatest commandments, and He says this, The first is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength, and the second is like it: love your neighbor as yourself.

All of the Law, all of the Prophets, all of the Bible, ultimately, is an exposition of those two commands: how to love God and how to love your neighbor.

And we need all that how. Because we get really dumb. And we get really selfish. And really tricky. With our own hearts.

So the Law and the Prophets exist to point out our lies, and expose our sin and selfishness. Because there's no end to the ways we'll trick ourselves into believing that we're loving people, while actually loving only ourselves. We do it all the time.

So the Ten Commandments are a list of nos. Nos work really well for immature people. For children. They're a simple way of saying, This is NOT what love looks like. There are a million things it does look like, but this is not THAT.

For example MURDER. MURDER IS BAD. It is not love. Taking things that are not yours is bad. It is not love. Lying is bad. It is not love. Worshiping a false god is not love for God.

Ten rules for dummies. Dummies like us. That's the Ten Commandments. And in those Ten Commandments, everything is there.

And that's what Jesus started by pointing out. Guys, The Law isn't about Don't Murder. The Law is about loving your neighbor. Murder stands for everything that moves in the direction of murder. It's your anger you have to deal with.

That summary that Jesus gives, the greatest commandment? Love the You're your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength? He's just quoting Deuteronomy IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

PUT IT TO THE TEST

So, we have the rule. Do unto others what you'd have them do unto you. Sorry, I know the ESV is behind me, but this one is stuck in King James land.

Let's put it to the test in the Sermon on the Mount and see how it holds up.

Anger...do you want to be insulted or mocked or called a fool? No? Don't do it.

So far so good, right?

Lust...do you want to be objectified? No? Don't do it.

Alright.

Divorce...do you want to be abandoned? No? Don't do it.

Oaths...do you like being lied to? No? Don't do it.

Do you want your sins to have perfect vengeance enacted on them? No? Don't be vengeful.

Do you want unkind treatment from everyone who isn't a close friend? No? Don't be unkind to others.

Okay, how's it working?

Did anyone notice that I tricked us? I did some sleight of hand. I did what every other religion gives us here. Which is don't do to others what you would not want done to you.

But that's not what Jesus said. Jesus wants more.

JESUS WANTS MORE

Jesus wants more. And Jesus understands our hearts. Jesus doesn't want a righteousness that's about don'ts. That's simply about avoiding a prescribed list of vices.

Jesus wants us to love. And love is active. It seeks out the good of others. It does unto others what we would have others do to us. It *does*. It acts. It's not passive.

DEATH TO PASSIVE CHRISTIANITY. There's no such thing.

And it doesn't even work. Have you ever tried to cut out a vice? What happens? You always have to have something to replace it with. So you play whack-a-mole.

It's why guys struggle with porn and lust so much. They're so caught up in not-looking-at-porn that they forget the whole point isn't not-looking-at-porn. The point is purity! Freedom! Love for your wife and your children and your neighbor. That's the point! If you want to conquer lust you have to learn to love.

The only way to deal with a vice is to replace it with a virtue.

But even that misses the point. We deal with vices because they're in the way of virtue. Virtue is the point. Righteousness is the point. Love is the point.

It's the whole mindset that Jesus is flipping on its head.

Anger and Lust—they're us desiring things that we don't have. Things we covet and cannot obtain. See James Chapter 4. It's looking for opportunities to satisfy ourselves. It is a mindset of being out to get. To take.

Every lustful look is a taking. Every angry thought is a taking. Jesus says stop taking. Start giving. Come to the Father. He's a giver.

He wants to provide for His children. He's ready to do it. Everything you need for life and godliness. You don't have to fight for it. You don't have to take it from anyone. Not when it's being given to you by the Father. Trust Him. And then be like Him. Be a giver.

You have freely received. Look at your life. Take stock. Cultivate gratitude. And be as generous with others as God has been with you.

Do to others what you would have them do to you.

One rule for life.

BUT JAKE!!!

But Jake, it's so cheap. It's so bumper sticker. It's so baller band. It's so t-shirt. It's so tattoo.

No, people use it cheaply, but it's not cheap. It's not cheap. It's simple. It's a proverb. God uses them to teach us. Because we need simple. And sticky.

I was talking with Pastor Dave about this this week when I was telling him what I was planning to preach and he reminded me of the very beginning of Calvin's Institutes where Calvin compares God speaking to us in the Bible to nursing mothers lisping and baby-talking their children.

And man, that is the Bible. And that is the Sermon on the Mount. See Jesus getting down on His knees to explain things to us.

Okay Jake, sure, it's a proverb. You've made your point. It's simple. But it's still hard!

The gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and few find it.

But I'll be taken advantage of! You have a Father who takes care of you.

But I won't get what I need! You have a Father who takes care of you. Look at the birds. Look at the lilies.

But I won't get what I want! Ah. There it is. That's what has to change. You're still ruled by the tyranny of yourself. Your self-indulgence. Your self-righteousness. Your self-preservation. And you're entitled.

Your rule is do unto me as I would have you do unto me. Or else I will hurt you the way I'm most easily hurt.

And everyone is responsible for bending to you. Or they'll suffer the consequences.

That is us by nature. Right? We're really good at knowing exactly what we want. Exactly how we want everyone around us to bend to that. And exactly how to punish others in the way that would hurt us the most.

That's the repent part of the Gospel of the Kingdom. Remember Jesus is preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom here, and Matthew summarizes that preaching like this, "Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."

That's the repent part.

THE WARNINGS AND THE CALL TO OBEDIENCE

Jesus closes here with some warnings. He's pressing home the call to actually apply, live out, obey, everything He's commanded in the Sermon on the Mount.

The first warning is this: do the hard work of living by faith. Take the narrow and straight path. And don't take the cop outs that present themselves to you. Don't take the exit ramps—hypocrisy, worldliness, judgmentalism. Stick to the straight and narrow path.

The second warning, is this: beware of false teachers. Remember Jesus starts by warning us against false teachers by telling us our righteousness has to exceed the scribes and Pharisees. The religious leaders. Jesus gives us a test for false teachers and that test is fruit. You'll know them by their fruit.

The third warning dovetails on that. Because it talks about what that fruit really is, but that warning doesn't just apply to the leaders we're testing, but to us, too. And that fruit isn't big, awesome works of righteousness. It's not preaching to huge crowds. Or performing miracles. Judas did those things, remember. It's a heart and life that comes from a real relationship with Jesus Himself. That comes from a real and living faith.

And then, finally, the final warning and promise. Be doers of the Word, not just hearers. If you fake it, if you don't actually put this into practice, when adversity comes you're going to be swept away. If you put these things into practice, if you actually do what Jesus is commanding here, nothing will be able to move you, no matter what hardships come. You'll be free and strong and firmly planted on the rock. The rain can come. The wind can blow. But your house will stand.

And you'll be free. You'll be a citizen of the Kingdom. Free from the rule of all other kingdoms. You won't be able to be controlled by your passions—your anger, and your lust, because you've disciplined them. You won't be able to be controlled by the praise of men, because you'll live to please Your Father. You won't be able to be controlled by the love of money, because you don't worship

Mammon, but your Father who provides for you. You won't be controlled by the fear of death, because the Kingdom of Heaven is yours. And so you will be hated and persecuted. Because you are salt. And light. And you are beyond reach.

If you just do this one thing, from a heart full of faith in Jesus, trusting in His blood to cover your failures and trusting the Holy Spirit to give you power to walk in this way: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Let's walk in obedience to this command. No cheap and easy ways out. Just the hard, but *happy* work of the real heart obedience that comes from faith.

Let's pray.