THE PLACE AND PURPOSE OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT



The Purpose of the Sermon on the Mount

Righteousness that Exceeds Introduction and Part 1

1. The Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5-7
2. The Calling and Sending Forth of the 12 Apostles, chapter 10:1-11:1
3. The Parables of Christendom in the Church Age, chapter 13:1-53
4. Greatness in the Kingdom of Heaven, chapter 18:1-19:1
5. The Olivet Discourse, chapters 24-25

1. The New Moses and Fulfilled Law View

Matthew presents Jesus as a greater, new Moses ascending a mountainside to deliver a decisive interpretation of God's will. Rather than abolishing the Old Testament Torah, Jesus "fills it full" (fulfills it) by uncovering its deep intent—shifting focus from external, surface-level compliance to the inner posture of the heart.

2. A Mirror to Expose Sin and Drive Us to Grace

Historically emphasized in Reformed and Lutheran traditions, this view holds that the sermon's high, radical standard, such as absolute perfection in Matthew 5:48 or internalizing prohibitions against anger and lust, is intentionally impossible for fallen human nature to keep on its own. Its purpose is to humble the listener, expose human inability, and drive them to rely on Christ for grace and salvation.

3. An Ethic of the Kingdom of Heaven

Viewed as a practical charter or manifesto for life under the reign of God. This perspective sees the sermon as a real, binding set of kingdom ethics for Jesus's disciples. It calls believers to radical love for enemies, non-retaliation, humility, and right relationships, meant to be lived out as "salt and light" before a watching world.

4. The Dispensational Future Kingdom View

In the classical extreme dispensationalism view, the strict rules of the Sermon on the Mount are viewed primarily as the governing ethics for the future Messianic, Millennial Kingdom. Matthew emphasized the Kingdom and this places the Sermon on the Mount as the ruling manifestation in that Kingdom, and not for the church age.

5. The Witness Evangelistic View

This view emphasizes that the sermon serves as a public demonstration of a transformed life. By contrasting outward religious hypocrisy, as in giving, fasting, and praying with sincere, heart devotion to the Father. The sermon aims to reshape personal piety so that believers genuinely reflect God's character, drawing others to glorify God through their visible good works.

What Living out Righteousness Looks Like Under the Law

Is Righteousness only Skin Deep?

Matthew 15:17-20

[17] Do you not yet understand that whatever enters
the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated?
[18] But those things which proceed out of the mouth
come from the heart, and they defile a man. [19] For
out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders,
adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness,
blasphemies. [20] These are the things which defile a
man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile
a man.”

Matthew 23:25

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

Matthew 19:24

And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” 25 When His disciples heard it, they were greatly astonished, saying, “Who then can be saved?”

Matthew 15:12

Then His disciples came and said to Him, “Do You know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying [teaching]?”

Matthew 23:27

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.

Matthew 23:28

Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

The Scribes & Pharisees Theology of righteous living was miles wide but only skin deep

Matthew 5:3-10

Righteousness from the Inside out will yield True Character Even Under the Law

Psalm 73:1-2

[1] Truly God is good to Israel, To such as are pure in heart. [2] But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped

Psalm 32:1-2

[1]Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven,
Whose sin is covered. [2]Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit

v.3 begins his journey of repentance for and his blessed conclusion to the Psalm.

[3]When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long.

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

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

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

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for
righteousness, for they shall be filled.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.

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

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

[10] Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’
sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. [11] “Blessed are
you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds
of evil against you falsely for My sake. [12] Rejoice and be
exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so
they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

[13]“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor [its influence], how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. [14]“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. [15]Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house.

[16]Let your light so shine [in such a way] before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

[17]“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. [18]For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. [19]Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Key Verse: 5:20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.