

Chapter 10: Sermon on the Mount—Part 2

Reading Outline:

- Matthew 6-7
(Parallel accounts: Luke 6:37-49; 11:1-13, 33-36; 12:22-24; B/M, 3 Nephi 13-14)
1. Introduction: The Sermon on the Mount Continues
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1. Introduction: The Sermon on the Mount Continues

During the last chapter, we began our study of the Sermon on the Mount, Sermon on the Plain and the Sermon in Bountiful in the Americas. We assumed that the sermon given was the same for each of the areas and that what has come to us through our scriptures today is “a wondrous compilation of the divine truth in a single sermon.”¹

During our discussion on the Sermon, our focus was upon knowing ourselves leading to the perfection of the individual. Our focus now shifts to our relationship with our fellowmen and God. It is important to remember that this sermon was given to the Apostles, and those who were already disciples, or who would yet become His disciples, including you and me. In contrast to the Law of Moses, which was in force until the Savior’s resurrection, these words are part of the higher law that is designed to refine and perfect our relationship both with God and our fellowmen.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer states,

“The call to follow Christ always means a call to share the work of forgiving men their sins. Forgiveness is the Christlike suffering which it is the Christian’s duty to bear.”²

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet and Brent L. Top state,

“[The process of forgiving others], is an aspect of discipleship that may be one of the most difficult labors the Christian is called upon to perform. Our involvement in this work, however, makes us more like the merciful Jesus than anything else we might do.”³

There are blessings that will come to us today as we let the Master Potter mold our dispositions. Both our desire and our ability to follow the higher law He taught His disciples will increase. We will learn for ourselves as we incorporate these verities into our lives that they will then bring us peace in this world and eternal life in the world hereafter.

2. Ten Areas of Importance in Our Relationship with God and with Our Fellowmen

As we continue our examination of the Sermon on the Mount our attention will focus on the following areas. These include: (1) Ostentation and hypocritical display in the giving of alms and in prayer; (2) Worldly wealth contrasted with the enduring riches of eternity; (3) Apostles to forsake all in missionary cause; (4) The need for caution in judging others; (5) The importance of being discreet and discriminate regarding disseminating sacred truths; (6) The implementation of the golden rule; (7) Strait is the way; (8) Beware of false prophets; (9) The uselessness of hearing alone, contrasted with the efficacy of doing, and (10) The steps necessary to obtain eternal life.

2.1. Ostentation and Hypocritical Display

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Among the Jews," [common to the time of Jesus], when praying, it was the custom to stand, face Jerusalem, cover one's head, and cast one's eyes downward. Certain hours of the days were set aside for prayers, and those desiring to make an ostentatious show of piety would arrange to be in the streets and public places at these hours. Those desiring to make a show of devoutness would also say their own prayers out loud during the synagogue services. This type of conduct, symbolical of all hypocrisy in prayer, was what Jesus condemned."⁴

In direct contrast, Jesus taught:

Matthew 6:1, 3-4	JST, Matthew 6:1, 3-4
<p>1 Take heed that ye do not your alms [righteous acts of religious devotion] before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven.</p>	<p>1 <u>And it came to pass that, as Jesus taught his disciples, he said unto them,</u> Take heed that ye do not your alms before men to be seen of them; otherwise ye have no reward of your Father who is in heaven.</p>
<p>3 But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:</p>	<p>3 But when thou doest alms, let it be <u>unto thee as thy left hand not knowing</u> what thy right hand doeth;</p>
<p>4 That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly.</p>	<p>4 That thine alms may be in secret; and thy Father <u>who</u> seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly.</p>

How different is the conduct of the disciples compared to those who perform deeds of generosity for the purpose of receiving the accolades of the world? When they choose to do so they receive no reward from God for they have exchanged His praise for the recognition of the world. This is their reward.

On the other hand, the true disciple of Christ performs acts of generosity but do so anonymously thus neither seeking nor receiving reward for their actions. The immediate reward they receive is the internal feeling within that comes from having given service to their fellowmen. Heavenly reward when it comes is seen as an extra, not the purpose for their kindness.

2.2. Prayer

Jesus teaches His disciples, and us, how we are to offer a prayer to our Heavenly Father. In order for us to receive direction, guidance and comfort from our Heavenly Father, we need to know how we are to approach Him.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“[Known as the Lord's prayer], this prayer was given as a sample or illustration of how Deity might appropriately be addressed in prayer, of the praise and adoration that should be extended to him, and of the type and kind of petitions men should make to him.”⁵

Matthew 6:9	JST, Matthew 6:9-10
9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.	9 Therefore after this manner <u>shall ye pray, saying,</u> 10 Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“God is our Father, the father of our spirits; we are his children, his offspring, literally. We lived in his presence, dwelt in his [heavenly] courts, and have seen his face. We are as well acquainted with him then as we are with our mortal fathers now.”⁶

Our willingness to approach Deity is dependent upon our conception of God. If we see Him only as someone who is there to punish us and to restrict our freedom, then our prayers will focus on our receiving forgiveness for our actions, often driven by guilt and fear. If we see Him as a kind and loving father who cares about our choices and wants us to find happiness during our mortal journey, then our prayers will be driven by affection and humility. It is important for us to come to know God.

Matthew 6:10	JST, Matthew 6:11
10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.	11 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done <u>on</u> earth, as it is <u>done</u> in heaven.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“*Thy kingdom*: the earthly kingdom of God which is the Church. *Thy kingdom*: the millennial kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, which shall be when there is a new heaven and a new earth whereon dwelleth righteousness. These are the kingdoms for which we pray...May we, O Lord, prepare for that day by living as though it were here.”⁷

We anxiously await the day when the earth will be cleansed from all wickedness and once again the spirit that existed during our pre-mortal life will again be found among the inhabitants of this earth. It will mean that the Savior has returned in glory and His leadership will prevail upon the earth. It is my belief that only under heaven’s direction will there truly be peace on earth, good will toward men. We, however, must do our part

today to help bring about that peace in ourselves, our families, and with our fellowmen by doing acts of kindness.

Matthew 6:11	JST, Matthew 6:11
11 Give us this day, our daily bread	11 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done <u>on</u> earth, as it is <u>done</u> in heaven.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“We need food, clothing, and shelter, health of body, and strength of mind. Our daily wants must be supplied, and he who notes the sparrow’s fall will also provide manna for his people from day to day.”⁸

It is my belief that the Lord does bless us each day, however, we miss the blessing when we expect Him to provide literal manna that would then require us to do nothing more than to collect our daily food from off the ground. It is my belief that the Lord blesses us most when we are doing our part to provide for our daily substance. This may require us to do manual labor or to take a job for which we believe we are overqualified or even to do work for less than we were previously being paid. As we demonstrate to the Lord, our willingness to do all that we can, before asking Him to make up the difference, we will be astounded at His generosity.

B/M, Mosiah 2:21

21 I say unto you that if ye should serve him who has created you from the beginning, and is preserving you from day to day, by lending you breath, that ye may live and move, and do accord to your own will, and even supporting you from one moment to another—I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls ye would be unprofitable servants.

We are reminded in this verse that God is preserving us from day to day, in ways that we may not be aware or even consider. These include preserving us, lending us breath, giving us our free agency to choose and even supporting us from one moment to the next. I believe it is important for each of us to be reminded of the daily blessings which we receive from our Heavenly Father in our lives. He does care about each of His children.

Matthew 6:12	JST, Matthew 6:13
12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.	13 And forgive us our <u>trespasses</u>, as we forgive <u>those who trespass against us</u>.

It is noteworthy that the word changes from the KJV, Matthew 6:12, and the JST, Matthew 6:12, is from debts and debtors to our trespasses and who trespass against us. It appears that with the addition of verses 14-15 in Matthew and 16 in JST, Matthew that we are being asked to expand our forgiveness to include a wider range of individuals? Not just those with whom we have entered into contractual arrangements, but all those whose acts of thoughtlessness have impacted our lives, including our own acts of inconsideration towards others.

Doctrine and Covenants 64:9

9 Wherefore, I say unto you, that ye ought to forgive one another; for he that forgiveth not his brother his trespasses standeth condemned before the Lord; for there remaineth in him the greater sin.

Modern revelation confirms the importance of the Lord’s words regarding forgiveness as recorded in the Sermon on the Mount. As recorded, those of us who refuse to grant mercy to those who trespass against us, will find ourselves condemned before the Lord. Not to forgive another may be likened to my burning down the very bridge that someday I will be required to cross as I approach the Lord seeking forgiveness for my own sins.

Following the conclusion of the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus again turns to the topic of forgiveness and its importance for each disciple.

Matthew 6:14-15	JST, Matthew 6:16
<p>14 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.</p> <p>15 But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.</p>	<p>16 For if ye forgive men their trespasses, <u>who trespass against you</u>, your heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your <u>heavenly</u> Father forgive you your trespasses</p>

Bruce R. McConkie reminds us,

“[It is important that we] forgive and be forgiven; sow mercy and reap the same, for every seed brings forth after his own kind.”⁹

Matthew 6:13	JST, Matthew 6:15
<p>13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.</p>	<p>15 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.</p>

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“The Lord does not lead us into temptation, except in the sense that he has placed us here in a probationary estate where temptation is the order of the day. We are here in mortality to be tried and tested; to see if we will keep the commandments; to overcome the world.”¹⁰

It is important that during our journey in mortality that we be exposed to both good and evil. Without the condition of evil, there would be no opportunity for us to use our free agency and make righteous choices. Therefore, good and evil are important ingredients in our earthly probation. In all choices with which we are confronted, it is important that we understand that the source of good is our Heavenly Father and that which is evil comes from Satan himself. We are influenced to choose good by our Heavenly Father whereas all temptations, regardless of their appearance, have Satan as their ultimate source. It is our decision to determine the influence we will follow.

D. Todd Christofferson states,

“...God intends that His children should act according to the moral agency He has given them, ‘that every man may be accountable for his own sins in the day of judgment’ (Doctrine and Covenants 101:78). It is His plan and His will that we have the principle decision-making role in our own life’s drama. God will not live our

lives for us nor control us as if we were his puppets, as Lucifer once proposed to do. Nor will His prophets accept the role of ‘puppet master’ in God’s place.”¹¹

Joshua 24:15

15 And if it seems evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve...but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.

These words spoken by Joshua continue to reverberate through the halls of time, “choose ye this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15).

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“His is the kingdom—both the earthly kingdom which is the Church and that glorious realm of celestial rest prepared for the saints. His is the power—nothing is too hard for the Lord; he is omnipotent; he it is who will raise lowly mortals to that eternal exaltation which makes of man a god. His is the glory—that is, the dominion, the exaltation, and the endless kingdoms; and also, the light and truth and infinite wisdom and knowledge he possesses.”¹²

2.3. Worldly Wealth/Riches of Eternity

Matthew 6:19	JST, Matthew 6:19
19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:	19 Lay not up for yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Treasures upon earth would include, money, clothes, jewels, houses, lands, property, business enterprises, honors bestowed by men, social affiliations, and political positions. All this fade away when life ends...they have no inherent eternal value.”¹³

It is important that we be able to provide for our families the necessities of life. It is, however, when our focus of time and energy shifts from our needs to our wants. It is then we are in danger of exchanging our eternal joy for fleeting temporal pleasures. As our appetite for more and more treasures increases, as time passes, we find that we have forfeited time with family and giving service to others “for just pennies on the dollar.”

Robert M. Solomon states,

“I remember reading a comic strip many years ago...[where] the final picture shows the end of the ladder, and the man who has been furiously climbing it since his toddler days is now a tired and exhausted old man. With great anticipation, he has arrived at the top of his ladder. But his mouth is open with shock, and his face is crestfallen with disappointment, his tired eyes filled with disillusionment and despair. The ladder is leaning against a cold and empty wall. There is nothing at the top of the long ladder. His mind is asking a hundred questions. ‘You mean I have wasted an entire lifetime for this? I have climbed the wrong ladder!’”¹⁴

How tragic when we learn that it is now too late. We have squandered our time and energy on earth for that which is of little or no value.

Matthew 6:20-21	JST, Matthew 6:20-21
<p>20 But lay not up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:</p> <p>21 For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.</p>	<p>20 But lay up for yourselves, treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.</p> <p>21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart <u>be</u> also.</p>

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"These treasures, earned here and now in mortality, are in effect deposited to our eternal bank account in heaven where eventually they will be re-inherited again in immortality. Treasure in heaven are the character, perfections, and attributes which men acquire by obedience to law. Thus, those who gain such attributes of godliness as knowledge, faith, justice, judgment, mercy, and truth, will find these same attributes restored to them again in mortality."¹⁵

The verses just quoted (Matthew 6:20-21), are the antidote for those who have come to realize that "they have climbed the wrong ladder!" The coin of the realm in heaven is obtained by one's obedience to God's commandments and the service they have rendered to others on earth. It is based upon love, not compulsion, as one seeks to serve God and their fellowmen by lifting up those who are in need. King Benjamin, a prophet/king in the America's left us the following counsel.

B/M, Mosiah 2:17

17 And behold, I tell you these things that ye may learn wisdom; that ye may learn that when ye are in the service of your fellow beings ye are only in the service of your God.

2.4. Apostles to Forsake All in Missionary Cause

Matthew 6:25	JST, Matthew 6:25, 27
<p>25 Therefore, I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on...</p>	<p>25 And, again, I say unto you, Go ye into the world, ...</p> <p>27 And your heavenly Father will provide for you, whatsoever things ye need for food, what ye shall eat; and for raiment, what ye shall wear or put on.</p>

There has been much discussion regarding the direction from the Savior as found in the King James translation, Matthew 6:25-34. It has been mistakenly understood that the Savior's directive, "take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body" (Matthew 6:25), was meant for all followers of Christ.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"There is not now and never has been a call to the saints [members] generally to 'sell that ye have' (Luke 12:33), give alms to the poor, and then to take no thought for the temporal needs of the present or further.

Rather, as part of their mortal probation, the true followers of the Master are expected by him to provide for themselves and their families (see Doctrine and Covenants, Section 75)."¹⁶

We may then ask if Christ’s directive is not for all Christians, then to whom is the directive given?

In this regard, the Joseph Smith Translation (JST, Matthew 6:25, 27), makes it clear that Jesus’ directive is solely to His Apostles, and later to the Seventy, who are to spend their time in full-time service building the kingdom of God upon the earth. As part of their service and lifetime dedication, God will provide the necessities of life.

Matthew 6:33	JST, Matthew 6:38
<p>33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all things shall be added unto you.</p>	<p>38 <u>Wherefore, seek not the things of this world but seek ye first to build up the kingdom of God, and to establish his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.</u></p>

The additions provided by the Joseph Smith Translation make it clear that this admonition given by the Savior was directed to those who would be engaged in full-time service in building the kingdom of God on the earth. Its application also extends to the missionaries today who give full-time service for a specific time in their lives, rather than to all members of the Church.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Jesus is directing his ministers...[like] the missionaries of this day to preach the gospel so that converts might come into the Church or kingdom, thereby building it up in strength and power.”¹⁷

The responsibility of the members in the Church today is to reach out to their friends and associates and invite them to hear the message of the restoration from the full-time missionaries. The responsibility of the full-time missionaries is to teach the individuals and their families. In this manner, both do their part in sharing the message of the gospel and building the kingdom of God on earth.

2.5. Judging Others

Matthew 7:1-2	JST, Matthew 7:1-3
<p>1 Judge not, that ye be not judged. 2 For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.</p>	<p><u>1 Now these are the words, which Jesus taught his disciples that they should say unto the people.</u> 2 Judge not <u>unrighteously</u>, that ye be not judged; <u>but judge righteous judgment.</u> 3 For with what judgment ye shall judge, ye shall be judged; and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.</p>

A reading of Matthew 7:1-2 alone would lead one to conclude that Jesus was stating that judgments were not to be rendered upon others. To do so was to put one’s own salvation at risk! The addition of the Joseph Smith Translation provides us with important insight regarding the process of administering judgment upon another.

It is a necessary aspect in the administration of Christ’s Church upon the earth today that judgment must be rendered by those who are authorized to direct the affairs of the Church. It is essential that in all circumstances the leader act in a responsible manner and seek the inspiration of the Lord in all judgments that he is required to make concern those under his authority. For example, when the membership of an individual is being considered, all efforts are to be made, including consultation with others the member has authorized, in an effort to gain understanding regarding this important matter. The rendering of righteous judgment involves a sincere effort on the part of the Lord’s servant to learn the will of the Lord before rendering any judgment within the Church. The following directive was given by modern revelation regarding the qualities necessary to make righteous judgments since it is only through the exercising of his priesthood authority that the leader makes inspired decisions.

Doctrine and Covenants 121:41-44

- 41 No power or influence can or ought to be maintained by virtue of the priesthood, only by persuasion, by long-suffering, by gentleness and meekness and by love unfeigned;**
- 42 By kindness, and pure knowledge, which shall greatly enlarge the soul without hypocrisy, and without guile—**
- 43 Reproving betimes with sharpness, when moved upon by the Holy Ghost; and then showing forth afterwards an increase of love toward him whom thou hast reproved, lest he esteem thee to be his enemy;**
- 44 That he may know that thy faithfulness is stronger than the cords of death.**

In most instances members of the Church are counseled to withhold any judgment upon another except when directed to do so by their presiding leader. It is a truth that unless directly involved, the member is not privy to all the facts necessary to allow them to make a righteous judgment. They, therefore, would be incapable of making a righteous judgment, and therefore, should not attempt to do so.

Matthew 7:3-5	JST, Matthew 7:4-8
<p>3 And why beholdest thou the mote [speck, chip or splinter] that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam [long piece of heavy timber used in construction] that is in thine own eye?</p>	<p>4 And <u>again, ye shall say unto them, Why is it that thou beholdest the mote that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?</u></p>
<p>4 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?</p>	<p>5 Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and cast not behold a beam in thine own eye?</p>
	<p>6 <u>And Jesus said unto his disciples, Beholdest thou the scribes and the Pharisees, and the priest, and the Levites? They teach in their synagogues, but do not observe the law, nor the commandments and all have gone out of the way, and are under sin.</u></p> <p>7 <u>Go thou and say unto them, Why teach ye men the law and the commandments, when ye yourselves are the children of corruption?</u></p>
<p>5 Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of</p>	<p>8 <u>Say unto them, Ye hypocrites, first cast out the</u></p>

thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to coast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

beam out of thine own eye: and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.

The Savior's injunction is directed first to the one who, in spite of their serious imperfections, focuses upon the seeming minor faults of another. He is directed to address his own sins before attempting to render assistance regarding another's errors.

Through the Joseph Smith Translation we learn that not only is Jesus concerned with the fault finding among individuals, but He is also concerned with the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who teach the commandments but do not live these principles in their own lives. This is due, in part, to the corruption that has occurred in the religious teaching of the day from what was originally taught by the prophets of the past.

The important lesson for each of us to learn is that we should address our own faults before we seek to improve our brother or sister. The second lesson is that when teachers fail to exemplify the truths they are teaching in their own lives, they will be held accountable for these disparities. It is important a teacher be an example to their students.

2.6. Disseminating Sacred Truths

Matthew 7:6	JST, Matthew 7:9-11
<p>6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.</p>	<p><u>9 Go yet into the world, saying Unto all, Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven has come nigh unto you.</u></p> <p><u>10 And the mysteries of the kingdom ye shall keep within yourselves; for it is not meet to give that which is holy unto the dogs; neither cast ye your pearls unto swine, lest they trample them under their feet.</u></p> <p><u>11 For the world cannot receive that which ye, yourselves, are not able to bear; wherefore ye shall not give your pearls unto them, lest they turn again and rend you.</u></p>

This directive is given in greater fullness in the Joseph Smith Translation. Therefore, it affords us increased understanding as to its meaning and application in our lives. In the Church of Jesus Christ then and now, each member has the responsibility to share the truths that they have learned with those around them. This directive is then not just to the Apostles and later the Seventy who will serve full-time missions, but to all who endeavor to share the truths they have espoused in their lives that have led them to membership in Christ's Church. As they do so, it is important they consider some important counsel: 1) Do not eliminate some individuals you may feel will not be receptive. Give everyone the opportunity. 2) Do not, in your enthusiasm, initially share all you know about the gospel. Remember to confine your conversation to the basic principles. 3) Do not be disappointed when everyone is not receptive to the message you have to share. Each individual has their own timetable regarding their receptiveness to religious truths. Now may not be their time, and, 4) Honor the individual's choice not to hear more. No one appreciates it when they feel their feelings are not being

respected; some may even get angry. Remember not everyone joins the church at the same pace; some take longer than others. Some may not join at all. Respect their feelings. Continue to be their friend.

Bruce R. McConkie reminds us,

“Any gospel truth, however easy and simple, that is not understood, or that is beyond the present spiritual capacity of a given person to understand, is to him a mystery.”¹⁸

It is important to remember to keep your message simple and sincere and then, if they are interested, invite them to meet the missionaries.

2.7. The Golden Rule

Matthew 7:12	Luke 6:31	JST, Matthew 7:21
12 Therefore 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.	31 And as ye would that men should do to you, do ye also to them likewise.	21 Therefore, 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.

The above counsel given by Jesus to His disciples is identical in both Matthew and the Joseph Smith Translation. While condensed, the meaning in Luke is similar. The same is referred to in western society as the Golden Rule: “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top remind us,

It is "only as we lose ourselves can we find ourselves (see Matthew 16:25). We gain the inner peace and stability of soul promised by the Savior only as we lose ourselves in our quest for God and as we give ourselves selflessly in service to others."¹⁹

2.8. Strait is the Way

Matthew 7:13-14	JST, Matthew 7:22-23
13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:	22 <u>Repent, therefore, and</u> enter ye in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction, and many there be <u>who go in thereat.</u>
14 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.	23 Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way <u>that</u> leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

While the verses in Matthew and the Joseph Smith Translation are similar, there is a distinct difference in the Joseph Smith Translation. It is before entering the gate, the individual must first repent. If we accept that the gate refers to baptism which symbolizes entrance into the kingdom of God or the Church of Jesus Christ on earth, then before the individual can proceed, he/she must first repent. This requirement assumes that the individual has reached the age of accountability for their sins. In the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day

Saints, this age as determined by revelation is eight years of age. Prior to this age, the Atonement of Jesus Christ covers all prior sins or transgressions, including those of Adam and Eve. It also means that infants do not need to be baptized.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"It is *strait* because it is narrow and restricted, a course where full obedience to the full law is required. Straightness has reference to direction, straitness to width...By entering in at the strait gate (which is repentance and baptism) a person gets on the "straight and narrow path which leads to eternal life (B/M, 2 Nephi 31:17-18)."²⁰

The alternative choice is to walk the way that, in contrast, is wide and broad because the path is so easy to walk and seems desirable as presented by the angels of Satan whose task it is to entice and, thereby, mislead those who are uncommitted to the path of righteousness. As one person said, not only is this particular path paved, it is also downhill. This path is in stark contrast to the path Jesus offers, for His path leads upward but while being clearly marked, it is neither paved nor easy. It requires an individual's total commitment and even then, he/she would not make it to the top were it not for the help they received along the way.

It is my impression that the way is strait meaning narrow, restricted, and limited, because entrance requires that the candidates be willing to submit their total will to the will of the Father and the Son. Many potential candidates find this requirement to be restricting, confining and limiting and a rejection of their ability to choose for themselves. The story is told of a man upon finding himself in an unfamiliar country was trying to get to a meeting across town. He stopped a gentleman and asked him for directions to the local bus stop. The old man said, "go to the end of the street, turn right and you will find the bus stop to take you across town." The man then said, "but what if I turn left at the end of street, not right? The old man then said, "if you turn right, you will be alright; If you turn left, you will not!" The stranger was free to choose to follow the old man's directions or not. Turning right would bring him closer to arriving at his destination; turning left would not. Each of us are free to choose, but it is an eternal truth that our choices will determine our destination.

Based upon their limited understanding some fail to comprehend this important truth--eternal happiness comes only to those individuals whose lives are in complete compliance with the eternal laws upon which the blessings of heaven are predicated (see Doctrine and Covenants 130:21). It comes only to those who, in exercising their free agency, choose to follow the will of the Father and the Son.

2.9. Beware of False Prophets

Matthew 7:15-18	JST, Matthew 7:24-27
<p>15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.</p> <p>16 Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?</p> <p>17 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.</p> <p>18 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.</p>	<p>24 And again, beware of false prophets, <u>who</u> come to you in sheep's clothing; but inwardly they are ravening wolves.</p> <p>25 Ye shall know them by their fruits; for do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles.</p> <p>26 Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.</p> <p>27 A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit; neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.</p>

The verses in Matthew and the Joseph Smith Translation are identical except for the reference to the false prophet as a who, rather than a witch. The words of Jesus are directed at being able to identify a true prophet in contrast to a false prophet. He makes it clear that appearance alone will not be sufficient for there will be false prophets who will appear to be someone whom they are not i.e. “ravening (to rush, take by force) wolves in sheep’s clothing”. It is, therefore, important for each of us to be able to distinguish a true prophet from a false prophet”.

Joseph Smith states,

"When a man goes about prophesying, and commands men to obey his teachings, he must either be a true or false prophet. False prophets always arise to oppose the true prophets and they will prophesy so very near the truth that they will deceive almost the very chosen ones [*Possible reference to false prophets in sheep’s clothing-RVS].”²¹

Joseph Smith concludes,

“[A]ny man who says he is a teacher or preacher of righteousness, and denies the spirit of prophecy [according to John, the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy] is a liar...and by this key false teachers and imposters may be detected.”²²

This is an important key. The spirit of prophecy is the spirit of revelation as bestowed to the individual through the Holy Ghost. It is only through the spirit of revelation to the individual that he/she can know spiritual truth. Intellect alone is not sufficient.

Bruce R. McConkie adds,

"What are false prophets? They are teachers and preachers who profess to speak for the Lord when, in fact, they have received no such appointment...False prophets are false teachers; they teach false doctrine; they neither know nor teach the doctrines of salvation. Rather they have followed cunningly devised fables that they suppose make up the gospel of Christ, and they preach them as such. They are the ministers who proclaim a false way of salvation, the expounders of doctrines that are not of God, and the proclaimers of every man-made system of religion on earth. They are the philosophers and sages who seek to explain God, existence, right and wrong, agency, immortality, and other religious concepts without reference to revelation.”²³

It is important to remember that the truths of God and the fruits that accompany them are best understood by seeking His guidance and direction through prayer and reading the scriptures. For example, The Church of Jesus Christ now should look like the Church He organized when He was upon the earth. It is only by our sincere desire and concerted efforts that we can discover the truths of God. He has promised us that He will then make them known to us through the spirit of the Holy Ghost. It is most often through the whispering of the still small voice than by the burning bush that He speaks to us and confirms within us the truth. We can know for ourselves.

2.10. Hearing Alone Contrasted with the Efficacy of Doing

Matthew 7:21-23	JST, Matthew 7:30, 32-33
21 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in Heaven.	30 Verily I say unto you, It is not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, that shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven.

22 Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works?

23 Then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

32 And many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name; and in thy name cast out devils; and in thy name done many wonderful works?

33 And then will I say, Ye never knew me; depart from me ye that work iniquity.

The key to these verses is the clarification found in the Joseph Smith Translation, “Ye never knew me.” I believe that Jesus is addressing two groups of individuals. The first group are those who are the “honorable men of the earth, who were blinded by the craftiness of men” (Doctrine and Covenants 76:75). They do not accept the gospel during mortality and, therefore, do not live the gospel law. The second group differs from the first group in that they did receive the gospel and are members of Christ’s Church, but they failed to endure to the end in faithfulness to the covenants they had made.

The first group consists of those who could have had the blessing of being members of Christ’s Church during mortality, however, they failed to respond to the testimony of Christ when it was presented to them, but will accept the gospel in the spirit world. They were influenced by the philosophies of man that spoke to their desire for pleasure without responsibility rather than the whispering of the spirit and the importance of performing good works. Alma, a prophet in the Americas speaks of this group.

B/M, Mosiah 26:21-22, 24-27 (underline added)

21 And he that will hear my voice shall be my sheep; and him shall ye receive into the church, and him will I also receive.

22 For behold, this is my church; whosoever is baptized shall be baptized unto repentance. And whomsoever ye receive shall believe in my name; and him I freely forgive.

24 For behold, in my name are they called; and if they know me they shall come forth, and shall have a place eternally at my right hand.

25 And it shall come to pass that when the second trump shall sound then shall they that never knew me come forth and shall stand before me.

26 And then shall they know that I am the Lord their God, that I am their Redeemer; but they would not be redeemed.

27 And then I will confess unto them that I never knew them, and they shall depart into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

The second group consists of those who did enter the waters of baptism that put them on the path leading to life eternal. Along the way the philosophies of the world led them to doubt the whispering of the spirit and they became lost spiritually.

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"To whom is he speaking? Is it not to those who have been baptized; those who have gained the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy; those who have received the holy priesthood and have cast out devils and worked miracles?...He is speaking to saints who have not endured to the end, who have not kept the commandments, and who have not pressed forward with a steadfastness in Christ in baptism...I never knew you, and you never knew me! Your discipleship was limited; you were not perfect members of my kingdom.

Your heart was not so centered in me as to cause you to endure to the end; and so, for a time and a season you were faithful; you even worked miracles in my name; but in the end it shall be as though I never knew you."²⁴

Those members of the Church that are not faithful to the end may be described as those who are “lukewarm” regarding their membership in the Church.

Bruce R. McConkie describes the traits of these individuals,

“[Lukewarm] Good, upright, decent members of the Church who nonetheless do not put first in their lives the things of God’s earthly kingdom. They have testimonies; they know the work is true; but they specialize as it were, in the social gospel; that is, in that portion of the truth which seems to bless others on pretty much the same basis as people are bettered by any good concepts in any church. Their interests are largely centered in the temporal things, in making a living, in the things of this world. They are not wicked and ungodly in the sense of being carnal and evil. But they are not devoting their energies to the spread of truth and the perfecting of the lives of their brethren. They are probably part tithe payers, and they likely go to sacrament meeting and perform church service when it is convenient. They seek the honors of men and the wealth of the world with more zeal than they do the honors of God and the riches of eternity. They are lukewarm and their souls will not be saved. “These are they who are not valiant in the testimony of Jesus; wherefore, they obtain not the crown of the kingdom of our God (Doctrine and Covenants 76:79). Lukewarm church members say: ‘We have testimonies, we have received the gospel, we belong to the Church; surely we shall be saved along with all the rest; what more do we need?’ But the fact is (and they know it not) they are no better off spiritually than many nonmembers of the Church; they are still poor in the things of the Spirit, are blind to the real blessings of the gospel, and have not in fact put on the robes of righteousness.”²⁵

If those in the two groups of whom Christ was referring do not humble themselves and seek spiritual guidance and direction, and become anxiously engaged in furthering the work of God upon the earth, they will each receive the same kingdom of glory. The words of Christ— “Ye never knew me” —will be spoken directly to them. At the end of their journey, they will both receive a lesser glory, like unto the Moon rather than the Sun, which could have been their final reward had they taken full advantage of their mortal probation. The time to decide is now.

3. Steps to Obtain Eternal Life

Bruce R. McConkie reminds us,

"Baptisms alone does not save; celestial marriage alone does not exalt; church membership without more does not assure an inheritance in celestial glory."²⁶

If baptism, celestial marriage and church membership are not alone enough to ensure our eternal salvation, what then must we do in order to live with our Heavenly Father and receive His blessing? Nephi, a Book of Mormon prophet taught us this important truth.

B/M, 2 Nephi 31:19-20

19 And now, my beloved brethren after ye have gotten into this strait and narrow path, I would ask if all is done? Behold, I say unto you, Nay: for ye have not come thus far save it were by the word of Christ with unshaken faith in him, relying wholly upon the merits of him who is might to save.

20 Wherefore, ye must press forward with a steadfastness in Christ, having a perfect brightness of hope, and a love of God and of all men. Wherefore, if ye shall press forward, feasting upon the word of Christ, and endure to the end, behold, thus saith the Father: Ye shall have eternal life.

Doctrine and Covenants 76:50-51, 53

50 We bear record—for we saw and heard...concerning them who shall come forth in the resurrection of the just—

51 They are they who received the testimony of Jesus, and believed on his name and were baptized after the manner of his burial...

53 And who overcome by faith...

You may be saying to yourself; I want to be numbered among those who are valiant in the testimony of Jesus. What does it mean to be “valiant in the testimony of Jesus?”

Ezra Taft Benson states,

“To have a **testimony of Jesus** is to possess knowledge through the Holy Ghost of the divine mission of Jesus Christ.

“**A testimony of Jesus** is to know the divine nature of our Lord’s birth—that He is indeed the Only Begotten Son of God in the flesh.

“**A testimony of Jesus** is to know that He was the promised Messiah and that while He sojourned among men, He accomplished many might miracles.

“**A testimony of Jesus** is to know that the laws He prescribed as His doctrine are true and then to abide by those laws and ordinances.

“**A testimony of Jesus** is to know that He voluntarily took upon Himself the sins of all mankind in the Garden of Gethsemane, which caused Him to suffer in both body and spirit and to bleed from every pore. All this He did so that we would not have to suffer, if we would repent (See Doctrine and Covenants 19:16, 18).

“**A testimony of Jesus** is to know that He came forth triumphantly from the grave with a physical, resurrected body. And because He lives, so shall all mankind.

“**A testimony of Jesus** is to know that God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, did indeed appear to the Prophet Joseph Smith to establish a new dispensation of His gospel so that salvation may be preached to all nations before He comes.

“**A testimony of Jesus** is to know that the church He established in the meridian of time and restored in modern times is, as the Lord has declared, ‘the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth’ (Doctrine and Covenants 1:30).

“**A testimony of Jesus** is to receive the words of His servants, the prophets, for as He has said, ‘Whether by mine own voice or by the voice of my servants, it is the same’ (Doctrine and Covenants 1:38).

“**A testimony of Jesus** means that we accept the divine mission of Jesus Christ, embrace His gospel, and do His words. It means we accept the prophetic mission of Joseph Smith and his successors.”²⁷

Now you ask, what does “a valiant testimony of Jesus” look like in action?

Ezra Taft Benson continues,

“Those who are just and true (Doctrine and Covenants 76:53). These are members of the Church who magnify their callings in the Church (see Doctrine and Covenants 84:33), pay their tithes and offerings, live morally clean lives, sustain their Church leaders by words and action, keep the Sabbath as a holy day, and obey all the commandments of God. They are courageous in defending truth and righteousness. To these the Lord has promised that ‘all thrones and dominions, principalities and powers, shall be revealed and set forth upon all who have endured valiantly for the gospel of Jesus Christ’ (Doctrine and Covenants 121:29)”²⁸

To be numbered among those who are valiant in the testimony of Jesus in word and deed is a worthy desire for all those who seek to be amongst the disciples of Christ. To these individuals will come happiness in this life and eternal joy in the heavenly courts above.

Bruce R. McConkie concludes,

"Blessed are all those who receive the word with joy; who build their house of salvation upon him who is the Eternal Rock; and who then endure to the end--for they shall be saved with an everlasting salvation.

"Blessed are all they who call Jesus, Lord, Lord; who have in their hearts the prophetic insight that men call the testimony of Jesus; and who are valiant in testimony all their days--for they shall wear the victor's crown.

"Blessed are all they who keep the commandments; who are true and faithful to every trust; and who do ever those things which please Him whose we are--for they shall dwell everlastingly with him in celestial rest."²⁹

4. Conclusions

Joseph Smith stated,

"...God has ordained that men should enjoy eternal life; and it is through the medium of the sacrifice of all earthly things that men do actually know that they are doing the things that are well pleasing in the sight of God."³⁰

What did I learn from this sermon? What am I willing to sacrifice to become like Him? I believe that in order for my life to become acceptable unto Him I must be willing to give up all my sins from the greatest to the least so that I may more clearly hear His voice, be more in tune with His will and thereby more usable in His kingdom. Included in this sacrifice is my forgiving others. Secondly, that the needs of others become as important as my own needs and that I am willing to give both my time and means to help my brothers or sisters. I must strive also for greater purity of self which includes forgiving others as well as myself. These are foremost amongst the lessons I have learned from the Sermon on the Mount.

May I ask, “What lessons have you learned from this magnificent sermon that you can now apply in your life?” It is one thing to understand the Sermon on the Mount, but its real importance is the personal application that we give to its principles in our own lives. No matter where we are on the steps toward sanctification and personal perfection, let us today strive to take the next step. He will assist us in our effort to be more like Him.

Thomas S. Monson states,

“As we strive to place Christ at the center of our lives by learning His words, by following His teachings, and by walking in His path, He has promised to share with us the eternal life that He died to gain. There is no higher end than this, that we should choose to accept His discipline and become His disciples and do His works throughout our lives. Nothing else, no other choice we make, can make of us what He can.”³¹

Footnotes

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- ¹ Bruce R. McConkie. *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 116.
- ² As quoted in Joseph Fielding McConkie, Robert L. Millet, and Brent L. Top. *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 84.
- ³ *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 83.
- ⁴ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 235.
- ⁵ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 235.
- ⁶ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 149.
- ⁷ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 149.
- ⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 150.
- ⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 150.
- ¹⁰ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 150.
- ¹¹ “Free Forever, to Act for Themselves” in *Ensign*, November, 2014, 16-17.
- ¹² *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 151.
- ¹³ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 239.
- ¹⁴ *The Race*. Singapore: Genesis Books, 2008, 13-14.
- ¹⁵ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 239.
- ¹⁶ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 243.
- ¹⁷ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 1. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1965, [11th Printing, 1976], 244.
- ¹⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 164.
- ¹⁹ *Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, Vol. 4. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992, 93.
- ²⁰ *Mormon Doctrine*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966, [Second Edition], 769.
- ²¹ Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [1977], 365.
- ²² Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith. Compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1976, [1977], 269.
- ²³ *The Millennial Messiah*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1982, 70-71.
- ²⁴ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 173.
- ²⁵ *Doctrinal New Testament Commentary*, Vol. 3. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973, [9th Printing, 1976], 460-461.
- ²⁶ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 172.
- ²⁷ *Come unto Christ*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983, 11-12, emphasis added.
- ²⁸ *Come Unto Christ*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983, 13.
- ²⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 173.
- ³⁰ *Lectures of Faith*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1985, Lecture 6, paragraph 7, 69.
- ³¹ “Ponder the Path of Thy Feet” in *Ensign*, November, 2014, 88.