

“You Heard It Was Said”

The Rev. Drew Willard
UCC at The Villages, FL
Aug. 12th, 2018
12th Sun./Pentecost

Deuteronomy 5:16-21

Matthew 5:1-48

[Jesus said,]

‘Do not assume I have come to undermine the Law and the Prophets.

I have not come to undermine them, but to affirm them...

Matthew 5:17

Let us pray... O God,

Help us to listen to those verses of your Word that are familiar to us
and hear them in a new way.

Help us to agree on what the challenges are before us
even when we don’t agree about how to solve them.

Help us to be patient with one another’s suggestions in the process.

Amen

Early on in my ministry here at UCC at The Villages,

I referred to passage in the book by Jaroslav Pelikan,

Jesus Through The Centuries about “Christ the Liberator”

as one of the ways Jesus has been interpreted
in the history of Christianity.

I learned that this characterization of him was significant

in the late 1700s and 1800s, coinciding with the debate about slavery -
especially in America.

Jaroslav Pelikan also described this particular role of Christ as ‘liberator’ was
‘rediscovered’ during this time and served to influence a Russian author
and radical, Christian anarchist, Leo Tolstoy.

Tolstoy’s writings would influence a young Hindu Indian lawyer
named Mohandas Gandhi, who would correspond with him.

Gandhi would go on to lead a revolution of nonviolent, direct action that would
eventually free India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh from the British Empire.

This successful campaign of waging peace inspired Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
in his work to free America from racist oppression and war.

What would serve as a common thread for them as well as others who would
respond in their words & deeds, leading to social transformation,
was Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon on the Mount provides a blueprint for that ‘Kingdom’ we pray for
every Sunday when we say the Lord’s Prayer:

“Our Father Who art in Heaven; Hallowed be Thy Name;

Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on Earth as it is in Heaven...”

and ‘on Earth as it is in Heaven’ presumes that this Kingdom
is an achievable reality.

Willard, p.2

It is a 3-Point Sermon – chapters 5, 6, and 7 in the Gospel of Matthew that have this basic message:

*You have heard that it was said, ‘One Way’,
but I say to you, ‘God is still speaking’;
So, don’t pray, donate, serve just for show,
because God is with you wherever you go;
Therefore, do unto others as you would have them do unto you –
or else!*

For today’s message – and the next three Sundays,
I would like us to explore this great teaching of Jesus, together...

I will recite my interpretation of this text –
Chapter 5 today, Chapter 6 next Sunday,
and Chapter 7 the last Sunday of August.

My goal is to equip you with a starting point for talking about
principles that go beyond arguing and a vision for what we hope for.
Another goal is to present this text in a way that is easily understandable –
and allows for discussion, alternatives, and consensus.

I hope to do this by using Biblical storytelling and then asking you to consider:
*What did you hear that was familiar? Was did you hear in a new way?
Do you agree? What do you suggest?*

Notes for discussion:

Jesus is giving us a way to re-examine scripture –
this is already evident in how the Gospels interpret Hebrew texts:

Isaiah 40:3

A voice cries:

*“In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.”*

Matthew 3:3^b [as well as the other Gospels]

*“The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.”*

Isaiah 61:1

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,

*because the LORD has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound...*

Luke 4:18

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,

because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor.

*He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty those who are oppressed...*

The 10 Commandments

- ‘Thou shalt not kill’ [Deuteronomy 5:17]
- ‘Thou shalt not commit adultery’ [Deuteronomy 5:18]
- ‘Thou shalt not bear false witness’ [Deuteronomy 5: 20]
as in, “Don’t make promises you can’t keep”
- ‘Thou shalt not take the LORD’s name in vain’ [Deuteronomy 5:11]

Other teachings from scripture

- ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth’ [Exodus 21:24]
[“Resist not evil” – as, in “Don’t stand in violent opposition”]
- ‘Love your neighbor’ [Leviticus 19:18]
- ‘Hate your enemy’
[“You have heard that it was said...”, but not in the Bible]

We have the responsibility for social transformation
because of our “response ability” [Richard Pimentel]

Amen

*In our scripture lesson today from Deuteronomy 5:16-21,
we hear the last five of the Ten Commandments
that describe how we ought to treat each other...*

- ¹⁶ Respect your father and mother,
and you will live a long and successful life in the land I am giving you.
- ¹⁷ Do not murder.
¹⁸ Be faithful in marriage.
- ¹⁹ Do not steal.
²⁰ Do not tell lies about others.
- ²¹ Do not want anything that belongs to someone else.
Don't want anyone's wife or husband,
house, land, slaves, oxen, donkeys, or anything else.

Let us be challenged and guided by these words...

Matthew 5:1-48

- ¹Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down his disciples came to him. ²And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:
- ³ "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴ "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- ⁵ "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- ⁶ "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- ⁷ "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.
- ⁸ "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- ⁹ "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- ¹⁰ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ¹¹ "Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.
- ¹³ "You are the salt of the earth; but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trodden under foot by men.
- ¹⁴ "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hid.
- ¹⁵ Nor do men light a lamp and put it under a bushel, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house.
- ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.
- ¹⁷ "Think not that I have come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have come not to abolish them but to fulfil them.
- ¹⁸ For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.
- ¹⁹ Whoever then relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but he who does them and teaches them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
- ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.
- ²¹ "You have heard that it was said to the men of old, 'You shall not kill; and whoever kills shall be liable to judgment.'
- ²² But I say to you that every one who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother shall be liable to the council, and whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to the hell of fire.
- ²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,
- ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ Make friends quickly with your accuser, while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison;
²⁶ truly, I say to you, you will never get out till you have paid the last penny.
²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’
²⁸ But I say to you that every one who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.
²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell.
³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.
³¹ “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³² But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
³³ “Again you have heard that it was said to the men of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’
³⁴ But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God,
³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King.
³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black.
³⁷ Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.
³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’
³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist one who is evil. But if any one strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also;
⁴⁰ and if any one would sue you and take your coat, let him have your cloak as well;
⁴¹ and if any one forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.
⁴² Give to him who begs from you, and do not refuse him who would borrow from you.
⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’
⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,
⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.
⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?
⁴⁷ And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?
⁴⁸ You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.