

## **The Sermon on the Fat Hill: Build Your Life on Jesus – Matthew 7:28-29**

Everyone is searching for the answer to the question, “How can I be happy in this life?” We Christians have the answer. And it is found in your hymnal of all places. Turn with me to #365.

You probably know this old hymn that says “To be happy in Jesus is to trust and obey.” Simple words, but hard to live out in our world of catastrophes. It seems the past couple of weeks tragedy after tragedy has filled our news. Hurricanes have hit, the war in Iraq continues, busses have blown up, and the world is not looking to God for answers. Economists, environmentalists, educators, weathermen, and even reports about clergy all give us good reason to be filled with pessimism, doubt, and despair. It makes us want to become apathetic and numb.

Sometimes Christians need to get a grip on what really matters. When we hear of things that break our heart, we have to go back to the basics of our faith. Sometimes something as straightforward and basic as an old hymn helps. We can be reminded of what life is all about when we sing “Trust and Obey.”

All of us want to be happy and a lot of us want to be in step with Jesus. The problem comes, however, when we start to sing about the obey part. Sometimes it doesn't come out as a melody, but as a groan.

We love grace. We love mercy. We applaud faith. We rejoice when there is talk of love and hope. But sometimes we want to scream when the preacher starts talking about submission, discipline, and obedience.

Those aren't fun words, but they are a part of the Christian life. The hymn is true – To be happy in Jesus means to trust and obey.

The world, however, wants us to sing a different song. Sixteen years ago Bobby McFerrin wrote an overnight hit song called “Don't Worry, Be Happy.” Its simple, sweet little message, sung with a Caribbean lilt and calypso beat, evoked images of a carefree life. The song called us to let go of the things we worry about and concentrate all of our energies on being happy. So if a storm hits in your life – just ignore it and it will go away. Just concentrate on smiling – Don't worry – be happy! This pop song's happiness comes from blocking out all signs of need and care.

Jesus, however, taught a completely different way of being happy.

We have been studying the very words of Jesus for the past 4 months. We have been studying Matthew 5-7 commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount, and we have affectionately called it the Sermon on the Fat Hill.

Beginning in Matthew 5, we have been astonished at what Jesus said. Jesus' song was not "Don't worry, be happy." It was persevere and be blessed. He told us in the beatitudes that the very source and springs of blessedness and happiness were the very things that most of us try to avoid in life. Jesus said that blessings in life do come from the conditions which are not popular. Blessed are the poor, blessed are those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirst, those who make peace, those who are persecuted. A life that will be able to endure and survive the storms of life, a life that will be experienced as blessed, is built by living in the direction of the very things which are most of our culture tries to avoid like the plague. That is pretty astonishing.

Jesus went on claiming that we were the very things that preserve society. He called us salt. He said that we were the very high beams on the dark highway of life. He called us the light. He went on to say that He Himself was the very fulfillment of the entire Old Testament and that our lives had to be good. He set the standard way up here when everyone else set it down here. He said some pretty astonishing principles.

Jesus then goes to a lot of trouble to make sure that none of us can say that we are all good. He makes adultery a look and a lust. He makes murder the flaming up of passion for revenge or the very desire to eliminate another. He makes the arrogance of calling another person a fool as guilty as murder. He sets the standards high for marriage and truth telling. He even said to love your enemy. These are astonishing words!

Jesus taught us to give, to pray, and to fast in such a way that would grow our intimacy with God. He even told us that worry was a sin and said to us that the standard that we use to judge others will be used against us.

All through out the Sermon on the Fat Hill, He makes us realize that we are like everyone else. The only difference is that we are blessed recipients of more grace than we deserve and more love than we have merited.

His words were amazing. In fact, I want to finish this sermon series by focusing on the very last words of the Sermon on the Fat Hill. Turn with me to Matthew 7:28-29.

Sometimes your Bible will put the words of Jesus in the color red. If your Bible does this, these last two verses that I want to focus on are black. Jesus did not say these things, but they are an important part of the Sermon on the Mount. They reflect the crowd's reaction to His sermon.

*Matthew 7:28-29 – When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.*

The crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as their scribes. Today, our reaction should be the same. We need to have this same astonishment and amazement. We each need to recognize this same authority from Jesus.

When you truly experience the life that Christ wants for you, then...

## 1. Christ should AMAZE you

- a. The crowd was astonished because:
  - i. He was young – see also Luke 2:46
  - ii. He came from an insignificant family and an obscure place – John 1:46
  - iii. He came from a blue color family – Matthew 13:54-56
  - iv. He never attended rabbi school, nor seminary – John 7:15

But to us, this is Jesus, the very Son of God who we worship every week.

- b. We should be amazed for whole other reasons.

- i. We should be amazed because of how powerful His Words are:

Hebrews 1:3 (The Message) - *This Son perfectly mirrors God, and is stamped with God's nature. He holds everything together by what he says—powerful words!*

- ii. Amazement should fill our hearts, because He transformed how you approach God:

The old was found in the Ways of Moses. We could approach God by simply being a good person. If you follow the Law, follow the Ten Commandments, sacrifice the right amount, live a decent life and then you get to go to heaven.

Jesus said, “wrong – no one can is good - put your faith in me and you’ll get in heaven.”

He changed it from a Religion to a Relationship. Jesus showed us that God does not care about how good you think you are, He cares about your heart condition and your faith.

Let’s suppose that you decide to go to work at Wal-Mart because you think that the blue smocks they wear are really cool. You just love the way Wal-Mart offers everything at a low price. You don’t feel like going to the trouble of filling out forms or waiting to be hired, so you just show up one day, jump into one of the lines and begin working. After a few days you may find that you’re even pretty good.

So, you work your 40 hours and at the end of the week you go to get your paycheck, what do you think they're going to say. "Paycheck? I don't even know who you are." You protest: "But I worked hard all week. I've been here every day. I've done a good job. Now I deserve to be paid!"

There are a lot of people that do a lot of good things—they have the religion down! They might even do some things in the name of Christ. They attend church every Sunday. They give money to the church and read their Bible. They help others and invite people to church. But, Jesus says there must be a relationship with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. Jesus even warned us that if there has never been a personal commitment made to the Lord Jesus Christ, then on the Day of Judgment, God will say, "I'm sorry, but I never knew you."

We should be amazed that Jesus changed the ball game from follow the rules to follow Christ.

iii. We should be amazed because Jesus is the ultimate Oxymoron:

Examples of Oxymorons: a little pregnant / Awfully pretty / pretty ugly / jumbo shrimp / Benign Tumor / dress pants / Great Depression / plastic silverware / rap music

Five hundred years before Christ was even alive, the prophet Isaiah told us about Jesus. He told us that Jesus was the ultimate oxymoron – Isaiah 9:6 (NLT) - *For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. And the government will rest on his shoulders. These will be his royal titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Wonderful Counselor vs. Mighty God:

- A Wonderful Counselor offers us wisdom, insight and advice. He hears our every problem, every anxiety, every fear. The intimate Jesus holds our hand when we are lonely or hurting, offers us his shoulder to cry on when we are sad. The wonderful counselor is there with us!
- A Mighty God, however, is up there. He is a distant divinity, controlling the universe, combating evil, creating good. We need the reassurance of an Almighty God on our side when we confront this life.

Jesus is both the Wonderful Counselor and the Almighty God! Jesus is also the Everlasting Father and the Prince of Peace:

- Everlasting Father: In this name we are offered the comfort of an eternal Lord. He is the one who lasts forever and is always there for us.
- Prince of Peace: This is an earthly name for our earthly savior. Heaven has no need of a Prince of Peace, but earth surely does. This is not an eternal title, but a temporary one while we are here on earth. We need His ways of peace.

Jesus was both God and Man:

- Colossians 2:9 (NLT) - *For in Christ the fullness of God lives in a human body.*
- Hebrews 2:14 (NLT) - *Because God's children are human beings—made of flesh and blood—Jesus also became flesh and blood by being born in human form.*

Jesus is the complete opposites mixed up in one person. He is close, but far. He is eternal, but here and now. He is God, and yet He is also man. We should stand amazed!

iv. The number one reason, we should stand amazed, however, is GRACE  
Grace is God's gift of salvation, mercy, and justice all rolled up into one given to us, even though we don't deserve it!

*Ephesians 2:4-8 (NLT) - But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, that even while we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's special favor that you have been saved!) For he raised us from the dead along with Christ, and we are seated with him in the heavenly realms—all because we are one with Christ Jesus. And so God can always point to us as examples of the incredible wealth of his favor and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us through Christ Jesus. God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God.*

Grace is the whole message, and purpose of Jesus! We should be amazed at this!

Many Christians are no longer amazed by Christ, because they no longer experience His power in their lives. It is like you have run out of fuel and aren't willing to fill back up because the price is too high. We each need a refill and we each need to stand amazed!

If you are no longer amazed or astonished at grace, your spiritual life is in trouble.

When you truly experience the life that Christ wants for you, then:

1. Christ should AMAZE you, and...

## **2. Christ should have AUTHORITY over you**

The crowd saw that Jesus taught with authority, unlike the teachers of the Law. They were stunned, because Jesus didn't quote others when He spoke. He spoke from His own authority.

When you make Jesus your authority, you are submitting to Him. It means that you obey Him. These are not easy words, so I want you to understand why He should be the one who is your King.

a. Christ should have authority because of what He taught:

- i. He corrected the Bible – “you have heard it said..., but I say to you...” If someone can correct the Bible and then back it up, then I think you should listen.
- ii. While God’s prophets would preface their sayings with “thus says the Lord”, Jesus began with “Assuredly, I say to you...” He spoke as if He were the voice of God Himself, because well, He was!
- iii. Jesus told us that He fulfilled the entire Old Testament – Matthew 5:17 - *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.* He taught this and then in His death & resurrection did it!
- iv. He declared that He would be the final authority as to who gets into heaven – He painted a picture of what will happen in the end times. He told us in Matthew 7:21-23 that He would be the final judge. You have a choice here – you can trust His words, or you can ignore them.

Christ should have authority because of what He taught, but it doesn’t end there.

b. Christ should have authority because of who He is:

- i. The Gospels tell us that Jesus had the power to say a word and it would just happen.
- ii. Jesus had authority over demons and sickness AND had the power to give His disciples this authority. He could sanction others to drive out demons and heal.
- iii. Jesus is the forgiver of sins. He proved it through His healing ministry AND His resurrection.
- iv. Jesus told us that He was the vine and that if we remained in Him, then we would experience true life. He doesn’t just teach us the way to have a great life, He is the way to real life.

There once was a missionary who lost his way in an African jungle. He could find no landmarks and the trail vanished. Eventually, stumbling on a small hut, he asked the native living there if he could lead him out. The native nodded. Rising to his feet, he walked directly into the bush. The missionary followed on his heels. For more than an hour they hacked their way through a dense wall of vines and grasses. The missionary became worried: "Are you sure this is the way? I don't see any path." The African chuckled and said over his shoulder, "Bwana, in this place there is no path. I am the path." (E. Stanley Jones)

- John 14:6 – *I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*
- Acts 4:12 – *Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which they must be saved.*
- 1 Timothy 2:5 (NLT) - *For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus.*

You have a choice – you can accept His authority, or you can walk away from it. I believe that Christ should have authority in my life because of what He taught and because of who He is.

You have to understand that Christ doesn't force Himself on you – He doesn't use coercion. He is Lord whether you make Him your King or not. He wants you to choose so that your love for Him would be real and not forced.

So Are you astonished? Amazed? Are you willing to give Christ the authority in your life? Is Christ your entire way of life?

If you stand amazed and astonished... If you have given Christ your authority..., then the same poem that St. Patrick wore as a breastplate over his heart will be true for you:  
 Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me, Christ in me,  
 Christ beneath me, Christ above me,  
 Christ when I lie down, Christ when I sit down, Christ when I arise,  
 Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me,  
 Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me,  
 Christ in every eye that sees me,  
 Christ in every ear that hears me (A Little Book of Irish Verse)

#### WHAT WILL YOUR CHOICE BE?

- In Deut 30:19-20 God told Moses to tell the people that they needed to choose who they were going to serve. God said that life would be found in obeying Him.
- In Joshua 24:13-15 upon entering the Promised Land Joshua told the people to choose this day who they would serve.
- As Elijah was about to take on the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel, he told the people to choose to either follow God or Baal in 1 Kings 18:21.
- Jeremiah – *“Furthermore, tell the people, ‘This is what the LORD says: See, I am setting before you the way of life and the way of death.’ --God was saying, “You get to choose which way you will go.”*

So what is your choice?

Believe – Repent – Confess - Be Baptized - Walk with Him

*Nothing But the Blood* – Favorite Hymns of Praise #138