

Christ Church, New Haven
Sunday Forum: The Gospel According to St. Matthew
October 1, 2023: Matthew 5-7—The Sermon on the Mount

Questions for Reflection

Which of the beatitudes (“Blessed are...” verses) resonates with you, and why? Which, if any, do you find challenging or difficult to believe?

The teachings in Matthew 5:21-47 are structured under six “antitheses” (see outline below). Why do you think Jesus does this? What do these teachings have in common?

In Matthew 5:42, Jesus says, “Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you.” Is this teaching realistic? Why or why not?

In Matthew 6:1-6, Jesus is critical of some public worship practices. What do you think Jesus would say about churches today? Why?

Is there a phrase of the Lord’s Prayer that especially resonates with you, in your life as it is today?

Notes for Matthew 5-7

The Beatitudes (5:3-11)—Compare to Luke 6:17-26

5:3 “poor in spirit”: In Greek, as in English, “poor” can refer to literal economic poverty, or to figurative poverty (humility, for example). “Spirit” may refer to the human spirit or to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus and the Law (5:17-48)

5:17 “the law or the prophets”: The law (Torah) comprises the first five books of the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament. The legal codes in these books formed the framework for daily life, national governance, and religious observances. The prophets are both the historical books of the Hebrew Bible (Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings) and the prophetic writings (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the twelve “minor” prophets).

5:21-47 antitheses: Six times, Jesus contrasts his teaching with rules and regulations from the Torah. These contrasts are framed with a statement like, “You have heard it said...,” followed by something like, “But I say to you...” The six antitheses concern (1) murder/anger; (2) adultery/lust; (3) divorce/adultery; (4) oaths; (5) revenge/generosity; (6) love of neighbors and enemies.

Guidelines for piety and prayer (6:1-18)

6:9-13: The Lord’s Prayer: compare to Luke 11:2-4.

Material wealth and trust in God (6:19-34)

6:24-25 “two masters,” “God and wealth”: compare to the “parable of the dishonest steward,” Luke 16:1-13

Further ethical guidelines (7:1-27)

How might we read these teachings as directed to us individually, but also towards our community as a whole?