

require that you seek help. If so, do it. Jesus wants these things out of our life because in the end they harm us, others, and our relationship with God.

Exodus 34:18-35; Psalms 40, 54; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-13

### **Saturday, May 14**

Matthew 5:38-48 *“If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?”* (v.46)

As we wrap up our week of looking at this section of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges us to radical love. He wants us to love in a way very different from the world around us. Jesus calls his disciples to sacrificial love.

This is not the normal way society operates. Most of the time we love conditionally. We are often temperamental and fickle and love as long as it is convenient. Just look at the wake of broken families and relationships that litter the landscape of our society.

Jesus reminds us that it is in sacrificing that love strengthens and reveals the love of God. The early church stunned the world with what? Buildings? Music? Speakers? No! The world was stunned by their amazing love. I don't think that's the first thing the world thinks of when it thinks of "Christians" today. We are meant to respond with the love of God in every situation. That is not only the teaching of Jesus, but also the example he gave us as he bore the cross on Golgotha. How can we love radically and faithfully today?

Exodus 40:18-38; Psalm 55; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12

*by Chris Findley*

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## **Good News Daily**

**Volume XXII**

**May 8-14, 2022**

**Number 19**

### **Sunday, May 8**

Mark 6:30-44 *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.* (v.34a NIV)

Chapter 6 of Mark is a roller-coaster chapter. It opens with Jesus being rejected in his hometown. It rises from there to the excitement of the new ministry of the twelve. Then it dives to the execution of John the Baptist and rises again when the disciples return full of excitement about their ministry. It must have been an exhilarating and draining time. Therefore, Jesus suggests they take some time away. But the rest doesn't come; their vacation is interrupted.

I would have been livid. I don't like interruptions and I don't like changes to plans. If the people had come to me, I would have asked them to come again tomorrow. We all need rest, don't we? But Jesus "had compassion on them." Out the depth of his compassion and the severity of their need, Jesus speaks.

This week we're going to walk through part of the Sermon on the Mount. I pray that as we read it, we remember that Jesus' compassion is still beyond reason and he is the only answer sufficient for what we really need. Like the crowd, the sound of our approach isn't an interruption to Jesus' otherwise busy schedule. He longs for us to seek him out.

Exodus 28:1-4, 30-38; Psalms 63, 98; 1 John 2:18-29

### **Monday, May 9**

Matthew 5:1-10 *“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.”* (v.6)

I thought it would be easy to find a diamond for my wife. All I needed was a pretty stone, a pretty mount, and an acceptable credit card. But I learned about color. Not all stones are white. Then I learned about cut. How a stone is cut makes a big difference. And clarity? The clearer the stone, the better. When I see her ring, do I remember these details? No. But knowing them helped me be wise in my choice.

The Sermon on the Mount deserves careful examination. Many of us read it from a distance, like glancing at a diamond. We love its words, but we need to examine its implications for our lives.

These first 10 verses of this first extended teaching of Jesus are nothing short of startling. The poor inherit the kingdom? The meek will inherit the earth? What strange teaching! Realize we are not called to be mourners or poor or persecuted. None of these produce blessing in and of themselves. Ra-

ther, they show the sovereignty of our Lord which gives us hope in our poverty, joy in our sadness, and confidence in our aching desire for the things of God.

Exodus 32:1-20; Psalms 41, 52; Colossians 3:18—4:18

## **Tuesday, May 10**

Matthew 5:11-16 *“In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.”* (v.16)

After the beatitudes, which describe not only present comfort but future hope, Jesus tells the disciples how they are to live. They are to live like salt. They are to shine like light. But why did Jesus use these metaphors?

If you had lived in first century Israel, you would have used salt primarily as a preserver. Meat that has been salted and cured will keep without refrigeration. Today, beef jerky is a holdover from this principle. Jesus is telling them that they are to be preservers and keepers of what is good. He warns them not to lose their saltiness; they have an important job to do.

Light was equally a very strong metaphor. Light was valuable and symbolized the revelation of God. Jesus says, “You are the light of the world.” You will reveal to the world the love of the father. He even tells them that everything they do should cause others to give praise to God. The light of their lives should point to God.

Salt and light—preserving, protecting, revealing and directing. That’s what you and I, as Christians, are called to be. How can you be salt and light in your world today?

Exodus 32:21-34; Psalm 45; 1 Thessalonians 1:1-10

## **Wednesday, May 11**

Matthew 5:17-20 *“For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.”* (v.20)

How impossible that must have sounded to the disciples. Who can be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees? They were the professional teachers of religion and keepers of the law. How could they (we) surpass them in righteousness?

But this passage must be read in context. Jesus has described the inner motivation of his followers. They are to be preservers and revealers, pointing in all things to God. That in itself begins to explain how the righteousness of a disciple of Jesus is to surpass that of the professional religionists.

Let me explain. God has always desired the righteousness of a faithful heart. The religious hierarchy (then and sadly now) often mistakes form for substance. Externalism becomes more important than internal change. This is partly what Jesus addresses in 5:21—6:4 as he radically interprets the law. He fulfills the teaching by showing its true intention and full implication. That

will be our focus for the remainder of the week. How does Jesus call us to true righteousness that is pleasing to God?

Exodus 33:1-23; Psalm 119:49-72; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

## **Thursday, May 12**

Matthew 5:21-26 *“You have heard that it was said...But I tell you that...”* (vv.21a, 22a)

From time to time I have heard it said that Christianity is for wimps. Evidently these people have never read the verses in today’s and tomorrow’s passages. The words of Jesus are incredibly challenging.

Jesus cuts through the externals and reaches deep into the hearts of his hearers. It is not enough to say, “I haven’t killed anyone.” The law was intended to teach the heart. Jesus says that if we are angry or if we deride and insult our brother we fall into judgment. He also says that we are to be reconciled to one another before we come to worship. We are to settle matters quickly and not be stubborn.

How often do we congratulate ourselves on our external faithfulness while we ignore our internal disobedience? I am embarrassed to recall my inner thoughts and the words I mutter in anger and frustration. How many times have I come to God while nursing the latest pin prick inflicted on my all-too-fragile ego?

Jesus teaches that these things matter—the internal attitude of our hearts is not inconsequential. Jesus knows that it is from our hearts that evil so often comes.

Exodus 34:1-17; Psalm 50; 1 Thessalonians 2:13-20

## **Friday, May 13**

Matthew 5:27-37 *“It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.”* (v.30b)

With this section on sex, marriage, and sin, Jesus has as the old saying goes, “gone from preachin’ to meddlin’.” Again, he addresses more than external obedience. It is not enough to say, “I haven’t cheated on my wife (husband).” That is good. But Jesus wants more from us—a faithfulness of the heart.

This is a serious call. Jesus points this out in the dramatic image of cutting off our hands and gouging out our eyes if they cause us to sin. Does he want his disciples to slice off body parts? No. But he wants us to be willing to “cut” anything from our lives that is a hindrance to our spiritual walk with him.

What needs to be “cut off” from your life? Jesus’ image reminds us that cutting these things may be painful. They may feel like a part of our very body. Is it a sour attitude? Is it a problem with wandering eyes? With alcoholism or workaholicism? Whatever it is, Jesus wants it gone. Some things may