



Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States



The Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew

Chapter 5

Bishop Youssef



Introduction

In This Chapter We will Study:

- The Sermon On The Mount
- The Theme, "the Kingdom of Heaven"
- The Characteristics of those in the kingdom, and their relationship to the world



An Overview

- Beginning in this chapter, St. Matthew records the "Sermon On The Mount"
- The theme of the sermon is "The kingdom of heaven" (Mt 4:17; 5:3,10,19-20; 6:10,33; 7:21)
- Jesus began with "The Beatitudes," describing the character and blessedness of those who would be citizens of the kingdom (1-12) and illustrating their relation to world as salt and light (13-16)
- Clarifying His own relationship with the Law, Jesus stressed how our righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees (17-20) following with a series of contrasts between the oral interpretations of the Law and conduct expected of His disciples (21-48)



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- This sermon is the first of the five major homilies by Jesus which appear in the Holy Gospel according to St. Matthew
 1. The Sermon on the Mount Matthew 5:1-7:29
 2. The Missionary Discourse Matthew 10:5-11:1
 3. The Parables Discourse Matthew 13:1-53
 4. The Homily to the Church Matthew 18:1-19:1
 5. The Eschatological Discourse Matthew 24:1-26:1

eschatology = etymology from the Greek *eschatos* = uttermost + *logos* = word or discourse; usually interpreted as the branch of theology or biblical explanation concerned with the end of the world



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- The Old Covenant Law of Moses was meant to be a tutor and a guide to teach the people about holiness and prepare them for the coming of the Messiah
- The holy prophets of God promised that the coming of the Messiah would usher in a new age in which a new covenant would be formed between God and His people and a new law with new blessings would be written on their hearts (Jer 31:31-34)
- The Sermon on the Mount begins with the introduction of this "new law" "the Beatitudes or Blessings of the New Covenant Law
- It is the Son of God's spiritual plan for a radical transformation of hearts and lives



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- We gather from Luke 6:12 that the Lord passed the night in the mountain in prayer; in the morning He chose and ordained the twelve; He then came down to the plain, where He found a vast multitude, whom He taught
- The mountain is thought to be the Horns of Hattin, about seven miles south of Capernaum, near the Sea of Galilee
- He went up into a mountain that He might have the greater advantage of speaking, so as to be heard by that great gathering of people which followed Him
- Setting was the usual posture of public teachers among the Jews, and among many other people



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- Each of the nine beatitudes pronounces a blessing upon those who have certain characteristics
- The word blessed means more than happy
- Happiness comes from earthly things; blessedness comes from God
- It is not bestowed randomly; a reason follows each beatitude
- Poor in spirit - One who is deeply sensible of his spiritual poverty and wretchedness
- Such Christ pronounces happy, because there is but a step between them and that kingdom which is here promised



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- Christ came to preach repentance, to induce people to mourn over their sins and to forsake them
- Those who feel their spiritual poverty, mourn after God, lamenting the iniquity that separated them from the fountain of blessedness
- The sorrow of the world produces death, Judas Iscariot vs. the Prodigal Son
- In Him the weary and heavy-ladened soul shall find peace and comfort Matthew 11:28-30; and the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, shall sustain them here, John 14:26-27, and in heaven all their tears shall be wiped away, Revelation 21:4



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- The first two beatitudes deal with how we see ourselves and in how we approach God
- The third one is more involved with how we deal with others
- Meekness is patience in the reception of injuries, gentleness, and it is the opposite of sudden anger, of malice opposed to the proud and ambitious
- Meekness produces peace
- Never mistake gentleness with weakness
- *The earth* or, the land
- This expression was commonly used by the prophets to signify the land of Canaan; Canaan as the type of all blessings
- It is the heavenly land
- The especial reference is to the Messiah's kingdom, of which the land of Canaan was a type



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- *Hunger and thirst*, here, are expressive of strong desire
- Nothing would better express the strong desire which we ought to feel to obtain righteousness than hunger and thirst
- No needs are so keen, none so imperiously demand supply, as these
- *The righteousness* that comes from the forgiveness of sins
- Those who show mercy to others shall obtain it
- *The merciful*, those who, instead of resenting injury, are ready to forgive, shall obtain the divine mercy
- The fifth petition of the Lord's prayer implies that we must forgive if we expect to be forgiven (Mt 6:12)



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- That is, whose minds, motives, and principles are pure; who seek not only to have the external actions correct, but who desire to be holy in heart, and who are so
- Man looks on the outward appearance, but God looks on the heart
- Not with the natural eye, but the spiritual vision; by faith
- In the pure heart the Lord will dwell and his presence will be recognized, John 14:23
- The men who, in the name of the Prince of Peace, go forth to proclaim peace and good will among men
- Christ is the great Peacemaker
- All those who endeavor to promote peace are like Him, and are worthy to be called His children



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- Christ pronounces a blessing on those who are persecuted, not for misdeeds, but for righteousness
- If, in the honest effort to be Christians others persecute and revile us, we are to consider this as a blessing
- It is an evidence that we are the children of God, and that He will defend us
- These shall have the kingdom
- Doubtless these words have sustained and cheered many martyrs
- That spiritual kingdom, explained Matthew 3:2, and that kingdom of glory which is its counterpart and consequence



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- Reproach you; call you by evil and condescending names; mock you because you are Christians
- The persecution mentioned in verse 10 comprehends all outward acts of violence
- This verse signifies legal persecutions and public accusations,
- Thus, they said of Jesus that He was a Samaritan and had a devil, John 8:48; that He was mad, John 10:20; and thus they reviled and mocked Him on the cross, Matthew 27:39-44
- But, being reviled, He reviled not again 1 Peter 2:23; and thus being reviled, we should bless 1 Corinthians 4:12;
- We ought to imitate His example, and even to suffer for his sake, Philippians 1:29



The Beatitudes (5:1-12)

- The crown of martyrdom has been thought to be the brightest that any of the redeemed shall wear; and hence many of the early Christians sought to become martyrs, and threw themselves in the way of their persecutors, that they might be put to death
- The reason why they may justly rejoice is given: Great is your reward in heaven
- Isaiah is said to have been sawed apart; Jeremiah was thrown into a dungeon and threatened with death; Elijah was hunted by Ahab and Jezebel

Believers Are Salt and Light (5:13-16)



- Salt preserves from corruption
- The disciples of Christ preserve the world from general corruption
- Whatever becomes utterly corrupted is doomed to be destroyed
- Salt is worthless if it has lost its qualities
- It preserves no longer
- It is fit only to be cast out and trodden under foot

Believers Are Salt and Light (5:13-16)



- This being the distinctive title which our Lord appropriates to Himself (Jn 1:4,9; 3:19; Jn 8:12; 9:5; 12:35,36)
- It is applied here by our Lord to His disciples only as they shine with His light upon the world
- The doctrines that He taught them, will be the means of diffusing the light of life throughout the universe
- Anciently cities, for the sake of defense, were placed on hills
- Such cities are seen from afar
- So must the church give forth its light
- It would be foolishness to light a lamp and put it under a bushel measure

Believers Are Salt and Light (5:13-16)



- Jesus proceeded here to show them that the very reason why they were enlightened was that others might also see the light, and be benefited by it
- When people light a candle, they do not conceal the light, but place it where it may be of use
- As the sun is lighted up in the firmament of heaven to diffuse its light and heat freely to every inhabitant of the earth
- As the lamp is not set under the basket, but placed upon the lamp-stand that it may give light to all in the house
- Thus let every follower of Christ diffuse the light of heavenly knowledge, and the warmth of Divine love through the whole circle of their acquaintance

Believers Are Salt and Light (5:13-16)



- Christ is the Light; we will shine reflected light if we walk in His light
- If we give forth light it will honor God
- Our religion cannot be concealed
- If it does not manifest in the life, it does not exist
- If we hide our Christian knowledge or experience is to betray our trust and to render our lives useless
- Good actions will be seen and will lead people to honor God

Christ Fulfills the Law (5:17-20)



- It was important for our Savior as He enters on His work to state what he came to do
- The preceding verses were so opposed to the teachings of the scribes and Pharisees that some might assert that He was a destroyer of the law
- He replies that He has not come to destroy it, but to fulfill it
- He does not say that He has come to maintain it
- To fulfill it is to complete its purpose
- He was the end of the law
- “Verily I say unto you”, This formula occurs thirty times in Matthew
- Jesus Christ teaches the instability of all visible things

Christ Fulfills the Law (5:17-20)



- The heaven which we see and is so glorious, and the earth which we inhabit and love, shall pass away
- The things which are seen are temporal and are for a time
- The things which are not seen are eternal
- Jot means the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet, while tittle refers to a simple turn by which one letter is distinguished from another
- Till implies that after the great events of Christ's life, and the establishment of His kingdom, the old dispensation, as a dispensation of the letter and yoke of bondage, as a system of types and shadows, will pass away, and has passed away (Eph 2:15; Col 2:14; Heb 8:13); while the spirit and substance of the law, i.e. love to God and man, will last forever."

Christ Fulfills the Law (5:17-20)



- The Pharisees were remarkable for making a distinction between weightier and lighter matters in the law, Matthew 22:36
- Christ shows that the spirit of obedience does not seek to make such distinction
- The Pharisees and scribes' righteousness consisted in outward observances of the ceremonial and traditional law
- They claimed to be the teachers and examples of righteousness, but they lacked the humble spirit of true obedience
- Our righteousness, then if it is to contrast with the outward and formal righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, must be inward, vital, and spiritual
- Without a righteousness exceeding that of the Pharisees, we cannot be members of it

Murder Begins in the Heart (5:21-26)



- Jesus illustrates what He meant by that better righteousness by showing that the common opinions of the scribes were incorrect
- He gives the law a new form to adapt it to His kingdom
- It takes a new, a deeper, a more spiritual shape and meaning
- He is referring to one of the ten commandments
- Christ, the Divine Lawgiver, modifies it
- He therefore spoke here and elsewhere as having authority, and not as the scribes
- Christ now gives the true sense, and explains the deep reach, of the commandment
- Jesus goes back of the murderous act, and forbids the anger and the reproachful words that precede it and are likely to lead it

Murder Begins in the Heart (5:21-26)



- He places the murderous heart on the level of actual murder
- Raca from the Hebrew rak, to be empty
- It signifies a vain, empty, worthless fellow
- The council is the Sanhedrin, the highest court of Israel
- It had seventy members
- Hell fire in the Greek language is the Gehenna of fire
- The term Gehenna arose from the valley of Hinnom, south of Jerusalem, where the Canaanites burned human sacrifices to Moloch
- After the return of the Jews from the Captivity they made it a place of defilement, where the waste of the city was thrown and burned
- The name was applied to the place of future punishment by the Jews

Murder Begins in the Heart (5:21-26)



- The Pharisees were intent only on the external act in worship
- They looked not at all to the internal state of the mind
- Our Savior taught a different doctrine
- It was of more consequence to have the heart right than to perform the outward act
- One must use all means to reconcile
- Acknowledge the offence
- Ask for forgiveness
- This shows, that acts of love and friendship are preferable to sacrifices
- If one is guilty of wrongs to his fellow-man cannot offer acceptable worship of God

Murder Begins in the Heart (5:21-26)



- Literal interpretation: The debtor was cast into prison and was held until the debt was paid, and if it were not, he remained in prison until he died
- Spiritual meaning: The Lord would warn us to make everything right before it is too late
- Before the judgment there is a chance; after it there is nothing but payment
- St. Augustine says:
“We are enjoined to yield to God, and to be well-disposed towards Him, in order that we may be reconciled to Him, from whom by sinning we have turned away, so that He can be called our adversary”

Murder Begins in the Heart (5:21-26)



He also says:

“Whoever, therefore, while in this way, *i.e.* in this life, shall not have been reconciled to God by the death of His Son, will be delivered to the judge by Him, for “the Father judges no man, but hath delivered all judgment to the Son;”

“His law and divine Scripture, which has been given us for this life, that it may be with us in the way, which we must not contradict, lest it deliver us to the judge, but which we ought to submit to quickly. For no one knows when he may depart out of this life”

<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/npnf106.v.ii.xi.html>

Adultery in the Heart (5:27-30)



- The Jewish rabbis held that a man was guiltless who did not commit the act
- Christ, as He always did, lays the laws upon the heart
- If it is impure, full of unholy desires, one is guilty
- It is our duty to keep the heart pure
- We are not to suppose, from the word here used "adultery" that our Lord means to restrict the breach of this commandment to married persons
- The expressions, "whosoever looketh," seem clearly to extend the range of this commandment to all forms of impurity, and were intended for all, whether married or unmarried

Adultery in the Heart (5:27-30)



- The eye that gives a lustful look
- Anything that tempts to sin, whether thoughts within, friends, or surroundings
- Cast far from you what would lead to sin
- Better to suffer deep mortification by self-denial than to be judged worthy of hell
- Victory over the desires of the heart, must be attended with painful exertions
- But it must be done
- St. Augustine says, “certainly, there is need of great courage in order to cut off one’s members”

Marriage Is Sacred and Binding (5:31-32)



- The divorce laws were very lax among the Jews
- A man could put away his wife for any cause (Mt 19:8)
- Moses directed a legal letter of divorcement (Deut 24:1)
- Christ positively forbids divorce except for unchastity
- Marriage is a divine institution, and the obligation is for life (Mt 19:3-9; Rom 7:1-3; 1 Cor 7:10-17)
- Those who are divorced for any cause except the single one of adultery, if they marry again, are, according to the Scriptures, living in adultery

Jesus Forbids Oaths (5:33-37)



- Oaths is found in Leviticus 19:12, Deuteronomy 23:23
- The Jews held that this only prohibited swearing falsely and by the name of God
- They had introduced a number of oaths in common conversation
- For example, they would swear by the temple, by the head, by heaven, by the earth
- This was meant to condemn swearing of every kind and on every occasion
- One was God's throne, the second His footstool, Jerusalem the city of the Messiah King, all too holy for profanation

Jesus Forbids Oaths (5:33-37)



- But in swearing by our own head and the like, the objection lies in their being "beyond our control," and therefore profanely assumed to have a stability which they have not
- A simple statement is all Christ permits
- Indeed, it makes one doubt the truth of him who was to confirm every statement by oath

Go the Second Mile (5:38-42)



- This command is found in Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20, and Deuteronomy 19:21 which obliged the offender to suffer the same injury he had committed
- Jesus does not forbid the judicial application of the law, but personal revenge, such as was common among the Jews
- Instead of turning upon those who injure us, and becoming a party to personal broils, it is the duty of Christians to suffer meekly
- This must be the Christian spirit, the great law of love, which endures all things (1 Cor 13:7)
- This is not a code to be slavishly observed in the letter, but its spirit must always be preserved

Go the Second Mile (5:38-42)



- Every where our blessed Lord shows the utmost condemnation of such litigations as tended to destroy brotherly kindness and charity
- The cloak is the outer and more costly garment
- This overcoat was not allowed to be retained over night as a pledge from the poor because they used it for a bed covering
- Better to give it up, too, than to engage in legal actions
- We are great gainers when we lose only our money, or other property, and risk not the loss of our souls, by losing the love of God and man

Go the Second Mile (5:38-42)



- In those days there were no stages, railroad trains, postal lines, or regular means of conveyance
- It was common for officers traveling to impress men to assist them on the route
- It was a necessary, but oppressive, exaction
- Christ directs to yield the service, and double it rather refuse it
- It is better to give sometimes to an undeserving person than to turn away one who is really in need
- This is the general rule
- We are not to turn away or deny him who asks us

Love Your Enemies (5:43-48)



- The command to love our neighbor was a law of God, Leviticus 19:18
- The Jews gave the command a very limited application
- The parable of the Good Samaritan is Christ's application (Lk 10:30-37)
- It embraces any one so near us as to need and to receive our acts of kindness
- Love the enemy is the most inspirational piece of morality ever given to man
- It is the fundamental law of Christ's kingdom
- His own earthly life is its perfect application
- The enemies are to be conquered by love, John 3:16

Love Your Enemies (5:43-48)



- Love will return blessing for cursing, good will for hating, prayers for evil treatment and persecution
- Christ on the cross prayed for His enemies (Lk 23:34); so did Stephen (Acts 7:60)
- The word "bless" here means to "speak well of" or "speak well to"
- But who can obey it? None but he who has the mind of Christ
- Pray for those who are making continual war upon you
- One cannot change that wicked man's heart
- God alone can change it



Love Your Enemies (5:43-48)

- We are God's children when we have the spirit of our Father
- We are called His children because in doing good to enemies, we resemble God
- We are not if we have the spirit of the world
- Our Father above sends blessing, the rain, and the sunshine, on the just and the unjust
- He loves all, and even sent His Son to a wicked world because He loved (Jn 3:16)
- In loving those who love you, there is no evidence of superior principle; the worst of men will do this: even a tax collector will go that length
- God has no enemy which He hates but sin; we should have no other

Love Your Enemies (5:43-48)



- The Jews usually disdained to speak to a Gentile, a publican, or a sinner, but would greet orthodox Jews
- Even the Gentiles, the heathen nations, had enough of love for this
- Unless the disciples could love better than the Jews, they would be on a level with publicans and heathen
- The Savior concludes this part of the discourse by commanding His disciples to be "perfect."
- To carry out fully this great law of love would lift man to the Divine standard of perfection
- This must be the aim of life

Love Your Enemies (5:43-48)



- We have before us as a pattern for the perfect God; we have the Divine perfection embodied in Christ
- It will require a constant struggle while in the flesh to come near so high an ideal, but it must be our continual aim
- This does not teach such sanctification that we cannot sin, nor that we, here on earth, attain absolute perfection, but we have placed before us, as a model, the perfect ideal, and we will constantly ascend higher by striving to attain it



Conclusion

- What was Jesus trying to get through to us in verses 1-12?
- What groundwork was He building for us?
- What did He mean by giving us these impossible standards?
- Think of the disciples. They had never heard such guidelines. Here was their beloved teacher telling them to live in a way that was the opposite of the lifestyles of most Romans and Pharisees. It was a radical move on Jesus' part. Did he really think they could actually follow these guidelines?



Conclusion

- What are two spiritual responsibilities of God's people living in the world?
- What was Jesus' relation to the Law of Moses?
- How can our righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees?
- How did the teaching in the Old Testament ("you have heard") compare to what Jesus taught ("but I say unto you")?
- Why would one be persecuted because of righteousness