SERMON SUMMARIES FOR THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Pastor Chris Brauns, 2015

*If I preached this series again, I would begin with the last sermon: “Decide to be astonished by hearing and doing the Word of Christ.” Then anticipate the highlighted themes below.*

See also [The Sermon the Mount Glossary](file:///Users/Chris/Dropbox/Stillman%20Valley/Preaching/New%20Testament/Matthew/Sermon%20on%20the%20Mount/Glossary%20for%20the%20Sermon%20on%20the%20Mount.docx)

**1/25/15** – **Sermon on the Mount I: Blown Away and Blessed** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/26279/Sermon_on_the_Mount_I_Blown_Away_and_Some_Blessed.mp3))- In the introduction to this series, we saw that when considering the Sermon on the Mount (SOTM), the greatest sermon ever preached, we should *expect to be blown away and blessed by the authority of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 7:28-29)*.

And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes. Matthew 7:28-29

Jesus surprised his audience by showing that his authority resided in Himself - -meaning He is God. Jesus’s authority was, and is, breathtaking.

Matthew framed the SOTM with the Authority of Christ.

* Matthew’s genealogy documents Jesus as the perfect culmination of the entire Old Testament (Matthew 1-2).
* Matthew proclaims Christ as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy (Matthew 1:22, 2:15, 17, 23, 3:15, 4:14).
* Jesus is presented as a new and better Israel (Hosea 11:1).
* Jesus is a new and greater Moses (Exodus 19:20). (Notice that the Christian imperative *follows* the indicative!)

In the scope of the first sermon, we compared Christ’s authority with that of Hinduism and the false god Genesha. We saw that Christ’s authority is far different and in him we can have complete confidence. Indeed, seeing the authority of Christ gives us confidence to follow wherever he calls.

See the lengthy entry on “authority” in my “Glossary for the Sermon on the Mount.”

**2/15/15** – **Sermon on the Mount II: The Kingdom of Heaven** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/26643/Sermon_on_the_Mount_II_Confused_About_the_Kingdom.mp3)) -The central subject of the SOTM is the Kingdom of Heaven / God. Christ, the King, announced the inauguration of the Kingdom. The Kingdom began, in a sense, with Jesus’s arrival. However, we await the consummation of the Kingdom when Jesus will establish His Kingdom.

The Gospel of Matthew shows us the centrality of the Kingdom of Heaven theme by bracketing this entire section of the Gospel with a Kingdom announcement (Matthew 4:23, 9:35) and with an immediate emphasis on the Kingdom of God in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3, 10).

While there is an “already” aspect to the Kingdom of Heaven, the Kingdom has not yet been fully consummated. When considering the consummation of the Kingdom, we turned to Revelation 20:4 and saw the promise of the Millennial Kingdom when Christ will reign in this space and history and Satan will be bound.

The theme of the Kingdom of Heaven should give us great hope. Though much in this life is not as it should be, Jesus is coming back. So we pray, “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

We need to meditate on the hope of the Kingdom of God because it is so wonderful. The message of the Bible is that though something went terribly wrong, God will defeat sin and one day we will be with Him on a new earth.

See “The Kingdom of God” in my “Glossary on the Sermon the Mount.”

**2/22/15 – Sermon on the Mount III: The Sequence of the Beatitudes** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/26759/Sermon_on_the_Mount_III_The_Sequence_of_the_Beatitudes.mp3)): Be Broken to Be Blessed

In the third sermon, we saw how the Kingdom of God is received. We must come to Christ recognizing that we have nothing to offer which is to say we should be “poor in spirit.”

The SOTM begins with the beatitudes. A “beatitude” is a blessing with an explanation of the blessing and a condition for receiving the blessing. To be “blessed” by God means to enjoy his favor. Some translate this happiness but “happy” is too superficial of a translation. Rather, it means to know the favor of God with the confidence a small child has in the favor of a parent.

The beatitudes begin with the beautiful truth that Christ extends his unmerited favor to who humbly receive it: the poor in spirit.

Just as was the case with God delivering Israel out of bondage in Egypt (Exodus 2), Jesus begins with salvation / deliverance and then lays out the conditions of those who follow him.

The blessing of the beatitudes is the Kingdom of Heaven as we have seen. While the Kingdom has been inaugurated, we can look forward to the day when Christ will reign with his people on earth when the Kingdom is fully realized.

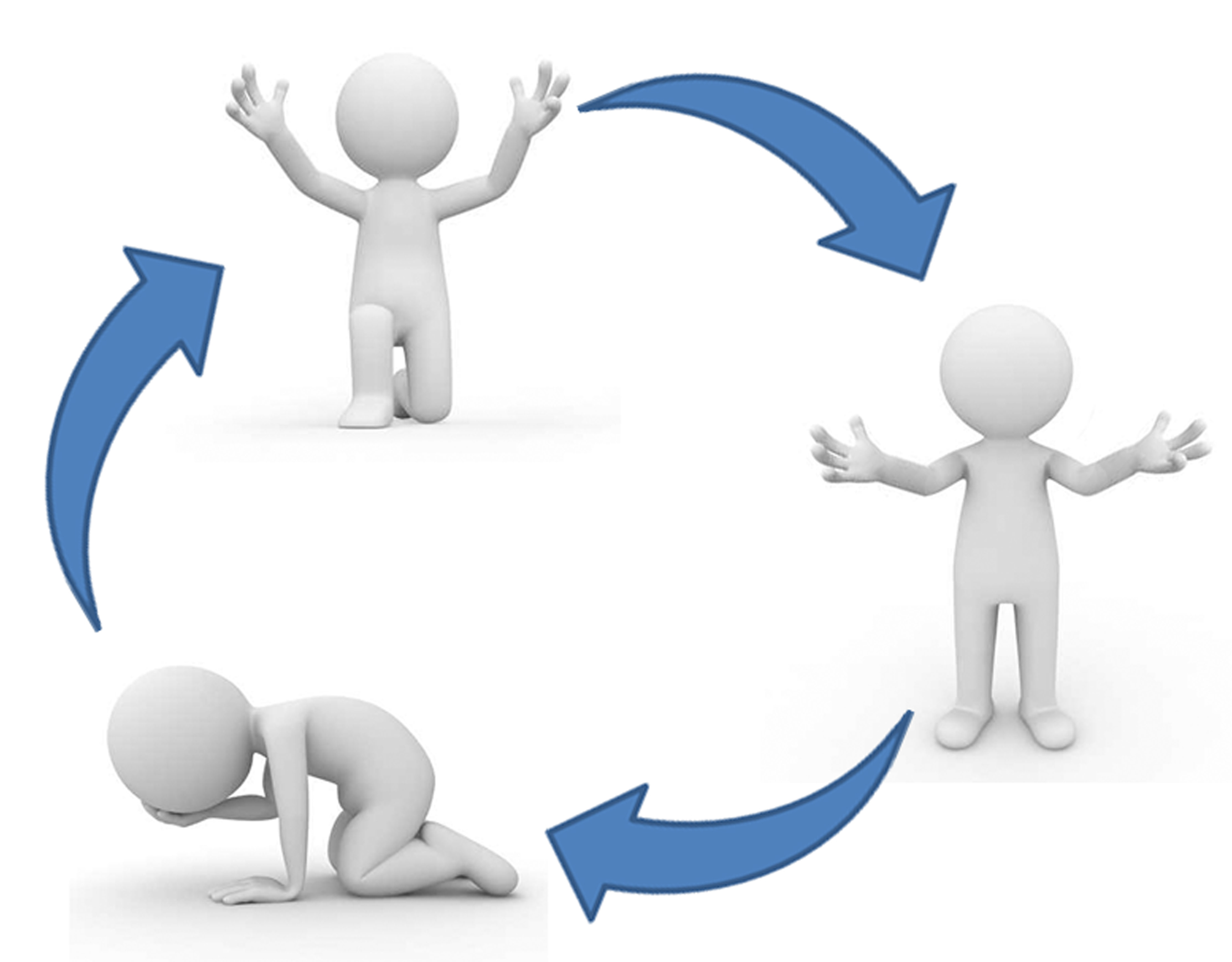
The beatitudes are extended to those willing to acknowledge their spiritual poverty. Blessed are the:

* “Poor in spirit” - Meaning those who recognize they have no assets to bring about a solution to the world’s problems - -
* “Those who mourn” - Those who see that the problems of the world are rebellion against God and consequently are grieved
* “The meek” – Those who see that the offense is not against them personally, but rather that it is against God and that we are complicit in the offense.
* “Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness” - Those who long for God to set things right. The people who hunger and thirst for righteousness are missions minded people who long to see the glory of God shine around the world.

There is a sequence of sorts to the beatitudes. One beatitude leads to the next. Those who are poor in spirit will mourn. Those who mourn will be meek and hunger and thirst for righteousness.

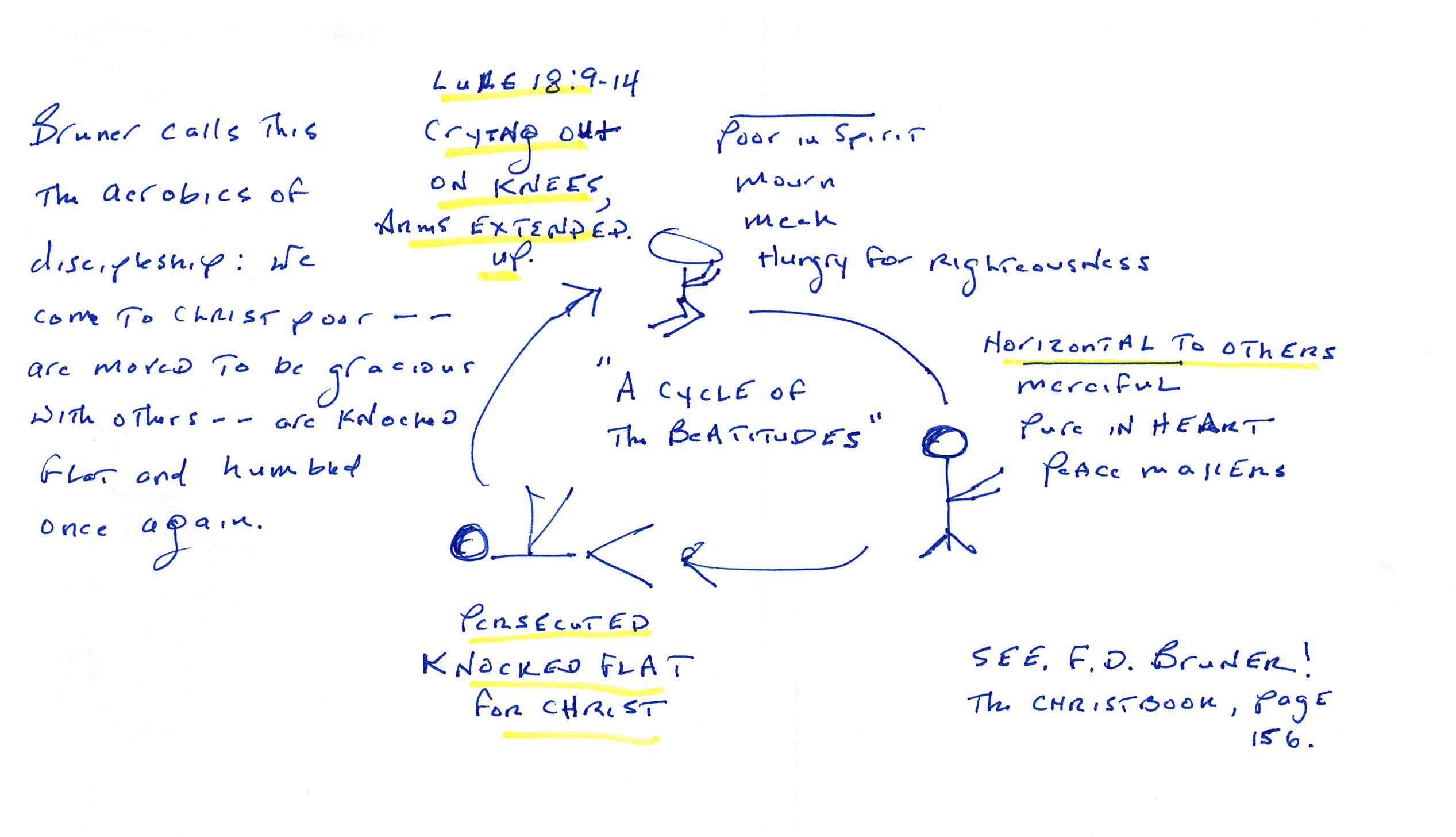
Lest we feel overwhelmed at how far short we fall of the beatitudes, at the conclusion of the sermon, it was stressed that those who think they have nothing to offer should run to the Cross where they will meet a gracious Savior.

**3/1/15 - Sermon on the Mount IV: The Cycle of the Beatitudes** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/26887/Sermon_on_the_Mount_IV_The_Sequence_of_the_Beatitudes.mp3))

The SOTM should be approached with anticipation (astonishing authority), hope (the Kingdom is at hand!), joy (Jesus blesses those who are poor in spirit), but also soberness because we see later in the sermon that there are some who think they part of the Kingdom who are not.

[21] “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. [22] On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ [23] And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.’ Matthew 7:21-23

Consequently, we should compare ourselves to the Beatitudes and see if they are characteristic of our lives - - or if their opposites are more characteristic.



Are we poor in spirit?

Or self-sufficient?

Do we mourn?

Or are we entertained by sin?

Are we meek?

Or defensive?

Do we hunger for righteousness?

Or are we apathetic about missions?

Are we merciful? Or impatient?

Pure in heart?

Or thinking the wrong things?

Persecuted?

Or afraid?

If, in reviewing this list, we find that we fall short - - then we are brought back to the first beatitude - - the gospel goes out to those who are “poor in spirit.” Let us recognize our need for Christ and Him alone.

So, we see in this sermon that there is also a cycle to the beatitudes. (Bruner) We begin on our knees in need of grace. But as God extends us grace, we are merciful peacemakers. Yet, we can anticipate that we will be knocked flat by persecution and find ourselves again reminded that we are poor in spirit.

**3/8/15 - Sermon on the Mount V: The Cycle of the Beatitudes** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/27013/Sermon_on_the_Mount_V_Blessed_are_the_Persecuted.mp3))

Dream of Rewards!

The final beatitude reminds Christians that they should endure persecution knowing that rewards await those who know Christ. While those who are followers of Christ *will* suffer, we should be motivated to endure knowing that we are making an eternal investment. Several “R’s” help us reflect on the nature of rewards that await:

* **Renewed** – We will receive *new* resurrection bodies and dwell with Christ forever on a renewed / new earth.
* **Riches and Rewards** – We will in no way be materially limited but will serve a good and giving king who has boundless resources. Eternity will be incredible.
* **Renown and Responsibility** - Those who have persevered can expect to hear well done good and faithful servant (Matthew 25:21).
* Relationships – The aspect of our reward that we most look forward to will be relationships. We will be with people we love but most of all our Lord Jesus Christ.

Great Christian music helps us anticipate the rewards that await those who serve Christ. I mentioned 3 songs in the sermon: (1) “I Bowed on My Knees and Cried Holy” (2) “We Shall Behold Him” and (3) “I Shall Know Him.”

3/22/15 – **Sermon on the Mount VI: AND** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/27269/Sermon_on_the_Mount_V__And.mp3))

Shake Your Salt All Around *AND* Your Light

Jesus instructed his followers that they should be salt and light. The image of salt points to that which subtly preserves. Salt smiles, participates, invites, and preserves. Light boldly proclaims. Christians who are light preach, confess, invite, send, and go. We must do both: subtly preserve and boldly proclaim.

I shared the story of a young man I knew from high school football who recently got in trouble. I reached out to let him know that if he needs some help we can help him find his way. These pictures of reaching out needs to happen over and over again as we love our communities by being salt and light.

4/12/15 – **Sermon on the Mount VII**: **The Law** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/27612/Sermon_on_the_Mount_VII_Should_People_Be_Put_To_Death_for_Sexual_Sin.mp3))

Jesus came to fulfill the Law. He did not come to abolish the Law - - that is to discard it and say it was never of any relevance - - nor did he come to say that it is still in effect in the same way. He came to show the fullness of all that God has planned all along and to bring the attention centrally on Him. Jesus showed that the center of the Law is loving God and neighbor whole-heartedly.

God’s reason for giving the law was to show us how we might glorify him and enjoy Him - -God is not glorified if we play in the middle of highway 72!

While the Old Testament law is no longer in effect in the same way - - we can eat bacon! And we don’t stone people! - - Still, we learn about God from the Law.

Old Testament prohibitions against homosexuality have been repeated in the New Testament (Romans 1:26-32, 1 Timothy 1:10).

5/3/15 – **Sermon on the Mount VIII**: (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/27937/Sermon_on_the_Mount_VIII_Calling_Grudges_What_They_Are.mp3))

Call Grudges What They Are

The thrust of this sermon was that we need to call grudges what they are. Grudges are not understandable. They are not just hurt feelings. Grudges are “damnable sins.” They put us in the place of God. Only Jesus gets to use the emphatic “I.” Grudges lead to devastating consequences and call our salvation into question. So call burning grudges what they are to keep things in perspective and to be motivated to deal quickly with grievances. Our failures in this area should call convict us of our sin and drive us back to the first beatitude and the gospel.

Jesus assertion of, “But I say to you,” is the first of six such statements in which he authoritatively teaches hypertheses of the law. In building on the Law of Moses, and contrasting himself with the current religious establishment, Jesus demonstrates that he is the ultimate communicator of the divine standard. Both Christ’s boldness in making this assertion, and the jolting standard that he set, amazed his audience.

5/24/15 – **Sermon on the Mount IX**: **Lust** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/28258/Stick_a_Needle_in_My_Eye.mp3))

*Stick a needle, In my eye. Because porno lust Will make me die. Forever.*

Jesus’s teaching on lust sets the standard. Sins of the mind are wrong. He stressed the stakes. Lust is eternally deadly. And Christ gave us a strategy: take radical action.

We need to learn about pornography and be warned[[1]](#footnote-1)

1. 12% of web sites are pornographic (over 24 million)
2. Every second over $3,000 is spent on pornography and nearly 30,000 are looking at it
3. 40 million Americans are regular visitors to porn sites
4. About $2.84 billion is spent yearly - - the entire industry is 4.9 billion
5. 2.5 billion emails every day are pornographic
6. 25% of all searches are pornographic, 68 million per day
7. 35% of all Internet downloads
8. 11 is the average age a child first sees it online
9. There are 116,000 searches for child pornography daily
10. 20% of men admit to watching it at work
11. Sunday is the most popular day for watching it

Pornography is a big deal because it twists, perverts, and destroys life’s greatest gift. The marriage decision is beautiful because a person freely chooses to focus his or her total affection on someone else. We were specifically created with this in mind.

There is an analogy with a dolphin. Dolphins are beautifully created for a specific purpose: to swim in the ocean. But if that purpose is altered, they die. Fresh water kills them. Being out of water kills them. Not being able to surface kills them.

Further, we know that most girls are created in a way that makes them look forward to a wedding day long before they are married. To objectify women - - to treat them so awfully is inexcusable.

Pornography: 8 Suggestions for Sticking a Needle In Your Eye

Pastor Chris Brauns, The Red Brick Church

*Stick a needle,*

*In my eye.*

*Because porno lust*

*Will make me die.*

*Forever.*

*#porn*

*#Matthew 5:27-30*

What does it look like to take radical action? How do we figuratively gouge out our eyes and amputate our hands? Below are 10 Policies for parents to implement to protect their families. These are not all radical in nature. Some of them take place over time. But be ready to act decisively if necessary.

1. **Be involved in a Christ-centered, Bible preaching local church**. The only way we can counter the corrosive effects of a fallen world is through Christian community. You need to feed on the proclaimed Word, share life with other believers, worship Christ in community, and pray with others.
2. **Promote a positive vision for marriage and God’s plan for intimacy.** Envision Christ-centered weddings.
3. **Make love -- husbands and wives -- a priority**. Spouses *belong* to one another (1 Cor 7:1-5).
4. **Establish and maintain modesty standards within your family.**
5. **Establish family policies early.** Second grade is easier than sixth for setting boundaries. Still, it is never too late.
6. **Minimize screen time in general.** Check the progression that accustoms families to always being in front of a screen. Hate addiction to video games and be scared of them in the first place. If the only way you can get work done is to occupy your children with a video, or, if you always use videos to keep children from being a distraction when you entertain, that is a problem! (Though, exceptions can be made for the sake of #3.
7. **Keep Internet access away from private contexts:** especially bedrooms and basements. Sin loves darkness.
8. **Implement steps from Pastor Tim Michalek’s** [**Top 5 Free Ways to Protect Against Internet Pornography**](http://theredbrickchurch.org/top-5-free-ways-to-protect-against-pornography/)**.**
9. **Question if teens really need Internet enabled phones.**
10. **Avoid split second decisions about purchasing Internet enabled devices.** Heed Tim Challies appeal. [“Please don’t give them porn for Christmas.”](http://www.challies.com/articles/please-dont-give-them-porn-for-christmas)

6/21/15 – **Sermon on the Mount X: Unpacking Revenge** (Matthew 5:38-48) - (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/28534/Sermon_on_the_Mount_X_Buffalo_Nickel_Games.mp3))

Christians must be gracious or generous. The basis for our generosity is that Christ gave himself for us on the Cross. We now follow his example. When slapped, we don’t slap back. Revenge is the anti-gospel. It is wrong because it is like taking poison to get back at someone else. It is wrong because it is puts people in the place of God.

7/5/15 – **Sermon on the Mount XI: Acts of Righteousness** (Matthew 6:1-4) –(Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/28538/Sermon_on_the_Mount_XI_The_Wide_World_of_Life.mp3))

Being busy isn’t enough. We must be busy with the right activities for the right reasons. At the center of our activity should be a goal of pleasing Christ and being rewarded in heaven. I applied this point to both pastoral motivation and to giving. We talked explicitly about the dangers of church memorials.

7/19/15 - **Sermon on the Mount XII: How Not to Pray** (Matthew 6:5-15) – (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/28783/Sermon_on_the_Mount_XII_Unpacking_Revenge.mp3))

Pray in a way that recognizes God as central, not people.

Not others. Don’t draw attention to yourself. But also don’t be concerned about how you appear that you are unwilling to ever pray in front of someone else. An unwillingness to pray comes down to a subtle kind of pride.

Not self. We have a tendency to make prayer a work where we are trying to earn what we want from God. We heap up empty phrases.

Can you identify a time when you prayed secretly without talking to someone else? God doesn’t dispense grace like pixie dust. His appointed means include prayer!

8/9/15 **Sermon on the Mount XIII: “Our”** – (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/28953/Sermon_on_the_Mount_XII__Righteous_Acts_.mp3))

Pray, Don’t Chant, The Lord’s Prayer

A proper understanding of the theology of the Lord’s Prayer will lead us to pray it rather than chant it. A major emphasis in the sermons on the Lord’s Prayer was to use the Lord’s Prayer as handrails for prayer and to pray through them rather than chanting.

**Our** – 1st person, plural, possessive pronoun: **Possessive** – Followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. **Plural** – Corporate emphasis. The Christian life is corporate, not individual. We are bound together in Christ. *Are you chanting the Lord’s Prayer? Or are you praying it? Are you praying with other people with a dream of what God might do?* If we are serious about prayer, then we’re praying together. We pray “our” not “my”.

**Father** – **Immanent** and **Loving**: *Only a three year old can wake up a king in the middle of the might.* **Authoritative**: Yet - - authority and submission. So in Ephesians 3:14-21 we read, for this reason I *kneel*. **Involved** - - One of the hallmarks of belief in our day, a defining characteristic is deism rather than theism. Many people believe that God is just watching us from a distance. But God is a heavenly Father who is involved in history.

**In Heaven** – **Transcendent**. One of the challenges of strict. Darwinism/ materialism/ natural is that ultimately they believe that the is no ultimate standard. Yet, when something like Cecil comes up people go ballistic. **Every reasonable person agrees that there is a standard of right and wrong**.

People do not believe that the strong should dominate the weak. We went to Cabelas & I warned MB in advance that Cecil was going to be stuffed. Of course, at the same time, we live in a country quite willing to take the life of unborn babies.

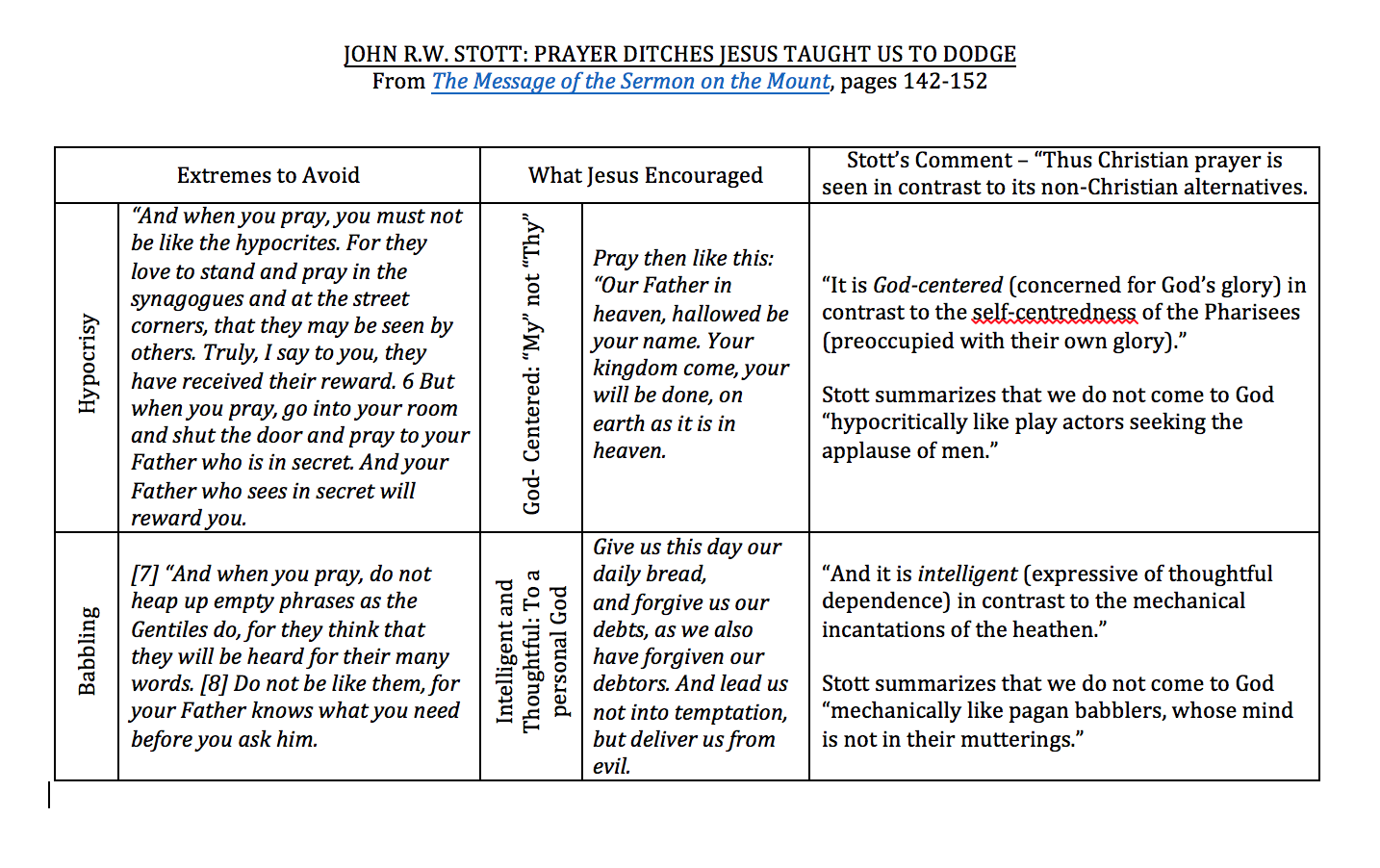
**Hallowed** – A passion for the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

*[26] “So have no fear of them, for nothing is covered that will not be revealed, or hidden that will not be known. [27] What I tell you in the dark, say in the light, and what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. [28] And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. [29] Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. [30] But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. [31] Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows. [32] So everyone who acknowledges me before men, I also will acknowledge before my Father who is in heaven, [33] but whoever denies me before men, I also will deny before my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 10:26-33 ESV)*

**Thy Kingdom come** – History is going someplace. There won’t always be injustice. The excitement will always be I aligning with God’s plan

8/16/15 **Sermon on the Mount XIV: “Thy” Not “My” –** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/29599/Thy_Not_My.mp3))

See this [document](Matthew%20sermon%20on%20the%20mount%20notes%20misc/Stott%20on%20prayer%20ditches%20to%20dodge.docx).

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Pray in a way that shows dependence on God for our daily needs. We should beware of songs like, “Gonna buy me a boat,” that foster dreams of material possessions. We should realize that when we dream of winning the lottery we are really just dreaming of being god. Rather, we should pray for those situations that would bring us closest to the Lord.

8/30/15 - **Sermon on the Mount XVI: Be Alert As You Pray** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/29817/Sermon_on_the_Mount_XVI_Be_Alert_As_You_Pray_.mp3))

*We must pray rather than chant the Lord’s Prayer. This means that we will be alert to Satan and his schemes.*

If once the curtain were pulled back, and the spiritual world behind it came to view, it would expose to our spiritual vision a struggle so intense, so convulsive, sweeping everything within its range, that the fiercest batle fought on earth would seem, by comparison, a mere game. Not here, but up there – that is where the real conflict is engaged.. Our earthly struggle drones in its backlash.” Abraham Kuyper

I stressed that Satan is sneaking up the stairs, and that when he gets there he isn’t playing a children’s game. He will rip our guts out and make us eat them. I used illustrations from John Murray and his address in 1944 to incoming seminary students when he told them they were preparing for a battle that even those in combat would not know. I talked about the urgency with which I prepared Allison for facing pedophiles and told our congregation that sometimes I feel like I am talking to them in such a way. We must pray that we would be delivered from evil.

9/13/15 – **Sermon on the Mount XVII: Living the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30034/Living_the_Sermon_on_the_Mount.mp3))

Meditation on the Sermon on the Mount should shape and mold our worldviews. In this sermon we saw that a focus on the Sermon on the Mount should result in our being word-centered, Kingdom minded, and broken and blessed. Chris pointed out that fairy tales serve the purpose of: (1) Warning children about awful threats. (2) Teaching them gender roles. (3) Showing them that fairy tales resonate with the deepest intuitions of the human heart. See also [Jesus’s Sermon on the Mount vs. Trump’s Sermon in the Media.](http://chrisbrauns.com/2015/09/jesuss-sermon-on-the-mount-vs-trumps-sermon-in-the-media/)

9/20/15 – **Sermon on the Mount XVIII: The Grace Gauge (Matthew 6:14-15)** – (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30141/Sermon_on_the_Mount_XIX_The_Grace_Gauge.mp3))

Check Your Grace Gauge. The Grace You Show is an Indicator of Your Relationship with the Father

*The grace and forgiveness we extend to others is one of the best indicators or gauges of the state of our relationship with our heavenly Father*.

## Why does Jesus so emphasize the place of forgiveness in the Lord’s Prayer? Have you ever thought about this, within the Lord’s prayer, forgiveness is **the one positive action on our part explicitly mentioned by Jesus**.

Other than forgiveness, the Lord’s prayer is explicitly about asking God to act. Thy Kingdom come. . . Give us today our daily bread . . . .

For example, Why not say, “Thy Kingdom come,” even as we say, “We will share the gospel”?Why not say, “Give us our daily bread as we give back to your work?”

1. What surprises us the most is that Jesus did not teach His disciples to pray about love. In Matthew 22:37-40 Jesus answered that the Greatest Commandment is love for God and neighbor. Perhaps, the most common OT prayer stresses “love”
2. Notice: Christ transitioned so quickly to follow up comment on forgiveness that many were obliged to add the longer ending: “Thy Kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”
   1. The longer ending was not historically there.
   2. The blunt warning

*Christ is pointing to something very particular and specific about forgiveness*.

## Define Forgiveness

*Biblical forgiveness is a commitment by the one true God to pardon graciously those who repent and believe so that they are reconciled to him, although this commitment does not eliminate all consequences.*

Forgiveness – A commitment by the offended to pardon graciously the repentant from moral liability and to be reconciled to that person, although not all consequences are necessarily eliminated.

Forgiveness –

A **commitment** by the offended . . .

. . . to pardon **graciously** the repentant from moral liability . . .

. . . and to be **reconciled** to that person, . . .

although not all **consequences** are necessarily eliminated.

The Trajectory of Forgiveness / Necessary and Inevitable Implications of Being Forgiven by God

1. That we are completely transformed by the grace of God. We are born again. Theologians call this regeneration. To become a Christian is to be “born again.”
2. Those who are born again bear fruit
3. Some of the most conspicuous fruit is that we are willing to extend grace to others

*The reason Jesus particularly emphasized forgiveness is because forgiveness is one of the best indicators of grace in our lives. Forgiveness is a grace gauge.*

## Scripture is Clear that We Should Examine Ourselves to See if We Show Christian Fruit

## In conclusion, look at the gauge on your dash

* When you are offended, are you quickly willing to move beyond the offense?
* How do other people describe you?
* Are you someone who requires a long period of time to get beyond an offense?
* Is it possible that where forgiveness is concerned, you are running on empty?

You say, well, yes I am running on empty. But it’s not as easy as pulling up to the grace pump? How can I be renewed? Recognize the gravity of who you are as a sinner - - as one who offends God? And it is not just once in a while. We offend God’s holiness every day. You object - - I just don’t like the idea of offending God. Do you realize what you are saying when you make that point? You are saying that

9/27/15 – **Sermon on the Mount XIX: Focus on Fasting (Matthew 6:16-19)** (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30212/Focus_on_Fasting.mp3))

Respond to grave injustice in the world by fasting.

*One of the ways God’s people should respond to grave injustice in the world is to fast and pray for the gospel message to go out to all nations*. *A number of our flock responded to my sermon on* [*Matthew 6:16-18*](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%206.16-18) *and a challenge to focus on fasting. You can listen to the sermon* [*here*](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30212/Focus_on_Fasting.mp3)*.*

The black notebook to the right is the binder I use for some of my prayer notes for our church family. This week, I have crammed into it many response sheets from those who want prayer and/or are committing to fasting and praying on Tuesday. This was in response to the [sermon](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30212/Focus_on_Fasting.mp3) on 9/27/15.

The logic of my sermon developed as follows:

1. **I asked our people if a captain in the United States army was justified in “beating up: an Afghan leader** (one who the United States helped put in place) who sexually abused a young boy he had chained to his bed. ([See U.S. Soldiers told to Ignore Sexual Abuse of Boys by Afghan Allies](http://www.nytimes.com/2015/09/21/world/asia/us-soldiers-told-to-ignore-afghan-allies-abuse-of-boys.html)).
2. **We defined fasting** (per Lloyd-Jones) as voluntarily giving up a legitimate activity for the purpose of prayer and spiritual focus. Food is one obvious example but we might also choose to fast from media, screens, entertainment etc. The possibility of rewards and God answering our prayers should encourage us to do so.
3. **We reviewed Jesus’s warnings about fasting**. Don’t fast to look spiritual in front of people. Be careful not to do acts of righteousness with the applause of people in view ([Matthew 6:1](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%206.1)). Further, do not approach fasting as a “work” to earn or merit something from God.
4. **We reviewed examples of biblical occasions of fasting** ([2 Chronicles 20:3](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Chron%2020.3), [Ezra 8:21-23](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ezra%208.21-23), [Nehemiah 1:4](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Neh%201.4), [Acts 13:2-3](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2013.2-3), [Acts 14:21-24](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%2014.21-24). We concluded with Calvin that, ““Wherever men are to pray to God concerning any great matter it would be expedient to appoint fasting along with prayer.”
5. We then returned to the original question. How should we respond to the sexual abuse in Afghanistan? It isn’t really for us to know precisely what should have been done in that situation. What is far more important than whether or not we would hit an Afghan leader as a soldier is to consider if we are **so concerned about the cause of missions in the world that we fast and pray for the gospel to go out?** We should consider which  we believe would help more: (a) Punching someone (b) Proclaiming the gospel?
6. Bearing in mind that our heavenly Father who hears in secret will reward those who pray in secret ([Matthew 6:18](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%206.18)), **we were challenged to consider making a specific commitment to fast.**

I asked people to consider fasting during the daylight on Tuesday. I also encouraged our people to let our pastors know if they are fasting and praying and to share their prayer requests. Many responded.

Now let’s follow through. Let’s be praying people who cry out to God for justice.

10/4/15 - **Sermon on the Mount XX: Meditations on Money and Materialism** (Matthew 6:19-21) (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30385/Sermon_on_the_Mount_XX_Meditations_on_Money_and_Materialism.mp3))

Store up treasure in heaven.

In this sermon, we saw that materialism betrays a small view of the gospel and invests in those things which are only temporary. We thanked God for how we are involved in his work in Nepal.

Christian Smith and Michael O. Emerson: Six Facts About “Failed Generosity”[[2]](#footnote-2)

1. At least one out of five American Christians – 2-% of all U.S. Christians –give literally *nothing* to church, para-church, or nonreligious charities.
2. The vast majority of American Christians give *very little* to church, para-church, or nonreligious charities.
3. American Christians do not give their dollars evenly among themselves, but, rather, a small minority of generous givers among them contributes most of the total Christian dollars given.
4. Higher income Christians – like Americans generally – give *little to no more money* as a percentage of household income than lower income earning Christians.
5. Despite a massive growth of real per capital income over the 20th century, the average percentage share of income given by American Christians not only did not grow in proportion but actually *declined* slightly during this time period.
6. The vast majority of the money that American Christians do give to religion is spent in and for their own local communities of faith – little is spent on missions, development, and poverty relief outside of local congregations, particularly outside the United States, in ways that benefit people other than the givers themselves.

The below table was reviewed from John Stott.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Table. “Do Not Store Up Treasure on Earth”: What Jesus Doesn’t and Does Condemn in Matthew 6:19-20** (J.RW. Stott) | |
| **Jesus Doesn’t Condemn / Mean** | **Jesus Does Condemn / Mean** |
| A ban on material possessions; Scripture nowhere forbids private property | Extravagant and luxurious living |
| Saving for a rainy day; Scripture praises the ant for storing up food in season (Prov 6:6) and says that the person who doesn’t provide for his family is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim 5:8). | The hardheartedness which does not feel the colossal need of the world’s underprivileged people |
| We cannot enjoy good things (1 Tim 4:3, 1 Cor 10:31). | The foolish fantasy that a person’s life consists in the abundance of his possessions |
|  | The materialism that tethers our hearts to the earth |
| “In a word, to ‘lay up treasure on earth’ does not mean being provident (making sensible provision for the future) but being covetous (like misers who hoard and materialists who always want more). The is the real snare of which Jesus warns here. ‘Where the gospel is taught,’ wrote Luther, ‘and people seek to live according to it, there are two terrible plagues that always arise: false preachers who corrupt the teaching, and then, Sir Greed, who obstructs right living.” John R.W. Stott[[3]](#footnote-3) | |

10/11/15 - **Sermon on the Mount XXI: Meditations on Money and Materialism**, Matthew 6:19-21(Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30473/10.11.15_Sermon_on_the_Mount_XXI__Meditations_on_Money_and_Materialism_II.mp3))

If one symptom of materialism is investing in things which are only temporary, a second symptom is anxiety and worry. Far too many people who call themselves Christians would be willing to take a year off church for a million dollars. This shows that money is really the god of many rather than Christ. First Timothy 6:6-10 shows us that it’s a very dangerous thing to want to get rich.

Rather than believing that money can solve our problems, we should seek first the Kingdom. And when we are materialistic, we should not be surprised that we are anxious!

10/25/15 - **Sermon on the Mount XXII: Why is This Verse So Popular? (Matthew 7:1-6)**. (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30694/15.10.25_Sermon_on_the_Mount_XXII___Why_Is_This_Verse_So_Popular__.mp3))

Our culture is infatuated with Jesus’s admonition, “Judge not, that you be not judged ([Matthew 7:1-2](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%207.1-2)).” But, as I explained in Sunday’s [sermon](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30694/15.10.25_Sermon_on_the_Mount_XXII___Why_Is_This_Verse_So_Popular__.mp3), the reason this is a favorite saying may not be good news.

There are, arguably, two reasons, our culture so often quotes Jesus’s prohibition of making judgments. First, hypocritical judging, which is what Jesus warned against, is ugly. The person who presumes to know why another person suffers, or the motives of another’s heart, or another’s status with Christ, puts him or herself in the place of God. Jesus warned against such hypocrisy in the strongest possible terms ([Matthew 7:2](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%207.2)).

Of course, when Jesus warned, “Judge not, that you be not judged,” he did not mean that we are not to make reasoned moral judgments. After all, in this same context, Christ cautions that we should identify some as “dogs” and “pigs” so as to not see truth trampled in the filth ([Matthew 7:6](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%207.6)).

The second reason that our culture is so enamored with the concept of not judging is that many do not like the idea of judgment at all. “Judge not” means to some that not even God judges. Yet, the idea that God will not judge is patently false. The Bible consistently stresses that God is a God who *will* judge sin. Consider a small sampling of biblical examples of judgment.

If these examples of biblical judgment people do not make you uncomfortable, then maybe you are not engaging with this idea of God’s judgment. The judgment of a holy God is a sobering topic. It is so uncomfortable the reality is that many churches in North America speak little of God’s judgment. And, perhaps the reason many pastors won’t speak of judgment is the same reason Jesus admonition, “Judge not that you be not judged,” is the most popular saying in the Bible.

For biblical Christianity, there is no denying the reality of judgment. Some insist that the Old Testament presents God as a harsher judge. But this is inconsistent with the Bible. Look at the table above. Read Revelation 20-22.

Some counter, “Well, then I’m not sure if I want the Bible. I’m not sure that I want judgment at all.”

But the person who objects to God’s judgment *does* want judgment. All people do. Every sane person believes in judgment. You need only to go to a high school football game and see a bad call and see people express their indignation at injustice to know people believe in justice. Or, watch a political leader make a decision that affects the standard of living. People cry out for justice. We all want judgment if a loved one is harmed. We should!

The fact is that people who object against God’s judgment are okay with justice and judgment. They just want to dictate judgment on their own terms and that, says Jesus in [Matthew 7:1-2](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%207.1-2), is what we must not do. To insist on being the judge is a matter of pride. **Only God is worthy of rendering judgment.**

But then someone else will counter, “These examples of God’s judgment are harsh. Think of Sodom! Think of eternal hell. How can a God of such harsh judgment be loving?”

This is where we need to go to the middle of the above table and focus on the the Cross! On the Cross we see how God’s love and God’s judgment are both on display. John tells us ([1 John 4:10](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20John%204.10)) that the ultimate display of love is that Christ died for our sins. The reason he died, was to give Christ as the propitiation or atoning sacrifice for our sins.

For sure, one reason that our culture appreciates Jesus’s admonition to not be hypocritically judgmental is because such hypocrisy is so ugly and damaging. But, I fear, the greater reason so many quote [Matthew 7:1-2](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%207.1-2) is because they have misread it to mean even God does not judge. About this, unbelieving culture could not be more mistaken. God is just and he will judge sin. Those who do not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, will suffer God’s judgment eternally ([John 3:36](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%203.36), [Revelation 21:8](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2021.8)).

| TABLE. ONE PAGE OF JUDGMENT: SELECT BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF GOD’S JUDGMENT  *From Pastor Chris Brauns, The Red Brick Church, October 2015* | | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Example** | **Text** | **Comment / Summary** |
| The Fall / Adam & Eve’s Disobedience | Gen 3 | Adam and Eve rebelled against God and God pronounces a sentence of spiritual death and all the pain and heart ache of a fallen world. |
| The Noahic Flood | Gen 6-9 | When God destroyed everyone on earth except Noah and his family: the one family who had faith. |
| Sodom and Gomorrah | Gen 19:23-29 | God destroys the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness, though Lot is spared |
| The Passover | Exo 12 | God strikes dead the firstborn in Egypt except those covered by the lamb’s blood (Exodus 12:21-28). |
| The Golden Calf | Exo 32 | God sends the tribe of Levi to execute about 3,000 and more die from a plague because of their idolatry at the foot of Mt. Sinai. |
| So severe that even Cannabilism | Lev 26:14-35 | God warns that if Israel breaks covenant that the judgment will be so severe that there will even be cannibalism (Lev 26:29) |
| Adult Israel dies in wilderness | Num 14:20-38 | God vows that all of the adults of Israel (save Joshua and Caleb), who would not follow Moses into the Promised Land, will die. |
| Jericho | Josh 6 | The city of Jericho is completely devoted to destruction. |
| Jesus promises judgment | Matt 16:26-28 | Jesus warns that he will return and reward people according to what they have done. |
| **THE CROSS** | **2 Cor 5:21, 1 Pt 2:21, 1 Jn 4:10** | **God’s simultaneous demonstration of love & judgment. Love: Jesus died for sin. Judgment: Jesus received the punishment we deserve.** |
| Ananias and Saphira | Acts 5:1-11 | Ananias lie about their commitment to the Church and God strikes them dead. |
| Herod | Acts 12:23 | God strikes Herod dead while people are praising him for having the voice of a god. |
| Those who destroy the church | 1 Cor 3:17 | God warns that people who harm God’s temple (the church) will be destroyed. |
| Warning to N.T. Believers | 1 Cor 10:1-22 | Paul warns the church at Corinth that examples of O.T. judgment are warnings for our day as well as then. |
| Partakers of communion in unworthy manner | 1 Cor 11:27-34 | Paul explains that the reason some are sick and have died because they participated in communion in an unworthy manner. |
| Leaders / Teachers Warned | Luke 12:47; Jam 3:1; Heb 13:17 | Warnings that those in positions of responsibility have an increased accountability to Jesus when He returns. |
| The Judgment Seat of Christ | 2 Cor 5:9-10; Rom 14:10-12 | When Christ judges Christians resulting in rewards for some and a sense of loss for others. |
| The Great White Throne Judgment | Rev 20:11-15 | Follows the Millennial Kingdom and is the occasion when the unsaved of all the world will receive their punishment of eternal hell. |
| Jesus’s final words in Revelation | Revelation 22:12-13, 16, 20 | Jesus promises that He will *soon* return and that when he does he will dispense punishment to those whose who do not know Him. |

In light of these verses, followers of Jesus should heed these imperatives:

1. **Don’t hypocritically judge**. Be under the Word. Have your mind rinsed with the Word and consistently evaluate yourself under the Scriptures.
2. **Do be appropriately discerning.** Life in a fallen world requires the discernment to identify those who are not willing to be helped or those who should not be in positions of leadership.
3. **Do be warned that judgment awaits.** First, we must all give an account to the Lord for our lives. And those who do not know Christ will spend eternity apart from Him. Christians will all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (2 Cor 5:9-10).

*Writing this after I preached the sermon, but Chuck Colson helps shed light on culture’s reading of “Judge not” when he talks about how much our culture says it hates judgments. “Tolerance has been elevated over truth,” says Colson*. [[4]](#footnote-4)

11/1/15 - **Sermon on the Mount XXIII**: The Paradox of Following Christ, Matthew 7:12-14 (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30871/Sermon_on_the_Mount_XXIII_The_Paradox_Of_Following_Christ.mp3))

Christ calls us to a distinct path - - but such a beautiful one. In contrast, the gods of this age - - whether the Kantian ethic of duty and Adolf Eichmann, or communism and the Khmer Rouge, or the god of comfort and convenience with going on 60 million babies legally murdered - - these gods are hideously evil. In comparing these two paths, we must see that we are left with a choice, and the choice is not an easy one. Rather, one must decide to follow Christ into a way that is constricted and pinched. While it is true that heaven and the New Earth awaits, in this life, there are crosses to be carried. But in so doing we will know the fellowship of suffering with Christ and be part of that great team.

The “paradox of the Christian life” is that following Christ is both hard and easy. Jesus tells us both. See C.S. Lewis in *Mere Christianity*.

11/8/15 **- Sermon on the Mount XXIV: The Sober Reality of Wolves**, Matthew 7:15-23 (Listen [here](http://s3.amazonaws.com/static.sermondrop.com/theredbrickchurch/podcasts/30918/Sermon_on_the_Mount_XXIV_The_Sober_Reality_of_Wolves.mp3))

Have the stomach to deal with wolves.

*Jesus begins to conclude the Sermon on the Mount and he wants to make sure that the lines are very clearly drawn. And he points out that there will come ravenous wolves from amongst them who will devour things.*

*The sober reality of “wolves” is that they are real and destroy lives, yet not many people - - not many churches - - have the stomach to hear Jesus’s “wolf warnings.”*

A survey of the New Testament shows that God’s people are warned about wolves in many different places: Matthew 10:16, John 10:7-14, Acts 20:28-31, 1 Timothy 1:6, 3 John 9, Jude, Revelation 2-3, the churches at Ephesus, Pergamum

Exposition: (1) **Wolves** are **ravenous** – Child abuse, Thieves, sow discord, close down churches. (2) **Wolves don’t look like wolves** – Jesus says they come in “sheep’s clothing.” No one thought the Fox Lake detective was a wolf. (3) We **recognize** **wolves** by their fruit (not by how long you have known them): **Doctrinal** – Church is the pillar and buttress of the Truth. The gospel is foolishness to those who are perishing. It is the smell of death. They hate it. 1 Tim 3:14-16. 2 Corinthians 2:14-17. **Legalists** – Titus – “especially the circumcision group” (1:10): Those who elevate tradition above true application of doctrine. **Antinomians** –Jude 4, 1 Corinthians , Those who **want to lead** but aren’t qualified (see 1 Tim 1:6-7), **Dividers** – Jude, mess up your love feasts (4) **Most wolves don’t know they are wolves** - Many have false assurance: they think they are Christians when they are not.

11/15/15, **Sermon on the Mount XXV: Deciding to Be Astonished - Matthew 5-7**,

*In the end, we have a choice. Will we be astonished by the SOTM? Or will we walk away sad like the rich young ruler who enjoyed the world more than the loveliness of Christ?*

The SOTM concludes with Jesus giving people a choice: build your house on the rock by hearing Jesus’s words. We stressed that we need fresh decisions to follow Christ.

The sermon developed by: (1) Giving the thesis: make a fresh decision to follow Christ to be astonished. (2) The Bible is full of examples: Abraham, Joseph, Ruth, Esther, Shadrach, Jonathan . . . but life is full of examples whether a boy making the decision to ask for wisdom or the going to a Bible study after losing a wife. (3) We reviewed highlights of what Jesus challenged us to do in the sermon on the Mount.

## So you say, “Well what does it look like to be astonished at Jesus?

*It means to lean into Jesus’s teaching and follow him even when it looks as though it will never work. I reviewed some of my notes on these 25 sermons.*

1. Meditate on the hope of the Kingdom of God.
2. Be broken to be blessed.
3. Dream of Rewards
4. Shake Your Salt all around and be light.
5. Call grudges what they are.
6. Stick a needle in my own because porno lust will make me die.
7. Where human sexuality is concerned, there is an analogy with a dolphin . . .they beautifully fulfill a purpose, but if that purpose is altered, they die.
8. Pray - - don’t chant the Lord’s Prayer
9. Check your grace gauge: The grace you show is an indictor of your heart.
10. Respond to grace injustice in the world by fasting.
11. Store up treasure in heaven.
12. Don’t hypocritically judge
13. Do be warned that judgment awaits
14. Have the stomach to deal with wolves

There are always objections to making fresh decisions to follow Christ: (1) Everyone does - - but the reality is that everyone doesn’t. (2) No one does - - pride gets in the way and if you’re too proud then we can’t help you. (3) My situation is too mundane. So was Ruth’s! (4) I’ve already made the decision. But you never make this decision just once.

1. Ed Stetzer, “Pornification: Just the Facts,” *Christianity Today*, August 2011, http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2011/august/pornification-just-facts.html. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Christian Smith and Michael O. Emerson, *Passing the Plate: Why American Christians Don’t Give Away More Money* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 29–56. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. John R.W. Stott, *The Message on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7): Christian Counter Culture*, ed. John R.W. Stott, The Bible Speaks Today (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1978), 155. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Charles Colson, “The Good Life,” in *Life, God, and Other Small Topics: Conversations from Socrates and the City*, ed. Eric Metaxas (New York: Plume, 2011), 188–189. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)