

Sermon on the Mount Intro Week 1: Title Recovering Compassion

We have been studying the Book of Revelation as the definitive guide to spiritual warfare

- Its message to the faithful is to persevere, though faith in God and His Christ
- Against the persecution of oppressive empires and their state religions
- And the pressures to worship the state religions

Xtians today and throughout history have been led astray

- That Xtianity since the time of Constantine, Edict of Milan 313 AD has been perverted
- Into the religion of empire, and that Xtians today have sullied their witness
- By pledging their allegiance to this religion, dressed up in patriotism, a God without Love
- Challenging this status quo is the Godless or Love without God religion
- Xtians on all sides have gotten caught up in the political strife
- Anathematizing and dehumanizing opponents, their fellow humans made in God's image

Each side claims a moral high ground defined by the political parties

- Each side wants to impose their religion through legislation
- As Revelation teaches us, forcing state worship is the sure sign of false religion
- Xtianity is a grassroots movement that converts one heart at a time
- The word compassion in the KJV occurs 41 times, yet seems all but forgotten
- Our premise: Xtians have either lost compassion or redefined it to suit their politics

Our conclusion is to exhort Xtians to return to the first works, core teachings of Xtianity

- To Choose Love, in other words, learn interdependent compassion for all of humankind
- To love God, honor his laws, love our fellow man, love our enemies
- That self-love is a prerequisite to loving our fellow man
- To embrace a mature approach to revelation, both natural and special

I include myself in this exhortation

- While we were taught not to use ourselves as examples
- I am abandoning that advice as stodgy fundamentalist tradition, not useful
- I am experiencing a personal transformation that I am sharing with the flock
- similar to when I first learned to minister to neighborhoods

I have been moved by the recent events, the Covid isolation has exposed attachments

- I am taking care of myself first, so I can care for others
- Reminded that Jesus taught interdependence with all humankind
- Having been awoken by the Choose Love motif, having compassion on an enemy

With this in mind, we will deep dive into Jesus tour de force, the Sermon on the Mount

- Our intent to provide a scholarly treatment, an extended introduction, not not exhaustive
- The version in Luke is known as the Sermon on the Plain, also covered when applicable

The title of our sermon is Recovering Compassion, 4 subsections

- Our reading, known as the Beatitudes Mat 5:1-12
- How to approach the text
- Some problems regarding historical perspective
- Literary considerations, composition, genre, function

We will continue with commentary on the Beatitudes next week

Section 1: How to approach the text

Sermon on the Mount is more than a Xtian text, it is a world text that even to modern readers,

- even to non-Christians, even to non-theists, is universally recognized as awe inspiring.
- As one writer put it: *“their long tradition in Christian and even in world literature has dignified them to an extent that modern readers cannot escape.”*
- These sermons may seem like nothing more than the simple teachings of Jesus, but as one further explores these texts, the richness and inexhaustibility of these words become apparent.

Studying these texts, with the appropriate guides, reveals layers of complexity and mystery,

- each new discovery opening innumerable new veins to be tapped, the complexity being irreducible, with no end in sight.

The text is of the sermon is recorded by the Matthew the evangelist

- The Sermon on the Mount has been preserved and became world literature
- Along with the Gospel of Matthew and the New Testament

The Sermon on the Mount and Sermon on the Plain have Judaic origins

- That are both inspired and overturned or corrected by Jesus of Nazareth
- Assumed to be the author and speaker, the brand of Judaism produced may be called
- The Jesus Movement, or later Jewish Christianity
- The intent is to formulate an epitome of the teachings of Jesus for the purpose of instructing those who have joined the movement, the “disciples.”
- The Sermon on the Mount sums up the essentials for disciples to keep in mind

All the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are Jewish in theology and cultural outlook

- It ended up recorded in the Gospel of Matthew, canonized as Christian text in the NT

The Sermon on the Plain ended up recorded in the Gospel of Luke

- The Sermon on the Plain is a product of the same branch of the Jesus movement
- But serves a different purpose and function, while basically the same theology
- The cultural outlook is Greek rather than Jewish, which can be said of the two gospels

While Matthew primarily targeted a Jewish audience, Luke targeted a Gentile audience

- The sermons in their own way are designed to establish an identity for the disciples
- Within both the Jewish and Greek religious and cultural environment
- For this reason, some Jewish and Greek presuppositions are confirmed and rejected

- Both adaptation and polemic against some forms of Judaism and of Greek culture

On the whole

- The Sermon on the Mount is more Pro-Jewish
- The Sermon on the Plain is more pro-Greek
- The differences in emphasis are not exclusive, but their respective purposes are clearly formed with presumed audiences in mind
- For this reason it is concluded that in spite of differences, both sermons are from the same branch of the Jesus Movement.

Mat 4 repent, repent of presumption, saved by ethnicity, Ratzinger, 12 tribes, new mooses
Example of privileged group identity, further developed by Augustine, Luther, Calvin
Puritan settlements in New England, the ultimate in group identity, elect vs, reprobate