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CHAPTER 5

Jesus proclaims the new values of the kingdom

5:1 - When Jesus saw the vast crowds he went up the hill-side and after he had sat down his disciples came to him.

5:2-12 - Then he began his teaching by saying to them, "How happy are the humble-minded, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs! "How happy are those who know what sorrow means for they will be given courage and comfort! "Happy are those who claim nothing, for the whole earth will belong to them! "Happy are those who are hungry and thirsty for goodness, for they will be fully satisfied! "Happy are the merciful, for they will have mercy shown to them! "Happy are the utterly sincere, for they will see God! "Happy are those who make peace, for they will be sons of God! "Happy are those who have suffered persecution for the cause of goodness, for the kingdom of Heaven is theirs! "And what happiness will be yours when people blame you and ill-treat you and say all kinds of slanderous things against you for my sake! Be glad then, yes, be tremendously glad - for your reward in Heaven is magnificent. They persecuted the prophets before your time in exactly the same way.

5:13 - "You are the earth's salt. But if the salt should become tasteless, what can make it salt again? It is completely useless and can only be thrown out of doors and stamped under foot."

5:14-15 - "You are the world's light - it is impossible to hide a town built on the top of a hill. Men do not light a lamp and put it under a bucket. They put it on a lamp-stand and it gives light for everybody in the house.

5:16 - "Let your light shine like that in the sight of men. Let them see the good things you do and praise your Father in Heaven."

Christ's authority surpasses that of the Law

5:17-20 - "You must not think I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to complete them. Indeed, I assure you that, while Heaven and earth last, the Law will not lose a single dot or comma until its purpose is complete. This means that whoever now relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men to do the same will himself be called least in Heaven. But whoever teaches and practises them will be called great in the kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you that your goodness must be a far better thing than the goodness of the scribes and Pharisees before you can set foot in the kingdom of Heaven at all!

5:21-22 - "You have heard that it was said to the people in the old days, 'You shall not murder', and anyone who does must stand his trial. But I say to you that anyone who is angry with his brother must stand his trial; anyone who contemptuously calls his brother a fool must face the supreme court; and anyone who looks on his brother as a lost soul is himself heading straight for the fire of destruction.

5:23-24 - "So that if, while you are offering your gift at the altar, you should remember that your brother has something against you, you must leave your gift there before the altar and go away. Make your peace with your brother first, then come and offer your gift."

5:25-26 - "Come to terms quickly with your opponent while you have the chance, or else he may hand you over to the judge and the judge in turn hand you over to the officer of the court and you will be thrown into prison. Believe me, you will never get out again till you have paid your last farthing!"

5:27-28 - "You have heard that it was said to the people in the old days, 'You shall not commit adultery'. But I say to you that every man who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her - in his heart.

5:29-30 - "Yes, if your right eye leads you astray pluck it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than that your whole body should be thrown on to the rubbish-heap. "Yes, if your right hand leads you astray cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than that your whole body should go to the rubbish-heap.

5:31-32 - "It also used to be said that 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce'. But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife except on the ground of unfaithfulness is making her an adulteress. And whoever marries the woman who has been divorced also commits adultery.

5:33-37 - "Again, you have heard that the people in the old days were told - 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord', but I say to you, don't use an oath at all. Don't swear by Heaven for it is God's throne, nor by the earth for it is his footstool, nor by Jerusalem for it is the city of the great king. No, and don't swear by your own head, for you cannot make a single hair - white or black! Whatever you have to say let your 'yes' be a plain 'yes' and your 'no' a plain 'no' - anything more than this has a taint of evil.

5:38-39 - "You have heard that it used to be said 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth', but I tell you, don't resist the man who wants to harm you. If a man hits your right cheek, turn the other one to him as well.

5:40-42 - "If a man wants to sue you for your coat, let him have it and your overcoat as well. If anybody forces you to go a mile with him, do more - go two miles with him. Give to the man who asks anything from you, and don't turn away from the man who wants to borrow."

5:43-45 - "You have heard that it used to be said, 'You shall love your neighbour', and 'hate your enemy', but I tell you, Love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Heavenly Father. For he makes the sun rise upon evil men as well as good, and he sends his rain upon honest and dishonest men alike.

5:46-48 - For if you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even tax-collectors do that! And if you exchange greetings only with your own circle, are you doing anything exceptional? Even the pagans do that much. No, you are to be perfect, like your Heavenly Father.

CHAPTER 6

The new life is not a matter of outward show

6:1 - "Beware of doing your good deeds conspicuously to catch men's eyes or you will miss the reward of your Heavenly Father.

6:2-4 - "So, when you do good to other people, don't hire a trumpeter to go in front of you - like those play-actors in the synagogues and streets who make sure that men admire them. Believe me, they have had all the reward they are going to get! No, when you give to charity, don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be secret. Your Father who knows all secrets will reward you.

6:5-13 - "And then, when you pray, don't be like the play-actors. They love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at street-corners so that people may see them at it. Believe me, they have had all the reward they are going to get. But when you pray, go into your own room, shut your door and pray to your Father privately. Your Father who sees all private things will reward you. And when you pray don't rattle off long prayers like the pagans who think they will be heard because they use so many words. Don't be like them. After all, God, who is your Father, knows your needs before you ask him. Pray then like this - 'Our Heavenly Father, may your name be honoured; May your kingdom come, and your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day the bread we need, Forgive us what we owe to you, as we have also forgiven those who owe anything to us. Keep us clear of temptation, and save us from evil'."

Forgiveness of fellow-man is essential

6:14-15 - "For if you forgive other people their failures, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you will not forgive other people, neither will your Heavenly Father forgive you your failures."

6:16-18 - "Then, when you fast, don't look like those miserable play-actors! For they deliberately disfigure their faces so that people may see that they are fasting. Believe me, they have had all their reward. No, when you fast, brush your hair and wash your face so that nobody knows that you are fasting - let it be a secret between you and your Father. And your Father who knows all secrets will reward you.

Put your trust in God alone

6:19-21 - "Don't pile up treasures on earth, where moth and rust can spoil them and thieves can break in and steal. But keep your treasure in Heaven where there is neither moth nor rust to spoil it and nobody can break in and steal. For wherever your treasure is, you may be certain that your heart will be there too!"

6:22-23 - "The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is sound, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is evil, your whole body will be full of darkness. If all the light you have is darkness, it is dark indeed!"

6:24 - "No one can be loyal to two masters. He is bound to hate one and love the other, or support one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and the power of money at the same time."

6:25-30 - "That is why I say to you, don't worry about living - wondering what you are going to eat or drink, or what you are going to wear. Surely life is more important than food, and the body more important than the clothes you wear. Look at the birds in the sky. They never sow nor reap nor store away in barns, and yet your Heavenly Father feeds them. Aren't you much more valuable to him than they are? Can any of you, however much he worries, make himself an inch taller? And why do you worry about clothes? Consider how the wild flowers grow. They neither work nor weave, but I tell you that even Solomon in all his glory was never arrayed like one of these! Now if God so clothes the flowers of the field, which are alive today and burnt in the stove tomorrow, is he not much more likely to clothe you, you 'little-faiths'?"

6:31-33 - "So don't worry and don't keep saying, 'What shall we eat, what shall we drink or what shall we wear?! That is what pagans are always looking for; your Heavenly Father knows that you need them all. Set your heart on the kingdom and his goodness, and all these things will come to you as a matter of course."

6:34 - "Don't worry at all then about tomorrow. Tomorrow can take care of itself! One day's trouble is enough for one day."

CHAPTER 7

The common sense behind right behaviour

7:1-2 - "Don't criticise people, and you will not be criticised. For you will be judged by the way you criticise others, and the measure you give will be the measure you receive."

7:3-5 - "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and fail to notice the plank in your own? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me get the speck out of your eye', when there is a plank in your own? You fraud! Take the plank out of your own eye first, and then you can see clearly enough to remove your brother's speck of dust."

7:6 - "You must not give holy things to dogs, nor must you throw your pearls before pigs - or they may trample them underfoot and turn and attack you."

7:7-8 - "Ask and it will be given to you. Search and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened for you. The one who asks will always receive; the one who is searching will always find, and the door is opened to the man who knocks."

7:9-11 - "If any of you were asked by his son for bread would you be likely to give him a stone, or if he asks for a fish would you give him a snake? If you then, for all your evil, quite naturally give good things to your children, how much more likely is it that your Heavenly Father will give good things to those who ask him?"

7:12 - "Treat other people exactly as you would like to be treated by them - this is the essence of all true religion."

7:13-14 - "Go in by the narrow gate. For the wide gate has a broad road which leads to disaster and there are many people going that way. The narrow gate and the hard road lead out into life and only a few are finding it."

Living, not professing, is what matters

7:15-20 - "Be on your guard against false religious teachers, who come to you dressed up as sheep but are really greedy wolves. You can tell them by their fruit. Do you pick a bunch of grapes from a thorn-bush or figs from a clump of thistles? Every good tree produces good fruit, but a bad tree produces bad fruit. A good tree is incapable of producing bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot produce good fruit. The tree that fails to produce good fruit is cut down and burnt. So you may know men by their fruit."

7:21 - "It is not everyone who keeps saying to me 'Lord, Lord' who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the man who actually does my Heavenly Father's will."

7:22-23 - "In 'that day' many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we preach in your name, didn't we cast out devils in your name, and do many great things in your name?' Then I shall tell them plainly, 'I have never known you. Go away from me, you have worked on the side of evil!'"

To follow Christ's teaching means the only real security

7:24-25 - "Everyone then who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a sensible man who builds his house on the rock. Down came the rain and up came the floods, while the winds blew and roared upon that house - and it did not fall because its foundations were on the rock."

7:26-27 - "And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not follow them can be compared with a foolish man who built his house on sand. Down came the rain and up came the floods, while the winds blew and battered that house till it collapsed, and fell with a great crash."

7:28-29 - When Jesus had finished these words the crowd were astonished at the power behind his teaching. For his words had the ring of authority, quite unlike those of the scribes."