

Sermon on the Mount Part XXVII - Christmas

Message on Forgiveness

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[0 : 00] to the Gospel according to Matthew. In a moment, we will read our Scripture portion for this morning, which is the Matthew account of the birth or the annunciation of the birth of our Lord.

But before we go there, I would like for you to turn to Matthew chapter 6. Matthew chapter 6, and we will remind you as to where we have been for the past few weeks.

It's in connection with the Sermon on the Mount. And I had every intention of completely changing my message for this morning to a more standard, I guess you would say, ordinary, predictable, and sometimes anticipated by people kind of Christmas message.

We have been dealing with the Sermon on the Mount, and in particular discussing the issue of forgiveness. And it just dawned on me, is there anything that Christmas is more about than forgiveness?

That's what this is all about. Do you realize that when Jesus Christ left heaven and came to this earth, he had a one-item agenda.

[1 : 24] That was it. He didn't come to accomplish a whole host of things, although he did accomplish a whole host of things. But his job one was this, was to die for the sins of the world.

That's why he came. More than anything else, that's why he came. He came because heaven's scales were out of balance, and they needed to be balanced.

And if they were not balanced, there would be no salvation for humanity. Because all of humankind had gone astray in the person of our first parents, Adam and Eve, and they passed on to every generation that nature that was in them.

And if you have ever asked yourself, why is the world the way it is today? Why is there all of the war and murders and robberies and all the rest that goes on?

What's wrong with people? Why do we do this to each other? There's your answer. It goes back to our first parents. They started something, and we are continuing it.

[2 : 34] And this is why the world is the way it is. And you know, it's very ironic, but you know who very often gets the blame for this? God does.

People shake their fists at heaven and say, why do you allow this to go on? Why don't you stop this? What kind of a God are you? And they have little or no clue that the blame lies at our doorstep, not God's.

When God created everything, he pronounced it very good. Sin had not entered the picture. But when you read in Genesis 3 that it did, and they disobeyed God, long story short is this, Adam and Eve took upon themselves a new kind of capacity or ability that God did not put in them.

Now, God did put in them a volition. That means a will. God did not create them robotic so that they had no choice but to just do everything they were supposed to do and not do anything they weren't supposed to do.

God created them with this thing called volition. It's a word from which we get the word volunteer. And it means you do it of your own free will.

[4 : 00] So he created them willful creatures. And yet, when they disobeyed, they took upon themselves a different kind of constitution. Not what God put in them, but what they caused themselves.

And that constitution was a sinful disposition. It is ranked with disobedience and lawlessness and greediness and selfishness.

And all of these negatives are found in that new disposition that Adam and Eve took upon themselves. And as a result of that, they fell out of favor with God.

They were no longer on the same wavelength with God. They were separated from God. And as a result of their disobedience, they knew they had done wrong.

And as soon as they had done wrong, they encountered something that they'd never had to deal with before. And what they encountered was guilt. Guilt is emotional pain caused by the violation of the known standard.

[5 : 10] And it can start at a very, very early age. We all know that a one-year-old, for instance, has the ability to feel guilty. And when you say, no, no, and they do something, they know they've done wrong.

Even at that tender young age, they have this sensation of guilt. And guilt produces fear. Because we fear that there will be consequences for our disobedience.

So, Adam says to Eve, uh-oh, here comes God. Let's hide. And they hid, thinking that if they didn't have any contact with them, there wouldn't be any consequences.

And God came seeking them out and said, what is this? They said, well, we heard your voice in the garden and we hid because we were afraid. And God says, you were afraid?

We were afraid because we were naked. That's interesting. Who told you you were naked? That wasn't a problem before. And you know something? It's really strange to think about this, but it's perplexing and it's fascinating at the same time.

[6 : 16] But man is the only one of all God's creatures that wears clothes. Did that ever strike you as different? You'll never see a horse or a cow or a dog embarrassed because they're naked.

and I'm telling you, there is something there. Something is afoot. There is a guilt, shame, factor, embarrassment kind of thing and yet some even seek to throw that over and they pose for pornographic pictures and things like that.

They flaunt their nakedness rather than have a sense of shame about it. So, that's another subject. But all I'm saying is that this is all connected. This is all part of the package.

And as a result of our parents' first sin and their taking on them that new disposition, that new capacity, that new ability that they didn't have that God didn't create in them, they brought the whole of creation crashing down with them.

Everything fell. This is what is referred to as the fall. Who fell? As in Adam, all die.

[7 : 32] No exceptions. In Adam, all die. Even so, in Christ, shall all be made alive. So, there is a corporate fall for all of humanity.

No exceptions. And there is a corporate redemption for all of humanity. No exceptions. Jesus Christ succeeded in buying back what Adam and Eve forfeited in his death.

And that provided the basis for God being able to forgive the guilty. To give us a pass because of what Jesus Christ did for us.

He paid our sin debt. We couldn't pay it, but he paid it. And God accepts his payment on our behalf provided we are linked with Christ.

And if we are linked with Christ, then we enjoy the benefit that Christ secured when he died for us. That's what it means to be in Christ. And if you are in Christ, then you share in his death, his burial, and his resurrection.

[8 : 36] And all that accrued to him in his accomplishment is true of you. But if you are not in Christ, then that is not true of you. The provision is there, but it's awaiting your application.

So, we've been looking at Matthew chapter 6 and dealing with the subject of forgiveness, and we pointed out to you that there is a conditional forgiveness that is set forth here.

It begins in verse 14 of Matthew 6. And Jesus is talking, and this is very, very important. Keep in mind now, Jesus is talking to a group of people, we don't know how many, but a large throng, before his crucifixion.

This is on the other side of the cross. This is very early on in our Lord's ministry. And he is talking to Jewish people who conducted their lives in accordance with the law of Moses.

They functioned under the law of Moses. And Christ is honoring that. He is not against the law. He isn't opposing the law, as some accused him of doing.

[9 : 43] But he came to fulfill the law. And yet, because the scripture makes it very clear that Jesus Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes, what that means is, even though Christ lived and functioned under the Mosaic law, yet when his death occurred on Calvary, everything changed.

It's a whole new game. Everything changed. I mean, this death of the Messiah on the cross was the singular pivotal point for all of humanity for all of time.

And it took place in the space of three dark hours on Calvary. and it was all it was all to enable God to remain just and righteous while forgiving the unjust and the unrighteous.

This is the most amazing transaction that has ever taken place in the history of humanity. So forgiveness is what it's all about. What is it that makes it possible for God to forgive us our sin?

The answer is Jesus Christ paid for it. That's what makes it possible for God to forgive. Some people just glibly think that well, God is in the forgiving business.

[11 : 17] It's part of his job description and he just forgives and all you have to do is tell God you want to be forgiven. No, no, no, no, no, no, no. God is just.

God is righteous. God is holy. His justice has to be satisfied. But you can't satisfy it. Who do you think you are?

You can't satisfy God's justice. Only God can satisfy God's justice. And that's who and what Jesus Christ was when he came.

that's why he was the only one eligible to do what he did. Someone has said he was able to do what he did because of who he was.

And who he was made him able to do what he did. Everything is wrapped up in his person. So we talked about this forgiveness here and part of it is really scary because part of it is under the Mosaic law.

[12 : 21] this part in verse 14. For if you forgive men for their transgressions your heavenly father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men then your father will not forgive your transgressions.

keep that in the context in which it is given and you will see that this is the way it functioned under the law of Moses.

And this is why God said listen if you want to come and present your gift to the altar of sacrifice and present your gift to the Lord in the temple and you realize that you have ought against your brother your brother has ought against you don't make the offering leave it there go find your brother and make things right with him then come back and offer your offering now that's what the law prescribed now of course we're not under the law we're under grace so we operate on an entirely different plane and this is confusing to many people who want to put us back under the law but they also they want one foot in the law and one foot in grace and they wonder why it won't work well it can't work because it's two different systems for two different classes of people we are under grace and that answers to the body of Christ and the body of Christ is comprised of all Jews and Gentiles who have faith in Jesus but the law of

Moses and the people of Israel they were under the law that God gave through Moses on Mount Sinai and that consists of Genesis Exodus Leviticus Numbers and Deuteronomy we don't function under those we don't keep kosher diets we don't abstain from eating pork we don't observe the Sabbath and we don't offer animal sacrifices that all belong to the old system but that's gone now we're under a new system and when you read this here in Matthew 6 talks about forgiveness and it's conditional you won't be forgiven if you don't forgive others that was then that was for them today where are we I won't take the time to go there but let me just quote it for you it's in Colossians chapter chapter one or two where Paul talks about our being in Christ and having been forgiven all transgressions that is a blanket forgiveness that covers everything when

Jesus Christ died on that cross he provided a corporate blanket forgiveness for all of humanity what that means is that the way of access is open to God for anyone to come to him through Christ as in Adam all die even so in Christ shall all be made alive who is that all that's everybody everybody that means that means that when we are born into this world even though we are born with a sin nature that begins developing almost immediately and you know when it really comes out the age of two why do you think they call those terrible twos it's been there lying low all the time and it's growing and that little youngster that darling sweet precious little granddaughter or whatever is a sinner no matter how cute they are they are a sinner and they start really manifesting that at about the age of two but they are born under corporate redemption everyone is everyone is we are born in a state of redemption and at some point in time and

[16:19] I don't know when that is because it may be different for everybody but God knows that innocent baby reaches an age where they are accountable responsible for their own actions it may be the age of five or six it may be the age of 12 and some who are born with mental deficiencies they may never reach that age because they are just incapable of that kind of reasoning and then when that time comes this is what Paul meant in Romans chapter 7 when he said I was alive once without the law but when sin revived and the law came I died we don't know when that was but he died and you know what he needed then he needed to be born again and as far as we know that took place on the Damascus road when he came to a personal relationship with Jesus Christ so this passage in Matthew 5 as we've been studying it is a conditional thing and has to be kept back in that time frame and if we'll turn now to

Matthew Gospel chapter 1 I want to read the Christmas story Q&A; the last time because I went too long so today I will try to do better all right we are reading beginning with verse 18 now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit and Joseph her husband being a righteous man and not wanting to disgrace her desired to put her away secretly now I must stop here and inject a few comments because otherwise it's confusing why was it necessary for Joseph to divorce Mary when they weren't even married yet because their culture 2000 years ago was radically different from our culture today if a couple are betrothed to be married all they have to do to remove themselves from the situation to say

I don't want to marry you and that's it the engagement is broken and it's over with there's no need for a divorce you just part company shed a few tears and each goes their own way but in biblical days and to their culture which of course is the way this is written a betrothal or an engagement period was binding you were as it were locked into that situation and usually within about a year after the betrothal the wedding would take place so you were officially committed to each other and even though you were not legally married if the engagement was to be broken you actually had to get a decree of divorce you had to break the engagement legally through the law court that existed at that time and that's what Joseph was going to do because his only other alternative was to turn her over to the authorities and say this woman to whom

I am engaged is pregnant and it may be that by this time she was showing so as to remove all doubt you know a gal can wear that loose flowing garment that will cover only so much for so long and after a while even that will not suffice so Joseph had that alternative he could have brought Mary before the authorities and said this woman is pregnant and it's obvious that she's pregnant by another man because I am not the father I don't know who the father is but I'm not the guy and she would have been handed over to the elders of the city and stoned to death that was the penalty under the law and it wouldn't have been the first time that it happened because this took place a number of times so that was the only other alternative but he didn't want to disgrace her he didn't want to harm her he just wanted you can imagine he was heartbroken and can you not see

Joseph talking to Mary about this what is this Mary I haven't touched you and you know it and here you are with child and I can just see Mary saying well Joseph let me explain to you an angel appeared to me and told me that I was going to become pregnant with the son of God oh Mary good grief you don't have to add to this with a big fat lie like that you expect me to believe that what kind of a fool do you think I am and doesn't that sound like a cock and bull story I mean good grief and ain't well so Joseph says I want out and he's making plans for a divorce and let's read on let's see what the text says verse 20 and when he had considered this behold an angel of the

[21 : 54] Lord hey Mary probably told Joseph that an angel appeared to her too fear not Mary the Lord is with thee blessed art thou and blessed is the fruit of her womb now an angel and we aren't told that it was the same angel but I think it was because the angel that appeared to Mary was Gabriel and Gabriel had a penchant for delivering messages like this Michael was the archangel and seemed to be in charge of the nation of Israel but Gabriel was the one who delivered these messages Gabriel delivered the message to John John the Baptist's father Zacharias and told him that he was going to be the father of John the Baptist and it was Gabriel that appeared to Mary and informed her that she was going to be the mother of the Messiah and we're not told that it was Gabriel here but I suspect that it might have been in this dream and he said Joseph son of

David do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife for that which has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit I can just see poor old Joseph saying well golly she was telling the truth after all can you beat that I bet he was one happy man because I think he really loved this girl and he was probably just heart shattered when she told him this and obviously he wasn't going to believe it and then this angel confirmed it by appearing to him Joseph son of David and don't overlook that he has to be the son of David he can't be just the son of anybody he has to be the son of David this is the son of David the king direct line many generations removed Matthew's gospel in the genealogy up before that the book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of

David the son of Abraham and it gives you all of these names most of which you can't hardly pronounce and they just appear to be so boring to read all of these names of these old guys that wore bathrobes and had long beards who cares about them hey don't write these men off they are very important very strategic they make up that specific line through which Jesus Christ was to come and it goes all the way back to Abraham and then all the way even back to Noah and why it's just wonderful and Matthew's account gives us Joseph's the earthly father of Jesus Joseph the carpenter he is the legal father of Jesus gives us his genealogy and you read the genealogy in Luke's gospel and it is purported to be the genealogy of Jesus too and some critics look at these and they say well these genealogies are not the same they're different there's a contradiction there no no no no contradiction the genealogies are reflecting the fact that when someone is born they have a father and a father

Matthew is Joseph's genealogy Luke is Mary's genealogy and they have some ancestors in common in fact they both have David the king in common but David had multiple children and David had a son Nathan and Nathan is the line from which Mary comes and the other son the other is the line from which Jesus came that was Solomon and it is just a beautiful thing when you put them together so there's no contradiction at all but Joseph is going to put her away and he is warned that that which is of her conceived of her Holy Spirit and she will bear a son and you shall call his name Jesus why Jesus because his name fits what he's going to do and what he's going to do is be a savior so you give him a savior's name and the name

Jesus Yeshua reflects the salvation that is going to come this is the Old Testament name for Joshua in the New Testament it is Yeshua or Jesus Jesus the Messiah Yeshua Hamashiach and his principal business the very reason for which he's coming job one top priority leading the list on the agenda is to die think of that to die we are all born to live but Jesus Christ was born to die that was the specific purpose for which he came he will save his people from their sins how's he going to do that you know who in the world would have ever thought that he's going to do it by dying himself when we think of somebody saving somebody rescuing somebody we think of some heroic feat some daring do some great risk that they take to put their own lives in jeopardy to save someone else and when somebody jumps in the lake to save somebody who's drowning and they pull him ashore and they say you have saved my life how did he do that he did it by rescuing him but wouldn't it be a different kind of drama if the one who jumped in to save someone else's life lost his own life in the process of saving another then of that person you could truly say the one who saved me from drowning gave his life for me but that's exactly what

[28 : 16] Jesus Christ did but he didn't do it on a one on one basis he saved the whole world he redeemed the whole world he brought the whole world out from under the curse imposed by Adam's sin and that curse results in death and in the death that Jesus Christ died what is wrapped up in it is not only death but burial and resurrection and yet we don't have that now we die physically we live our lifespan out for maybe 60 70 maybe even 100 years and we die physically and where's the life well the life that was in that believer when they died physically physically left the body and went to be with the Lord so the life continues on and if you read Romans chapter 8 we read there that that we are given in

Ephesians we are given the down payment the earnest of the spirit that means that when God saves you as an individual he gives you a down payment in your spirit called the first fruits of the spirit and what the first fruits does it guarantees that there will be a harvest you see when the farmers put their crop out and waited for the harvest to come there were always a few ears of grain or stalks of grain that ripened first maybe just a couple of days ahead of the other that's called the first fruits and the first fruits was a kind of guarantee that there was going to be a general harvest later when all the rest of it ripens that was just the first fruit so when God saved you and you put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ he gave you the earnest of the spirit or the first fruits of the spirit that was the life of God put in you when he regenerated you he made you new on the inside a brand new person that's called the being placed in union with

Christ it's called receiving eternal life all of those things are part of that same package and that's what you have in your human spirit your body isn't changed at all and because we are just given the down payment the body is still going to die and when you read in Romans chapter 8 that all of creation groans and travails in pain waiting for the redemption of our bodies we now have an unredeemed body but we have a redeemed spirit and that's the part of you that is made new in Christ that's the part that is regenerated that's the part that is changed and when you die that part of you leaves this body and goes to be with the Lord and there it awaits the resurrection of the body so there will be a reunion and then that new body will be a body fashioned like unto the body of

Christ and it will never know death again it will be a glorified body but we don't have that now and this is why we still die physically even though someone may be a good and outstanding Christian they're still going to die because the body is not redeemed so the work that Christ paid was a complete and entire work of redemption but the application of it has not been fully made we are still awaiting that and we're going to trade these bodies in and then we will be a complete person body and spirit and it will all be different so all of this is on the agenda of what Christ is going to accomplish folks many have no idea how strategically and importantly it applies to them this is you this is your life this is what Jesus Christ did for you and he did it for you personally as well as for all of us corporately she will bear a son you shall call his name

Jesus and the reason you're going to call his name Jesus is because that's going to be his occupation it is he who will save his people from their sins sins are any acts or attitudes that are contrary to the character and nature of God you can go ahead and put it with whatever handle on it you want but that's a pretty broad definition of it and it is sin that separates from God but the separation consists of alienation no contact stranger from God that's what the separation is it is God not being in your life and when you receive Jesus Christ as your savior he comes into your life don't ask me how he does that

[33 : 57] I have no idea all I know is when he came into my life December 8th 1956 he worked me over he changed me on the inside I had next to nothing to do with it they were changes that I could not affect changes that I could not bring to pass changes I wouldn't have even tried to but he wrought his own changes in me and he'll do the same thing for you he does the same thing for everyone who trusts no no one can ever have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and ever be the same it just cannot be done and he saves you he individually redeems you as opposed to the corporate redemption he regenerates you he forgives your sin he cleanses you he pardons you he makes you his child he gives you eternal life all of these things and

I just named a few of them that are part and parcel of what happens when someone puts their faith and trust in Jesus Christ and you know what you did to deserve that not one blessed thing you see God does not owe the world redemption God was not obligated to buy back what was lost God is obligated to be just he absolutely has to be just that's the bare minimum he cannot be unrighteous he wouldn't even know how to go about it he is a just and righteous God and the good news is he is a gracious God he will provide something for you that you do not deserve because Jesus picked up the ticket for you and he is your ticket and if you are in

Christ then you have Christ's redemption you have Christ's forgiveness you have Christ's eternal life you have Christ's life itself it's the most amazing thing that has ever happened John Newton wrote a song about it and called it amazing grace that's exactly what it is do you know this Jesus or do you just know about him is Christ in you have you come to the place in your life where you know you are not right before God and you realize there's nothing you can do about it that's why Jesus came because none of us were right before God and there was nothing that any of us could do about it and God took the initiative God sent his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh to condemn sin in the flesh that we might be made the righteousness of God in him think of that when you come to

Jesus Christ he gives you his righteousness not yours it's his and if it's his it's perfect it's lacking nothing so that now when you are in Christ God looks at you and he doesn't see you as a sinful wayward human being he sees you as clothed and robed in the righteousness of Jesus Christ and I want to close with this comment question that I've asked many times over the years and it serves better for the situation than anything I can think of if something were to happen to you and you were to die today and you stood before your maker and God looked at you and said John Doe why should I let you come into my heaven what would you tell him do you realize there's only one answer just one not a half dozen just one you can look

God in the eye and say you should let me come into your heaven because Jesus Christ paid my way and that's all I've got that's all you need he is the ticket the father sent the son to be the savior of the world and when he died for corporate humanity he opened the way of salvation and we can come to him directly through Jesus Christ that makes that makes our redemption personal you see what Christ provided simply made salvation available I put it this way it makes everybody in the whole world savable it doesn't make them saved it makes them savable that means anyone no matter how vile how undeserving how mean and nasty and sinful they are their sin is not greater than the grace of God and the price that

[39 : 38] Christ paid to redeem them so everyone everyone can exercise personal individual faith in Jesus Christ and who he is and what he did and when you do then you receive that internal regeneration of which I spoke there is nothing like it in the world this is the work of God not of man would you pray with me father we are so grateful for this day that brings up people all across the world to hear this wonderful old message and how grateful we are for that babe of Bethlehem because he grew to manhood and was suspended upon a cross and there died for the sins of the world the only eligible one who could do that was willing to do it as the

God man he who knew no sin was made sin for us and you punished your own son he died our death to balance the scales of heaven's justice and now we are free to come to you we pray this day if there is someone here who has never made that decision has never really turned to Jesus Christ in a trusting and believing way that they may see the importance of doing that even now and right where we are dear friends in the quietness of your own seat right there where everything is private in your own mind and heart you can say Lord Jesus Christ I never understood this before but I do now and there's still a lot that I don't understand but I know one thing

I know I'm not what I need to be to be accepted by you and I know that's why Jesus died he died to make me accepted in the beloved and with all of my questions and even doubts and fears as best as I know how I want to believe on the Lord Jesus I want to give him my life he who died for me the least I can do is turn my life over to him and that's what I want to do right now I want you to come into my life and make it what you want it to be thank you for dying on that cross for my sin Lord Jesus I take you as my savior thank you for being who and what you are in your name amen if you made that decision please let someone know tell someone so that they can encourage you or let me know because I have some literature that will be of help to you and getting started in the

Christian life and I'd love to share it with you now we've got a few minutes left so we'll entertain some questions and comments for about the next seven or eight minutes feel free I have some written down but I didn't bring them for the session this morning but we will next week so if anyone has questions now feel free to voice them anyone up here that's not exactly a question for the subject she wanted to know if I found my Bible no I didn't but I found my phone I actually I didn't find it someone else found it for me but no I didn't find my Bible I still know where it is other other are there any comments that have to deal with the subject I'm sorry what good questions that were asked what you want you to find well you're right about that I can remember most of them I can't remember all of what she's talking about is I had several questions that you submitted from the audience and

I jotted them down on a paper in that Bible and that paper is in the Bible that I can't find so I may have to ask you to refresh your mind or you're thinking about that but Lynette in the back I'm sorry well you know you got a point there I never listened to my own tapes or my own CDs that might be a good idea yeah I can do that if I don't find my Bible I'll have to do that as a reason and by the way what we were talking about this morning the issue and this is I would be the first to admit that this is a confusing subject and it was confusing to me for many many years until I was able to work this out and I'm not saying now that it is some infallible solution but

[45 : 15] I'm just saying that it satisfies me it satisfies my intellectual curiosity at the present time and on CD number 10 that's back there on the thing we dealt with this universal reconciliation versus universal salvation and how that it is personal and babies in death remain redeemed they are born redeemed and remain redeemed this has been a question among theologians for many many years what happens to infants when they die before they reach that age of accountability and the most that most theologians come up with is well that's a good reason to baptize babies but that's a very very unsatisfying answer as far as the scriptures are concerned because there's no not even a shred of justification for infant baptism in the Bible but when you understand that babies are born in a state of redemption even though with a fallen nature born redeemed and then that is forfeited when they become willful in their own responsibility and their sin then they become sinful indeed and need a personal redemption so that is spelled out a little bit in this as well as some other subjects frustration you you