

SERIES: The Good News, as reported by Matthew  
 SERMON: **A Sermon for the Ages: Abnormal Kingdom Living**  
 SCRIPTURE: Matthew 5:33-48  
 SPEAKER: Michael P. Andrus  
 DATE: March 4, 2007

We continue in our study of the Sermon on the Mount this morning by tackling three more of Jesus' startling statements that come in the form, "You have heard that it was said, but I tell you..." As we noted two weeks ago, Jesus is bent on rescuing the original intention of God's revelation from the twisted interpretations of the religious leaders of His day. In the process, though, He shocks us at times and forces us to come to grips with some very difficult truths. We have already been confronted with three of these:

Anger *can be* equivalent to murder.

Lust for a person not your spouse *is* adultery.

Illegitimate divorce *can* lead to adultery.

This morning we are going to cover three more tough issues that I have chosen to frame in terms of questions.

### **Will we swear to tell the truth *or* will we be truthful?**

One of the most pervasive problems of our day is dishonesty. One scholar states:

*Our whole society is largely built on a network of fabrication, of manufactured "truth." We shade the truth, we cheat, we exaggerate, we misrepresent income tax deductions, we make promises we have no intention of keeping, we make up excuses and betray confidences—all as a matter of normal, everyday living.<sup>1</sup>*

In recent years there have been major scandals of plagiarism by Pulitzer prize-winning historians—people like Joseph Ellis, Stephen Ambrose, and Doris Kerns Goodwin. Toronto Blue Jays manager Tim Johnson and Notre Dame football coach George O'Leary were both fired when caught lying on their resumes. Dan Rather, in a Fox News interview said of President Clinton, "I think at core, he's an honest person. . . . I think you can be an honest person and lie about any number of things."<sup>ii</sup> That was stunning to me, being stated by a man who at the time was one of the three talking heads controlling much of the access Americans have to the news.

Sadly, these people are not in the minority. James Patterson and Peter Kim, authors of "The Day America Told the Truth," estimate that 91 percent of us regularly trash the truth.<sup>iii</sup> Yet despite this pervasiveness of dishonesty, I believe most people know in their consciences that truth is important, even necessary. That is one reason they go to such lengths to make what they say *appear* to be truthful. Their problem is in *being* truthful. They will say, "I swear on a stack of Bibles"—all the while they're lying through their teeth.

With that background, let's read the first paragraph of our Scripture text today, Matthew 5:33-37. In each of these three sections we're going to look at the same three issues:

The teaching of the Old Testament  
 The perversion of that teaching by the religious leaders  
 The heart of the matter as revealed by Jesus

Please note that Jesus is speaking here in Matthew 5:33:

*Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, “Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.” But I tell you, Do not swear at all; either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your “Yes” be “Yes,” and your “No,” “No”; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.*

**The teaching of the Old Testament.** God has always called for complete honesty on the part of His people. For example, in Leviticus 19:11-12 God says, “Do not lie. Do not deceive one another. Do not swear falsely by my name and so profane the name of your God. I am the Lord.” In Numbers 30:2 we read, “When a man makes a vow to the LORD or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.” And Deuteronomy 23:21-23 adds,

*“If you make a vow to the LORD your God, do not be slow to pay it, for the LORD your God will certainly demand it of you and you will be guilty of sin. But if you refrain from making a vow, you will not be guilty. Whatever your lips utter you must be sure to do, because you made your vow freely to the LORD your God with your own mouth.”*

Of course, the 9<sup>th</sup> of the Ten Commandments forbids lying as well: “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”

**The perversion of that teaching by the religious leaders.** They apparently put the emphasis on the wrong syllable. They said, “Keep the oaths you have made *to the Lord*,” but, they added under their breath, “if you make oaths by something else or someone else, then keeping such oaths is optional.” In fact, they set up a whole pattern of rules that required different levels of honesty depending upon what you might swear by. We can see this more clearly in a parallel passage in Matthew 23:16-22, where Jesus is speaking directly to some of these same religious leaders, chiding them for the neat little mind games that allow them to lie:

*“Woe to you, blind guides! You say, ‘If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gold of the temple, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind fools! Which is greater: the gold, or the temple that makes the gold sacred? You also say, ‘If anyone swears by the altar, it means nothing; but if anyone swears by the gift on it, he is bound by his oath.’ You blind men! Which is greater: the gift, or the altar that makes the gift sacred? Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by it and by everything on it. And he who swears by the temple swears by it and by the one who dwells in it. And he who swears by heaven swears by God’s throne and by the one who sits on it.”*

Clearly they were standing logic on its head, but more importantly, they were standing the truth on its head. God is the Creator and Lord of everything, and to carelessly or deceptively call any part of His creation as witness to a false oath is to dishonor God Himself, whether or not His name is even mentioned. In opposition to this distorted interpretation of the OT, Jesus reveals the heart of the matter.

**The heart of the matter as revealed by Jesus.** He simply says, “Do not swear at all ... Simply let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.” Now that’s what Jesus says, but what does He mean? Does He really mean that one should never take an oath of any kind, not even in court when asked to say, “so help me God”? I don’t think so. For one thing, such a prohibition would clearly contradict the OT itself.<sup>iv</sup> We’ve already seen at least three passages from Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy that clearly allow for oath-taking under certain circumstances. Not only that, God Himself took oaths! For example, the writer of Hebrews states, “When God made his promise to Abraham, since there was no one greater for him to swear by, he swore by himself.” (Heb. 6:13).

I think Jesus means that we should not lace our ordinary speech with oaths, because there should be no need for it. The heart of the matter is simply this: we should be so well known for our honesty that no oath would ever add an ounce of credibility to what we are saying. Even our most routine conversations should be truthful in every detail. “Let your Yes be Yes and your No be No.” Say what you mean and mean what you say.

Is that how you live? Or are you so used to exaggerating stories that you always have to add, “I swear it’s true,” when the person you’re talking to looks skeptical? Or do you find yourself twisting the truth to make yourself look better and then have to say, “By golly, it’s true!”? Sadly, I find that even church leaders are sometimes guilty of putting spin on things—looking for ways to make a bad decision appear to be good. Let me restate the heart of the matter: we should be so well known for our honesty that no oath would ever add to our credibility.

The second paragraph in our text today deals with one of the most misunderstood concepts in the OT, and I have framed the question this way:

### **Will we retaliate or will we practice self-sacrifice?**

Matthew 5:38-42:

*“You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’ But I tell you, Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.”*

**The teaching of the Old Testament.** Three times in the OT we are told, “Eye for eye,

and tooth for tooth” (Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, and Deuteronomy 19:21). This principle is called the *Lex talionis*, or the law of retaliation, and in fact, it goes further than just eye for eye and tooth for tooth. Exodus 21:23,24 speaks of “life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.” That sounds pretty brutal, doesn’t it—almost primitive to our refined, educated and civilized ears!

But this law is not nearly as barbaric as it may sound on the surface. Its purpose was essentially twofold. First, it was intended to deter crime, and it did so well. It still does, for example in Saudi Arabia, where one-handed individuals are quite an effective warning against petty theft. Second, however, there was an even more important purpose behind the law of retaliation, and that was to prevent family and tribal feuds—the kind Lamech boasted about in Genesis 4:23,24: “I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for injuring me. If Cain is avenged seven times, then Lamech seventy-seven times.”

Personal vengeance and angry retaliation tend to spiral out of control. When I was visiting the Yanomao Indians in the rainforest of southern Venezuela a few years ago, I saw this first hand. Someone from one village would steal a wife from another village. So the warriors in that village would feel obligated to go and kill a man from the first village. That required retaliation, so two members of the second village had to die, and on and on it would go.

But this is not something practiced only by primitive, stone-age tribes. During WWII Nazi Germany had a policy of killing 100 innocent citizens for every soldier killed by partisans. In our own country many young black men in the deep south were lynched for nothing more than looking at a white woman in a way that was considered inappropriate. Just yesterday the Wichita Eagle had an article entitled, “14 missing Iraqi officers found slain.” The first paragraph reads,

*The bodies of 14 missing police officers were found near a school in Diyala province Friday after a group linked to al-Qaida claimed to have kidnapped members of a government security force in retribution for the alleged rape of a Sunni Arab woman. (March 3, 2007)*

None of these incidents would be permitted according to the *lex talionis*. In fact, these were the very kinds of retaliation this law was meant to prevent. Punishment, God says, has to fit the crime. If a tooth was lost due to someone’s negligence, only a tooth could be taken, not a hand or a foot. So this was not a barbaric law, but actually a merciful one because it both discouraged crime and put limits on the natural tendency of the sinful human heart toward excess retaliation.

**The perversion of that teaching by the religious leaders.** Though Jesus doesn’t take the time to spell it out here, it seems obvious that the principal error made by the religious teachers was the application of the law of retaliation to *personal* offenses. If you read each passage in the OT in which “eye for eye and tooth for tooth” is mentioned, you will discover that it is clearly a prerogative of the civil justice system. While the punishment was sometimes allowed to be carried out by the victim, the trial and sentencing were always the responsibility of duly appointed judges. But the religious leaders twisted this law to allow each individual Jew to

become his own judge, jury, and executioner. What God provided as a restriction on civil justice was turned into a license for personal revenge.

**The heart of the matter as revealed by Jesus.** Jesus makes it clear that the law of retaliation was not intended for personal offenses at all. In fact, He lays down a whole new approach for individuals: “Do not resist an evil person.” He is not addressing the issue of civil justice or criminal justice or just war. In other words, this passage does not speak to the question of whether President Bush should have resisted Saddam Hussein. He is talking about a person who is evil to us personally, and He forbids retaliation against that person.

Jesus then applies the concept of non-resistance to four different areas of life: dignity, security, liberty, and property.<sup>v</sup>

**1. Dignity.** “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” Why does he mention the right cheek? Well most people are right handed, and if a right-handed person slugs another person, he will generally hit him on the left cheek. But if he slaps him back-handed, he will hit the right cheek. I suspect what Jesus is talking about here is the back-handed slap that is intended not to injure one’s face but to injure one’s dignity. It is symbolic of being treated with disrespect, as less than human.

Jesus consistently refused to retaliate when He was disrespected. He strongly resisted evil when it was directed against others, especially His Father and His Father’s house, but He did not resist evil directed at Himself. Peter describes the actions of Jesus toward His persecutors as he urges us to follow in His steps (1 Peter 2:20-23):

*... If you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.*

If His Father were not trustworthy, Jesus’ refusal to retaliate would be foolish. But because his Father is trustworthy, and because his Father has promised to balance the books, Jesus’ refusal to retaliate makes eternal sense.

**2. Security.** The second illustration of appropriate non-resistance is this: “And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well.” Paul agrees in 1 Cor. 6:1-8, telling us it’s better to be defrauded and cheated than to countersue, especially if it’s a believer who is suing us. Some years ago I saw an amazing illustration of this willingness to sacrifice one’s security instead of retaliate. I received a call from a man in our church, deeply troubled by the fact that another man in the church (whose name he did not reveal—I don’t know who it was to this day) had stolen a significant amount of property from him. We’re talking blatant felony theft—a chargeable crime.

The situation was complicated by the fact that the perpetrator’s marriage was in deep trouble. If

his spouse learned of the incident, it might spell the end of his marriage. The victim of the theft asked me what he should do. My advice was that instead of calling the police or confronting the other man in anger, why not quietly confront him and promise that if he returned the property nothing would be said, not even to his wife. The implication, of course, was that if he didn't pay up he was in big trouble.

I was pretty proud of my advice—no retaliation *if* he paid up. But I learned a few days later that the man didn't take my advice. He decided to take Jesus' advice instead. He called up the other guy and just asked how things were going. When the perpetrator seemed hesitant to talk and expressed that things weren't going too well, the victim asked if he could pray for him right there on the phone. This expression of love and concern put the other man under such conviction that he broke down right on the phone and confessed to the theft. He returned everything he had stolen, and a friendship was saved, perhaps even a marriage. *That* was the Sermon on the Mount acted out before my very eyes.

**3. Liberty.** The third illustration is, “If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.” The Declaration of Independence speaks of cherished rights that every American holds dear—the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. I believe God's original intent was for everyone made in His image to live in freedom. Human bondage and slavery are consequences of the Fall and had no part in God's original plan for His creation. But freedom, like all other rights, is not to be cherished and protected at the expense of righteousness or even of faithful witness.

The particular issue Jesus addresses here is that Roman law gave soldiers the privilege of forcing civilians to carry their packs a mile. This was not only inconvenient; it was also detestable to those living in occupied territories. But Jesus exhorts them not only to do it, but to be willing to double the distance, rather than retaliate. In so doing they would be obedient to Him and at the same time say something startling to a world that would be forced to ask, “Why would you do that?”

**4. Property.** Finally, He says, “Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.” We have a very strong sense of property here in America. One of the first words a lot of children learn is “mine,” and it is very deeply ingrained in our culture. Surely Jesus doesn't mean what He says here, does He? Yes. Even our highly developed sense of property needs to be placed on the altar of obedience.

I personally think the implication is that the person who is doing the asking has a genuine need. I do not believe we are required to respond to every foolish, selfish request made of us. In fact, sometimes to give a person what he wants but does not need is a disservice to him, causing more harm than good. But when confronted with genuine need Jesus wants His followers to be genuinely generous.<sup>vi</sup>

Having examined these four areas where the law of non-retaliation is applied, I would suggest as well that we must avoid simplistic responses to Jesus' teaching. The peace movement has been guilty of that at times, urging non-resistance in the face of incredible evil (which only encourages

more evil). Others have argued for the elimination of the death penalty on the basis of Jesus' words.

Clearly Jesus Himself did not always respond to evil with absolute passivity. When He was on trial before the high priest He refused to react to the false accusations that were heaped upon Him. But when He was struck by one of the soldiers for allegedly showing a lack of respect to the high priest, He objected, "If I said something wrong, testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" (John 18:23). But also please note that Jesus didn't slug the soldier back, or curse at him, or vow revenge, even though He certainly had the power to just speak the man into oblivion.

I do not believe Jesus is encouraging a weak, complacent attitude toward evil, by which the wicked are confirmed in their wickedness. But He is saying that even when firm action is taken against those who do evil, it should not be primarily to secure our own rights, protect our own property, or achieve our own personal benefit; rather it should be for the sake of the honor of God plus the highest well-being of others, including the sinning one himself. He is describing not the weakling who offers no resistance but the strong man whose control of himself and love for others are so powerful that he rejects every form of retaliation.

The spirit Jesus teaches in this passage is the spirit Abraham manifested when he gave the best land to his nephew Lot. It is the spirit of Joseph when he embraced and kissed the brothers who had so terribly wronged him. It is the spirit that would not let David take advantage of the opportunity to take the life of Saul, even though Saul was trying to take his. It is the spirit that led Stephen to pray for those who were stoning him to death. It is the spirit of the believer who, by the Holy Spirit's power, seeks to be like Jesus.

In our third and final paragraph this morning Jesus stretches our understanding, or at least our willingness to listen, almost to the breaking point, as he offers us His final illustration contrasting the false righteousness of the religious leaders with the true righteousness of God.

### **Will we love *just* our neighbors or *even* our enemies?**

Listen to His words from Matthew 5:43-48:

*You have heard that it was said, "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy." But I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*

Loving one's neighbor is often very difficult. I have great neighbors right now, but that hasn't always been the case. I could tell you some stories you wouldn't believe. But as difficult as it is

sometimes to love one's neighbor, loving one's enemy seems almost impossible.

I saw a man on TV talking about a criminal who had brutalized a relative of his. "I would like to beat him to a pulp," he said, "then tie him to the back of my truck, and drag him through the streets." A woman whose relatives were exterminated by the Nazis in a concentration camp said, "I hate them with a profound hatred. I will never forgive them, ever." You know something? There's a part of me that understands that kind of hatred toward enemies. I know myself well enough to know that I have the capacity to feel that way. And some of you here this morning have known that kind of anger and bitterness. In fact, I suspect there are some who right now have deep and abiding resentment inside of you because of something someone has done to you, perhaps many years ago, or maybe just this past week. And the bitterness is eating your lunch!

You may even be responding in your heart, "But I have good reason to be bitter!" Do you know what you're really saying when you say that? You're saying, "I have good reason to sin. I have good reason to destroy my life and the lives of those around me." Because that's *exactly* what you're doing. Hebrews 12:15 offers us a critical warning: "See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root ("root of bitterness" in the KJV) grows up to cause trouble and defile many." Bitterness always causes trouble and always defiles. You show me a bitter, resentful person, and I'll show you someone who has lots of relationship problems—with parents, with spouse, with children, and probably with brothers and sisters in Christ.

I was absolutely amazed at the story of the Amish after the schoolhouse massacre in Pennsylvania. These people immediately began to minister to the family of the man who killed their little girls. They attended the murderer's funeral (he committed suicide, you will recall—not to picket or to jeer but to pray for his wife and kids. In fact, more than half of those attending were Amish. "We sin, too," they said, embracing the widow of the man who killed their children. "Didn't Jesus tell us to forgive others as God has forgiven us?"<sup>vii</sup> They took some of the money given to help their own grieving families and gave it to the family of the man who will never get out of prison. That was loving one's enemy.

**The teaching of the Old Testament.** "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy'" (verse 43). At least part of this quote is indeed from the OT. In Leviticus 19:18, for example, the Lord says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." That this meant more than one's next-door neighbor is obvious from Deuteronomy 22:1-4:

*If you see your brother's ox or sheep straying, do not ignore it but be sure to take it back to him. If the brother does not live near you or if you do not know who he is, take it home with you and keep it until he comes looking for it. Then give it back to him. Do the same if you find your brother's donkey or his cloak or anything he loses. Do not ignore it.*

Furthermore, this command is repeated frequently in the NT (Matt. 19:19; 22:39; Mark 12:31; Luke 10:27; Rom. 13:9; Gal. 5:14; James 2:8). But there is nothing in the Bible that corresponds to the latter half of the statement in verse 43: "and hate your enemies." And that's where the perversion of the religious leaders comes in.

**The perversion of that teaching by the religious leaders.** Actually they distorted the OT in two ways, once by omission and the other by addition. When they quoted Leviticus 19:18 they left out “as yourself.” God said, “Love your neighbor as yourself,” but they said only “Love your neighbor.” It’s a lot easier to love your neighbor than it is to love your neighbor *as you love yourself*.

But even more seriously they added to God’s Word, “and hate your enemies.” Throughout the OT, to say nothing of the NT, God’s standard for His people was to treat even their enemies in a godly manner. Sure, there are passages in the OT which speak of the enemies of God in very severe terms and promise judgment on them. But our own personal enemies are another matter—we are to love them.

I will simply say that when Jesus tells us to love our enemies, I don’t think it means we have to like our enemies, or feel warmly toward them, or enjoy being around them—no one does; we only have to love them. Now lest you think that’s a lot of double-talk, allow me to conclude with . . .

**The heart of the matter as revealed by Jesus.** The emotional love we have for certain special people we cannot help. In fact, we often speak of *falling* in love, by which we mean that it is something which just happens to us. But all of us who have been married any length of time know that love of that variety does not continue unabated. We wake up one morning (after ten years of marriage, or ten months, or maybe even ten days) and say, “What happened? I’ve fallen out of love!” But then if we’re wise we move from emotional love to love of the will and we commit ourselves anew to seek our spouse’s highest good. Often in the process we discover that emotional love is rekindled.

Unfortunately, with our enemies we are not starting from a basis of emotional love; rather from emotional hatred. But Jesus indicates we don’t have to *stay* there. We can dig deep into the spiritual resources provided by the Holy Spirit and allow God to love them through us. That may be hard, but not impossible. And prayer sure helps. Notice the phrase, “And pray for those who persecute you.” Try hating someone and praying for him at the same time!

Many Christians practice what might be called “loving the lovely.” That is, they love their friends, those who are like them, those who can do something for them. Frankly, people who love the lovely are not bad people. In fact, they make pretty good neighbors. But their conduct is not uniquely “Christian” at all. In fact, it is at heart just another form of retaliation. When we retaliate for evil it is called revenge. When we retaliate for good it is called payback—“You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.” The evil in revenge is obvious, but the evil in the payback is more subtle. Either way, retaliation is the way of the world—paying back injuries or paying back favors.

But payback will not do in the Kingdom of God! Jesus dismisses such conduct with the question, “Are not even the tax collectors doing that. . . . Do not even pagans do that?” God expects more from His children. One author sums up the alternatives with admirable simplicity:

To return evil for good is devilish;  
to return good for good is human;  
to return good for evil is divine.<sup>viii</sup>

In other words, that's what God does, and Jesus expects us to be like Him. In fact, twice in this passage He says so.

*“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. . . . Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect”* (Matthew 5:44-45, 48).

If that's how God is, Jesus argues, it's how God's children should be. What an assignment! To imitate God! I think most of us are probably tempted to throw our hands up and say, “I can't do it. I'm just not able to live by this kind of standard.”<sup>ix</sup> And in a sense that is true. You cannot do it on your own power; but when God enters your life at the moment of conversion, a new life is created by which the new you—fed and nourished by the Spirit of God—is made capable of attaining increasingly to all God requires.

Not only can we do it; we *must*, for the issue is one of eternity. God desires all people to come to Him through his Son Jesus Christ. He wants his enemies to see his Son in the loving, good, generous lives of His sons and daughters. What is at stake is not *our* rights, but *their* eternal destiny. It was the love of Christ extended to us when we were his enemies that brought us into the kingdom of God. Now that we are in, we must not forget how we got in! And living as Jesus describes here will point the way for others!

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i. John MacArthur, *Matthew 1-7*, 320.

ii. *U.S. News & World Report*, May 28, 2001, 8.

iii. Why has lying become so common today? There are probably a number of reasons, but one is surely the rise of postmodern deconstructionism on college campuses. Postmodern professors teach that the truth is not merely irrelevant; they believe it simply doesn't exist. As Lynne Cheney observes in her book, *Telling the Truth*, academics “leaped beyond the common sense observation that people's descriptions of reality differ to the conclusion that there is no independent reality and thus no basis for making judgments about truth-or-falsity.” Truth claims are in reality “the constructs of dominant groups—the creations of the powerful.” (Quoted by Charles Colson, “Post-Truth Society,” *Christianity Today*, March 11, 2002, 112).

iv. Jesus has said earlier in this very chapter that “until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18).

v. These are the categories that John MacArthur uses in his Matthew commentary, vol. 1.

vi. Frankly, I suspect there are relatively few truly generous people. Some people are generous with their best friends but not with others. Some are generous with the Lord but not with people

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(which seems strange). And still others are generous in their wills but not while alive. Jesus asks us to be truly generous with what we own.

vii. Quoted by Phil Yancey in an article entitled “A bird’s-eye view of contemporary evangelicalism” in ChristianityToday.com, posted February 28, 2007.

8. Alfred Plummer, citation lost.

ix. In his classic book, *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis offers an illustration to which all of us can relate:

*When I was a child I often had a toothache, and I knew that if I went to my mother she would give me something which would deaden the pain for that night and let me get to sleep. But I did not go to my mother – at least, not till the pain became very bad. And the reason I did not go was this: I did not doubt she would give me the aspirin; but I knew she would also do something else. I knew she would take me to the dentist next morning. I could not get what I wanted out of her without getting something more, which I did not want. I wanted immediate relief from pain: But I could not get it without having my teeth set permanently right. And I knew those dentists; I knew they started fiddling about with all sorts of other teeth which had not yet begun to ache. They would not let sleeping dogs lie; if you gave them an inch they took (a mile).*

*Now, if I may put it that way, Our Lord is like the dentist. If you give him an inch, he will take (a mile) ... That is why he warned people to “count the cost” before becoming Christians. “Make no mistake,” he says. “If you let me, I will make you perfect. The moment you put yourself in my hands, that is what you are in for. Nothing less, or other, than that. You have free will, and if you choose, you can push me away. But if you do not push me away, understand that I am going to see this job through ... I will never rest, nor let you rest, until you are literally perfect – until my Father can say without reservation that he is well pleased with you, as he said he was well pleased with me.”*