

Sermon Notes - December 5, 1999

The Sermon on the Mount
“Developing a Kingdom Heart”
Matthew 5:38-42

From Chuck Swindoll:

Last week I heard about a traveler who, between flights at an airport, **bought a small package of cookies.** She then sat down in the busy snack shop to glance over the newspaper. As she read her paper, she became aware of a rustling noise. Peeking above the newsprint she was shocked to see a well-dressed gentleman sitting across from her, helping himself to her cookies. **Half-angry and half-embarrassed, she reached over and gently slid the package closer to her as she took one out and began to munch on it.**

A minute or so passed before she heard more rustling. **The man had gotten another cookie!** By now there was only one left in the package. Though flabbergasted, she didn't want to make a scene so she said nothing. **Finally, as if to add insult to injury, the man broke the remaining cookie into two pieces, pushed one piece across the table toward her with a frown, gulped down his half, and left without even saying thank you. She sat there dumbfounded.**

Some time later when her flight was announced, the woman opened her handbag to get her ticket. **To her shock, there in her purse was her package of unopened cookies.** And somewhere in that same airport was another traveler still trying to figure out how that strange woman could have been so forward and insensitive. Assumptions are shaky things to rely on; situations are not always as they appear.

A reporter interviewed **Lynette Fromme**, the girl who took a shot at President Ford in Sacramento and who was also a member of the infamous Manson family. She said that the thing that attracted her to Charles Manson was his philosophy—**“Get what you want whenever you want it. That is your God-inspired right.”**

Julian Huxley was committed to an evolutionary humanism. He believed: **“Man’s most sacred duty and at the same time his most glorious opportunity, is to promote the maximum fulfillment of the evolutionary process on this earth; and this includes the fullest realization of his own inherent possibilities.”**

British actor Michael Wilding was once asked if actors had any traits which set them apart from other human beings. **“Without a doubt,” he replied. “You can pick out actors by the glazed look that comes into their eyes when the conversation wanders away from them-selves.”**

Introduction

A. Our Inalienable RIGHTS

1. We have grown up in a country that has almost taught us the VERY OPPOSITE of what a Christian should believe:
 - a. **We hold these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain INALIENABLE RIGHTS; that among these are life, liberty and the PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.**
 - b. There are two problems that I see for the Christian when we look at the Preamble to the Constitution:
 1. That we have RIGHTS!
 - a. Rights that must be protected.
 - b. And if they are abused, we have the right to retaliate and go to court until we get our rights.
 2. And that we can PURSUE HAPPINESS.
 - a. AS IF HAPPINESS CAN BE PURSUED!
 - b. I have never met a soul that pursued happiness and caught it. Most of the people I know who have spent their life pursuing happiness are the most unhappy people I know.
 - c. Most of the people that have NOT pursued happiness are the happiest people I know.
2. As long as you consider YOUR rights and your happiness, YOU WILL BE LOOKING IN THE **OPPOSITE DIRECTION** THAT JESUS IS LOOKING!

B. Our Inalienable REVENGE

1. Because we have certain INALIENABLE RIGHTS, when we don't get those rights, we have our CERTAIN INALIENABLE REVENGE.
 - a. If you get in the way of my inalienable rights, I have the right to:
 1. Hit you
 2. Sue you
 3. Abuse you
 - b. BECAUSE I HAVE MY RIGHTS.
2. Revenge goes back a long way.
 - a. No sooner had God created the world that revenge took place.
 1. God received Abel's sacrifice, but did not receive Cain's sacrifice, so Cain killed Abel.
 2. Joseph was favored by his father, so his brothers sold Joseph into slavery.
 - b. NOTHING HAS CHANGED.

C. Our Inalienable RESPONSIBILITY

1. **We are called to live a Biblical life NOT an American life.**
 - a. We are Christians before we are Americans.
 - b. In fact, we are ALIENS on this planet.
 - c. We need to listen to what OUR COMMANDER IN CHIEF says about RIGHTS.
2. Let's look at our "Biblical rights."

I. The PAST Of Our Rights

A. GOD'S View of Rights

1. The Old Testament was clear about the rights of individuals - in a law named LEX TALLONIS -
 - a. Exodus 21:23-25 "But if there is serious injury, you are to take life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise."
 - b. Now before you "pitch a fit" let's look at the "grace" of lex tallonis.
 1. **It limited VENGEANCE.**
 - a. In the very earliest days, the vendetta and blood feud were characteristic of tribal societies.
 1. If a man of one tribe injured a man of another tribe, then at once ALL of the members of the tribe of the injured man were to take vengeance on ALL the members of the tribe of the man who committed the injury; usually meaning death to the ENTIRE OTHER TRIBE.
 2. This law said that ONLY THE MAN WHO COMMITTED THE INJURY SHOULD BE PUNISHED AND NO PUNISHMENT MUST be no more than the EQUIVALENT of the injury HE inflicted, and no more.
 - b. Wholesale judgment was avoided.
 2. **It took REVENGE away from the individual.**
 - a. The judge or the courts were to make this decision.
 - b. This prevented rage and revenge between individuals who instead had to give their case to the court systems.
 - c. **A truck driver was eating at a diner when three hoodlums on motorcycles came in. One took the truck driver's hamburger, another drank his coffee and the third one wolfed down his pie. Quietly, the truck driver got up from the table and left the diner. One of the bikers says, "He's not much of a man, is he?" The cashier replied, "He's not much of a driver either. He just ran his truck over three motorcycles."**
 3. **It would be helpful TODAY.**
 - a. Our prisons are filled with people who are being punished EXCESSIVELY.
 1. Breaking and entering - steal a \$500 T.V. set;
 2. Allow a person to pay his debt to society and be DONE WITH IT!

- b. Now, that ALSO means that if you have TAKEN a life, you would lose yours!
- 2. God meant for the government or authorities to enforce these God-given laws.

B. The PHARISEES' View of Rights

- 1. They took LITERALLY that:
 - a. Individuals **WERE** to take revenge.
 - b. And that they were to take revenge **EVERY TIME IT HAPPENS!**
 - 1. After all, the verse DOES say "eye for eye and tooth for tooth"
 - 2. So, revenge and "pay back" were a way of life for Jews in Jesus' day.
 - 3. **None was better at insults than Winston Churchill, who had no love affair with Lady Astor.** Actually, the feeling was mutual. It's reported that on one occasion she found the great statesman rather obviously inebriated in a hotel elevator. With cutting disgust she snipped, "**Sir Winston, you are drunk!**" to which he replied, "**M'lady, you are ugly. And tomorrow I will be sober.**" That may be a classic example of how *not* to handle an insult.
- 2. Jesus is going to challenge THEIR views as well as OUR views.

II. The PATTERN Of Our Rights

A. Our Rights Regarding SPIRITUAL INSULTS

Vs. 39 - "If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."

- 1. **This IS speaking of a personal, spiritual insult**
 - a. NOTICE that Jesus speaks of being attacked on the RIGHT cheek.
 - 1. Normally he is not hitting you with the fist or even the flat of the hand - but the BACK of the hand.
 - 2. This is clearly an insult being applied to your face.
 - 3. Jewish Rabbinical law said that to hit a man with the BACK of the hand was TWICE as insulting as to hit him with the flat of the hand.
 - b. Here we must speak of the fact that these instances that Jesus will be speaking of **ARE RELATED TO CHRISTIANS!**
 - 1. After all, He is speaking to His DISCIPLES - NOT the whole world.
 - 2. And He has taken them through the Beatitudes (review).
 - 3. NO UNBELIEVER can understand this - only the Christians.
 - 4. And you are being slapped on the face by the back of the hand BECAUSE IT IS AN INSULT TO YOU BECAUSE YOU ARE A CHRISTIAN.
 - a. Billy Bray - Evangelist Billy Bray was once a boxer who worked in the mines. He was converted.

Knowing that he would not strike back, some of his fellow miners, who had feared him before, decided to take a shot at him. Without any provocation, they struck Bray. Instead of retaliation, Bray said, “May God forgive you, even as I forgive you.” The result was that that man endured days of agony in mind and spirit and later was converted.

- b. THIS IS talking about taking an insult BECAUSE OF YOUR CHRISTIAN FAITH.
 1. H. Mitchell - college
 2. NO RETALIATION!

2. **This is NOT speaking of self defense.**

- a. Many have taken this text to prove pacifism to the utmost degree.
 1. Nineteenth century Russian novelist and social reformer, Leo Tolstoy believed that the socialist state should be built on total pacifism; no soldiers, policemen, or magistrates.
 2. Mahatma Ghandi built his view of non-violence on the views of Tolstoy and Jesus.
 3. And we have seen in our lifetime the view of Martin Luther King.
 4. Ron Sider - Rich Christians In An Age of Hunger
- b. But Jesus is talking to Christians about their PERSONAL vengeance.
 1. Jesus is speaking about a personal insult, not a personal attack.
 - a. In which I am able to protect myself.
 - b. LEARN to protect yourself
 - c. M.L. Jones - “It makes our Lord’s teaching ridiculous to say that if a drunken man, or a violent lunatic, should happen to come along and strike me on the right cheek, I am immediately to turn the other cheek to him. For if a man in that intoxicated condition, or a lunatic, should so deal with me, what is happening is really not any personal insult or injury. This man who is not in control of his faculties is behaving like an animal and does not know what he is doing. What our Lord is concerned about is my spirit and my attitude towards such a man. Because of the alcohol, this poor man is not aware of what he is doing; he is not really concerned to insult me, he is a man who is doing harm to himself as well as to me and to others. He is, therefore, a man who is to be restrained. And, in the full spirit of this injunction, I should restrain him.

- d. **John Stott** says: Christ's illustrations are not to be taken as the charter for any unscrupulous tyrant, beggar, or thug. His purpose was to forbid revenge, not to encourage injustice, dishonesty, or vice . . . true love . . . takes action to deter evil and to promote good . . . He teaches not the irresponsibility which encourages evil but the forbearance which renounces revenge.
 - e. **Martin Luther described one such pacifist as "the crazy saint who let lice nibble at him and refused to kill any of them on account of this text, maintaining that he had to suffer and could not resist evil."**
 - f. Swindoll: **"If you have roaches (or lice!), don't twist Jesus' words into a persuasive plea for letting them live on, untouched. Likewise, if you have rats, poison those suckers! Furthermore, if our nation encounters an enemy who would steal our liberty, there is nothing in this that even implies we should let that enemy conquer us."**
2. Jesus is not referring to public protection.
 - a. Romans 13 says that the government does not bear the sword in vain.
 - b. Criminals **MUST** be dealt with **BY THE GOVERNMENT** by means of eye for eye and tooth for tooth.

B. Our Rights Regarding OUR COMFORTS

Vs. 40 - "And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well."

1. The law in Jesus' day.
 - a. People generally owned an outer cloak and one or two inner tunics.
 1. The outer cloak served as your outer protection and even a blanket at night.
 - a. These were an absolute necessity to have your outer cloak; for survival.
 - b. In fact, there was a Jewish law that forbid taking someone's outer cloak: Exodus 22:16-27 - "If you take your neighbor's cloak as a pledge, return it to him by sunset, because his cloak is the only covering he has for his body. What else will he sleep in? When he cries out to me, I will hear, for I am compassionate."
 2. The inner tunics were in a sense the underwear under the outer cloak.

- b. Unlike Americans with closets FULL of clothes, they had very few articles of clothing to wear.
2. The application in Jesus' day.
- a. If someone personally has need of your clothes, give them all that you can.
 - b. EVEN THOUGH the law IS ON YOUR SIDE!
 - 1. We have rights!
 - 2. I can go to court and WIN!
 - c. But I am willing to give up my legal right AND comforts to help ones that are in need.
 - d. When are we going to learn that the Christian life is not about rights but about duties - about ministry - about OTHERS!
 - 1. In Dr. James Dobson's newsletter for September 1991, he told of his aborted trip to the Soviet Union in August of that same year. While being forced to cancel his trip and stay in London during the Soviet coup, he was able to speak with **Soviet dissident, Irina Ratushinskaya, who had spent four years in labor camps as punishment for her Christian activities.** President Reagan heard of her plight and put pressure on Gorbachev to release her during their meeting in Reykjavik. She now lives with her husband in London and longs for the day she can return to her native land. After being raised in an atheist's home she found an old Slavic Bible when she was twenty-three. She taught herself to read it and discovered a personal relationship with Christ. Her faith was discovered by the KGB, who infiltrated the Russian Orthodox Church as phony priests, and she was sent to a labor camp. **She refused to deny the Lord, so they tortured her. A tooth was drilled without anesthetic to test her tolerance for pain. She was placed in an unheated room at fifty degrees for five months and given only a cotton gown. She sat on the cold floor and was fed every other day.** This immovable woman, said, **"Following Christ is not a very pragmatic thing to do. It doesn't bring you very many benefits in the Soviet Union."**
2. When Dr. Livingstone was working in Africa, a group of friends wrote him; "We would like to send other men to you. Have you found a good road into your area yet? Dr. Livingstone sent this message in reply: "If you have man

who will only come if they know there is a good road, I don't want them. I want men who will come if there is no road at all."

3. Years ago, the Salvation Army was holding an international convention and their founder, Gen. William Booth, could not attend because of physical weakness. He cabled his convention message to them. It was one word: "OTHERS."

C. Our Rights Regarding POWER STRUGGLES

Vs. 41 - "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles."

1. The law in Jesus' day.
 - a. It was a Persia practice, handed down to the Romans, that allowed the ruling government to be able to compel a citizen into duty to help out the government.
 - b. The practice during Roman days was that a soldier could conscript any citizen to carry his things a Roman mile (a little shorter than our mile).
 - c. The law required that the soldiers could only require one mile - not more.
 - d. This literally happened to Simon of Cyrene who was called into service to carry Jesus' cross when Jesus could no longer carry it.
2. The application in Jesus' day.
 - a. Jesus says that if you felt the blade of a Roman soldier's sword on your shoulder, you pick up his pack, walk the mile, then OFFER to walk ANOTHER!
 - b. Instead of a power struggle between the two of you, offer to do MORE than was required.
 - c. WHY? Because this Roman soldier will HAVE to ask why have you offered to do more than was required of you when I know you resented even carrying my pack one mile to begin with!

- d. **Mother Theresa of Calcutta has well said, "We must not drift away from the humble works, because these are the works nobody will do. It is never too small. We are so small. We look at things in a very small way. But God, being Almighty,**

sees everything great. Even if you write a letter for the blind man, or just go and sit and listen, or you take the mail for them, or you visit somebody—small things—or wash clothes for somebody or clean the house. Very humble work -- that is where you and I must be. For there are many people who can do big things. But there are very few people who will do the small things. It is the small things that sisters and brothers do. We can do very little for the people, but at least they know that we do love them and that we care for them and that we are at their disposal.”

- e. 73 year old Iowa resident Aldin Straight needed to visit his ailing brother, who lived on the other side of the state. There was no one who could drive Mr. Straight to his brother’s house. He himself didn’t feel capable of driving there—he can’t read road signs when he drives faster than 20 M.P.H. So, Mr. Straight did what he could. **He rode his lawn mower 240 miles across the state of Iowa to be with his brother.**

D. Our Rights Regarding OUR POSSESSIONS

Vs. 42 - “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”

1. The law in Jesus’ day.
 - a. The Bible definitely teaches **PRIVATE OWNERSHIP**.
 1. The Eighth Commandment - Thou shalt not steal.
 - a. If we were to share everything, how **COULD** I steal from anyone else.
 - b. Everything would be everyone’s!
 2. And when it comes to private ownership - we speak of our **RIGHTS!**
 - a. Me/wreck - who pays?
 - b. Borrow my things -
 - b. Jesus’ words do not reject private ownership.
2. The application in Jesus’ day.
 - a. If someone has a need of your possessions, then give it to them.
 1. Now realize, this is a real need –
 - a. We are not called to give money to the alcoholic (give lodging, gas).
 - b. Money to the gambler.
 2. Here is a person who has a real need, and **YOU** have the means to help them.
 - a. College/truck
 - b. Sure, you may occasionally get ripped off.
 1. Columbia
 2. **Swindoll - “I have never met a generous person yet who wasn’t occasionally taken advantage of. But, I’ve never met a truly generous person who kept score. Every**

generous person I know is a person of relentless optimism.”

III. The POWER Amidst Rights

A. What Is Your GOAL In This Life?

1. Do your goals center around YOU?
 - a. Is your goal to be happy?
 - b. Is your goal to be successful?
 - c. Is your goal to demand and protect your rights?
2. If these ARE your goals, then you will:
 - a. Be **DIFFICULT TO LIVE WITH** because OTHERS have to rotate around you.
 - b. Have A **QUICK TEMPER** because people don't do it the way you want them to. Crabb - You get angry at anyone and anything that blocks your goal.
 - c. Have **AN OPINION ON EVERYTHING** because this is your opinion.
 - d. You **DEFEND YOURSELF QUICKLY** because you are the most important person in this world.
 - e. You will **USUALLY BE UNHAPPY** because life NEVER turns out like you like it.
 - f. You **STRUGGLE WITH RELATIONSHIPS** because they exist for you.
 - g. You are **WAITING FOR LIFE TO BE FULFILLED** which will never happen!
3. We live in a selfish society that:
 - a. Deserves a break today.
 - b. Have it your way.
 - c. I could have had a V-8.

B. Are You Ready For a NEW GOAL In Your Life?

1. **Die to self.**
 - a. The solution to life is not in finding yourself, it is in **losing** yourself.
 - b. No Christian who has ever amounted to anything has avoided this truth.
John 12:23-25 - “Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.”
2. **Live for Christ.**
 - a. Your goal is changed to ministry and service.
 - b. Whereas:
 1. When you lived for self, any intrusion in your life made you angry:

- a. An insult to you.
 - b. Asking something of you.
2. But when your goal is ministry, here is an opportunity.
3. **You can't do this on your own.**
 - a. **I believe THIS is the message of The Sermon on the Mount – IT IS AN IMPOSSIBILITY APART FROM THE LORD WORKING THROUGH YOU!**
 - b. George Muller, who gave his life to the ministry of orphans said: **“There was a day when I died, utterly died, died to George Muller and his opinion, preferences, tastes and will; died to the world, it's approval or censure; died to the approval or blame of even my brethren and friends; and since then I have studied only to show myself approved to God.”**
 - c. What “rights” did Jesus have?
 1. He took the personal insults; the strikes on His face AND His body.
 2. He not only went the extra mile, He went “the whole way.”
 3. And He gave up ALL of His possessions.
 - d. We need that “Kingdom Heart” - a heart like Jesus that dies to our personal rights - that the world will see the Jesus in us.

Joe was a drunk who miraculously converted at a Bowery mission. Prior to his conversion, he had gained the reputation of being a dirty wino for whom there was no hope, only a miserable existence in the ghetto. But following his conversion to a new life with God, everything changed. Joe became the most caring person that anyone associated with the mission had ever known. Joe spent his days and nights hanging out at the mission, doing whatever needed to be done. There was never anything that he was asked to do that he considered beneath him. Whether it was cleaning up the vomit left by some violently sick alcoholic or scrubbing toilets after careless men left the men's room filthy, Joe did what was

asked with a smile on his face and a seeming gratitude for the chance to help. He could be counted on to feed feeble men who wandered off the street and into the mission, and to undress and tuck into bed men who were too out of it to take care of themselves. One evening, when the director of the mission was delivering his evening evangelistic message to the usual crowd of still and sullen men with drooped heads, there was one man who looked up, came down the aisle to the altar, and knelt to pray, crying out for God to help him to change. **The repentant drunk kept shouting, “Oh God! Make me like Joe! Make me like Joe! Make like Joe! Make me like Joe!”** The director of the mission leaned over and said to the man, **“Son, I think it would be better if you prayed, ‘Make me like Jesus.’”** The man looked up at the director with a quizzical expression on his face and asked, **“Is he like Joe?”**