

DIRECTIVE FOR DISCIPLESHIP

(Studies In The Sermon on The Mount

1st in the Series.

Text: Matthew 5:1-2

Introduction

A cartoon in the New Yorker some years ago showed a mother addressing her daughter: "I do hope you won't come back from College with any ideas."

A great deal of christian education seems designed to keep that principal. But now and then in our church life we start thinking in a way that makes our whole personality vibrate. With a wrenching of mental gears we pull out of an old rut and seize a new idea of take a new direction of life.

I hope this happens as we study together Christ's Sermon on the Mount and learn the meaning of citizenship in God's Kingdom.

The Sermon on the Mount is the teaching of Jesus recorded in Matthew chapter 5-7. It is shorter than the average Sunday sermon. Three and a half newspaper columns will hold its contents. But the human mind cannot hold all its thoughts.

Actually this is probably more than a single sermon. Some of the material appears in the shorter "Sermon on the Plain" in Luke 6:20-49. Other parts are scattered through Luke and Mark in various settings.

Hence most biblical scholars say that Matthew and Luke started with the same core of materials - a brief set of teachings in poetry which Jesus gave his disciples. Then Matthew, who liked to organize his materials topically, added many related sayings of Jesus that originally came from different situations. Sometimes if we can discover these situations, we can understand Jesus better.

As I have said, Matthew has carefully outlined his gospel. In his story of the Baptism of Jesus, Matthew shows us Jesus realising that the hour has struck, that the call to action has come, and that He must go forth on His mission. In the story of the Temptations Matthew shows us Jesus deliberately choosing the method He will use to carry out His mission, and ~~the will of God~~ deliberately rejecting methods which He knew to be against the will of God. If a man sets his hand to a great ~~task~~ task, he needs his helpers, his assistants, his staff. So Matthew goes on to show us Jesus selecting the men who will be His fellow-workers and His fellow-helpers. But if helper and assistants are to do their work intelligently and effectively they must first have instruction. And now, in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew shows us Jesus instructing his disciples in the message which was His and which they were to take to men. In Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount this becomes even clearer. In Luke the Sermon ~~th~~ on the Mount follows immediately after what we might call the official choosing of the twelve. (Luke 6:13ff)

Many Bible teachers speak of the "The Five Books of Matthew."

1. There is the introduction of a wonderful sunrise (the birth of Christ)
2. ~~W~~ wonderful sunset - the account of the resurrection of Christ.

And in between the ~~introduction~~ ^{sunrise} and the sunset are five narratives. Each narrative being followed by an appropriate collection of the "sayings of Jesus." These five narrative-teaching units conclude in each case with a repeated formula: "And when Jesus had finished these sayings...."

Perhaps Matthew had in mind the Five books of Moses ~~when he~~ which we now call the "Pentateuch"; when he wrote his gospel.

The sermon is the first of these collections of "the saying of Jesus." The other four, if you wish to find them, are:

- a. Teachings on apostleship (9:36-10:42)

(7:28)

The sermon is the first of these collections of "the sayings of Jesus". The other four, if you wish them, are:

- a) teaching about apostleship (9:36-10:42)
- b) teachings about the secrecy of the Message of Christ (13:1-53)
- c) teachings about the beginnings of the Church (17:22-18:35)
- d) teachings about the Last Judgment (chs. 23-25)

Then what shall we say of the Sermon on the Mount, we who live today in our strange contemporary world? Maybe that is precisely the question which Christ asks of us: "What do you think?" That again and again was his way with men. Shall we say that this directive is revelation? Men cannot climb to God, though God can descend to men. Human wisdom cannot "find out" God. All we know about God must come as he chooses to reveal himself - not through philosophy (its concepts are too thin, and too much of man's mind), not through science (it uses only a part of the mind, the analytic mind, to examine only a part of the world, the measurable world), but through events; and centrally through the total Event of Christ - his teachings, life, death, and resurrection. So the sermon we may say is the breakthrough of divine light for those who would be Christ's disciples.

Now let's start our study by looking at vses ³ ~~and~~ 2 of chapter 5.

READ VS. ~~1-2~~ 1-2

In these two introductory verse there are three clues to the real significance of the Sermon on the Mount.

(1) Jesus began to teach WHEN HE HAD SAT DOWN. When a Jewish Rabbi was teaching officially he sat to teach. We still speak of a professor's chair in a college situation. Often a Rabbi gave instruction when he was standing or strolling about; but his really official teaching was done when he had taken his seat. So, then, the very ~~int~~ idea that Jesus sat down to teach His disciples is the indication that this teaching is central, that it is official, that it is the very essence of His teaching.

(2) Matthew goes on to say that HE OPENED HIS MOUTH AND TAUGHT THEM, SAYING: This phrase HE OPENED HIS MOUTH -- is not simply a roundabout way of saying HE SAID. In Greek the phrase has a double significance.

(a) In Greek it is used of a solemn, grave and dignified utterance. It is used, for example, of the saying of an oracle. It is the natural preface for a most important teaching.

(b) It is used of a person's words when he is really opening his heart and pouring out his concerns. It is used of personal teachings with all barriers down. Again the very use of this phrase indicates that the material in the Sermon on the Mount is no chance piece of teaching. It the grave and solemn utterance of the core of things; it is the opening of Jesus's heart and mind to the men who were to be His right-hand men in His mission.

(3) ~~The~~ Now let's look at the rest of that 2nd verses. He opened his mouth and TAUGHT THEM SAYING. In Greek there are two past tenses of the verb. There is AORIST tense, and the aorist tense expresses one particular action, done and completed in past time. ^{FOR EXAMPLE} In the sentence, "He shut the gate," SHUT would be an aorist in Greek because it describes one completed action in past time.

Also, there is the imperfect tense, and the imperfect tense describes repeated, continuous, action in past time. FOR EXAMPLE, in the sentence, "IT WAS HIS CUSTOM TO GO TO CHURCH EVERY SUNDAY," in Greek IT WAS HIS CUSTOM would be expressed by a single verb in the imperfect tense, because it describes continuous and often-repeated action in the past.

Now the point that I am trying to make is that in the Greek of this sentence which we are studying, the verb TAUGHT is not an aorist, but an imperfect and therefore the translation should be: THIS IS WHAT HE USED TO TEACH THEM."

Matthew has said as plainly as Greek will say it that the Sermon on the mount is not one sermon of Jesus, given at one particular time and on one particular occasion; it is the summary, and the essence, and the core of all that Jesus continuously taught His disciples.

The Sermon on the Mount is greater even than we think. Matthew in his introduction(vs. 1-2) wishes us to see that it is the official teaching of Jesus; that it is the opening of Jesus' whole mind to His disciples; that it is the summary of the teaching which Jesus continuously gave to his inner circle. The Sermon on the Mount is nothing less than the concentrated memory of many hours of heart to heart communion between the disciples and their Master.

Now we are ready to discuss the Beatitudes -- that is -- for next week.