

Dr. Robert A. Peterson, Christ's Saving Work, Session 7, 3 Offices of Christ: Prophet, Priest, and King, Part 2

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This is Dr. Robert Peterson in his teaching on Christ's Saving Work. This is session 7, Three Offices of Christ, Prophet, Priest, and King, Part 2.

We are studying Christ's three offices of prophet, priest, and king, and at present, we are working with his prophetic office.

We've said that Deuteronomy 18:14 to 22, speaks of the whole line of prophets culminating in the Christ as Peter identifies with in Acts 3.22. And so I would like to go ahead and speak to Jesus as the great prophet, as exhibited in the Sermon on the Mount, as the Word in John 1, and as the speaker of the I Am statements in the Gospel of John. In the Sermon on the Mount, a number of times, one, two, three, four, five times, at least Jesus says, you have heard that it was said, but I say to you, Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28, 33, 34, 38, 39, 43, 44, each time he is correcting the Pharisaic and scribal misinterpretations of the Old Testament. Once in the midst of those, he doesn't say you have heard, he says it was said, speaking of the allowance for divorce, but I say to you.

Jesus is indeed an authoritative prophet. I thought it would be good to take some time and walk our way through the Sermon on the Mount, seeing Jesus' radical and wonderful teaching. He's a radical teacher.

He doesn't teach like the scribes and the Pharisees, but as one who has great authority. Indeed, the demons obey him, and God's creation obeys him. There can be different themes of the Sermon on the Mount, and thus, it could be sermonized and taught in different ways.

And one theme, of course, is the righteousness of God. But I want to pursue a different theme, and that is the theme of God as our Father. And so I want to look at the sermon in this way.

It talks about living our life on earth with God as our Father in heaven, of the little setting in verse 1 of chapter 5 of Matthew's Gospel. The sermon, of course, is given in Matthew 5 through 7, one of the most extensive portions of Jesus' ministry as a prophet.

In Beatitudes, they follow a pattern. Truly happy, Jesus says, blessed are people whose lives are characterized in this way, and then because, or for, they will be ultimately saved. That's the meaning of that format.

For example, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. There is an inclusion in verse 10, which also says theirs is the kingdom of heaven. So, the book ends at either end, and it's talking about the final kingdom of heaven.

Of course, the sermon pertains to life now, rightly understood, taking into account that Jesus' teaching is radical, and we had to be careful. Many Christians have misunderstood the sermon for that very reason. But I'm not going to go through the whole, but truly happy are those who see their spiritual poverty as an ultimate need of God and his forgiveness and grace, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Truly happy are those who mourn over their sins, for they shall be comforted by God in the end. And so it goes, but the verse that really fits the theme I am addressing is verse 9. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. This doesn't mention God as Father, but it implies it.

Blessed are those, Jesus says, truly happy are those who pursue peace in their relationships with one another, but even most importantly, in their relationship to God. They will be called sons of God. And again, each of the Beatitudes ends up speaking of final salvation.

So, this is talking about our final adoption or God's final acknowledgment of us as his sons or daughters. Of course, it has ramifications now, but once again, already here in the Beatitudes, in the introduction to the sermon, which describes the character of godly men and women, we have this reference to God's family and to belonging to the Father. Again, the main thrust is ultimately, but the implication, of course, is that we belong to him already, as we will see in Jesus' applications of this principle of his, the Father's fatherhood, and our sonship that goes right on through the sermon.

The rest of Matthew 5, after the Beatitudes, is an application in verses 11 and 12 to the disciples experiencing persecution. Even there, Jesus says, you can be truly happy because you are suffering for me, and you shouldn't be surprised. It's the way they treated the prophets before you and the people of God before you.

But the rest of chapter 5 talks about living in the world, here and now, with the knowledge that God in heaven is our Father. Living on earth, in the world, with God as our heavenly Father. So, we see in verse 16, in the same way that a city on the hill, the light there shines and can't be hidden, in the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Believers are not to become indistinguishable from the world; they're not to be conformed to the world, and neither are they to withdraw from the world. Rather, they're to penetrate the world and live in its midst and live for their Father. And they're to do good, they're to do good works, as evidence that they know God by his grace, and when they're, and people are to, their goal is not that people would praise them, and Jesus later condemns that in the sermon, but they're to do good for their neighbor, especially in this context, their unsaved neighbor, so that with the result that people will give glory to God.

We're to live in the world with the knowledge that God in heaven is our Father. We see it again in verses 44 and 45. You have heard it was said, 43, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

The early edition of the New American Standard Bible, I don't know if it still does, but it puts Old Testament quotations in caps. All of that was in caps. A subsequent edition only put the first part in caps because hate your enemy was not in caps; that was the pharisaic interpretation, I should say misinterpretation, of the Old Testament principle of loving your neighbor.

Therefore, you have the right to love your enemy and hate your enemy. No, Jesus says, but I say to you, not criticizing or correcting the Old Testament, but indeed correcting the Pharisees gloss on the Old Testament. I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven.

For he makes his son rise on the evil and on the good and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect. Our sonship to the Heavenly Father is demonstrated in praying for enemies and even loving them, demonstrating we have been forgiven and loved by God.

Again, contrary to the teachings of the leaders of Israel at the time, Jesus' teachings were radical. It cuts against the grain deliberately so that the people might see their need for the Lord because their leaders are blind men leading them into a ditch. The last verse in chapter 5, you, therefore, must be perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

It's not to be watered down. You say, you mean to tell me the Bible gives an impossible target for the Christian life? Yes, it gives absolute perfection as the goal. That's unattainable.

You're right. Doesn't the Lord know that? Of course, he knows that. We see the same thing in 1 Peter 1, quoting Leviticus.

Perhaps it's 11:44, I'm not sure. Be holy as your Father, as God is holy. Be holy as God is holy, says the Lord.

What? That is impossible. Yes. Why does God give an impossible goal for the Christian life? For a couple of reasons.

Number one, although he accepts us freely by his grace, he gives us impossible standards to humble us and to remind us that every day, we need his grace. We're not only saved once and for all by grace through faith, but we live the Christian life every day by God's grace through faith. So, it humbles us and drives us to God's grace, not only as his love initially accepting us into his family but as the Father's power and provision.

We have shrunk grace. It does mean God's unmerited favor or love. As a matter of fact, it's even stronger than that.

It's his favor and love against what we merit, not just unmerited. It's contrary. We deserve hell, and we get heaven.

We deserve his displeasure, and we are welcomed into his family. But it's not only so. God's grace is also his power.

As in 2 Corinthians 12, God gave Paul a thorn in the flesh. Paul asked God to relieve this physical malady, perhaps bad eyesight. Galatians 4, we're not sure. But he beseeched the Lord again and again, and God said, no, my grace is sufficient for you. Watch the parallelism, for my power is made perfect in weakness.

God wants us to have weakness, to see our need, that we might rely upon his grace every day of our lives. So, in Matthew 5:48, and in 1 Peter 1, among other places, the standard for the Christian life is absolute perfection and is unattainable. So, the dictum you sometimes hear, God would never command us to do something that is not possible, is incorrect.

He deliberately does that in order to put us in our place. We're not better than unsaved people. We are saved by the grace of God and should love them as fellow sinners who need to know that grace, and also to drive us to his grace every day, and depend on his spirit to live the Christian life because it is not a self-help program.

Oh, we strive and work hard, but we are under God and relying upon his grace and spirit. The next section of the sermon again shows Jesus' tremendous ministry as God's great prophet, as we see in chapter 6:1 through 18, living in the religious realm

with God as Heavenly Father. Is it all of life spiritual? Yes, but Jesus here picks on the three elements that the Pharisees separated them from the average man or woman.

We have a negative view of the Pharisees largely, and that comes from Jesus and Paul, but the first-century Jews greatly respected the Pharisees because they prayed, gave, prayed, and fasted more than the law required. They were super zealous for the things of God. They were super zealous for the law.

They gave more, they prayed more, and they fasted more. It is no surprise, no accident, that Jesus speaks of giving in 6, 1 through 4, of praying in 5 through 15, and then in fasting of 16 to 18. Once again, he deliberately and radically clashes with Pharisaic teaching.

Why? Two reasons. Actually, to show mercy to the Pharisees. I'm astonished at Acts 6, and perhaps it's around verse 6. Even many priests believed in Jesus through the Apostles' ministry.

That would not have happened had Jesus played by the rules of the Jewish leaders. In mercy, and he made it hard on himself in so doing, he lambasted them again and again. Matthew 23, the seven woes on the Pharisees.

Wow! He irritated them. He provoked them so that they might see their need for salvation. Acts 6, around verse 6, that many of them did.

Many Levites and many of the priestly families believed in Jesus. Wow! The second reason was to free the people from the bondage of the Pharisaic teaching. So, again and again in this section, we see we are to live and do those spiritual things we do.

Giving, serving, whatever, using our spiritual gifts for God, not to be seen by human beings and applauded by them, but we're to do those things serving our Father who is in heaven. We see it right away in verse 1. It's the slogan, the topic summary for 1 through 18 of this chapter. Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you'll have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. We don't think this is literal, but we get the point. It seems to be hyperbolic language of giving to make sure others see that we give.

Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward in full. Their reward is the praise of men. Their religion, thus, doesn't get above the earth.

It doesn't reach heaven. It's, they're earthbound. They're really man-pleasers if you will.

But when you give to the needy, Jesus says, 6:3 of Matthew, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. It's not literal. In other words, as much as possible, do it in secret and don't draw attention to yourself.

I know people who have seriously never given to something they thought the Lord wanted to give them to because somebody would have found out they missed a radical nature of Jesus' teaching. Of course, some people will find out sometime, but in your heart of hearts, the goal is not so people would say, man, what a spiritual giant she is. No, that's not it.

Sometimes, people will notice, and they will, and the people will praise you. Again, Jesus' teaching is not absolute here. Remember, do your good works before men so that they will praise your Father in heaven.

Unavoidably, some people will see this is dealing with Jesus in the sermon radically deals not only with the letter of the law, but he pierces to the heart, to the spirit of a law. And this, too, is in, is fit, is fitting for the very law itself. The 10th commandment, good grief, goes very deep into the heart.

It's a commandment against coveting. So, Jesus is in the very spirit of the Old Testament, rejecting Pharisaic glosses that distorted the law and used it for their own purposes. Boy, he is mad at that.

And there are traditions that they added to the Old Testament, again, for their own gain. Jesus attacks these things and restores the Old Testament ethic. Does he advance it? Sure, because of his person, because he's the king who brings his spiritual kingdom.

But our emphasis right now is not so much on his kingdom, although the offices are inseparable from the person. And this is also the priest talking, but it is about his being the great prophet of God. If you give without letting one hand know what the other is doing so that your giving may be in secret, if you do, your Father, who sees in secret, will reward you.

And it's the same for praying. Don't be like the hypocrites who pray in the synagogues, wanting to be seen by others. They have received the reward, the praise of men.

But when you pray, go into your closet and shut the door. Some people have literally had prayer closets because of this. I don't oppose it.

But again, I know people who have not prayed in prayer meetings because of their misunderstanding of the radical nature of Jesus' teaching and his use of hyperbole. The point is, well, the point was exhibited once by D.L. Moody, the great evangelist, to great effect. A man, an atheist, went to the Moody meetings to mock this ignorant preacher.

Moody was not a greatly educated man, but he loved the Lord, he studied the Bible feverishly, and he preached the truth. And in this big crusade, Moody called upon a local pastor to pray. The guy went on and on and on, and it sounded like he was praying to be seen by men.

And this atheist could not believe it. It actually opened, it began to open his heart to the gospel. Because Moody went to the microphone and said, excuse me, my brother, while you finish your prayer, we're going to turn to hymn number like that.

In other words, he recognized the pharisaic inclination of this. This was the pastor's chance to shine in front of his city, and Moody was having none of it because Jesus was going to shine in this message, in this crusade, and not any like that.

Wow, the man was so impressed. He said, this guy is genuine. He opened up his eyes and ears, and in God's grace, God opened up his heart, just to Moody's simple message.

And the more educated atheist man, than the preacher, who was more educated, believed in Jesus. Through Jesus, through, excuse me, Moody's obeying Jesus' ethic in the sermon on the mount, Jesus the great prophet. When you go and pray, go to your room, shut the door, and pray to your father in secret.

And when you pray, your father, who sees in secret, will reward you. And don't be like the pagans who heap up their empty phrases so that they may be heard. I think of the priests of Baal jumping around, the altar in the battle with Elijah.

Oh, my word, they think they'll be heard by their many words. Do not be like them, verse eight, for your father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray like this, our Father in Heaven.

The sermon on the mount can be analyzed in different ways. I'm not saying this is the only way, but one valid and edifying way is to view it as Jesus teaching, the great prophet Jesus teaching us how to live our lives on earth, with the knowledge that almighty God in heaven is our father. It's the same for fasting.

Don't fast to be seen by others, Jesus says. When you do that, when people do that, verse 16, you know what he's going to say. They receive the reward in full. But when you fast, look as normal as possible.

Don't show how spiritual you are by looking so miserable. You want your father to see who sees in secret, and your father who sees in secret will reward you. If chapter five, after the Beatitudes, talks about living our life in a world hostile to God, with the knowledge that God is our father, and if six, one through eighteen, teaches doing those particularly religious things in our own context, worship, bible study, prayer, evangelism, whatever it might be, using the gifts God has given us to serve the Lord, we should do that, Jesus says, not to reap the applause of men and women, but we should do it to please our Father in heaven. There is joy in serving Jesus and using our gifts in order to please our Father. What a blessing that is.

Then, 6:19-34 talks about an area as relevant in the first century as the twenty-first, and that is living, handling one's wealth and possessions with God as a heavenly Father.

First of all, he says, your ultimate goal should be not to accumulate as much wealth as you can on earth but to rather accumulate wealth in heaven. Do not lay up treasures on earth where moths and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, but lay up treasures in heaven for yourselves. Twenty-one is a wonderful principle.

For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. We can somewhat judge one's spirituality by where people put their money. Another application of this passage I have used a few times when wronged by Christians and Christian institutions and being tempted to have a nasty attitude toward them, I'm just being frank here, I will name no names however, is deliberately supporting them financially, because I found the Lord then changed my attitude.

I'm not saying it's the major application the Lord Jesus had in mind, but where your treasure is, there your heart will also be, and to support, so I'm not saying support liberal enterprises or those who don't promote the gospel, but perhaps you've been wronged by an institution along the way at some point. Give to it, and God will take away your nasty feelings toward it. You cannot serve both God and money, verse 24.

Not only should we not store up our treasures on earth, but in heaven where our heavenly father is, but we're not to be anxious for money. I do confess this is an ongoing battle in my life, and yet God is good, and he provides wonderfully, but we are to be anxious, so to speak, for God in his kingdom, and our father will provide richly for us. We see it in verses 26 and 32.

Don't be anxious about your life, what you'll eat, or what you'll drink, about your body, what you'll wear. Is not life more than food in the body, more than clothing? Look, God takes care of the birds, and he clothes the flowers gorgeously, as if they were. This is an argument that God does the greater thing.

He cares for these insignificant non-human creatures. Are you not of more value than they? Your heavenly Father feeds them, and he dresses the lilies in beauty. Your father knows what you need.

Therefore, but do not be anxious, say, in verse 31, what shall we eat? What shall we drink? What shall we wear? For the Gentiles, in this context, it means unsaved people. Those who don't know the Lord seek after these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Your father loves you. Your father cares for you. So Jesus, the prophet, in the realm of possessions and finances, says, don't live for earthly wealth.

The Bible warns of the danger of wealth. At the same time, it admonishes those who are wealthy by God's gifts to use that wealth to promote the kingdom of God. And then Jesus shifts in 26 through 34 and says, don't worry about what you need because you have a Father in heaven.

Don't you understand? If you live like the unsaved people, worrying about those things, then you communicate to them that you don't have, that there is not a father in heaven. But if you live confidently, of course, working at your job and so forth, even as you have need and trusting your Father to provide, your life is a testimony to him that there is a father in heaven, and he is your father, and you are his son or daughter, and he will take care of his own. I see Matthew 7 as a whole, as a conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount, and in a few places, it mentions God as our father.

7:1 through 6, basically says, now I've given you amazing teaching. This is my paraphrase. I've given you amazing teaching.

Don't use it to judge others. Use it to judge yourself and then help others. But don't let this be ammunition that you go out and shoot others with.

No, no, no. No, the Sermon on the Mount is intended for your heart, your mind, and your life. And then grow by it, and look as if you can help other people.

And I don't think that this knowledge is sufficient in itself. Rather, you need your father in heaven. Paul would say you need the Holy Spirit.

So, ask, seek, and knock, and God will answer. He will enable you to find. He will open the door to you.

That is, you need God's power, his grace, his spirit. You need God to fulfill the Sermon on the Mount. The principle is given in verse 11.

If you then who are evil, Jesus does not mince words, know how to give good gifts to your children, and you do, you don't give them something bad that looks similar to something good they're asking for in the context. If you then who are evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him? So, ask him. The content of the Bible, in this case of Jesus' prophetic ministry to his first-century hearers, does not drive us away from dependence upon the Father, just the opposite.

It shows us we need him in order to live for him and honor him. Don't be, don't be fooled, Jesus says. You're enjoying my teaching here on the mountainside, but don't, don't be religious naive people.

Most people are not going to live by the Sermon on the Mount. Most, on the contrary, are going to follow the wide gate and the easy way that leads to destruction. Understand, Jesus says, what I'm telling you is not easy.

It is difficult. The gate is narrow; the way is hard, and that leads to life. And comparatively, there are few that find it.

So don't be disillusioned when everybody doesn't rejoice in my radical prophetic teachings concerning how you are to live your life. In fact, be careful. You accepted my teaching as from God, and that's true because I am the Son of God, Jesus says, and I'm giving you the teaching of true righteousness, not the Pharisaic kind, but true righteousness of the heart and so forth in the life.

And I'm teaching you to honor your Father and mine who is in heaven. But there'll be false prophets. Test what they say in this context, especially test how they live.

There's an inclusion. You'll recognize them by their fruits, 16. You'll recognize them by their fruits, verse 20.

As my wonderful systematic theologian teacher, Robert J. Dunzweiler taught me, to get the teaching of the Bible, you have to use the whole Bible. In other places, we already see it in Deuteronomy 18, where the prophet who claims to be the Lord's prophet says things that don't come true, that they speak falsely. Likewise, in a chapter earlier in Deuteronomy, it is either 13 or 15, I've lost, either in Deuteronomy 13 or 15, 13 that would be, the teaching is, if the teaching of the prophet doesn't agree with previous revelation, he's a false prophet too.

So, here, Jesus' emphasis is on life. In that way, he is actually drawing attention to his own life. And it reminds me of John 8, I do not recommend you, or I say what Jesus did to his enemies.

Which of you can convict me of sin? We'll see that his sinless life is one of the prerequisites for his atoning death and triumphant resurrection. Here, you'll receive my teaching, Jesus says, about the Father who is in heaven. Don't receive everybody's teaching naively.

Test the spirits to see whether they are from God, 1 John 4, because many false prophets have gone out into the world, and God will judge them. Not only so, there are not only false prophets, but there are false disciples. Not everyone who says to me, Matthew 7:21, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father, there it is again, who is in heaven.

On that day, many will say to me, Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, cast out demons in your name, do mighty works in your name? Maybe it was the NIV at one time; it was only in your name twice. It's three times. It's so emphatic.

These people did things in Jesus' name, things associated with spiritual gifts. So, supernatural phenomena are not a sufficient test of the truth of God. I once had a student from Brazil.

He was so careful. He was so careful. He said, my country is a big country.

And we have the Catholic Church, and we have the evangelical church, and we have many believers. We also have cults. Because my American student was sitting in this particular elective on perseverance and apostasy, we were working from the Greek text, studying one passage after another, slowly building up a theology.

They said we can't understand this. How could people possibly do these things in Jesus' name and not know him? Because he declares to them in verse 23, he will, at the last judgment, I never knew you, and depart from you, you workers of lawlessness. This guy was very careful.

He wasn't making Brazil into a zoo of cults, all right? Many evangelicals, strong evangelical Presbyterian church, for example. But there are cults. He spoke of a particular cult and people he knew who had been healed by it.

How did they do it? Sometimes, in the name of Jesus. They performed spiritual surgeries. The practitioner would go like this on a person's arm, open it up, take out a tumor, and close it up.

He called this white magic and black magic. Definitely supernatural stuff going on. And, of course, people clamored for it.

And some people were healed by it. And then I, with a little bit of trepidation in my heart because I didn't exactly trust this guy. But here we're teaching a class, and now he's got everybody's attention, right? So, I said, how do you determine truth in that context? Oh, his answer was beautiful.

I couldn't have done better, he says. Not by the miraculous, not by the supernatural works, he said. You determine truth by the word of God.

And by the word of God, this was a cult leading my friends and others astray with supernatural phenomena. The American students who heard this man talk will never forget that and this passage. It is possible to do miracles in the name of Jesus, or the supernatural, I call it, in the name of Jesus, not to belong to Jesus and not to know the Father who is in heaven.

It's by Jesus' own words. Oh, we should very carefully conclude that about anyone, but it should be part of our total worldview and picture and part of the repertoire by which we evaluate reality. The Lord closes the sermon not with a mention of the Father, but the Lord Jesus, the great prophet who brings the kingdom of God and who's going to go to the cross as a priest, says, now you have heard my sermon on the mount.

Obey that sermon because in his parable of the two kinds of houses built, one on sand, one on rock, both of them hear the truth. So the guy building this house on sand isn't for a lack of information; it's for a lack of obedience that causes his house to collapse when calamity comes. And the man that builds this house on the solid rock obeys the words of the Lord Jesus.

It's a beautiful little parable because calamity comes to all, including to Christians. And I always say, when calamity hits you and your house, you go down, you will sink. We're not super spiritual giants, but by God's grace, his grace will buoy us back up to the surface.

And with the help and prayers of our brothers and sisters, we will keep on keeping on, especially if our life is grounded in the teachings of the great prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ. In this context, especially the teachings of the sermon on the mount. I'm going to share a little later on how Jesus is the great prophet from Hebrews 1:1 and 2, but I'm going to do that in the context of Hebrews chapter 1, verses 1 and 2. Chapter 1 of Hebrews actually goes through 2 and 4. The chapter division isn't the best of how that is the best passage to my knowledge, combining all three offices and applying them to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Because God gave those offices in the Old Testament, historical offices, a prophet, priests, prophets, priests, and kings, so as to minister to his people in their own live stories and in the history of Israel, doubtless, but his long-term goal was to unite those three offices, unheard of in the Old Testament. Kings weren't supposed to mess around with the priestly stuff, for example.

Unite those three offices in one person, his son, to whom he would give the spirit without measure to be the prophet, priest, and king par excellence. So, I'll be back to Hebrews 1:1 and 2, Lord willing, but Jesus is more than a prophet. Jesus is the very word of God himself, as we see from John chapter 1.

We'll see it in more detail in a few moments in our next lecture when we indeed take it up again.

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