



## Jesus' Sermon on the Mount

Lynn G. Jackson

**T**HERE were many times in Jesus' life when he went off alone to pray. Sometimes after he prayed, he'd call his disciples aside to teach them.

One of his early followers put Jesus' most important sayings together. The writer of the Gospel of Matthew tells of Jesus sitting on a hillside talking to his followers in the form of a sermon. Today we call this the *Sermon on the Mount* (see Matt., chaps. 5–7). Some of the ideas in the sermon can also be found in the *Sermon on the Plain* in the Gospel of Luke (see Luke 6:20–49). Jesus probably gave talks like this at many times. The Gospel of Matthew records four other long talks (chaps. 10, 13, 18, 24–25).

In the *Sermon on the Mount*, Jesus talks with a lot of wisdom and power, even more so than Moses or the Jewish scholars. He speaks as the Son of God and shows his disciples a whole new way of life.

### The Beatitudes

The sermon begins with Jesus teaching his disciples the Beatitudes—a list of things that would bless them and make them happy. It's as though Jesus is asking his followers to be part of a new people. And in the Beatitudes, he tells what these people are like and what they will find.

Jesus says that *everyone* is blessed. Those who are searching for God's Word with all their heart will find it. Those who are sad will find happiness. Those who are kind, pure, and peaceful will find even more kindness. And, most important, they will see God. This is possible now, he says.



### The kingdom of heaven

Jesus taught his disciples that as the children of God, we are all included in the kingdom of heaven. To Jesus, the kingdom of heaven wasn't a place. It was a way of thinking and acting. This includes obedience to Moses' Ten Commandments. But it is more, too. It is the spiritual understanding of God's laws.

### Fulfillment of law

Some people who heard Jesus mistakenly believed that he wanted to destroy the teachings of Moses and to replace them with his own teachings. But Jesus told his followers that he had not come to destroy the law of Moses, but to "fulfill" it—to expand upon it and make it even more special and clear.

In talking about the Ten Commandments, Jesus said that it's not only wrong to kill someone, it's also wrong to be upset or hateful. He taught his followers that their *thoughts* mattered just as much as their actions.

### The law of love

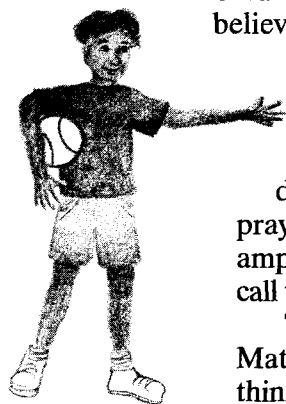
Jesus' words, as recorded in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, show that it's what is within the heart that is important. He knew that if evil is within somebody's heart, it will show up in bad actions. He said that the laws of God demand that we love at all times, no matter what. People should even pray for, and love, their enemies. Why? Because their enemies are actually God's children, too. To love the way God loves is to be perfect.

### The warnings

The author of the book of Luke in the Bible tells the story of Jesus' sermon a little differently. He talks about what are called "the woes." These are warnings. They warn against the love of money. They also warn against being selfish. Jesus taught his disciples that, even if they are punished by those who don't understand God's laws, they will still be safe because God always takes care of them.

### Example of prayer

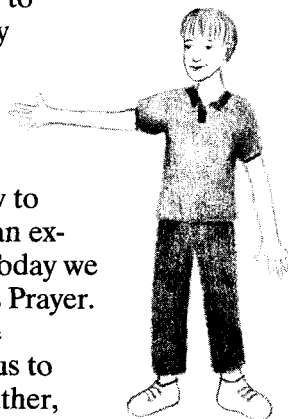
Jesus prayed often. And he showed his followers how to pray. He began by explaining to them what prayer is *not*. He was against praying just so people could *see* you praying. And he warned against pretending to believe in God, but not really



acting as if you do through good thoughts and deeds.

One day, his disciples asked him how to pray. Then he gave them an example of what prayer is. Today we call that example the Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer (see Matt. 6:9-13) encourages us to think of God as our true Father,



who is ever present and all-powerful. And because He is our true Father, we can ask Him for all that is spiritual and good. It teaches us to ask God to forgive us when we do bad things, and to show us how to forgive others when they act in ways they shouldn't. But it also asks God to *keep* us from thinking unkind thoughts and from doing anything unloving. The Lord's Prayer ends where it begins by declaring God's power to be supreme over all. Forever. After showing how to pray, Jesus spoke about how important it is to pray quietly and to serve one God. To be faithful. To be sincere. God will take care of you if you believe in Him, he told his followers. God will feed you, He will clothe you, He will keep you from worrying.

### The laws of mercy

Jesus knew it wouldn't always be easy to do what God wants. This may be one reason he gave his disciples what are called "the laws of mercy." The idea of helping each other is at the heart of these laws. Unkind thoughts need to be destroyed. And Jesus said that the way to destroy them is by forgiving others. He gave us a rule to show us how to do that—the "Golden Rule." It says, "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matt. 7:12).

### Parable of the two houses

The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain end with Jesus' parable about two houses. This story points out that those who follow Jesus, not just in words but in deeds, are like houses that have been built on a firm foundation. Even though it may rain on the houses, or the houses might be in a flood, or strong winds might

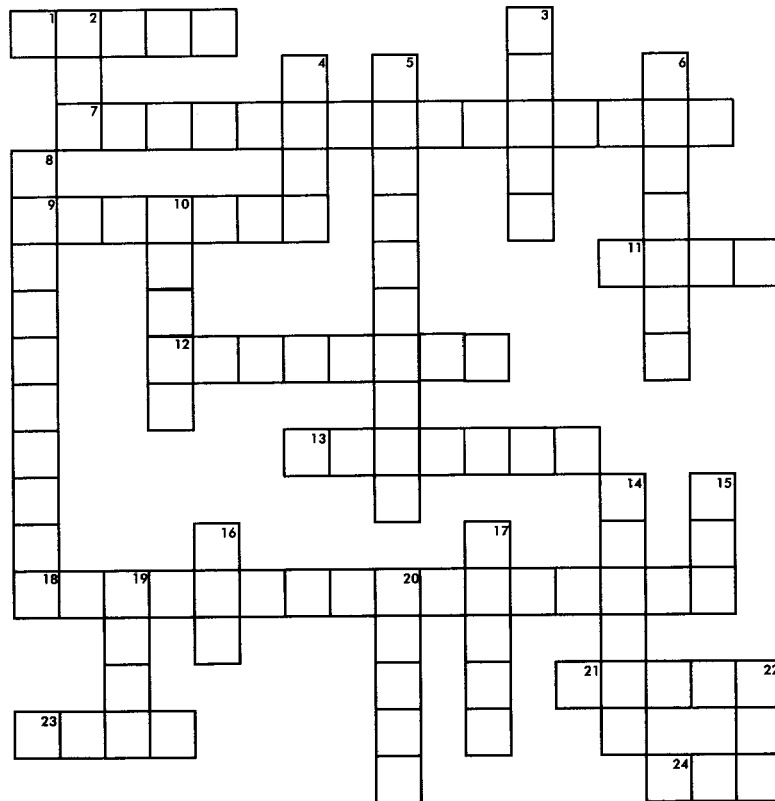


blow around them, they will not fall, because they have good foundations. But those who have heard Jesus' teachings and have chosen not to follow them are like houses built on sand. When hard times come, these people struggle.

When Jesus finished his talk, many people came to him for help. And he healed them. This is how he proved what he said about God and about each one of us being blessed.

Look for part ten in this series on the Bible next month.

Crossword Puzzle by Sabrina Stillwell



ACROSS

1. If we follow the laws of Moses and Jesus we will be \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Not a place, but a way of thinking and acting, being ruled by God.
9. In Luke 6:27, Jesus says, "Love your \_\_\_\_\_."
11. "\_\_\_\_\_ us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11).
12. Jesus says we are the \_\_\_\_\_ of God.
13. Jesus came to \_\_\_\_\_ the laws of Moses, not destroy them.
18. Jesus' teaching on the hillside was called this.
21. Christ \_\_\_\_\_.
23. This Gospel talks of "the woes."
24. Moses taught the \_\_\_\_\_, which includes the Ten Commandments.

DOWN

2. In Matthew 7:7, Jesus says, "\_\_\_\_\_, and it shall be given you."
3. We are to follow Jesus' teaching because they will \_\_\_\_\_ us.
4. The warnings.
5. Jesus' statement on how we should treat others.
6. This is another title of Jesus' meaning Saviour.
8. The "list of things that would bless" us if we follow them.
10. One of these is "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain \_\_\_\_\_."
14. Jesus uses a story about two \_\_\_\_\_, one built on a firm foundation, and one built on a shaky foundation.
16. Jesus was known as the Son of \_\_\_\_\_.
17. In Matthew 6:21, Jesus says, "For where your treasure is, there will be your \_\_\_\_\_ be also."
19. The house that stood after being rained on was built on a \_\_\_\_\_ foundation.
20. Jesus used stories and parables to \_\_\_\_\_ his disciples and the people.
22. In Matthew 6:26, Jesus tells us to look at how God cares for the birds. They don't \_\_\_\_\_ or reap but God feeds them.

Look for the solution to the puzzle in next week's *Sentinel*.