

“All God’s Words As My Words”

Matthew 5:17-20, 47-48; 7:12
Sermon on the Mount Series

“When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight”
Jeremiah 15:16

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Introduction

This evening I, like many of you this weekend, will sit down with my family and celebrate with a Thanksgiving meal.

We have so much to be thankful for as we remember the last year and certainly some of those good stories will be heard at the table.

When I ask my grandchildren what they are thankful for how do you think they will respond?

What are we thankful for?

Listening to this morning's Scripture reading I think Jesus was thankful for words from God.

When Jesus says: **For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.**

He obviously understood God's Words were intrinsic to the very structures of Creation and therefore a great gift to be thankful for. Remember some of the very first words spoken by Jesus: **Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.**

At Thanksgiving, we are always grateful for what bread symbolizes: Coho Salmon; Mountain Sheep; Elk; Bison; Turkey; fruits; vegetables; all the bounty of the harvest.

Things necessary to richly sustain our lives.

Jesus tells us words from God are just as important.

Words from God sustain healthy living.

What kinds of words sustain us? What words do we eat? What words are in our diet?

I ask this because of experiences with my grandchildren

In my case, they are growing up: adult, teen and pre-teen and they, much more than me live in the social media world.

Now as a pastor I live with a lot of words, my life is filled with words.

But my grandchildren – not only do they walk around with earbuds connected that constantly fill their minds with words; they live in the social media world.

When I think of that world I think of things like the phrase, 'news feed' or 'streaming' and the manner wherein the social media world feeds into or streams into a connected person.

In my world, I choose to take a book off the shelf and read. In the social media world, you choose to be connected and then an avalanche of data streams into you.

What kinds of words sustain us? **Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word . . .**

What words do we live on?

Jesus offers us the words of God.

Text

In listening to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount we first examined some introductory matters.

The way the Gospel writer Matthew gives us preliminary information about who Jesus of Nazareth is (the sermon preacher) – the Messiah, Son of God come down from heaven.

The way Jesus first (before he sermonizes), with pure grace, heals people.

The way Jesus gathers a group of intimate followers through whom his ministry flows.

Then hearing the sermon proper we are startled by the Beatitudes; upside down values that in fact bring about the kingdom of heaven on earth. (poor in spirit; mourn, meek, hunger for right)

Rather than the usual religious disciplines – Torah study, Sabbath observance, temple reverence, almsgiving, prayer and fasting – we hear of the superlative values destined to turn our world upside down.

Following the promise of life transformed as we live with Jesus – Beatitude life - the 'title' of the Sermon shows the outcome, the results: **salt of the earth . . . light of the world.**

The Beatitudes are heard in the 'third person': **Blessed are the poor . . . the mourners . . . the meek . . .** and so on.

The 'title' is heard in the 'second person': **You are the salt of the earth . . .**

Now, as heard in this morning reading, the first person sounds: **I have come . . . I tell you . . .**

Now the Sermon comes home. Now we must decide:

Am I a follower of Jesus? Not just a follower because of his charisma or his power to heal

Am I a follower of Jesus all the way, in all the business of life?

For me, does the joy, the celebration, of being a Christian arise from my obedience to the directives, the commands of Jesus? Do I do what he tells me to do!

If not, best to close your Bibles now and not listen to the rest of the Sermon.

The people had never experienced anyone like Jesus: his unique teaching, his miraculous power, his unorthodox behavior. The regular religious teachers, the Pharisees and Scribes, practiced many behavioral taboos – food regulations, Sabbath regulations and so on. Jesus was not

always observant. So, a natural question arose – When Jesus claims to come from God and to speak God’s words is this instead of the Law and the Prophets? Is he abolishing them?

For the audience that day the **Law and the Prophets** are what we call the Old Testament. It was their Scriptures and pride of place was given to the Torah, the first five books, the books of Moses and particularly to the 10 Commandments.

So when Jesus says: **Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.**

He is affirming the Scriptures as God’s Words and claiming to bring them to completion; both in explaining them in depth, in their truest meanings, and in demonstrating a full and complete reverence and obedience to them.

Jesus is saying, Yes, the Scriptures are God’s Word. Yes, to God’s Word.

And he says this as a foreword to what he will next teach: **You have heard that it was said . . . But I tell you . . .**

Jesus affirms the Scriptures and demonstrates their fulfillment in his explanations and practice.

Why? Because of Heaven and Earth.

Because God’s Word as given in Scripture is as much a necessary part of Heaven and Earth as the chemical composition of the Universe, as the laws of physics, as the powers of wind, rain and sunshine.

And so what? So learn and teach the words of God and obey and practice the words of God.

In so doing righteousness blossoms. (I do not have the ability to articulate what this is.)

Righteousness as the holistic right way of being and doing: right relationship with God as incorporated in the life of Jesus; right expression of all the Creator’s ordering of my person; right relationship those who populate the circle of my life; right relationship with the world at large in all its expressions

Righteousness as will be explained and demonstrated in Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount.

Application

Jesus teaches his followers obedience to the Law of God – through his life – is a non-negotiable.

Jesus’ teaching does not contradict other parts of the New Testament, for example Romans 10:4 **For Christ is the end of the Law.**

The Law of God as a preparatory ‘schoolmaster’ to bring us to Christ – in that role – is completed. Some aspects; for example, all the laws of atonement, all the temple observations; are ended – Christ is the final sacrifice to make atonement with God.

But other aspects, for example, the Ten Commandments – in the life of Christ, remain as long as Heaven and Earth remain.

So we ask ourselves; why does this passage stand at the front of Jesus' Sermon?

Why, when we come to Jesus' directives – **I tell you** – do we first have this affirmation of Scripture, of the Law of God?

Certainly, to clarify, Jesus in his ministry never nullifies the Law of God.

Certainly, to explain before he delves into the depths of God's Law – **You have heard it said . . . but I tell you** – that his 'fulfillment' does not negate God's Law but expands in accordance with the implicit intention of God.

But most important, to tell his followers, he lives by the Word of God and so shall they.

Why, because God's Word is part and parcel of the structures of Creation, without which we would be at a loss as to the way of righteousness.

The laws of chemistry, the laws of physics, the natural order of the material world do not reveal to us righteousness – right living: right personal development; right social relationships; right creational relationships; most important – right relationship with our Creator.

It is inconceivable God who is righteous, could create the Heavens and the Earth and not create righteousness in the warp and woof of Creation.

As a society, we recognize this. Righteousness is why government exists; it is why the justice system exists; it is why the constitution exists.

On last Monday at 8am, if you were tuned in, CBC played the live recording of the installation of Julie Payette as our new Governor General.

As a constitutional monarchy, the Governor General symbolizes the rule of law in Canada. Our governance model, our justice model, our security services, all undergird Canadian society to be a secure, peaceful and prosperous place to live. It is why people all over the world want to come and live in Canada.

There were three oaths Julie Payette was required to swear to uphold. The first, of course, an allegiance to the monarch, Queen Elizabeth the second. What caught my attention was the second oath: the Governor General swore to uphold the 'impartial administration of justice'. Justice and Righteousness are two sides of one coin.

To be a Christian, as the Bible puts it: is to be a citizen of Heaven; a fellow citizen with the saints, a member of the household of God.

Righteousness is of first concern.

Wherein do we find the resources of righteousness – in the Words of God – in the Scriptures – as fulfilled by Jesus.

We live in a world where media streams into us. I urge you as citizens of heaven to daily open the Scriptures and welcome the stream of the Word of God to fit you for your heavenly country. To thankfully read, memorize, study and sing the Scriptures. Amen.