

Jesus: The Coming Together of Divinity and Humanity

Introduction

- **Jesus as Savior and Judge:** Jesus is the savior who heals broken humanity, but he is also the judge, showing us where we fall short.
- **Christmas Story:** This story presents both the beauty of God's incarnation and the darkness of the struggle between two visions of life, which culminates in the cross.

Sermon on the Mount: The Standard Teaching of Jesus

Overview of the Sermon

- **Chapters 5-7 of Matthew:** These chapters likely represent the typical teachings of Jesus, remembered and repeated during his life.
- **Symbols:** Jesus delivers the sermon from a mountaintop, symbolizing his role as the new Moses, giving the law from the mountain like Moses on Sinai.

The Beatitudes: A Radical Vision

- **Blessed Are:** The Beatitudes speak of blessedness, happiness, and even luck in aligning with God's vision for humanity.
- **Wealth:** "Blessed are the poor in spirit." Wealth is not evil, but being free from addiction to wealth brings true happiness.
- **Example:** A man who achieved all his financial dreams found himself miserable, demonstrating how wealth cannot satisfy the soul.
- **Power:** "Blessed are the meek." Power is addictive, but Jesus teaches the value of meekness, which is a countercultural virtue.
- **Honor:** "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Seeking honor makes you dependent on others for validation, but true freedom comes

from seeking righteousness, not approval.

- **Pleasure:** "Blessed are those who mourn." Pleasure is not inherently bad, but addiction to pleasure distorts life. Mourning represents freedom from this addiction, a detachment from worldly desires.

The Positive Beatitudes

- **Mercy:** "Blessed are the merciful." When free from addictions to wealth, power, and pleasure, one becomes a conduit of God's mercy. True happiness comes from aligning oneself with God's will.
- **Purity of Heart:** "Blessed are the pure of heart." Purity of heart means having a single focus on God, without divided loyalties.
- **Righteousness:** "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness." A righteous person seeks to do God's will in all circumstances.
- **Peacemakers:** "Blessed are the peacemakers." Those aligned with God naturally bring peace into the world.

Salt and Light: A Call to Action

- **Salt of the Earth:** Jesus' followers are called to preserve the goodness of the world and make life flavorful with their presence. They are also meant to stand against evil, like salting the earth to prevent bad things from growing.
- **Light of the World:** Christians are meant to illuminate the world with their lives, making God's truth visible to others.

The Love of Enemies: A Radical Command

Enemy Love as a Test of True Love

- **Will the Good of the Other:** True love is willing the good of the other, even one's enemies. Jesus' command to love enemies is the ultimate test of divine love.
- **God's Love:** God loves everyone equally, whether they are good or bad, and we

are called to love in the same way.

Nonviolence and Turning the Other Cheek

- **Nonviolence as Active Love:** Jesus teaches nonviolence, not as passivity, but as a way to confront evil without perpetuating it.
- **Turning the Other Cheek:** This act resists violence while refusing to cooperate with the aggressor's worldview.
- **Giving the Cloak:** Jesus calls for a provocative response to injustice, using humor and shame to expose wrongdoing.

Historical Examples of Nonviolence

- **Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr.:** Both Gandhi and King were inspired by Jesus' teachings on nonviolence, using them to effect social change.
- **Example:** Archbishop Desmond Tutu used nonviolent humor to confront a racist, showing the power of Jesus' method.

The Cross: The Climax of Jesus' Mission

The Ultimate Sacrifice

- **Jesus' Descent:** The Incarnation is a downward movement, with Jesus descending into the deepest forms of human suffering, including death.
- **The Cross as the Ultimate Suffering:** Crucifixion was the worst form of execution, a state-sponsored terror designed to humiliate and torture.

The Meaning of the Cross

- **Divine Mercy in Suffering:** Jesus entered into the worst of human suffering to bring divine mercy into all aspects of human dysfunction.

- **Salvation:** Jesus' descent into suffering and death brings healing (salve) to humanity, and his resurrection from the dead is the ultimate victory over death.

The Resurrection: The Source of Christianity

The Good News of Jesus Christ

- **Resurrection as Proof:** The resurrection is the central claim of Christianity, proving that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and inaugurating a new creation.
- **Mark's Gospel:** The Gospel begins with “the beginning of the good news,” signaling the start of a new world through Jesus' victory over sin and death.

Revolutionary Language

- **Son of God:** This title was used for Roman emperors, but the early Christians applied it to Jesus, signaling a radical challenge to worldly power.
- **The Explosive Message of the Gospel:** The Gospel's message of Jesus as the true Son of God was revolutionary, leading many early Christians to persecution and martyrdom.

The Church's Mission

- **Salt and Light Today:** The Church's mission is to continue spreading the revolutionary message of Jesus, bringing God's light and mercy into the world.
- **Adoratio:** Through right worship (adoration of God), Christians become radiant with God's presence, transforming the world around them.

God bless you all. Thanks.

