

“Back to School with Jesus: Master Teacher”

Scripture: Matthew 4:23-5:2

Graphics: back to school, paper, books, backpack

Big Truth: The Sermon on the Mount is essential teaching for the Christian life and the promise of blessing that comes through poverty of spirit and mourning which are the key foundation of the sermon. It's great to learn the words of Jesus and even be able to recite them, as we share the good news. However, Jesus calls us to not only know the words and The Word, but to put those words into practice as we love and serve the world in Jesus' name. Let's go back to school with Jesus. Whether you are young or old, there is always something to learn so that you can put it into practice.

Focus Phrase: Jesus is the Master Teacher who teaches and shows the gospel in action.

1. Introduction

- A. **PRAY! (Jesus, You are Lord...)**
- B. I know many of you don't want to hear this, but it's almost time to go **back to school!** If you have friends or family in other states, many of the kids and teachers are already back to school. And many of our college students have been back for a week or so.
- C. If you're a teacher, you've already been mentally preparing your mind, and maybe even your classroom, for a new cohort of students to teach!
- D. I remember the days of school shopping, new clothes, new school supplies, and, my favorite part, new sneakers!
- E. The thing that always made me a little nervous, and I bet for you too, was who you teachers would be. In every school, some teachers are legends because of their grading or expectations. Some are fun and make you at home. Others are new to teaching and will learn a lot in that first few years.
- F. Having the right teacher makes all the difference in the world. And, I bet we can all name 2-3 teachers we had over the years that made a huge impact on our lives and learning. Some of my favorite were Mr. Pascucci, my high school band teacher. Dr. Hassett, my water engineering professor in college. And Dr. Brian Russell my Inductive Bible Study professor in seminary.
- G. Having the right teacher makes a huge difference.
- H. I'm inviting us, over the next 6-7 weeks to go back to school with Jesus, our Master Teacher in the Christian faith we practice...the One we follow as we live out our mission as believers.
- I. A disciple is a student-learner...a follower of a person. To be a disciple means to keep learning and growing in knowledge and practice on what is means to live the Christian life. We gather together in worship and small groups and Sunday School and Bible Study, not just to learn but to put into practice what we learn from the Teacher. And OUR teacher is Jesus Christ, Son of God,

second person of the Trinity (Father, SON, and Holy Spirit), and Savior of the world. Yet, when Jesus was on the earth, he was a Teacher in the ways that the people around him recognized.

2. Scripture

- A. But what's Jesus' resume as a teacher? What sort of teacher was he?
- i. In John 1:38, Jesus' disciples called him *teacher* (Rabbi). "When Jesus turned and saw them following, he said to them, 'What are you looking for?' They said to him, 'Rabbi' (which translated means Teacher), 'where are you staying?'" So, clearly, those closest to Jesus knew Him as Teacher.
 - ii. We know that **strangers** called him a *teacher*. In Mark 10:17, we read this, "As he [Jesus] was setting out on a journey, a man ran up and knelt before him and asked him, 'Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?'"
 - iii. Even Jesus' **ENEMIES** called a *teacher*! In Luke 20:20-21, we read this, "So they watched him and sent spies who pretended to be honest, in order to trap him by what he said and then to hand him over to the jurisdiction and authority of the governor. So they asked him, 'Teacher, we know that you are right in what you say and teach, and you show deference to no one but teach the way of God in accordance with truth.'"
 - iv. Finally, Jesus recognized **himself** as a *teacher* in John 13:14: "So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."
 - v. Clearly, Jesus was a teacher, a Rabbi, someone who'd gone through the rigorous process of learning and being trained to teach others in the Jewish Law and all things of God.
 - vi. So it's no surprise that Jesus not only taught what the Law and the Prophets had to say, but, like every good teacher, He made lesson plans...he had goals and objectives for His students. In college, we called those rubrics and syllabi...the outlines of the important concepts we need to learn and put into practice.
 - vii. For Jesus, who had a limited amount of time to teach everything that was critical for the disciples to learn, the lessons were all important. And it all happened while he was teaching through the 3 years of his public ministry.
 - viii. And no where do we find a more succinct and complete syllabus than in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's gospel - chapters 4, 5, and 6. THAT syllabus is what will guide our lessons, as we go Back to School with Jesus! As we (like my teachers would say) put on our thinking caps, sit up straight, eyes forward, ready to learn.
 - ix. Now, many people refer to the Sermon of the Mount (and even use it WAY out of context)...things like, "Blessed are the peacemakers" in times of war,

etc. Fewer people have actually read and studied what we refer to as The Sermon on the Mount. Fewer still have applied, faithfully, the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon of the Mount.

- x. John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement in the 18th century, expected his preachers to preach on the Sermon on the Mount regularly. In fact, 13 of Wesley's original 44 standard sermons were specifically on the content of the Sermon of the Mount.
- xi. Here's a quote from one of those sermons: "And what is it which [Jesus] is teaching? The Son of God, who came from heaven, is here showing us the way to heaven, to the place which he hath prepared for us, the glory he had before the world began. He is teaching us the true way to life everlasting, the royal way which leads to the kingdom. And the only true way; for there is none besides – all other paths lead to destruction. From the character of the speaker we are well assured that he hath declared the full and perfect will of God. He hath uttered not one tittle too much: nothing more than he had received of the Father. Nor too little: he hath not shunned to declare the whole counsel of God. Much less hath he uttered anything wrong, anything contrary to the will of him that sent him. All his words are true and right concerning all things, and shall stand fast for ever and ever." John Wesley "Upon our Lord's Sermon on the Mount, Discourse the First" (0.3)
- xii. Wesley expected his preachers to preach about the Sermon of the Mount. He expected his preachers to be living proof that the Sermon of the Mount pointed people to everlasting life. But Wesley also expected all good Methodists to understand and apply everything Jesus taught in that sermon in their lives. None of us gets a hall pass or an early dismissal!
- xiii. See, because Wesley KNEW that Jesus was defining in a very clear way what He, as Messiah and Son of God, expected of those who wanted to be his disciples...including you and me.
- xiv. Let's focus in on the scripture text for today...as we begin this back to school journey with Jesus. Turn with me to Matthew 4, starting in verse 23.

B. READ MATTHEW 4:23-5:2

- i. The two things that Matthew wants us to know about Jesus our Master Teacher is that, (1) He taught in WORD and (2) He taught in DEED.
- ii. The synagogues throughout Galilee were smaller version of the Temple in Jerusalem. In 2018, we visited the ruins of a synagogue in Capernaum. It had columns and stone...it was incredible to see. I tried to envision that place 2000 years ago as place of worship. It had a central place in the front, similar to the stage here. Those were the places where Jewish people came to hear and learn the Word of God. There would be music and praying, and there would be teaching from the scriptures.

- iii. Our Sunday worship services are modeled after what the Jewish people did when they gathered for worship.
 - iv. And when Jesus was in those synagogues, as a Rabbi (Teacher), he was presenting the word of God in the Torah and the words of the Prophets like Isaiah and Daniel.
 - v. But even more importantly, is when Jesus was in that place teaching the word of God, what many didn't know yet was that Jesus WAS and IS the Word of God made flesh, right before their eyes, as it says in John chapter 1. So, not only was He presenting the Word, but was presenting HIMSELF AS the WORD.
 - vi. John Genesse says that, "Jesus was the messenger and the means."
 - vii. From Jesus, the Master Teacher, we know that teaching from the word of God - the Bible - and teaching about Jesus is a central task of the church. Jesus shared the message of God's love for His people...and Jesus would become the message of love on the cross for all time.
 - viii. Yet, just like today and every era of the church (and even in school and life), teaching is a difficult task...because it's so important...because we want to get it right. Jesus knew that. The early disciples knew that. WE know that.
 - ix. I have an incredible appreciation for the challenge that it is to teach...so a shout out to all our teacher and school staff out there. I grew up in a home with two parents who were public school teachers, so I have full understanding of the fact that your teaching task doesn't end when you leave the school building. As you all begin a new school year, know that we are praying for you...and in a couple weeks, we WILL pray over you, and all our students.
- C. Our task of learning and teaching doesn't end when we leave this sanctuary or leave our small group or class. In fact, it's always just beginning when we leave.
- D. Jesus taught the word in those synagogues, but Matthew is very clear that he followed that teaching in word with teaching in DEEDS.
- i. In verse 24, we read that Jesus not only taught the gospel - the Good News about God's love - in the synagogues, but he cured EVERY disease and EVERY sickness among the people as a way to prove what he was saying was true.
 - ii. Teaching the ways of God and what God wants us to do is important, but living out what we learn is also important. Jesus demonstrated what he was teaching...word IN action!

- iii. Someone once said, “I would rather see a sermon than hear one any day.” I couldn’t agree more. That’s why, as a pastor, and as teachers, we MUST be living the Word we teach every day, even as sinners saved by grace.
- iv. As student-followers of Jesus, it’s not enough to simply KNOW what Jesus said and taught...but to also put that into action in your life.
- v. That includes the amazing and miraculous things Jesus did, along with feeding the hungry and caring for the sick. Worshiping passionately, loving extravagantly, and witnessing boldly.
- vi. The way you and I live our lives is evidence of the Jesus in us...and, trust me, the world is watching you if you profess to be a follower of Jesus.
- vii. The world is watching to see if your actions and your words match up. It’s not always fair, but no one ever - not once - taught you that life is fair, amen?

3. Application

- A. The result of Jesus being the Master Teacher was that, as we read in verse 25, crowds - multitudes - gathered around Jesus, from all over the place.
- B. Jesus didn’t sugarcoat the call for those who would be disciples...he didn’t water down what they would need to do. He said things like, “In order to be my disciple, you must deny yourself daily and take up your cross and follow me.”
- C. He never taught people that whatever they thought God’s will should be is OK. He never said that you can do whatever you want and still have eternal life with Him. In fact, He said the road to everlasting life is narrow and few will find it.
- D. And they KEPT coming anyway! See, the answer to the sin problem in the world and in our lives is not to make it all OK based on what we want. The answer is, like Jesus did, to call people to higher levels of holiness and righteousness. Jesus’ call was to teach the truth...to live the truth...and to put the rest in His hands to sort out.
- E. Being a follower of Jesus is not about right-thinking alone...but of right-living, based on the clear commands of Jesus in the Bible.
- F. One of the reason why I am Methodist is because we have always been called to combine KNOWLEDGE about God’s will with a VITAL PIETY. What does that mean? Well, it simply means that we put our faith into action. John Wesley challenged the early Methodists to visit the sick and those in prison, to care for the widows and orphans, to love those who were outcast and lonely. Where can you do that this week? In this season?
- G. What you KNOW about God is what develops and motivates you to serve God and love those around you, extravagantly.

- H. Over the next 6 weeks, we'll see that the Sermon on the Mount, taught to us by the Master Teacher Jesus, is a direct challenge - an affront - to superficial, cultural Christianity. It may just offend us as we read Jesus' teaching and His challenge to live it out.
- I. I would encourage you to read Matthew 5 this week...and be ready to go back to school with Jesus in worship even as we prepare ourselves for a new season coming.

4. Conclusion

- A. People came from all over the place to be taught by Jesus. They heard the words. They received the healing. They came to the quick conclusion that Jesus was no ordinary Rabbi. Word spread and more people came.
- B. As we spend time with Jesus as we study His words in the Sermon on the Mount, we WILL hear what it takes to be part of the Kingdom of God...this Kingdom that includes all those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus.
- C. What we do with that teaching is then up to us, as the Holy Spirit fills us up.
- D. Are we (will we be) willing to learn and live according to the teachings of our Master Teacher, even when it puts us at odds with the world around us?
- E. Next week, we'll sit down with Jesus and his disciples (and the crowds I suspect) to begin our first lessons.
- F. Let's DO THIS! Class dismissed!
- G. Let's pray...