

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

March 6, 2016

10. Three Essential Aspects of Worship

Matthew 6:1-18

After teaching the disciples by amplifying or magnifying the laws to teach us the spiritual intent of the laws so as to raise the standard of building quality loving relationships among his followers or disciples, Jesus move on to begin teaching on worship. For without a Christ-loving-like relationship among the disciples, there can never be true worship. It will just be expressions of external rituals to impress others so as to be patted on the back. Worship is falling in love with God. Therefore what you do during worship is not to impress others but to express your gratitude to God as you become considerate and kind to others because that is what pleases the God you say you love and serve. In fact, gratitude is a deep emotional expression of appreciation for what one has and not a consumer-driven emphasis on what one wants. Worship is a sacred duty and what you do to receive a reward from Him; as such sacred duties must be done in secret in order to please God and not necessarily duties done just publicly to impress others.

You see, Jesus had just finished describing the incredibly high standards of behavior required of those who would be His disciples. In verse twenty of Matthew chapter five Jesus had told His disciples that their righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisee and teachers of the law, or else you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven. Then beginning in verse twenty-one through verse forty-eight Jesus gave six examples of how the teachers of the law had changed the law to suit themselves and amplified the spiritual intent of those laws. Jesus then moved to deal with the motivation in which one carries out their religious devotion or worship. Jesus declares that even right things can be done for the wrong motives. Why people do good things may not be as obvious as we think. To make His point about motivation Jesus uses as examples of the three most important demonstrations of religious devotion in Jewish religious practice; giving, prayer and fasting. The question of motive still comes into play in our religious lives today, especially when in our day there are some who teach that material prosperity is a demonstration of the favor of God. God does not only want us to give, to pray and to fast, but He wants us to do it for the right reasons. Those who would be disciples of Jesus are to practice their religion from the heart and not merely for the notice and reward of men.

Jesus introduces the subject of worship or religious devotion in Chapter six and verse one saying, "Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven." The basic principle emphasized by Jesus on worship or religious devotion is; "Beware of doing the right thing for the wrong reasons." The fundamental principle is found in the word translated "take heed" or "beware" or "be careful" (NASB, ESV, and NIV) is not only an imperative but it is in the present tense denoting that the disciples must continually guard against doing good deeds for the wrong reason. Moreover, under normal, everyday conversations most of us have learned to use absolute words such as "always" and "every" quite sparingly. This is because we know that statements such as 'You always leave the dishes on the table' or 'Every time I want to talk to you, you're watching television' or 'you always want to be in control' can get us in hot water. But Jesus' words here were and are still absolute. Jesus is saying, 'Anyone who does good deeds so as to be seen and appreciated by others will lose his or her reward from God, no matter how 'good' and beneficial the deed is. And absolutely there are no exceptions! Thus the focus on today's sermon is on the teaching of Jesus on "Three Essential Aspects of Worship".

Hence our text of the day states, “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them. If you do, you will have no reward from your Father in heaven. 2 “So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 5 “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 6 But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 “This, then, is how you should pray: ““Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, [The Greek for temptation can also mean testing] but deliver us from the evil one. [Or from evil; some late manuscripts one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen]’. 14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins. 16 “When you fast: do not look somber as the hypocrites do; for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 17 But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” (Matthew 6:1-18).

The question that each follower of Jesus must ask personally is: “Do I want the approval of God or the approval of others?” The truth is that it is almost impossible to have both. Usually, the human tendency in each of us desires the appreciation of others. In verse one the word translated “to be seen” (theathenai) is from the same root word for the word “theater”. It has in mind a spectacle to be gazed at. Therefore let’s look at the Three Essential Aspects of Worship that Jesus applies this general principle to explain the wrong and the right motive to go about it!

GIVING

If you give to be seen of men – You Have Your Reward. (6:2-4)

“So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. 3 But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, 4 so that your giving may be in secret. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.” Notice the assumption in verse two: “...when you give to the needy ...” In fact in the discussion of each of the three aspects of worship Jesus does not begin with “If you give, pray, or fast, then this is what you should do.” Instead He says, “When” (vv. 2, 5, 16) you do so.” He takes for granted that they will do these things.

You worship in giving because you have been brought into the Kingdom of God and so it is natural that you will give to the Kingdom of God, to further the growth the Kingdom of God. It is evidence that you are truly saved when you truly worship in giving. You do not just give the tenth, but above and/or beyond that although the tenth is the minimum. The wrong way to give (v. 2) is to first announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, to be honored by others. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward.” Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. The word “hypocrite” means ‘to wear a mask’, as the Greeks did in their dramas [smile, frown, angry, etc.]. Whenever the Pharisees were going to give to the poor, they would sound a trumpet. They said it was to get the poor to come to them, but Jesus saw through the mask for the real reason was to call attention to themselves! They wanted the recognition and applause of men; they wanted the prestige and honor of being known as godly men. Jesus is using a figure of speech when He says in verse three— “do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” but common sense tells us it doesn’t imply you hide your left hand as write the check with your right hand. Also, it doesn’t mean that you can’t keep track of your giving, say, for example for tax purposes. It simply means your giving is not for the intention of garnering attention and praises from others. This is because the honor or praise or applause of humans you get is your reward in full. In others words you can choose to have the approval of God or the applause of others. If we choose the applause of others, then that applause becomes our reward. So it is not whether something is done in a public place or not, but rather it is the motive that matters. The ancient Christian preacher, Chrysostom, of the 1st century summed it this way: “You may do good deeds before men, and yet not seek human praise; you may do them in secret, and yet in your heart wish that they may become known to gain that praise.”

Someone may then ask is it wrong for the Christian to be motivated by rewards? There is a misconception that many Christians hold to, that we should never be motivated by reward. You may say, “Well, maybe some people need to look for a reward from God to do good works, but it must be better to do good works without expecting any reward even from God!” And as spiritual as that sounds, one can also say, “Are saying that you are more spiritual than Moses?” Moses looked to a reward as recorded in the book of Hebrews, “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, (25) choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, (26) esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”(Hebrews 11:24-26). Heaven itself is not the reward for a faithful life. Salvation is by faith through grace (Ephesians 2:8-10). But the Bible does have a lot to say about rewards that await the faithful Christian. In fact one of the prominent doctrines of the New Testament is the Doctrine of Rewards and the Judgment Seat of Christ. The judgment seat of Christ is not a place and time when the Lord will mete out punishment for sins committed by the child of God. Rather, it is a place where rewards will be given or lost depending on how one has used his or her life for the Lord. That means that our decisions and words in this life directly affect our eternal status. Will you be great in heaven, or least? Are you daily investing in eternity so as to earn rewards to enjoy forever, or are you merely living for the temporary earthly rewards that you can see?

PRAYER

If You Pray To Be Seen Of Men – You Have Your Reward. (6:5-8). As with giving, there is a wrong way to pray. Verse five reads, “And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.” It should be noted that the Lord spends more time devoted to how motivation applies to the subject of prayer than to any other Christian act. This is no doubt because it is easier to be a hypocrite in praying than in any other Christian act. It is not a sin to pray in public. It is not a sin to stand while praying. The fault lies in the desire to be seen and applauded by men in doing it. Deep within each believer is the desire to pray and to have people stand in amazement at our skillful use of words, and to say, “Did you hear that wonderful prayer?” “Wow, I sure wish I could also pray like that.” Jesus gives us the right way to pray beginning from verse six, “But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.” Here Jesus teaches us the value of praying in secret! Since prayer is communication between a believer and his God, then anything that can be done to eliminate every possible distraction and disturbance is wise. It is not wrong to pray in public in fact Jesus then gives us the “Model Prayer” as an example. Prayer can be done in public, but it must always be remembered who is being spoken to. It is not wrong to pray in public, but it’s wrong to pray in public when we’re not praying in private. We should pray in secret before we pray in public. Jesus also tells us to “Cut off trying to be impressive in your prayers!” because God is not impressed with the number of words that we use or how politically or grammatically correct we are in our prayers. Rather, some of the world’s most effective prayers have been short. Peter prayed a very effective prayer from his heart as he was sinking after trying to walk on the water to Jesus. He said, “Lord, save me!” (Matthew 14:30). The Model prayer that Jesus gave us reads, “This, then, is how you should pray: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, 10 your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. 11 Give us today our daily bread. 12 And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. 13 And lead us not into temptation, [The Greek for temptation can also mean testing] but deliver us from the evil one. [Or from evil; some late manuscripts one, / for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen]’. 14 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. 15 But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matthew 6:9-15). This is the pattern we are to follow when praying and always bear in mind that a hindrance to prayers is lack of forgiving others their sins because God will not forgive us our sins either. And Isaiah 59:1-2 says, “Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor his ear too dull to hear. 2 But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear”.

FASTING

The Third essential aspect of worship is fasting. If You Fast To Be Seen of Men – You Have Your Reward. (6:16-18). Fasting is usually understood to mean the abstaining from food for some spiritual purpose. The instruction given here in the Sermon on the Mount on how to fast is of course based on the assumption that believers would fast because it is part of your worship. The issue is not how often we fast but how we fast and why we fast. Jesus is not condemning fasting as a practice. Rather He is condemning fasting done for the wrong reasons. Jesus first of all tells the wrong way to fast in verse sixteen, “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do; for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.” The problem, as in the other cases (giving and prayer) was the motive of the heart. Those who wanted to “appear to men to be fasting” would put on a gloomy face. It is the attitude that said, “I may have to fast but definitely I want people to notice how spiritual I am.” They wanted everyone to know they were denying themselves. Even self-denial can be a self-gratifying experience when we do it for the sake of being noticed by others. However, the right way to fast is stated in Verses 17-18, “But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, 18 so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.”

Like in almost every other facet of Jewish spiritual life, fasting had been perverted and twisted beyond the scriptural and spiritual intention. Fasting was seen as a way to gain merit with God and the attention of men. The Jews of Jesus day were only commanded by the Old Testament to fast one day each year on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16). The Pharisees however prided themselves on fasting twice a week (Mondays and Thursday). It even became somewhat of a point of contention as to why the followers of John the Baptist fasted “often” but the followers of Jesus did not (Matthew 9:14). Jesus answered that when He was not longer with them- “when the bridegroom was taken away” - then His disciples would fast (Matthew 9:15). Fasting is most often thought of in connection with abstaining from food. But there are other applications to fasting; it is to abstain from any legitimate thing, in order to spend the time thus gained intimately with God. So one can legitimately fast from; television, reading, playing computer games, communicating on face book , etc to spend the time more intimately with God. But (fasting) abstaining from anything that does not result in more time spent with God is of no value. So when might one want to fast? You might need to fast in times of national crisis to seek and to know the will of God or whenever faced with seemingly impossible situations. Do you have a major problem, big decision, or heavy burden? Try fasting! And do it in secret. As always the choice is between the approval of God and the applause of others. And there a certain things that cannot be accomplished in life except by prayers and fasting!

Conclusion

In these verses Jesus gives three very clear ways that the righteousness of His disciples can exceed the Scribes and Pharisee’s as explained in the three essential aspects of worship. The hypocrisy of these religious leaders had stripped the spiritual value out of three most important facets of religious life; giving, prayer and fasting. As followers of Jesus we are expected to do all of these

things but do them with the right attitude and motive. The thrust of these verses is very humbling! Why do we do the things we do? Why do we serve in the church? Why do we teach Sunday school? Why do we work in various ministries at Mt Traveler? Why do we help others? Why do we pray? Do we serve out of a humble sense of gratitude for all that Christ has done for us? Or do we serve, give, pray and fast to be recognized by others? If you do so for recognition by men then you have received your reward. But those who do these things from their heart for God alone will be rewarded by Him.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude today, the following are some main points to remember: The Sermon on the Mount is the most famous sermon Jesus ever gave and perhaps it is the most famous sermon ever given by anyone. In it Jesus taught us:

- The Beatitudes – are virtues in life which will ultimately lead to reward in this life and the life thereafter.
- Using the metaphors of Salt and Light – to explain the roles of believers in the world
- He has come to fulfill the Law
- About sin of adultery which starts with lust in the heart
- About divorce and remarriage
- Oath and extension or amplification of taking oaths unnecessarily so that your Yes is yes and No is no.
- Forgiveness rather than retaliation (an eye for an eye, etc.)
- To love our enemies
- Right motive to three essential of worship to receive reward from God
- And let the church say, “Amen!”

Do you know this Jesus who transforms you to be truthful always?. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God’s kingdom as you practice the Beatitudes. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don’t you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

March 13, 2016

11. Storing Treasures in Heaven

Matthew 6:19-24

The issue of how we treasure money was of paramount importance to Jesus Christ that He addressed it soon after He amplified and explained the three essential aspect of worship – Giving, Prayer and Fasting. The motive of doing thing is the crux of the heart, as the crux of the matter

is the matter of the heart. Therefore the way you invest your money determines where your heart is.

Each time that you invest in Heaven, you are going to enjoy such investment forever; and you invest in Heaven every time you use money for good purposes especially meeting the needs of the “least of these ones”. You actually invest in eternity by using your money to grow your character, encourage fellowship in the Body of Christ, and serve others in need. There are two funds that you should invest in so that you can yield eternal dividends in Heaven: God’s Investment Fund (Global Fund) and God’s Treasury Fund (Funds given as an act of worship).

Instead of you squandering your funds it is better to put it in God’s investment funds, also referred to as the Global Fund. This is when you use your money to share the Good News and bring people to Jesus. Luke 16:9 says, “Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings” (NIV). This means that God wants you to invest in things that help get people into Heaven so that when you get to Heaven, they will welcome you there. So you can see why this is the greatest investment of your life and it always good to ask yourself, is anybody going to be in Heaven because of me? Another investment fund that you need to consider is God’s Treasury Fund. This is when you give money to God as an act of worship. God’s promise in Proverbs 3:9 say, “Honor the Lord by giving him the first part of all your income, and he will fill your barns with wheat and barley and overflow your wine vats with the finest wines” (TLB). This is when you give your tithe which is your first 10 percent of your income given to God. Anything given above a tithe is called an offering. You can’t really give God anything, because he already owns it all. But think about the allowance you got as a child. If you went out and bought a birthday present for your mom or dad, you’re really using their money. Does that mean they would like the gift any less? No! This is because they care more about the thought and the love behind the gift more than the gift. God feels the same way about your giving.

The Bible says that wherever our treasure is, our heart will also be there. If what are most important to you are the things of this earth, then every day you are moving further and further away from your treasure. Because every day you are here on Earth, you have got one less day to be here on Earth and you are really moving further and further away from the things you are going to leave behind soon. But, if you are investing in God’s funds and using your money to serve God’s purposes, then you are storing up treasure in Heaven every day and you are getting closer and closer to your treasure instead of further and further away from it. Jim Elliot once said, “He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.” Thus the focus on today’s sermon is on the teaching of Jesus on “Storing Treasures in Heaven”.

Hence our text of the day states, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. 22 “The eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are healthy, [The Greek for healthy here implies generous] your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eyes are unhealthy,[d] your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness! 24 “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:19-24).

Let me start by asking you: Have you ever purchased a new car, drove it off the lot, and then discovered that it has depreciated by 33%? Worse yet, have you had someone “key” or rear-end your new car, damaging the showroom appearance? Are you in a situation where you recently purchased a home and now need to move, but you can’t get what you paid for your house? Have you diligently put money away for retirement and now you need to draw upon your earnings, but then find out you have lost half of what you invested? Undoubtedly, you would experience that sick feeling in your stomach on account of such lost money and possessions. Do you ever feel that your possessions possess you? Most likely, if you are honest, you would be nodding in agreement. One of God’s goals is for you to realize that your money and possessions are not owned by you; they are actually loaned to you. Also, perhaps you have seen the classic bumper sticker, “You can’t take it with you.” The point of this expression is: There’s no afterlife so live like a pagan, spend everything you have, and go out with a bang! Surprisingly, Jesus agrees with the slogan, “You can’t take it with you.” However, Jesus tacks on an expression: “You can’t take it with you, but you can send it ahead.” So in Matthew 6:19–24, Jesus shares three directives that will help you send your wealth ahead: 1. Transfer your treasure to heaven (6:19–21), 2. Recognize your responsibility to be generous (6:22–23), and 3. Choose your master wisely (6:24)

1. Transfer your treasure to heaven (Matthew 6:19–21)

Jesus commands you to prioritize heavenly treasures over earthly trinkets. I know what you are thinking: “Oh no, this is another message about money again! Yes, Jesus knew the importance of it in humans’ livelihood as money can either be a slave master or a servant depending on how you treat it. So in Matthew 6:19, Jesus begins with a negative command: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.” This verse is better rendered, “Stop storing up treasures for yourselves!” The Greek words translated “store up” (thesaurizo) and “treasures” (thesaurus) have the same root. So Jesus is literally saying, “Do not treasure for yourselves treasures.” What does He mean? Are we not to bother with having a savings account? Is He saying don’t invest in Wall Street? Don’t have any money put aside for tough times that may come? This can’t be what Jesus is saying because the Bible applauds saving and caring for our family members. The apostle Paul even indicates that you can enjoy what God has given you. What Jesus prohibits here is the selfish accumulation of goods. Notice the phrase “on earth.” Jesus’ concern is stockpiling on earth rather than stockpiling in heaven. He doesn’t want you to have a wonderful earthly bank account while your spiritual bank account is bouncing checks because what you have stored up is solely for yourself. This is a poor investment. Jesus is clear: You can’t take it with you, but you can send it ahead. Jesus commands you not to store up treasures on earth because they are temporal. In Jesus’ day banks did not exist, so people saved their wealth in three ways. First, they collected clothes. A nice wardrobe of fine garments was as good as money in the bank. These clothes could be sold in the future. The only problem was that these garments were very susceptible to moths. And since they didn’t have mothballs and cedar-lined closets, moths would eat holes in the garments and render them worthless. Secondly, people accumulated wealth by storing grain in barns. Famine was an ever-present reality in the ancient Near East because of the undependable rains. If a man could store his grain until a famine came and prices soared, he could become fabulously wealthy.

Most of our English versions indicate that what will destroy the second standard of wealth is rust. However, the word “rust” (brosis) conveys the act of eating. As a consequence, it is most likely that Jesus is talking about rats, mice, roaches, and termites that eat away the grain. Wealth will be destroyed, obliterated, and/or made to vanish in this way. Thirdly, another method of saving was to exchange assets for gold. The people in Jesus’ day generally buried their gold under their house floors. Palestinian houses were made of baked clay, so a burglar broke in by digging a hole in a wall. In fact, thieves in the first-century were called “diggers.” Thieves can carry off just about anything, in one way or another. In essence, if moths and vermin don’t destroy your wealth, thieves will break in and rob you blind. No matter what kind of wealth you have and no matter what you do to protect it, eventually it will be gone. Earthly treasures are perishable and vulnerable. When you invest heavily in the treasures of this world it is the equivalent of buying a company’s stock the day after they have declared bankruptcy. Not a very good deal!

So why do you and I seek to accumulate “treasure” on earth? It is for the following reasons: (1) Security. We want to know that we are taken care of, so what brings us the greatest security of life and soul is to have material security. (2) Personal worth, esteem, and value. Material possessions and wealth often indicate that people are successful in what they have done with their lives. We feel good about ourselves if we dress, drive, dine, and decorate well. (3) Power. With wealth and material success, we believe that we can have and get and be what we want. Wealth gives us control over our own fate and over other people. (4) Independence. With wealth I can be my own “god” and not rely on anyone else. (5) Pleasure. With wealth we can indulge our every fantasy, whether it is the exotic vacation, the luxurious wedding, the finest dining, or the most decadent home. As tempting as these benefits are, the echo resounds: You can’t take it with you, but you can send it ahead. Again, Jesus said, “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.” He is not speculating...He’s speaking of sure things. When He warns you not to store up treasures on earth, it’s not just because wealth might be lost. It’s that wealth will definitely be lost. Either it leaves you while you live, or you leave it when you die.

If storing up treasures on earth is the wrong priority, what’s the right one? After giving a prohibition, Jesus moves to a positive command. In Matthew 6:20 He says, “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.” Matthew 6:20 is one of the clearest verses in the Bible supporting eternal rewards. Now I realize that some people think it’s selfish to seek rewards. While I can appreciate these sentiments, there are some problems with this notion: First, Jesus commands believers to seek eternal rewards. The Greek verb translated “store up” is a command! The verb is also in the present tense and refers to that which is to be the constant pattern and objective of your life. Second, Jesus never rewards selfishness, only selflessness. If Jesus thought that the motivation of rewards was selfish, He would have never commanded this pursuit. We dare not attempt to be more spiritual than Jesus. Finally, Jesus is all about treasure—your heavenly treasure—because it glorifies Him! He wants you to keep and enjoy your treasures forever. Since heaven is the only

place your treasure will be safe, He commands you to store it up for your good and His glory! You can't take it with you, but you can send it ahead.

Suppose I offer you \$100 to spend today however you want. Not a bad deal. But suppose I give you a choice—you can either have that \$100 today, or you can have \$1 million if you'll wait one year—then \$1 million more every year thereafter. Only a fool would take the \$100 today. Yet that's what we do whenever we grab on to what will last for only a moment, foregoing something far more valuable that we could enjoy later for much longer. A year may seem a long time to wait. But after it's done—as when our lives here are done—it will seem like it passed quickly. A few years ago, a group of world-class athletes were asked the following question: “If you could take a drug that would cause you to win a gold medal, but it would kill you in ten years, would you take it?” Amazingly, the majority said yes. They'd sacrifice fifty or more years of life for a gold medal.

What would you give up to have treasure in heaven? Would you be thriftier with your family food budget? Would you occasionally split a meal with your spouse when you eat out? Would you forgo your Starbuck's addiction? Would you spend less money on Christmas gifts? Would you let go of cable TV or cell phone? Would you drive a lesser car than you could otherwise afford? Perhaps you would be willing to drive used cars? Would you have a less expensive wardrobe? Maybe you could shop after-holiday sales? Would you sell your large home and downsize to a more modest home? Perhaps you could refinance your mortgage? Maybe you could choose to enjoy simpler or fewer vacations or possibly turn your next family vacation into a mission trip? Or perhaps you could cash in a retirement fund so you can support yourself and serve others? Would you use your work skills to benefit God's work in a more direct way? Would you negotiate a four-day workweek so you can devote one full day a week to ministry? These are ways that treasures in heaven can be accumulated. Be creative, come up with your own ideas, and let the Holy Spirit direct you. But reflect on these words from Andrew Murray (1794–1866): “We ask how much a man gives; Christ asks how much he keeps.” Recall, you can't take it with you, but you can send it ahead.

In Matthew 6:21, Jesus provides the reason for His command to “store up treasures in heaven:” “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” What He's saying is this: “I want to capture your heart. I do not only want you to do what is right, but to want to do what is right. Therefore invest your money in the right things, and your affections will follow your investments.” We have a tendency to turn this principle on the other way around. We think that the important thing is to feel good about something before we do it. We want our emotions to lead us. If and only if we feel good about doing what is right, then we will do it. Jesus says that life works in the opposite way. Emotions follow motions. Motions create emotions. Investment creates interest. The first step in godly living is to do something that we don't want—at least emotionally—to do. We take the first step by faith and write a check for something that we really don't want to write it for. It is only after we do so by faith that we enjoy a sense that God has changed our heart about it. Don't wait for your heart to move on its own, because it might never

happen. Instead, begin to move your treasure today to what matters in heaven...and your heart will follow. Jesus said what you spend money on or invest money in, you will come to love. Your heart always follows your money. The reason God doesn't have some people's wallets is because He doesn't have their hearts.

How do you know what has your heart? Let me ask you a few quick questions: (1) What occupies your thoughts when you have nothing else to do? What occupies your daydreams? Is it your investments, your position? If so, those are the things you treasure, and that is where your heart really is. (2) Similarly, what is it that you fret about most? Is it your home or perhaps your clothing? If so, then you know where your treasure lies. (3) Apart from your loved ones, what or whom do you most dread losing? (4) What are the things that you measure others by? Do you measure others by their clothing, education, homes, or athletic prowess? Do you measure others by their success in the business world? If so, you know where your treasure lies, for these questions are a very revealing mirror because we measure other people by that which we treasure. (5) Lastly, what is it that you know you cannot be happy without?

2. Recognize your responsibility to be generous (Matthew 6:22–23)

Generosity breeds light while stinginess breeds darkness and these attributes depend on how you see things with your eyes. In Mathew 6:22–23 Jesus says, “The eye is the lamp of the body; so then if your eye is clear, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!” In this context, the eye is used metaphorically. Many English versions imply that Jesus is concerned about the health or clarity of the eye. But these translations are somewhat misleading. The KJV is more accurate with its literal rendering, “If your eye is single...if your eye is evil.” (This is where we get the expression “evil eye.”) But what does it mean to have a “single” eye or an “evil” eye? In our culture, we have various expressions about the eye. Sometimes the eye can describe a person's physical condition. Someone who is red-eyed or bleary-eyed is tired. Sometimes we refer to the eyes to describe a person's feelings or character. Someone who is dreamy-eyed is in love. Someone who is sharp-eyed is crafty. Someone who is cock-eyed has a distorted view of reality. Someone who is bug-eyed is excited or surprised. In the Old Testament, we find references to people being single-eyed. A single-eyed person is someone who is generous. The New Testament also uses forms of the word to refer to those who are generous. When Jesus refers to someone having a single eye, He means that person is someone who gives to others with open-hearted generosity. The warm heart shines through warm eyes. The opposite of the single eye is the evil eye. It refers to a stingy or begrudging spirit. The same expression occurs in Jesus' parable of the generous vineyard owner who paid all his laborers the same wages regardless of the hours they worked. When the workers who had put in a full day's labor bitterly complained, the owner asked them: “Is your eye evil because I am good?” (Matt 20:15) This crew wanted to have more for themselves, or for the others to have less. The evil eye is a stingy spirit. If one's eye (ethical perception) becomes clouded by greed the result is darkness (selfishness) in the whole self. Jesus is saying, “If you look upon the things of this earth with a generous perspective, your life will be useful. If, however, you look upon the things of this earth

with greed in mind, then your life will be wasted.” Remember, you can’t take it with you, but you can send it ahead. Generous people give of themselves and their money to those who have need. As a result, they will experience joy in this life and in the life to come.

A man in New York City had a wife who had a cat. Actually, the cat had her. She loved the cat. She stroked it, combed its fur, fed it, and pampered it. The man detested the cat. He was allergic to cat hair; he hated the smell of the litter box; he couldn’t stand the scratching on the furniture; and he couldn’t get a good night’s sleep because the cat kept jumping on the bed. When his wife was out of town for the weekend, he put the cat in a bag with some rocks, dumped it in the Hudson River, and uttered a joyful goodbye to the cat. When his wife returned and could not find her cat, she was overwhelmed with grief. Her husband said, “Look, honey, I know how much that cat meant to you. I’m going to put an ad in the paper and give a reward of \$500 to anyone who finds the cat.” No cat showed up, so a few days later he said, “Honey, you mean more to me than anything on earth. If that cat is precious to you, it is precious to me. I’ll tell you what I’ll do. I’ll buy another ad and up the ante. We’ll increase the reward to \$1000.” A friend saw the ad and exclaimed, “You must be nuts; there isn’t a cat on earth that is worth \$1000.” The man replied, “Well, when you know what I know, you can afford to be generous.”

If you have an understanding of heavenly treasures and how God’s kingdom works, you can afford to be generous. You can establish priorities by the way you give and live. Generosity is possible because you realize that life is short and your money and possessions will fly away like an eagle (Prov. 23:5). Hey, you can’t take it with you, but you can sure send it ahead.

3. Choose your master wisely (Matthew 6:24).

In this final verse of our text, Jesus explains that you cannot serve God and wealth. He puts it like this: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” During Jesus’ time on earth, a slave owner could actually rent out one of his servants to another taskmaster. Such an arrangement always put the servant in a bind. What would happen if the two men gave conflicting orders? How was he supposed to respond? Who was he supposed to listen to? Perhaps you’ve been in a situation like this at work, with two supervisors telling you to do two different things, disagreeing about how you should do your job. It was quite frustrating, right? You might be able to have two jobs, but your relationship with God is an exclusive relationship. There is a throne in your life that is only big enough for one. Christ may be on the throne or money may be on the throne. But both cannot occupy that throne. The reason is simple: God and money are not employers, they are slave owners. Each demands single-minded devotion from you. Moreover, you cannot be a full-time slave to two masters. If you serve God with your whole heart, the seductive love of money will be squeezed out. Notice, Jesus didn’t say you couldn’t have money; He said you can’t serve it. What does serving money mean? It means that you are consumed with money: you think about it all the time, you bring it up in nearly every conversation, and you are scared to death of losing it. Serving money means that money determines what you do as it calls the shots. Does God tell you what to do with the things you

have, or do you go ahead and make those decisions independently of Him? Does God direct your life, or do you do it yourself? That's His concern. His concern is about priorities. Money is a good servant but always a poor master.

In his book, "I Talk Back to the Devil", A.W. Tozer writes, "Money often comes between men and God. Someone has said that you can take two small ten-cent pieces, just two dimes, and shut out the view of a panoramic landscape. Go to the mountains and just hold two coins in front of your eyes—the mountains are still there, but you cannot see them at all because there is a dime shutting off the vision of each eye." Just as we cannot follow a road that forks, we cannot serve God and wealth at the same time. God requires a single eye and single service.

In the game of Monopoly, players buy land and collect money. When one player has enough money and at least one monopoly of properties, he or she can buy houses and hotels and collect rent on them. Eventually, one player receives enough rental money through land and building holdings to bankrupt the other players, thus ending the game. Parker Brothers, the makers of Monopoly, take for granted one final instruction—when the game is over, put all the pieces back in the box. People who live for the present, who spend their strength on what cannot last, are like children who play Monopoly as though it were reality. In the end, we all get put in the box (the coffin) and we are gone. What matters is what remains when the game on earth is over.

One day in the not so distant future, Jesus Christ will return and He will bring the treasures that you have stored up with Him. In the final chapter of the Bible, Jesus' declares: "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev. 22:12). He is bringing back what you have invested with Him from the one place in the universe that it can never be lost. Only heavenly treasure can provide genuine security and permanence. You can't take it with you, but you can send it ahead.

Conclusion

John Wesley (1703–1791) said, "I value all things only by the price they shall gain in eternity." David Livingstone (1813–1873) said, "I place no value on anything I possess, except in relation to the kingdom of God." And Jim Elliot (1927–1956) said, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose." In these verses Jesus gives three very clear ways that the righteousness of His disciples can exceed the Scribes and Pharisee's as explained why and how we are to store our treasures in heaven. Three ways to store up treasures in heaven are by:

1) Transferring your treasure to heaven (Matthew 6:19–21); 2) Recognizing your responsibility to be generous (Matthew 6:22–23) and 3) Choosing your master wisely (Matthew 6:24).

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude today, the following are some main points to remember: The Sermon on the Mount is the most famous sermon Jesus ever gave and perhaps it is the most famous sermon ever given by anyone. In it Jesus taught us:

- The Beatitudes – are virtues in life which will ultimately lead to reward in this life and the

life thereafter.

- Using the metaphors of Salt and Light – to explain the roles of believers in the world
- He has come to fulfill the Law
- About sin of adultery which starts with lust in the heart
- About divorce and remarriage
- Oath and extension or amplification of taking oaths unnecessarily so that your Yes is yes and No is no.
- Forgiveness rather than retaliation (an eye for an eye, etc.)
- To love our enemies
- Right motive to three essential of worship to receive reward from God
- And let the church say, “Amen!”

Do you know this Jesus who transforms you to be truthful always?. If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God’s kingdom as you practice the Beatitudes. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don’t you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mtraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.

Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

March 20, 2016

12. Why Worry?

Matthew 6:25-34

I am reminded of a chorus that I had learned as a child in Sunday school

Why worry when you can pray?

Trust in Jesus and He will lead the way.

Don’t be a doubting Thomas, rest fully on His promises

Why worry, worry, worry when you can pray?

There are several reasons we could give that causes us to worry such as high energy costs, a worsening economy, rogue nuclear nations, threats of terrorism, widespread job layoffs, natural disasters and/or tension in the Middle East or anywhere else on the surface of the earth. In general, the uncertainty of the future causes us to worry. However, worry is the most dangerous companion to have because it kills too many people. Worry has an uncanny knack for killing people and the poet Robert Frost (1874–1963) wrote, “The reason why worry kills more people than work is because more people worry than work.” In fact, it appears that worry has become an American pastime as economic stress is taking its toll on Americans’ emotional and physical health. Fortunately, the encouraging Word that Jesus has for you today in Matthew 6:25–34 is “Don’t worry, be hopeful.” In this passage Jesus uses the word “worry” six times and He says, “Don’t worry” three times. This is because Jesus is against high anxiety and unhealthy worry.

In the previous verses we dealt with on last week Jesus encouraged believers to invest in storing their treasures in heaven because wherever your treasure is, your heart will also be there. Storing your treasure in heaven can be accomplished by transferring your treasure to heaven (Matthew 6:19–21); recognizing your responsibility to be generous (Matthew 6:22–23); and choosing your master wisely (6:24). But if we do what Jesus says, what about the future here on earth? This is what causes people to worry. So Jesus explains why there is no need to worry in Matthew 6:25-34.

Hence our text of the day states, “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life [Or single cubit to your height]? 28 “And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matthew 6:25-34).

In these verses Jesus emphatically expressed that there is no need for believers to worry if they:

1. Have faith in God’s providence and
2. Make God’s will their number one priority.

1. Have faith in God’s providence (Matthew 6:25-32)

Jesus tells us not to "worry" in these verses because worry is a lack of faith in God’s providence. The word worry in the original means "distracted". Therefore you cannot let anxiety about food and clothing distract you from more important things in life (recall Martha allowed food preparation for guests distract from listening to the word of life from Jesus - Luke 10:38-42). As such Jesus makes four arguments why we shouldn't worry:

A. Is not life and body more important than food and clothing (Matthew 6:25)? This is an argument from the greater to the lesser, similar to what Romans 8:32 says, “He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Life and body are certainly more important than food and clothing. If so, Who provides our lives and our bodies? God! If He is powerful enough to create life isn't He also able to provide food and clothing to sustain that life? He who has displayed so great goodness as to form the body, and breathe into it the breath of life, will surely follow up the blessing, and confer the smaller favor of providing for the body to be clothed, and food that life would be preserved.

B. Second argument: Look at the birds of the air, are you not more valuable than they (Matthew 6:26)? The birds are an example of God's ability to provide and through His providential workings in nature, God provides for their needs. This does not mean they do not

work for their needs (indeed, they are often very busy, gathering food, preparing nests, caring for their young). But they are not guilty of overdoing a good thing as the rich fool was in the parable of Luke 12:16-21. We are certainly more valuable to God than birds! This is an argument from the LESSER to the GREATER if compared to verse 25. Now, if God through His providence provides for their needs, will He not for you? (A similar argument is found in Matthew 10:29-31 that reads, "Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. [Or will; or knowledge] 30 And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. 31 So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows"). How are you more valuable than birds? You were created in the image of God! You were redeemed by the blood of His Son! Why, then, would you let the concern over physical needs distract you from what is really important in life?

C. Third argument: Can you grow simply by worrying (Matthew 6:27)? This argument illustrates the helplessness of man. There are many things in this life which we cannot affect by "worrying". For example, worrying will not make our bodies grow any taller (just learn to appreciate your height – God loves diversity!). The implication of this argument seems to be that "Worrying" about food and clothing cannot guarantee that you will have them tomorrow. If you doubt this, ask people who have been through natural disasters such as victims of "Hurricane Hugo", the "Great Quake of '89", "Hurricane Andrew" and "Hurricane Katrina" to name a few.

D. Fourth argument: Consider the lilies, won't God provide for you also (Matthew 6:28-30)? This is another example of God's ability and willingness to provide. Like the argument in verse 26 (the "birds of the air") it is another argument from the LESSER to the GREATER. Look at how they grow without any "toil" whatever, on their part, nor any "care" bestowed on them by any human agency. Yet their glory surpasses Solomon in all his glory! How? Through God's providential care by so ordering the affairs of this life to assure that they accomplish what they were designed to accomplish! Will God not much more clothe you? If God is able to so clothe the grass of the field, is He not ABLE and WILLING to do so for you? Remember you are created in the image of God and you who are designed to spend eternity with God! If we worry, we are of little faith as stated in Matthew 6:30. This implies we have "little faith" in God's Promise to care for us and Power to deliver that promise! Jesus then gave a summary concerning God's providence by saying, don't worry about food and clothing (Matthew 6:31) because it is only people without God (e.g., the Gentiles) that naturally worry about these things (Matthew 6:32). But we have God as our Heavenly Father, and He knows that we need such things! So we need to develop faith in God's providence, both in His ability and willingness to provide for His children. But the promise of His providence is conditioned upon our willingness to make God's will our number one priority.

2. Making God's will your number one priority (Matthew 6:33-34)

To make God's will our number one priority Jesus advised that we seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness (which surpasses the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees), and don't worry about tomorrow. Seeking first the kingdom of God and its righteousness is the second key to overcoming "Worry". We must make the will of God the number one priority in our life

(Matthew 6:33). We do this by serving God instead of "mammon" (or money) as our master; letting the "lamp" of our body be a "good eye" (i.e., being generous not greedy by focusing clearly on that which is good, true, and righteous); and laying up our treasure in heaven (by using earthly treasure to help others {Matthew 19:21; Luke 12:33-34; 1Timothy 6:17-19}). If we do this, God will provide for our physical needs for He is certainly "able" and He is certainly "willing" to do so. Once you make God's will your number one priority, don't worry about tomorrow as today has enough trouble with which to concern yourself (Matthew 6:34). We are not capable of handling tomorrow's worries as we have no control over the future and worrying about the future only distracts us from the duties of the present. Today's problems are all we are capable of handling without becoming distracted. So let tomorrow take care of itself by trusting in God and doing God's will today! Let your undivided attention be given to seeking God's rule in your life as you make His kingdom the number one priority in your life and concern yourself with His righteousness, not your riches.

CONCLUSION

The motto of many is "Don't worry, be happy"; but Jesus qualifies that motto by saying: "Don't worry, seek God's will first, and you will be happy!" If we take to heart what Jesus says and practice it, then our lives will be like homes built on a rock (see Matthew 7:24-25) such that no matter what "storms" of life may come our way our treasure is in heaven and our Father will provide for us during our earthly sojourn! If we don't heed Jesus' teachings and allow ourselves to be distracted to serve perishable "mammon" (or money), then we must go through life on earth without God's help and have no hope of eternity with God when we die. That is why we must "Seek first the kingdom of God and its righteousness... and we shall not worry about tomorrow ... because God will provide and supply all our needs"!

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude today, the following are some main points to remember: The Sermon on the Mount is the most famous sermon Jesus ever gave and perhaps it is the most famous sermon ever given by anyone. In it Jesus taught us:

- The Beatitudes – are virtues in life which will ultimately lead to reward in this life and the life thereafter.**
- Using the metaphors of Salt and Light – to explain the roles of believers in the world**
- He has come to fulfill the Law**
- About sin of adultery which starts with lust in the heart**
- About divorce and remarriage**
- Oath and extension or amplification of taking oaths unnecessarily so that your Yes is yes and No is no.**
- Forgiveness rather than retaliation (an eye for an eye, etc.)**
- To love our enemies**
- Right motive to three essentials of worship to receive reward from God**
- To store up treasures in heaven**
- Seek first His Kingdom and its righteousness and not to worry**
- And let the church say, "Amen!"**

Do you know this Jesus who transforms you to be truthful always? If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God's family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God's kingdom as you practice the Beatitudes. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

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**Mt. Traveler Missionary Baptist Church, Waverly, Alabama
Synopsis of Sermon Preached by Rev. B. C. Datiri, Pastor**

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

March 27, 2016

13. Why Judge Other?

Matthew 7:1-6

It is often quite easier to pass judgment on others but not on ourselves. Humans do not very often find faults with their actions but those of others. Even Jesus Christ who is coming back again to earth to judge everyone according to what they have done, went from one judgment hall and to another without being found to be at fault during the passion week; yet was finally condemned to death. He was judged and condemn so that we will not be judged and condemned. He died, not for His sins but for our sins such that we would live eternally.

On this resurrection morning I want to assure you that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. However, those without Christ have been condemned already because they rejected the son of God who loved them and died for their sins so that they can live. Therefore it is important to realize that when you judge yourself and turn to Christ, you will not be judged. But if you judge others, you will be judged in the same way you have judged them. Instead of appropriating Matthew 7:1a, "Do not judge", many use it as an excuse to continue to do wrong. Jesus wants us to understand that evaluating our actions prevents us from condemnation. Most of the time we are critical and quick to condemn the actions of other whereas would not do so if we acted the same way. In other words we see the specks of sawdust in other people's eyes but fail to realize we have a log or plank in our own eyes. So be quick to see or hear but don't be quick to judge others. Gather the facts first and then you can in a better position to help others. This is because it is hypocrisy to be very critical and judgmental of others' sinful behaviors whereas your behavior is more sinful.

Hence our text of the day states, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. 6 "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do they may trample them

under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces” (Matthew 7:1-6).

In these verses Jesus was instructing his disciples or followers to be careful about reaching an opinion to condemn someone without first having the complete facts. He says in Matthew 7:1, “Do not judge, or you too will be judged”. So what does Jesus mean and is He advocating that we can’t judge? First, let us understand the word judge. In the English language, the word “judge” can mean all sorts of things that range from passing a sentence at court to condemning someone, to making a value judgment, to making a decision about something or to choose one thing over another, or just forming an opinion about something. The Greek word has a similarly wide meaning as the English word too. So some people think that we shouldn’t therefore condemn or judge anyone for anything and shouldn’t even form an opinion. Rather, we should just leave all the judging to God. We are just to love and accept people unconditionally. But in 1 Corinthians 5, we have the situation of someone in the Corinthian church who had been committing sexual immorality. The church had been tolerating this person by not judging this sinful person, and so Paul wrote to them: “But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you” (1 Corinthians 5:11-13). There we have it. Paul is saying we should judge those who are inside the church and it’s the same Greek word for judge here as it is in Matthew 7. We are therefore to judge those in the church who sin and don’t repent and continue in their sin even after being warned. Furthermore, Jesus instructed in Matthew 18:15-17, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector”. This passage doesn’t have the word “judge” in it, but it’s certainly a judgment that is happening. It outlines a process where a sinning brother who refuses to repent is to be treated as a Gentile or tax collector or as an unbeliever. Now if this isn’t judging then I don’t know what is! So we see Jesus is not telling us not to judge at all, but to be very careful when we do judge, and that there is a certain way we must judge.

However in Matthew 7:2, Jesus tells us in more detail why we shouldn’t judge - “For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you”. What Jesus is reminding us here is that we need to be careful when we judge. Why? Because we are also liable to judgment! For people can be very self-righteous, very one-eyed and very biased; and find it very easy to see the faults of others but find it difficult to see their own faults, or if we do recognize our own faults we tend to brush them off as unimportant. But this verse two is a sober reminder to us that in the same way we judge others, so too will we be judged. Therefore, before thinking of judging someone you need to be really careful that the finger you point doesn’t turn around and point back at you. And this reminds us of that last part

of the Lord's Prayer that we looked at a few weeks ago and it says, "... and forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors" (Matthew 6:12). We ask for God to forgive us our sins, but if we expect God to forgive us, then we need to forgive others of their sins against us. And what would happen if God didn't forgive us our sins? If God judged us, condemned us as we deserve, we would incur the wrath of God and we would pay the penalty for our sins, which is eternal separation from God in Hell. Thanks be to God who forgives of us our sins! But God can only forgive us of our sins if we recognize that we are sinners - that we do have sin and that we deserve His judgment. But a whole lot of the problem is that we often don't think we are sinners, or if we do realize we are sinners, we don't think we are really quite bad sinners like others.

On this Easter Sunday, 2016 if you are here today and you haven't come to that point of recognizing your sin before God, and how that offends Him, then I urge you to do so. It's only when you can confess your sin that you can ask Him to forgive you and come into a right relationship with Him. Generally people find it easy to find faults with others, while ignoring their own faults. This is why Jesus then goes on to say in Matthew 7:3-4, "Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log (or plank) that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye?" The biggest problem with judging is that you are blind to your own faults while the faults of others are obvious to you. We are quick to accuse others of their problems and issues without seeing our own problems and issues, let alone doing anything about it. The fact remains that we all seem to be much better at seeing the speck in other peoples' eyes than the logs in our own. It's an interesting analogy Jesus uses here – the specks and the logs in eyes. Now before Jesus entered the ministry full time He worked as a carpenter - that was His job. And this speck here is probably the sawdust that is always hanging around carpenter's shops. A tiny speck of sawdust was pretty easy to get in your eye, but a tiny speck of sawdust is pretty hard for someone else to see. Yet, we seem to be so good at noticing specks in other people's eyes! Jesus contrasts that to the logs in our own eyes. Logs are another thing you find in carpenter's shops, but it's pretty hard to get a log in your eye. Even if you did get a log in your eye, you would think it would be so obviously seen. Well, the trouble is that we do tend to see the little faults in other people without seeing the big faults in ourselves! So what are we to do?

Jesus tells us what to do in verse 5, "You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye" (Matthew 7:5). Truly, the only way you can help your brother with the speck in his eye is to first look at self to get the log out of our own eye. In other words deal, with God's help, with the sin in your own life that mars your judgment so much. Jesus says that once we take the log out of our eye we will be able to see the speck in our brother's eyes clearly and help him take it out. So there is a place for judging others, but only after we have really and truly judged ourselves. Part of Christian maturity is that whenever there is a conflict involving one it is necessary to recognize that most likely we are part of the problem, and to look at ourselves before we blame others. In such a case, Jesus has already given us the steps to follow in Matthew 18:15-17. It talks about what to do if someone does something against you. Also, Galatians 6:1 says, "Brothers, if anyone is caught in any

transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness”. There are some important principles here about judgment, and that is accountability, and working together. When we make judgments, if we are making them on our own, then the logs in our own eyes can hinder us from judging well. One of the reasons that we have the Leadership Team in this church is so that one man – the pastor - doesn’t make all the judgments on his own. But important decisions – or judgments – about the church, about people in the church if necessary, about doctrine, about whatever, can be decided in council together with the Leadership Team involved. How terrible it is, as unfortunately sometimes happens, when someone in the church is judged on the basis of hearsay and rumors when the correct process hasn’t been followed. Now the Bible tell us that in some cases we are called upon to judge others, but our passage for today tells us to be very careful about judging. It tells us that before we judge someone – have a good hard look at ourselves; then follow the process Jesus outlined for us in Matthew 18. Next, judging is not something we do ourselves but we do together with others by seeking and/or asking advice and help of spiritual Christians, those showing in their life and speech that they are Christ- minded people. Why? Well – we can make mistakes, and other people can often see our own faults better than we can ourselves. Then we should get all the facts and research something thoroughly before making a judgment. And finally, we should do all this in a spirit of gentleness, with the ultimate aim of helping ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ to be restored to live righteous lives, seeking first God’s kingdom and His righteousness.

Jesus then concluded our text of the day with Matthew 7:6 “Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you”. Why talking about dogs and pigs while talking of judging other? Well, back then dogs were not seen as the cute and cuddly pets we see them as today, but they were wild dogs who were regarded as unclean animals that were often a dangerous pest. Dogs and pigs were symbols of gentiles or pagans - that is, people who rejected God and His laws. So when Jesus says – do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw pearls before pigs – pearls were the most valuable precious stone back in those days. Jesus is talking about Gospel truths, about the things of God. We’ve just been talking about judging and trying to bring reconciliation, and looking at ourselves long and hard before trying to remove any specks from our brothers’ eyes. But there are people in this world who just won’t listen to anything to do with God. Yes, we must evangelize and tell people about Jesus and what He has done for us. But there comes a time when some people won’t listen and they completely reject God and won’t have anything to do with Him. They won’t accept correction, even if humbly given by a number of wise, mature and spiritual people. And in that case after we’ve followed the right process we have to come to a judgment that, well – we have done our best, and we don’t need to try and persuade them anymore. Don’t cast your pearls before pigs or the holy things before wild dogs, because they treat them with disrespect and try and rip us to shreds. But in the case of our fellow Christians and people, who do listen, don’t be quick to judge. Get the facts. Judge yourself first. And when conflict or disagreements or the potential for judgment rises, our overriding concern should be for God’s glory and His righteousness and for the restoration of good relationships between each other if at all possible. The ultimately goal is to serve each other by watching out for each other

and helping each other on the path to be being more righteous and more like Christ than attempting to destroy and/or condemn the one at fault and create a rift in Christian relationship.

Mt Traveler members, as we conclude today, the following are some main points to remember: The Sermon on the Mount is the most famous sermon Jesus ever gave and perhaps it is the most famous sermon ever given by anyone. In it Jesus taught us:

- **The Beatitudes – are virtues in life which will ultimately lead to reward in this life and the life thereafter.**
- **Using the metaphors of Salt and Light – to explain the roles of believers in the world**
- **He has come to fulfill the Law**
- **About sin of adultery which starts with lust in the heart**
- **About divorce and remarriage**
- **Oath and extension or amplification of taking oaths unnecessarily so that your Yes is yes and No is no.**
- **Forgiveness rather than retaliation (an eye for an eye, etc.)**
- **To love our enemies**
- **Right motive to three essentials of worship to receive reward from God**
- **To store up treasures in heaven**
- **Seek first His Kingdom and its righteousness and not to worry**
- **Not to judged or you too will be judged**
- **And let the church say, “Amen!”**

Do you know this Jesus who transforms you to be truthful always? If you have not, we invite you to come, repent, and humbly accept Jesus Christ into your heart and life by faith. I hope you will make room in your heart for Him today! Then confess with your mouth your faith in Him that He died and rose again to save you from your sin through the shedding of His blood on Calvary, and you will be saved and become part of God’s family and kingdom. Then ask Him in prayers to empower you through the Holy Spirit with wisdom, courage and boldness to be always truthful to cause the continual growth of God’s kingdom as you practice the Beatitudes. May God bless you as you humbly open your heart to provide room for Him as the choir leads us in a song!

If you are reading this on the Internet why don’t you pray asking Jesus Christ to be your Lord and savior, then write us at pastordatiri@mttraveler.org? If you are a child of God and this message has blessed or helped to you, please write and tell us also.