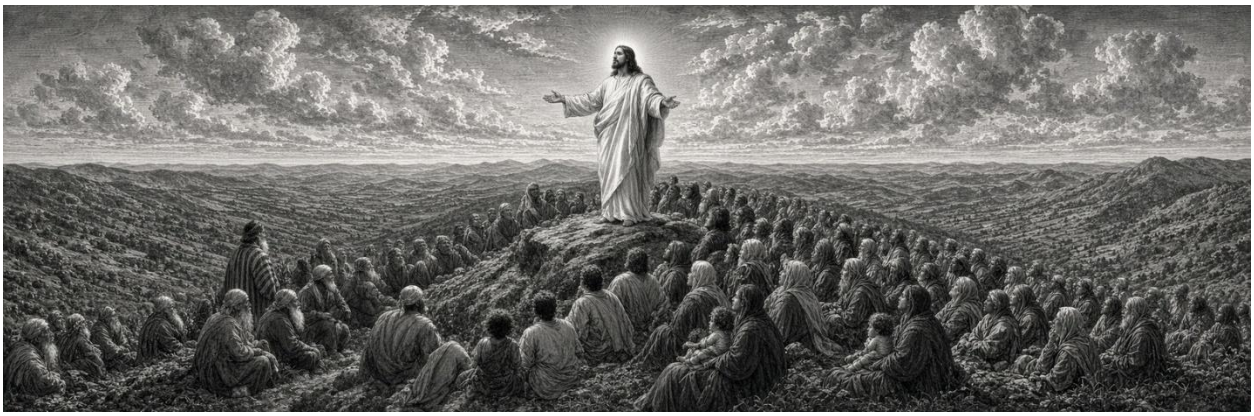
Why the Sermon on the Mount Is the Standard for Preaching



Foreword: The Sermon on the Mountain is the Gold Standard for all sermons to follow.

The Sermon on the Mount, found in **Matthew chapters 5–7**, is the longest and most focused collection of Jesus' teachings about how to live. He gave it on a hillside in Galilee to his disciples, and the crowds gathered around him. For centuries, Christians have seen it not just as one good sermon, but as the best model for all Christian preaching. Augustine, an early church leader, called it a "**perfect standard of the Christian life**."

In this sermon, Jesus speaks with clear authority. He turns upside down the values the world prizes, looks deep into people's hearts and motives, gives practical guidance for daily life, and ends with a strong call to choose how we will live. These features have shaped how sermons are written and preached for hundreds of years. By looking closely at the main parts of the Sermon on the Mount, we can see a lasting pattern for sermons that shape people's character, clarify where their loyalty lies, and **invite them into the life of God's kingdom**.

The Beatitudes: Redefining Blessedness

A good sermon begins by making clear what the good life really is. Jesus starts the Sermon on the Mount by saying that certain people are blessed. He names the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and those who are persecuted for doing what is right.

These words turn the world's usual ideas of success upside down. The world often praises wealth, power, self-reliance, and being popular. Jesus instead says that real blessing comes from depending on God and becoming more like Him in character.

A sermon modeled on the Sermon on the Mount therefore starts by helping people see life from the kingdom's point of view—its different values—before moving on to give specific instructions for how to live.

Salt and Light: Identity and Mission

After describing the character of people who belong to God's kingdom, Jesus immediately tells them who they are and what they are for: "**You are the salt of the earth… You are the light of the world**."

Who we are shapes what we do. Disciples do not become salt and light by trying harder. **They already are salt and light because of their relationship with Jesus**. Their task is simply not to lose that distinctiveness—so that their lives continue to preserve what is good and shine in a way that points others to God.

A sermon modeled on the Sermon on the Mount therefore begins by clearly declaring who the hearers are in Christ. **This keeps the call to live differently from becoming mere moralism or empty rule-keeping**.

Jesus and the Law: Completing, Not Canceling

Next, Jesus explains how his teaching relates to the Law and the Prophets (the Old Testament Scriptures). He says he has not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them—to bring them to their full meaning and purpose. **He also says his followers' righteousness must go beyond that of the scribes and Pharisees**.

This part of the sermon shows two important things: Jesus speaks with real authority, and his teaching continues Scripture rather than discarding it. A sermon modeled on the Sermon on the Mount does not invent new rules out of nowhere. **Instead, it shows how the Word of God is completed and deepened in the person and teaching of Christ Jesus**.

Going Beyond the Rules to the Heart

In six teachings that begin with "You have heard that it was said… but I say to you," Jesus moves beyond outward rules to the **heart's inner attitudes**. He shows that anger is the root of murder, lust is the root of adultery, true integrity makes oaths unnecessary, we should not seek

revenge, and we are to love even our enemies. The standard he sets is nothing less than the perfect character of our heavenly Father.

In this section, the Sermon on the Mount shows preachers an important task: do not just give rules for behavior. Help people see their motives and desires. Outward obedience alone is never enough. **The real goal is a changed heart**.

True Piety and the Lord's Prayer: Worship without Hypocrisy

Turning to religious practices, Jesus warns against performing almsgiving, prayer, and fasting for human applause. True piety is secret, seen only by the Father. At the center stands the Lord's Prayer, which orders desire: God's name, kingdom, and will first, then daily bread, forgiveness, and deliverance. **A model sermon addresses not only ethics but worship**, teaching hearers to approach God as Father without theatrical display, and providing a pattern of prayer that shapes the whole of life.

Treasures, Money, and Trust: Single-Minded Allegiance

Next, **Jesus speaks about the danger of making money or possessions more important than God**. He says no one can serve both God and money. What we value most in life must be treasure in heaven, not treasure on earth.

He also speaks to the worry many people feel about food, clothing, and the future. Instead of being anxious, we are called to seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness. When we do that, God promises to take care of our needs.

A sermon modeled on the Sermon on the Mount names the things that compete for our loyalty today and invites people to trust God's care. This frees them from the heavy burden of constant worry.

Judging Others, Asking God, and the Golden Rule

Next, Jesus warns against judging others harshly or hypocritically. He says, "**Judge not, that you be not judged**," and uses the picture of someone trying to remove a speck from another person's eye while a large log is in their own eye. The point is clear: we must first deal honestly with our own faults before we try to correct someone else (**Matthew 7:1–5**).

He then encourages his hearers to ask, seek, and knock, promising that their Father in heaven will give good gifts to those who ask Him (**Matthew 7:7–11**).

He concludes this section with the **Golden Rule**: “Whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets” (**Matthew 7:12**).

These teachings show that living rightly is practical, not abstract. It concerns how we treat one another. The Golden Rule also gathers up what Jesus has already taught into one clear statement. A sermon modeled on the Sermon on the Mount can both explain things carefully and summarize them simply.

The Narrow Gate, False Prophets, and True Disciples

As the sermon nears its end, Jesus presents clear choices. There are two gates and two ways: a narrow gate that leads to life and a wide gate that leads to destruction. He also speaks of two kinds of trees. Good trees produce good fruit, while bad trees produce bad fruit. In the same way, you can recognize false prophets by the fruit of their lives.

Jesus then warns that not everyone who says to him, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven. Only those who do the will of the Father will enter.

A sermon modeled on the Sermon on the Mount leaves people clear about what matters. It helps them tell true from false, calls them to careful discernment, and makes clear that claiming to follow Jesus must be matched by real obedience.

The Two Foundations: Hearing and Doing

The sermon ends with the parable of the wise and foolish builders. The wise person is the one who hears Jesus’ words and puts them into practice. That person is like a man who builds his house on solid rock. When the storms come—the rain, the floods, and the winds—the house stands firm because it has a strong foundation.

The foolish person is the one who hears Jesus’ words but does not do them. That person is like a man who builds his house on sand. When the same storms come, the house falls, and the fall is great.

When Jesus finished speaking, the crowds were amazed at his teaching because he spoke with real authority, unlike their usual religious teachers.

A sermon modeled on the Sermon on the Mount does not stop at giving information. **It presses people toward a real response**. Hearing the teaching is not enough. **In the end, what matters is whether we actually do what Jesus says**.

Conclusion

The Sermon on the Mount remains the best model for all sermons because it brings together several important things. It tells people who they are, explains Scripture, looks honestly at the heart, teaches how to worship and how to live, names the things that compete for our loyalty, and ends with a clear call to obey Jesus.

It avoids two common mistakes. It does not turn faith into a long list of rules, and it does not treat obedience as optional or unimportant.

Its structure is clear and helpful. It moves from what is truly blessed, to who we are called to be, from inner change to public witness, from private devotion to how we treat others, and finally from hearing to doing.

Preachers who want their sermons to form real disciples, not just inform an audience, can learn from Matthew 5–7. It is not a loose collection of sayings. It follows a clear pattern: describe the character of the kingdom, tell people who they are in Christ, deepen the meaning of God's word, address motives, turn desires toward God, and call for a response that builds on the solid rock of Jesus' words.

In this way, **the Sermon on the Mount still teaches us both what the Christian life looks like and how Christian preaching should be done**.