

Matthew 7:12

The Golden Vision

Introduction: If you're joining us for the first time - Welcome. We're currently teaching through Jesus' most famous teaching known as the Sermon on the mount.

Contrary to what some may think the Sermon on the Mount is not teaching us how to get into the kingdom of God- the Bible makes it clear that entrance to God's kingdom is only through grace - by the sacrificial work of Jesus.

The sermon is also not teaching us how we stay in the kingdom. Rather it is a description of the character and conduct of those who already belong to God's kingdom.

The Sermon is not a call to repentance, though that may be involved at times, it is a description of the expression and evidences of true repentance.

Though anyone can listen and learn from this sermon, and respond to it's offer of the fulness of life, it's primary audience and focus is the disciple of Jesus. It describes the life that necessarily results from genuine salvation; it describes what God is doing in us and wants to do in us. What he is making us into by the work of his spirit and grace upon us.

This sermon of Jesus has been used for centuries to shape and form God's people into the way of Jesus and we are believing that this is what God will do with us as well.

I want to come back to verse 12 this morning because it is worthy of more thought and attention than we were able to give it in our last study.

As we've been saying throughout these teachings - Jesus' sermon is not so much about doing as it is about being. Jesus is transforming his people into a people who do righteousness, and the right thing, because that's the kind of people they are, or have become.

The Golden rule is then a radically practical tool for helping us change our behavior and thought by getting us to think deeper, and personally about our reactions and actions towards people and situations.

The Golden rule -Treat others as you would want to be treated is not so much a rule but rather a vision that Jesus is calling his people into. It is an invitation to virtue by giving a vision of how to relate to other people. It is a practical out working of the human wholeness and greater righteousness that Jesus has been teaching us. If we go back to chapter 5:17 we see that Jesus began there casting a vision for his disciples of what true righteousness looks like - a righteousness that fulfills the law and the prophets.

1. The Law and the Prophets

1. **“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.** Or another way to put it is - **“so the way you want others to treat you is the way you should treat others - this is what much of the Bible is about.”**
 1. Does that seem like an over simplification?
 2. Jesus was not the first to simplify the OT teachings. There is story that comes from the Babylonian Talmud about two of Judaism’s greatest Rabbi’s Shammai and Hillel.
 1. *“Once there was a gentile (A non-Jew) who came before Shammai, and said to him: ‘Convert me on the condition that you teach me the whole Torah while I stand on one foot. Shammai pushed him aside with the measuring stick he was holding. The same fellow came before Hillel, and Hillel converted him, saying: That which is despicable to you, do not do to your fellow, this is the whole Torah, and the rest is commentary, go and learn it.” - Babylonian Talmud*
 2. It was a common practice in Jesus time to summarize the Law and the Prophets - In another place Jesus summarizes the whole Law in two commands - **“One of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.” - Matthew 22:35-40**
 3. Or Paul in Romans, **“Owe no one anything, except to love each other, for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, “You shall not commit adultery,**

You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet,” and any other commandment, are summed up in this word: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.” - Romans 13:9-10

4. For at least the last year at Refuge we have been looking at how 3 of the most reoccurring themes of the OT are Righteousness, Justice and Peace - which all fall under the category of Loving Our Neighbor. what you see consistently through the OT are standards and teachings dealing with interpersonal relationships. It is true that most of the Bible is about how we live in right relationship with one another. Sometimes we fail to see that according to scripture true spirituality in large part consist in being human with others humans.
5. This is where more liberal Christians usually get it right. The Bible cares nothing for a spirituality or holiness that is not concerned with personal relationships. God is not about religious form and function as He often and so clearly points out in Scripture, **“I hate your sacrifice, and religious feasts... (What does he want; what does he love?), But let Justice roll like a river, and righteousness like a never ending stream.”** — Christianity is a humanitarian religion! It cares for, loves, and gives dignity and worth to every man, woman and child - from the cradle to the grave. It measures true christlikeness, and godliness to the amount that we love and treat others with kindness, forgiveness, mercy, and love. We need to guard ourselves against a Christianity of spiritualism that fails to see that we are on earth largely to be human with other humans.
 1. I am often struck by the way the Apostle Peter describes the life and ministry of Jesus - **“God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.”**
 2. Then think of how many times Paul speaks to the fact that we are saved in order to do good works - “For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great

God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.”

2. The Need for the Gospel

1. We've talked about this before, contrary to popular American christian belief, the Bible is not just about getting our sins forgiven and going to heaven - it is about so much more. It is about a new humanity, a new creation. One cannot fail to see this if you actually read the Bible - it's about living in a whole new way, the flourishing way of God, the way God created us to live.
2. See as great of a standard as - “do unto others as you would have them do unto you, or love your neighbor as yourself, might sound - the problem is humans fail miserably to live up to this standard - most of us live our lives in selfishness, self seeking and self preservation - what we need are new hearts, and new minds. We need a new creation, and this is what is promised in the and through the Good News of Jesus Christ.
3. As I've been saying from the beginning of these studies - Implicit in the understanding of the Sermon on the Mount is that Jesus has invited us and is inviting us into his kingdom and he offers us his righteousness - imputed and infused.
 1. **Imputed Righteousness** - means he gives us a status we could never attain - Justification and Adoption as children of God.
 2. **Infused Righteousness** - means rebirth - regeneration - new creation, with new hearts, new minds, and a new spirit according to Jeremiah 24; 31 so that we become a new kind of people - his people, who do God's kingdom righteousness because that is the kind of people we have become through his grace and Spirit at work in us.
 1. This is what Paul is talking about when He says, **“For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. (Romans 8:3-4)**

3. Infused Righteousness

1. Starting in Matthew 5:17 Jesus has been laying out what this fulfilled or greater righteousness looks like for us in terms of just about everything from anger, to lust, to marriage, fidelity, retaliation and forgiveness, to righteous acts of charity, prayer and fasting to generosity, and judging others... And here Jesus summarizes all of this teaching with this simple principle - Whatever you wish others would do to you, do also to them - for this is the Law and the Prophets. Here Jesus gives us a radically practical and simplified tool for assimilating his Righteousness. This tool trains us not just to do but to be, to become a certain type of people who do goodness, and kindness to all.
2. In personal relations all that Jesus followers are being called to do is consult our feelings - How would we like to be treated in this situation? We don't have to be learned, mature Christians to practice this, but we do have to be honest in our heart searching. The Golden rule is a call to personal heart searching and creativity.
3. **Personally** - Something Grace and I experienced was that early in marriage and ministry we didn't have many people to learn from, to consult, or confide in.. early in marriage, when raising kids - we often say now - we want to be for others what we wish we could have had in those seasons of life.
4. **Communally** - when it comes to the inner workings of the church community - we often approach the church community asking what others can do for us rather than asking Jesus' question - how would you like to be treated, then do that for others.. this question and vision can radically transform a community. It turns from a self seeking, you serve me culture and community to an 'at your service' culture and community
 1. When I was new to the church community, what did I want? a friend, someone to welcome me, to talk to me, to ask honestly and sincerely about myself, to call me up, to go out to coffee with me. Amen. Do that for others - be part of building this culture in our church.
 2. When I went through a hard season or situation what did I need or want from others?
5. **In friendship** - How would I want to be treated - spoken to respectfully, honestly and sincerely. Given the benefit of the doubt. to be listened to sincerely, and responded to patiently and lovingly.
6. **In parenting** - how would I have wanted my parents to have treated me when I messed up - with love and grace.

7. **In marriage** - how would I like to be treated as a husband?
seriously this was a big one in our marriage, and especially when babies came into the picture.. what would I want? I want someone to get up and take care of my baby in the morning so I can get some sleep... so that's what I would do... when I was concise enough to think through it..
8. **In my work** - as a co-worker how would I want to be treated? as a manager, or boss how would I want to be treated? As an employee how would I want to be treated?
9. **With my neighbor or my enemy** - How would I want to be treated?
 1. Jesus' inward question is a simple but powerful tool to actually be agents of change in the world, to be culture makers by building cultures of empathy and kindness in our homes, our churches, our places of work, and in our city.. Following the golden rule turns us inward first to deal with our own hearts and character, then outward in love toward our neighbor.

Conclusion: At a time when politics and culture are polarizing and toxic what our culture needs is not people who recoil and go into hiding, to protect our beliefs, and our christian subculture, but a people who are winsome, kind and empathetic. They need the Kingdom of God in the practice and manifestation of everyday life and circumstances. And this is simultaneously what we need if we are to be trained in true human wholeness and Godliness.

This is exactly what Jesus is calling us to...