



In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit  
One God, Amen.

Sunday October 18, 2008

## The Sermon on the Mount

### Introduction

Every king or president running for office or addressing his people may give a speech about what his administration will be known for. The address usually contains the elements that best describe the candidate. For example, it might include what they will do in office and what their administration will be known for. Our Lord and King Jesus Christ gave such a talk on the mount in Galilee popularly known as the 'Sermon on the Mount'. In this talk, documented in three full chapters in the gospel of Matthew (chapters 5-7), He outlined some of the key principles of Christianity by which every Christian lives today. It is as if Christ is telling us "This is what my kingdom is like, and those who want to be part of my kingdom must behave in this way". The Sermon on the Mount covers many topics including the beatitudes, the Lord's Prayer, expounding on the Law of Moses, and how to live a perfect life among other things. Specifically when it comes to living a perfect life, I'd like to contemplate on a few key points that encompass the golden rule – **"do unto others what you would have them do unto you"**.

Dealing with others is always difficult. Imagine what you would do if someone cut you off in traffic, spread slanderous words about you, or caused you an offense. What would your reaction be in this case? Let us examine what the bible tells us and look at a few examples from the lives of the saints.

### Love

History has it that a saintly monk was walking calmly in the desert one day when he saw his disciple lying on the ground beaten up. When he asked him what had happened, the disciple told him that he simply saw one of the pagan priests chopping wood for his altar which caused him to get angry and insult the pagan priest. When the pagan priest heard his insult, he grabbed the poor monk and beat him up. So the saintly monk picked up his disciple and took him back to the monastery where lo and behold the pagan priest was there as well and he wanted to be baptized! When the disciple asked the saint how this man ended up believing in Christ, the saint simply told him that he too had seen this priest but he had to praise him for his effort in chopping wood calling him a man of vigor. When the pagan priest heard the monk's praise, he was moved and wanted to know more about the God of the saint – Jesus Christ.

Sometimes we think we're being zealous for God by rejecting evil and denouncing it. Sometimes we know that what we are doing is righteous and we refuse to concede our opinion to anyone else. We must ask ourselves in this case: what are our motives? What is the motive when I rebuke someone? Is it because I love him or her or is it because I am angry? What is the motive when I stay away from someone? Is it because I'm trying to stay away from bad friends or is it because I don't want to be associated with a bad person?

Christianity is a religion of feelings, and no other feeling is greater than love. If we don't have love for one another then how can we love God? As St. Paul says: **"If someone says 'I love God' and hates his brother he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?"** (1 John 4:20).

You might say "But how can I love my enemies"? We must ask God for His guidance in following His ways so He can teach us how to understand and follow his commandments. For He said: **"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another."** (John 13:34).

### Forgiveness

I might be bold by saying that only God can truly forgive. Humans have such a hard time forgiving others that even the Saints struggle with this concept at times. Look at what the book of revelations says in chapter six **"I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?'"** Indeed it is the human spirit crying out for vengeance just like the blood of Abel cried out in the beginning. Yet as hard as this concept is for us as much as Jesus stressed this point in saying **"But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"** (Matt 6:15). In fact, he gave us the Lord's Prayer and this was the only point he commented on that we must forgive others their trespasses. In order to forgive others we must remember our own weaknesses. We must give them an excuse for their actions and try to understand why they said or did what they did. If we don't condemn others, God will not condemn us.

### Mercy

God speaks to his people in the book of Hosea saying **"For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings."** (Hos 6:6). In fact, Jesus himself mentioned this verse at least twice to the Pharisees who bowed to the letter of the law and violated the heart of the law – mercy, justice, and faith. They didn't accept the poor in spirit and they didn't encourage the weak. Jesus gave them the parable of the good Samaritan as an example of how being merciful to others is more important in front of God than appearing righteous in front of people. Even though we tend to have pride in ourselves and put ourselves first we must learn to do otherwise. We must share others in their burdens and try to help those who are in need. Saint James says this in the second chapter of his epistle verse 15: **"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?"** Therefore we must have mercy on others for this is how we show our love for them and love for God.

May God give us the ability to follow his example and teachings on the mountain by loving others, forgiving them and being plenteous in mercy. Glory to our Lord God forever. Amen.