

The Sermon Connection

Connecting Sunday's Teaching to Everyday Living

Volume 3 Issue 37



The Sermon Connection is a weekly handout to help you apply Sunday's sermon content to your everyday life. It is designed to give you additional insights and practical tools for applying the teaching throughout the week.

The application, reflection and connection questions may also serve as a springboard for discussion in your small group, your family time, or in one-on-one conversations.

Hard Sayings of Jesus "From the Inside Out" (Mt. 5:21-22) Sermon by Trent Thomas September 9, 2018

Pastor Trent continued our series in Matthew 5 titled "Hard Sayings of Jesus." Keep in mind that when we talk about Jesus' hard sayings, we mean two things. First of all, some of the things that Jesus said are hard to understand, or interpret. We have to take great care in developing our understanding of what he meant. But second, the hard sayings of Jesus can be difficult to apply. They should cause anyone who is honestly seeking after Jesus to evaluate themselves – if not squirm!

Jesus was quite a radical figure when he burst on to the scene over 2,000 years ago. His life and words challenged the status quo. Such is the case in today's passage where Jesus addresses what is on the inside. Trent pointed out how we spend inordinate amounts of time working to craft our professional image and public persona. We put only the best personal photos on our Instagram and Facebook pages. We invest millions of dollars on diets and weight loss remedies. We spend even more money on clothes and fashion items. Those who can afford it get plastic surgery and cosmetic dentistry. We pay a lot of attention to externals! Sadly, with all of the focus on externals, the part of us that is invisible goes largely unattended and void of care. Our thoughts, attitudes, motives, and emotions are often left unchecked.

As Trent unfolded today's passage, he started by pointing out that "misinterpretation leads to incomplete application." The religious leaders of the day focused on externals – when the law said to not murder, they followed it literally to the letter – and they took great pride in it. However, that was a misinterpretation of what God intended.

Jesus clarifies what God meant by saying that anyone who is angry with his brother (or sister) is subject to the same judgment as one who murders someone. Trent showed how this reveals that BOTH our "externals" and our "internals" matter to God. This is why Jesus condemned the religious leaders as being "white-washed sepulchers." We need to be vigilant in our own lives, because in a culture that is so focused on externals, it is easy to become like the Pharisees were in Jesus' time.

Trent then went to Luke's account of The Sermon on the Mount. In Luke 6:45 Jesus says that "a good man brings good things out of the good that is stored up in his heart." In other words, what shows up on the outside is only revealing what is already on the inside. If anger shows up regularly in our lives, there is anger (and therefore hatred) in our hearts. Only those who have been given a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27) have the capacity to store up good things in their heart. But, as Trent closed, he shared that those who have the Spirit have to SURRENDER to Him on a daily basis. As we do that, we become the same on the inside as we are on the outside!

E CHECK: ALL 5!

READING AND REFLECTION:

Read Matthew 1-7. Observe the references to “the kingdom of heaven.” How did Jesus begin His ministry?

Read all of Matthew 5 to see the context of Jesus’ teaching. Note any observations.

Now read Matthew 5:21-22. How does Jesus’ teaching challenge the status quo?

PERSONAL APPLICATION:

Read I Samuel 16:7. What is the contrast between what people view as most important and what God considers most important? In what ways do you settle for superficial externals with others?

Read Proverbs 16:2. How do we often deceive ourselves when it comes to honest self-examination? How does God counter our self-deception? Is there any area of your life where you are vulnerable to deceiving yourself?

Read Jeremiah 17:10. What is the connection between our thought life, heart desires and our deeds?

Read Luke 6:43-45. What does this passage say about our inward life? Looking back on your life up to the present, what kind of fruit are you bearing?

Read Ezekiel 36:26-27. Reading the Sermon on the Mount can be depressing if you try to obey it in your own strength. What does God promise in this passage that gives the Christian hope for obedience to God’s word from the heart?

COMMUNITY CONNECTION:

In your family or small group time this week, talk about the idea of your external life versus your internal life. Which do you emphasize? Review the verses in the personal application section together and discuss what our lives should look like.

KEY POINT:

Your internals matter to God! Your attitude, thought life, motives, and feelings toward others are all a reflection of what’s going on in your heart. The Christian practices daily surrender to the Holy Spirit in order to align righteous internals and externals.

RESOURCES:

One-Year New Testament Bible (Available at the Information Table on Sunday mornings)