

Scripture:

Matthew 5:48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 7:12 So (therefore) whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Sermon:

We have preached 26 sermons for this series of sermons based on our Lord Jesus' sermon on the mount. But the sermon on the mount is actually one single sermon. So today I'm going to give you one sermon that connects all the previous 26 sermons together and also to give a recap on the whole sermon on the mount. I think Matthew 5:48 and Matthew 7:12 are the key message of the sermon on the mount:

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Matthew 5:48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 7:12 So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Slide (end)

In Matthew 5:48 Jesus gives us the standard: we must be perfect as the Father is perfect. Here the Father's perfection doesn't refer to His omni-potence or omni-science or other divine attributes alike, because we can never be all-powerful and all-knowing as God is. But it specifically refers to the perfect righteousness of the Father, meaning that to perfectly observe the Law and the Prophets, we must be perfect as the Father is perfect in His righteousness.

Another way to perfectly observe the Law and the Prophets is given in Matthew 7:12: whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them.

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Matthew 5:48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 7:12 So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets."

Galatians 5:14 For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

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Matthew 7:12 is actually the same as what is given in Galatians 5:14: For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

But actually the full version of this commandment is given in Matthew 22:37-40: **READ SLIDE**

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Matthew 22:37-40 “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.”

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But why do Matthew 7:12 and Galatians 5:14 miss the part “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind”? I think it’s because no one has seen God and so to love God with all our heart is a bit too abstract for us as we humans always need something more specific and concrete to follow, as 1 John 4:20-21 explains: **READ SLIDE**

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1 John 4:20-21 If anyone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from Him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

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Therefore, if we love God, we must love our neighbors. But it doesn’t mean that we can love our neighbors without loving God.

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Matthew 22:37-40 “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 5:48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 7:12 So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

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Matthew 22:37-40 consists of two points: first is your heart which must be centered on God and second is your action by which you show your love to God by loving your neighbors. Similarly, the two commandments given in Matthew 5:48 and Matthew 7:12 are actually the same commandment given in Matthew 22:37-40, [**NEXT SLIDE**], and therefore, the whole sermon on the mount is also elaborating the same two points: first your heart must be God-centered; and second your action by loving your neighbors as yourselves.

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Your heart: God-centered

Your action: love your neighbors as yourselves

Slide (end)

Let's go through the sermon on the mount. But first, I'd like to call your attention to Matthew 5:1: **READ SLIDE**

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Matthew 5:1 Seeing the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and when He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

Two groups of people:

The disciples: follow Jesus and learn from Him

The crowds: come to Jesus for healing or to see miracles, but most are not changed by His Sermon

Slide (end)

Here it mentions two groups of people, the crowds and the disciples of Jesus. The disciples were those who followed Jesus and they learnt from Him as He taught them, even though they might not be very quick to learn. The crowds mostly came to Jesus for healing and to hear Him out of curiosity as they had heard of all the miracles done by Jesus; while some of them might become disciples later on, most of them would go away and go on with their own life, the sermon on the mount didn't change them. Now the first question we need to seriously ask ourselves is this: am I a disciple and do I want to be changed by His sermon, or am I one of the crowd who listen and then go on with their sinful life? I hope you will all say aloud in your heart:

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I am a disciple!

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If you do, then today's sermon is gonna empower you to be a disciple of Jesus!

The sermon on the mount can be divided into 4 sections: be living testimonies of Jesus, be perfect as the Father is perfect, be God-centered in all we do, be true disciples of Christ.

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Be Different

Matthew 5:3-16 **Be living testimonies:** how the citizens of God's kingdom should live in the world

Matthew 5:17-48 **Be perfect:** the correct interpretation and application of the OT

Matthew 6:1-7:12 **Be God-centered:** how to live a God-centered life

Matthew 7:13-27 **Be disciples of Christ:** four warnings and four choices

Slide (end)

These four are essentially the same commandment but Jesus elaborates it from different angles. He begins by teaching us how the citizens of God's kingdom should live in this world, and this part of His sermon is often referred to as the Beatitudes.

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The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:3-10

³ Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Slide (end)

Matthew 5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The poor in spirit here refers to those who recognize their spiritual poverty and hence their spiritual needs. This calls us to depend on God for our needs, for spiritual richness to know God and love Him more and spiritual gifts to serve His church.

Matthew 5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. In the Old Testament, those who mourn for their sins would wear sackcloths and cover their heads with ashes. And thus Jesus calls us to deeply repent for our sins and long for God's forgiveness, and if we do, we would be comforted.

Matthew 5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. The meek are those who are gentle and humble, submissive to God and trusting in Him in all circumstances, like a lamb remained silent even when He was led to be slaughtered. We are called to be completely humble and gentle, to be patient and bear one another in love. [Ephesians 4:2]

Matthew 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. This doesn't ask you to seek your own righteousness, but we're called to hunger and thirst for God's righteousness. To do this, apparently we need to be familiar with God's righteous requirements as given in the Law. But when seeking God's righteousness, we must also not forget God's mercy.

Matthew 5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. God's righteousness requires Him to punish sinners for their sins and this puts us all in condemnation, that's why Paul says in Ephesians 2:3 Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But God, who is rich in mercy, forgives our sins and sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross to pay for the penalty of our sins, that's how much mercy we have been shown. Therefore, be merciful, as the Father is merciful. [Luke 6:36]

Matthew 5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. The pure in heart will see God, but who can be? Indeed no one can be totally pure in heart.

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John 14:9 ... Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.

Romans 8:29 For those whom He foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, in order that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

1 John 3:2-3 ... when He appears we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure.

Slide (end)

But Jesus says in John 14:9, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father." And Romans 8:29 tells us that God predestined us to be conformed to the likeness of His Son. That means when we become more and more like Jesus, we shall see God in ourselves. The image of God in us is certainly blurred, but we're called to keep sanctifying ourselves so that God may be seen in us more and more clearly by others. The ultimate fulfillment is on the day when we see God face to face, as 1 John 3:2-3 says "when God appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure." So be pure, as God is pure.

Slide (start)

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⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Slide (end)

Matthew 5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. While we're called to make peace with everyone, even with our enemies, it is foremost important to make peace with God. Christians are called to be peacemakers to bring sinners into reconciliation with God through Christ.

Matthew 5:10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. I have wondered why I am not persecuted, because Jesus clearly expects His disciples to be persecuted for righteousness' sake. 2 Timothy 3:12 also confirms that all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. So why am I not persecuted? I think the answer is that I am not seeking God's righteousness but am comfortable living in the world, for example, if I maintain integrity at a level just higher than normal or preach the gospel to the people around me as I preach here, then I am sure most of the people I work with would hate me. Are you being persecuted for righteousness' sake?

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Matthew 5:13-16 **You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste**, how shall its saltiness be restored? **It is no longer good for anything** except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, **let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.**

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The above teaching summarizes how the citizens of the kingdom of God should live their lives in this world. And our Lord Jesus expects us to be the salt that preserves the world from corruption and the light shining in the darkness. Therefore, brothers and sisters, be living testimonies of our Lord Jesus to those who're living in the darkness, so that they may be led to Jesus and see our good works and give glory to our Father in Heaven.

However, Jesus actually didn't teach us something new, as if He was giving a new set of law. We preached 8 sermons for the 8 blessings in the Beatitudes and another sermon for being the salt and light of the world. These 9 sermons, actually all the 27 sermons in this series, are summed up in two words: Be different!

Slide (start)

Be different!

Be holy, for He is holy! [1 Peter 1:16; Leviticus 11:44-45, 19:2]

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We should be different from the world while living in the world. "Be different" actually means "be holy", as God is holy. Be holy means to be set apart, and the entire Law and Prophets teach that God's people should be holy or set apart or different from the rest of the world. So the Beatitudes only highlight the essence of the Law and the Prophets and the blessings God has promised to those who set themselves apart.

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Matthew 5:17-20 **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.** For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. **For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.**

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He then went on to the more specific laws that are familiar to the Jews. And He emphasized that He didn't come to abolish the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them. Not only so, but He went further to surprise everyone by telling them that they had never understood the Law correctly, but they had always missed the real meaning and purpose of God's Law.

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Be Different

Matthew 5:3-16 Be living testimonies: how the citizens of God's kingdom should live in the world

Matthew 5:17-48 Be perfect: the correct interpretation and application of the OT

Matthew 6:1-7:12 Be God-centered: how to live a God-centered life

Matthew 7:13-27 Be disciples of Christ: four warnings and four choices

Slide (end)

This comes to the second section of the Sermon on the Mount: Jesus teaches the correct interpretation and application of the OT. The second section and the third section actually form one big section.

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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.

Matthew 7:12 So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is **the Law and the Prophets**.

Slide (end)

The second section begins with that Jesus has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, and the third section ends with how the disciples of Jesus should live by the Law and the Prophets.

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Two "therefore" and the same commandment

Matthew 5:48 You **therefore** must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew 7:12 **So (therefore)** whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Slide (end)

Both sections also conclude with a "therefore" commandment and these two commandments are essentially the same commandment as we explained earlier.

The two sections also share a similar structure. Unlike the Beatitudes which are more like general rules, here in both sections Jesus illustrates His teaching with typical, concrete examples of life. Let's first review the second section.

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Matthew 5:17-48 Be perfect: the correct interpretation and application of the OT

- 6 “You have heard that it was said ...” wrong interpretations and applications of the Law
- 6 corresponding “But I say to you ...” corrections by Jesus

Slide (end)

The second section consists of 6 “You have heard that it was said ...” wrong interpretations and applications of the Law by the Jewish religious leaders, and 6 corresponding “But I say to you ...” corrections by Jesus. Let me go through them quickly with you: **READ SLIDE**

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Matthew 5:21-48

Anger

21 “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ 22 But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.

Lust

27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Divorce

31 “It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ 32 But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

33 “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ 34 But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all... 37 Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.

Retaliation

38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ 39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.

Love Your Enemies

43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you...

Slide (end)

The interpretations and applications of the Law by Jesus push the standard so high that is impossible to achieve.

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Matthew 5:48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

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But Jesus concluded this section by asking us to be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect. But in fact, Jesus didn't raise the standard, not at all! The Law and the Prophets have always been the same. The standard is meant to be high because we're made in the image of God and are expected to reflect the perfection of God. Sadly we have all failed and fall short of the glory of God. But God didn't send us directly to hell, instead He sent His Son to the world to die for our sins. Therefore, our inability to observe the law should lead us to Christ, as we have already repeated again and again in the previous 26 sermons in this series.

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Slide (end)

To be perfect as the Father is perfect, we need to first change our heart and our attitude, so in the third section of His sermon on the amount, Jesus teaches us to be God-centered in all we do.

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Give glory to God rather to yourselves

Matthew 6:1-4 when you give to the needy, do not aim to get praises from others

Matthew 6:5-8 when you pray, do not aim to be seen as pious by the public

Matthew 6:16-18 when you fast, do not perform a show of fasting

Do it all in secret, do it all for the glory of God

Slide (end)

First, in Matthew 6:1-18, our Lord teaches us in all our righteous acts and good deeds, we should not aim to seek our own glory or get praises from others for ourselves, but rather we should do good works in secret to be seen by the Father only. Jesus specifically teaches us: do not aim to be praised by others when we give to the needy, do not intend to be seen as pious by the public when we pray, and do not perform a show of fasting but fast with the heart. Instead, we should perform our good deeds in secret, whatever we do, do it all for the glory of the Father. [Col 3:17]

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The Lord's model prayer

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

Slide (end)

Jesus also gives us the model prayer, in which He teaches us to first ask for God to be glorified and for His kingdom to come and His will be done, and then ask for the needs of our human life. I think we are all too familiar with the Lord's prayer, but sadly our human nature is too self-centered instead of God-centered. We have focused too much on praying for the needs of our own life rather than for the glory of God and His will be done.

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Matthew 6:19-24

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth ...
but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven ...
For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. ...
You cannot serve God and money.

Slide (end)

Therefore, our Lord warns us not to focus on earthly things, but store up treasures in heaven. He wants us to set our heart right and fix our eyes on heavenly things. We can only either choose God or choose the devil, life or death, heaven or hell.

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Matthew 6:25-34

Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, nor about your body, what you will put on.
... your heavenly Father knows that you need them all.

But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

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But clearly He understands that the choice is difficult because of our sinful nature. Therefore, He admonishes us not to be anxious about our life, what we will eat or drink or cloth. He assures us that our heavenly Father knows all our needs, even before we ask Him. And once again, He teaches us to be God-centered: first seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and He promises all the rest will be taken care of by the Father.

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Matthew 7:1-6 Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you.

Slide (end)

One of the greatest obstacles of living a God-centered life is our own self-righteousness. The root of the problem when we judge others by condemning their faults is our own self-righteousness, as we consider ourselves more righteous and fail to see our own unrighteousness, and therefore we have forgotten how much we ourselves have been forgiven. Well, some of us may know the Bible better, and some of us may be more faithful, but 1 Corinthians 4:7 says: **READ SLIDE**

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1 Corinthians 4:7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

Slide (end)

All the good things we have now we received from the Father. So let's not think ourselves more highly than others, but humbly examine ourselves again and again so that we may take the log out of our own eye, not in order to see clearly to find fault in others, but rather that we can see clearly our own unrighteousness so that we may ask for forgiveness and learn to forgive others, just as we have been forgiven so much through the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Do not trample the Gospel underfoot ourselves!

Now the final thing we need to learn about how to live a God-centered life is to know our spiritual poverty and to turn to the Giver of all spiritual gifts: **READ SLIDE**

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Matthew 7:7-11 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ... If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!

Slide (end)

Because of our sinful nature, we cannot observe the law by ourselves and we cannot live a God-centered life by our own effort. But now, Jesus Christ has come to set us free from the slavery of sin, and we have become the children of God. So we can ask the Father to give us all we need to live a godly life and He will give us every good thing that we ask of Him.

Slide (start)

Matthew 7:12 **So (therefore)** whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Slide (end)

Therefore, **therefore**, now we have been enabled to keep His law, which is summed up in this one commandment: whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them. We have been enabled to do it, brothers and sisters, and so let's do it now!

I think the Law serves three general purposes: **READ SLIDE**

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The purposes of the Law:

1. To show men the righteous requirements of God
2. To lead us to Christ
3. To guide Christians how to live a godly life

Slide (end)

Certainly in His sermon, our Lord has clearly shown us the righteous requirements of God and how we fall short of His standard and therefore how much we need Christ as our Savior. But I think the main objective of His sermon is actually for the third purpose of the Law, that He was teaching His disciples, including you and me, that we have been enabled to live a godly life in the world. Therefore, if He asks us to be the salt and light of the world, how would He not also enable us to do so?

Slide (start)

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Matthew 7:12 **So (therefore)** whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.

Slide (end)

Of course, the Law and the Prophets only find their perfect fulfillment in the perfection of the Father, but every disciple of Jesus is called to be perfect as the Father is perfect and to love our neighbors as ourselves. Well, I understand that we're still co-existing with our sinful nature and the final fulfillment

happens only when we see our Lord face to face, but we must try because we have been enabled, in fact, our Lord tells us to try very hard.

Slide (start)

Be Different

Matthew 5:3-16 **Be living testimonies:** how the citizens of God's kingdom should live in the world

Matthew 5:17-48 **Be perfect:** the correct interpretation and application of the OT

Matthew 6:1-7:12 **Be God-centered:** how to live a God-centered life

Matthew 7:13-27 Be disciples of Christ: four warnings and four choices

Slide (end)

He asks us to strive to enter the narrow gate, the gate that is through Jesus only, to deny ourselves daily, to take up our cross and follow Him instead of following the crowd or the teaching of the world. He asks us to bear good fruit that is pleasing to the Father instead of disguising ourselves as being faithful but bearing bad fruit. He asks us to do the will of the Father instead of performing works in His name for our own gains. He asks us to build our good work upon the foundation of Christ instead of neglecting His teaching.

So it's not easy, it requires us to do everything He has commanded us in His sermon, but He has enabled us, He has given us the Holy Spirit, and He will give every good gift that we ask Him.

Slide (start)

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Slide (end)

What's the application of today's sermon then? I hope it's obvious to you from the beginning: the sermon on the amount was written down for you to study it, so the application of this sermon is to understand the sermon on the mount, to study it and to meditate upon it, to be living testimonies of Jesus, be perfect as the Father is perfect, be God-centered in all we do, and be true disciples of Christ. In short, be different, be holy, be set apart! We have emphasized that we need to be different in the previous 26 sermons and we have just given you another booster shot in today's sermon: be different! So we have heard it, we have no excuse, we must be different! May God help us!