The Sermon on the Mount
Class Notes
Session 13

Matthew 5.43-48 Jesus now turns to Love—Love of friends *and* enemies!

"Love:" ἀγαπάω (*agapao*): "To love" (Based on personal regard given by the "lover")

All of what Jesus has commended from the beginning of the sermon, is set within these parameters.

If one loves his/her enemies, who would *not be loved*?

(v.44): Love in this way, is an outer demonstration of our inward belief.

Love here is "lived out" by…

Praying for them.

Doing good to/for them.

"Greeting"…them.

At the time…social convention directed that those who were socially inferior should greet the socially superior first.

(v.45): When we love in this way, we are like God. God gives His "common grace" to all!

(vs.45-47): Beginning at *v.45*, Jesus uses a common practice of ancient argumentation…

…Using both positive and negative examples. In v.45 is the ultimate positive example…God!

The negative examples?... Tax Collectors and Gentiles. Citizens of the Kingdom are to (*should*) live differently.

(v.48): Jesus has already commanded love of enemies using God's love as an example…Now, imitate our Heavenly Father's perfection.

The Greek word translated "perfection" is…τέλειος (*teleios*): "Complete" "Brought to the end" (Mature)

The Greek word does not convey the sense of moral "sinlessness" but rather "completeness."

An integrity between our heart and our life.

"Jesus is not frustrating his hearers with an unachievable ideal but challenging them to grow in obedience to God's will—to become more like him. J. Walvoord rightly observes, 'While sinless perfection is impossible, godliness, in its biblical concept, is attainable.'" (Craig Blomberg, *Matthew*).

Matthew 6.1-4 Jesus continues with describing the ways that Kingdom people are to live and "be" with others.

Notice, Jesus has just told the disciples (us) that they must have both a greater righteousness and seek the spiritual and moral perfection (Maturity)…As God is perfect.

Now, He warns them (us) of a potential "threat"…Religious hypocrisy!

(vs.1-2): To "practice" righteousness here…was to publically demonstrate one's piety.

Like the…ὑποκριτής (*hypokritēs*)…Lit., "To interpret" (Play-actor).

Generally in the Greco-Roman world, *personal charity* was *not supported*…Wealthy contributions to public projects or to poorer clients were meant to ensure the <u>giver's honor and popularity</u>.

Not so for the Jewish people. The common expectation was to "show mercy" to those in need.

Psalm 106.3; Isaiah 58.2; 1 John 2.29.

The issue is what are one's <u>motivations</u>? Pleasing God or Pleasing "man."

The word "seen" is the Greek word, θεάομαι (*theaomai*): "To be seen" "Visit." This is the root for our word, "Theatre."

"This word by itself would not bring to mind the theatre, but as Jesus begins piling up other terms and activities, such as "hypocrites" (or play-actors), sounding a trumpet, long prayers/speeches, coordination of the right and left hands, and wearing makeup, his hearers would recognize the allusions to the theatre…" (Craig Evans, *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary*)

(vs.2-4): Beginning here, Jesus will use as examples the three chief acts of <u>Jewish piety</u> (*vs.2-18*):

Almsgiving, Prayer, and Fasting. The *expectation*…"<u>When</u> you give to the needy…"

The "sounding of a trumpet?" Likely, the image is a <u>Shofar</u>, a ram's horn used in Jewish life and worship.

What is Jesus describing here? Many commentators suggest this refers to the practice of blowing trumpets at the time of collecting alms in the Temple for needed relief.

Others, the sound of coins being tossed into the *trumpet-shaped* money chests ("shofar-chests") in the Temple used for collecting alms.

Graphic hyperbole…(?)…meant to vividly demonstrate the ridiculousness of the action…similar to our "He/she is just blowing his/her own horn."

Righteous acts are to be done "in secret" …Not <u>seen</u> by any onlookers.

The "left and right hand." Again, a hyperbolic description of an attitude of an *unself-consciously* giving/serving that is natural…A kind of "self-forgetting!"

Not done for one's glory. If one's giving/serving is "in private" then God will "see" this…only God can <u>see</u> what is secret—and will reward the giver!

Going Forward: "Jesus calls us to hide our good works when we are tempted to show them. Our works must glorify the Father. The only blessing that counts is the one received from His generous hand. His grace perfects even the least of our good works." (*The Lutheran Study Bible*. Concordia)