

Dr. Craig Keener, Matthew, Session 7, Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5 Podcast Audio Overview

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Welcome back, everybody, today. We're going deep on one of the most well-known parts of the Bible, the Sermon on the Mount. Yeah, that's chapter 5. That's right, to get to the heart of it.

We've got Dr. Craig Keener's lecture on Matthew. Excellent source it is, and He really dives deep into, you know, what Jesus is saying about following God's law, and you know, we all know it's not just about like checking off A list of rules, right? It's really about the heart. It's about the motivation.

What's going on inside? Totally, and Keener points out that Jesus, like, calls us to check our hearts even more than the Pharisees did. Yes, now, wait a second more than the Pharisees. I mean, those guys were like the rule-followers; they were known for it. Yeah But Matthew sets up the Sermon on the Mount is something really important right from the start He tells us that Jesus sat down to teach and this posture Shows us that he was a respected and authoritative teacher Oh like a professor giving a lecture exactly and it's even more than that Matthew describes Jesus teaching on a mountain and this is a clear connection to Moses receiving the law on Mount Sinai So right away we see Jesus as this like new Moses delivering a new law That's a great way to put it and it's important to remember that while these teachings are specifically for Jesus's disciples You know the people who are choosing to follow him right anyone can learn from them.

Yeah, absolutely. Okay, so let's dive into the heart of the Sermon on the Mount, okay, the beatitudes. Yeah, you know, blessed are the statements. Yeah, they always kind of felt, I don't know, a little mysterious to me, cryptic. Yeah. Yeah, like I mean, what does it actually mean to be? Poor in spirit or to hunger and thirst for righteousness, right? They're very poetic almost paradoxical They are a lot more than just nice things though their countercultural statements They completely flip the script on what the world usually sees as success or happiness Okay, so instead of like money or power or fame the beatitudes are pointing us toward something much deeper absolutely, they're emphasizing things like humility and dependence on God a Radical focus on the kingdom of heaven both now and in the future now Hold on a second.

You said both now and D in the future. I thought the kingdom of heaven was something that happened after we, you know, after we die. Well, that's certainly part of it, right? But the beatitudes are saying that getting ready for the kingdom starts now right here right now exactly They're about living out those kingdom values in our everyday lives, you know, take that beatitude about the meek inheriting the earth Yeah, blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth I mean that doesn't really sound like a recipe for you know, getting ahead in this world It doesn't does it but by this time Jewish scholars understood inheriting the earth To mean inheriting the whole world in the future kingdom total victory, okay So it's

not just about like being passive or weak. It's about humility, you know, trusting God's plan, living in a way that reflects that future kingdom even while we're here. That's a great way to put it, and you know, there's another really cool thing about the beatitudes. Okay, each one connects to something that happened in Jesus's own ministry.

Oh, that is so cool. Like, for example, so we have blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Yeah, think about when Jesus raises Jairus's daughter from the dead. He's bringing real comfort to those who are grieving. Okay, I see that. So there are like these parallels all through the beatitudes. Yeah, for example, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

Yeah, Jesus miraculously feeding the 5,000. Oh, wow, so that's like Satisfying physical hunger, but it also points to this like deeper spiritual hunger exactly And if you notice the beatitudes begin and end talking about the kingdom of heaven, that's the *inclusio* Okay, which emphasizes getting ready for the kingdom now through like a lifestyle of repentance and obedience Okay, radical discipleship, but Jesus isn't saying to throw out the Old Testament Laura. Absolutely not. He makes that super clear.

Okay, when he says Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. So he's not getting rid of it, but he's not completing it. How does that work? Well, Dr. Keener brings up this really interesting story in Jewish tradition about the letter Yod, which is like the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet.

The story goes that when God changed Sarah's name to Sarah, He took the Yod out of her name, and this little letter is feeling left out totally. The Yod cries out, asking God, you know, why did you take me out of the Torah? When will you put me back? And according to the tradition, God eventually added the Yod to Hosea's name, making it Joshua. So even the tiniest part of God's Word is important. Yes, and this story shows us that God's law is permanent and powerful. Jesus isn't getting rid of it; He's building on it, right, revealing its deeper meaning. He's saying that true obedience goes way beyond outward actions and comes from the heart. Exactly.

Okay. So how does Jesus unpack that deeper level of obedience? It sounds like we're about to get to the good stuff. We are, and he does this through what we call the antithesis, where he takes common understandings of the law and goes deeper, focusing on the heart. Alright, I'm ready to dive into those antitheses, but let's save that for part two of our deep dives because we've got a lot to unpack there. Okay, so we're going to jump right into the antitheses.

Let's see how Jesus takes the law and goes, you know deeper to the heart of it exactly and He contrasts, you know the common understanding of the law with like this deeper spiritual meaning Really getting at the heart of like living right with God Okay, so like how about an example like take the Ten Commandments and you know show us how he's giving him like a new depth Sure, let's take you shall not murder someone focused on just the outside like following the rules might say hey I haven't killed anyone so I'm good but Jesus he goes further. He goes right to the root of the problem: anger. So it's not enough to, like, just not physically kill someone. We've got to deal with, like, the anger, the hate that could, like, fuel

that action in the first place, right? Jesus says that being angry with someone without reason is like facing judgment. Hmm, and if you actually insult someone, calling them Raka, like worthless, you're in danger of the court, like a heavenly court. Yeah, and it gets even more intense if you call someone a fool. It's like you're in danger of a fiery Gehenna, which is basically like hell.

Oh, so he's really emphasizing how seriously God takes our inner attitudes, you know? They matter. Yeah, so our thoughts and words matter, even if they don't lead to, you know, like physical actions. Yeah, like this whole chain reaction: anger, harsh words, and then ultimately actions that just go against God. Yeah, got it. And we see this pattern of going deeper with the commandment against adultery. Okay, again, the Pharisees would focus on the outward action, but Jesus cuts to the chase. He addresses the desires, the lust, before any action even happens.

It's not just about avoiding the physical act. It's about guarding our hearts and minds from those lustful thoughts. That's it. Dr Keener points out that, like, even back then in Jewish culture, they understood how powerful just seeing something can be and the need to, like, protect yourself from those desires. That's why Jewish women cover their hair, really? Yeah to prevent lust That's like a really interesting point about the culture back then so it's not like this was some brand new idea that Jesus Was bringing up people were already kind of dealing with this Yeah, and it's also interesting that Jesus doesn't put the blame on women for like causing men to lust he emphasizes personal responsibility Saying that it's the person with the desire who needs to you know deal with it Okay, so how do we deal with like those desires? I mean, they can be pretty strong. Jesus doesn't hold back. He says, if your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. Wait, is he really saying we should, like, I don't know, actually pluck out our eyes? Not literally.

No, it's hyperbole. It's an exaggeration to, you know, make a point. It means we should be willing to do whatever it takes to cut off anything that leads us to sin, even things we might think are super important. Whoa, okay, that's intense, but it really shows you know how serious sin is and how important it is to protect our connection with God. Absolutely, and this whole focus on the heart, you know, getting to the root of things. It also shows up when Jesus talks about divorce Okay divorce, I mean that's a tough one even today it is Jesus brings it up in the context of adultery and He says that anyone who divorces their spouse except for you know, sexual immorality and marries someone else commits adultery Wow, okay, so he's really setting the bar high for marriage He is it's important to note that he talks more about this later in the Sermon on the Mount But what we see here is like he's connecting divorce with betrayal and highlighting the commitment of marriage, you know Yeah, like honoring our vows right seems like this whole idea of integrity, you know Making sure that what we say and do actually matches what we believe on the inside.

It runs through all these antitheses, yeah, you're right, and that focus on integrity continues when He talks about oaths. He says Simply let your yes be yes and your no-no Anything beyond this comes from the evil one So basically no need for big promises or swearing on things to show we're telling the truth exactly He's saying look your word should be good enough Your character should be solid enough that you don't need to back it up with all these oaths It's about a deep honesty that affects every part of your life that's a challenging standard, but I can see how it would be really freeing to like not having to constantly prove

yourself Yeah, that's a good point And then there's this really radical teaching about turning the other cheek Jesus says that if someone hits you on the right cheek, you should turn to them the other also wait So don't defend yourself. I mean that seems to go against like every instinct it does But it's really important to understand that Jesus isn't saying to be passive in the face of like injustice or real evil He's calling for a different kind of response, you know a higher standard of love So it's about breaking the cycle of like violence and hate by responding with grace instead of just getting angry Yes, and this idea of radical love it goes beyond physical violence Jesus also talks about like going the extra mile literally and figuratively if someone makes you carry their stuff for a mile Go to with them.

It's about going above and beyond, so it's not just about like meeting the minimum requirements of the law. It's about exceeding those expectations and just like showing love even when it's hard, exactly, and all these teachings show something really important: Jesus isn't trying to contradict the law. He's showing its true heart. He's revealing what God really wants, and it's not just about what you do on the outside.

It's that inner transformation. Yes, okay, so we've seen how Jesus takes these like well-known commandments and shows, you know, this deeper meaning. But what about the command to love our neighbor? The Pharisees were focused on the law. They must have been doing that already, right? Well, they were, but Jesus takes us to a whole new level.

He says You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy,' but I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. Love your enemies, pray for the people who are hurting you. That's a tough one, almost impossible, right? It is, but that's the point, isn't it? Yeah, Jesus is calling for a different kind of love, the kind that only God can give a love that's bigger than our human Limits, so it's not about pretending. We're not hurt or just ignoring the wrong that's been done. It's about finding a love that can like heal and transform even the worst situations. Yes, and that brings us to one of the most challenging parts of the Sermon on the Mount: Be perfect therefore as your heavenly father is perfect; be perfect. Seriously.

How can any of us even get close to that? That's a great question, and I'm sure that's what people were thinking when Jesus said it, but it's important to understand He's not setting some impossible standard that we've got to meet before we can get into God's kingdom, right? Yeah, it's not like a to-do list to earn God's faith. So what is it then? It's about becoming more and more like our Father in heaven, right? It's about letting God's power transform us day by day. Yeah, making us more loving, more compassionate, more holy. Okay, so it's like a journey, not a destination. Like, we're probably never going to be totally perfect in this life, but we can, you know, try for it.

That's it. It's realizing we need God's grace surrendering to his work in our lives and it's in that surrender that we like Find real freedom and joy right beautifully put it's about seeing that we need God and letting him work in us And that's what makes the Sermon on the Mount both so challenging and so hopeful it sets this like high standard But it also shows us the one who can help us reach it. Yeah, okay. So we've talked about how Jesus challenges our actions and our motives.

Yeah, but I'm wondering Why this emphasis on the heart what's so special about our inner world, you know, that's a great question And I think the answer is in understanding who God is. God isn't just interested in our outward actions; He wants our hearts.

He cares about our motives our deepest selves So it's not about trying to impress God with you know, how good we look on the outside It's about cultivating this real love for him that just like flows out into everything we do exactly Real freedom and joy they come from aligning our hearts with God and That's what makes the Sermon on the Mount both tough and hopeful Yeah, it sets a high bar, but it also shows us the one who helps us get there. This has been awesome. It's like I'm still processing everything. But before we wrap up this part, I've got to ask: we've been talking about how the Sermon on the Mount, you know, challenges our behavior.

Does it also tell us anything about Jesus, you know, like who he is? It totally does, and this is where things get really interesting. Dr. Keener says that the Sermon on the Mount isn't just about how to act. It's also about Christology. Now, what was that again? Christology is studying who Jesus is and what he did, right? And what's fascinating is that even when Jesus is teaching us how to live, we see who he is. Oh, okay.

I'm listening. Give me an example. How does the Sermon on the Mount show us Jesus? We'll think about those Beatitudes.

Yeah, Jesus perfectly embodies each one of them. He does. Yeah, so He's not just telling us how to live.

He's showing us exactly. He's humble. He mourns.

He shows mercy. He's persecuted for doing right. He is everything he calls us to be. Wow, that's powerful. It's like he's saying, follow me. Don't just listen to my words; watch how I live, learn from me. Yeah, the Sermon on the Mount is more than just an old document. It's this living word, an invitation to change, and we see that change modeled by Jesus himself. That's it. And that change begins with realizing that we need God.

We can't be this good on our own. We need God's power working in us. So it's not all about our own efforts. It's about letting God's love in and letting him do his work exactly, and that's what makes the Sermon on the Mount both really Hard and really hopeful. Yeah, it's challenging but it points us to the one who can help us This has been amazing so much to process the Sermon on the Mount is clearly more than just rules It's like this guide to a whole new way of life a life that reflects God It is but before we get ahead of ourselves, let's take a break and come back for the rest of this deep dive in part 3 Okay, we're back and I'm still thinking about everything we've learned about the Sermon on the Mount, you know It's like this this radical invitation to like live differently, but not just following a bunch of rules, right? It is Yeah, it's about a change that like starts way deep down inside us.

Yeah, in our hearts. So it's not about, you know, trying to be good enough for God. It's about letting him change us from the inside out. Exactly, and you know, what's really interesting? Dr. Keener really emphasizes that the Sermon on the Mount isn't just about ethical behavior. It's deeply connected to Christology. Christology, now remind me what exactly does that mean? Is Christology studying? The person and work of Jesus Christ. Okay, and

what's so cool is that even while Jesus is teaching about how we should live, you see who he is. Okay. Now, I'm really curious, like give me an example.

How does the Sermon on the Mount show us who Jesus is? Well, remember those Beatitudes we talked about. Yeah, Jesus is like the perfect example of all of them. So he's not just telling us how to live; he's actually showing us, like, living it out himself, exactly. He's humble. He mourns over sin.

He shows mercy. He's persecuted for doing what's right. He embodies everything He calls us to be; that's really powerful.

It's like he's saying, follow me. Don't just listen to my words. Watch how I live. Yeah, so the Sermon on the Mount isn't just some ancient document. It's this like living word, an invitation to real change, and we see that change modeled perfectly by Jesus. You got it, and that change starts with realizing that we need God's help. We can't be this good on our own, right? We need God's power working in us.

So it's not all up to us You know, it's not about just trying harder It's about letting God's love in and letting him work exactly and that's what makes the Sermon on the Mount so challenging and so hopeful at Yeah, it sets this like really high standard but it also points us to the one who can actually help us get there Yes, this has been such a great deep dive. I'm feeling challenged but also encouraged, you know. Me too. The Sermon on the Mount isn't just a list of rules It's like this invitation to a life that's I don't know deeper and more meaningful a life that reflects God It really is and it's a journey that we don't have to do alone So as we wrap up here one last question, you know, if God really cares about our hearts, you know What we're really like on the inside then then how does that how does that affect? Like how we live every day, our thoughts, even like the little things we do. That's a great question to sit with, you know, the Sermon on the Mount.

It's not just history. It's a living word It's this invitation to keep digging deeper to examine our motives to like go after real righteousness and to become more like Jesus Powerful stuff. Thanks for joining us on this deep dive.

We'll be back next time for another look at the ideas that shape our world