

WALKING WITH JESUS - PART 4
Beautiful reflections
Dr. Derek Morris

Preaching passage: Matthew 5:17-48
Subject: What are the good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven
Complement: those works that reflect the beauty of His character of love and mercy.
Exegetical idea: The good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven are those works that reflect the beauty of His character of love and mercy.
Homiletical idea: **Jesus wants you to reflect the beautiful character of our Father in heaven to the world!**
Purpose: To remind my hearers that God's ideal for them is higher than the highest human thought can reach—to reflect the beauty of God's character to those around them! This will result in glory being given not to us but to our Father in heaven.

I love beautiful reflections, don't you? Look at this one! (slide #1) Beautiful! I love to get away from everything man-made and surround myself with the beauty of God's creation. Beautiful reflections come at different times (slide #2), and in different places. (slide #3) Sometimes it's hard to tell what is the real thing and what is the beautiful reflection! (slide #4) Beautiful reflections can be found in the most unexpected places. (slide #5) We all enjoy looking at beautiful reflections! (slide #6)

My wife Bodil loves beautiful reflections! When we were dating, she took a picture of me standing beside a reflection pond. And she was so enamored with the beautiful reflection that she actually cut my head off in the picture! No, I'm making up a story! Do you want to see the picture? She found it for me on Thursday! (slide #7) Look! No head! Maybe she thought that the picture looked better without my head! But she loved the beautiful reflection!

We all love beautiful reflections! And I'm convinced from my study of the sermon on the mount this week that Jesus loves beautiful reflections too!

This is part 4 of our series on the great sermon of Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount. We are calling this series Walking with Jesus. We began with the testimony of James, son of Zebedee, and set the scene for the preaching of this great sermon by Jesus. Then we looked at the cluster of sayings at the beginning of the sermon. Many Christians have referred to that cluster of sayings as...the Beatitudes. We discovered that the Beatitudes are not a list of obligations in order to earn salvation and become a part of the kingdom of heaven. They are not a list of required characteristics in order to become a follower of Jesus. Rather, this cascade of blessings at the beginning of the sermon on the mount are there to remind us that when we are part of the kingdom of heaven, we are blessed. Blessed. Blessed. Blessed. This great sermon of Jesus begins with a cascade of blessings!

Then last time we considered the powerful metaphors of salt and light. Jesus said, “You are the salt of the earth” and “You are the light of the world”. We discovered from our study that Jesus wants to use you, Jesus wants to use me, to make a difference in the world! What an amazing thought! You are not here on the planet just to survive, or to make a living. Jesus wants to use you to make a difference in the world!

Jesus concludes His discussion of salt and light with the words recorded in Matthew 5:16. If you have a copy of the great sermon of Jesus, let’s read those words together. Matthew 5:16. “.....”

“Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Remember those words: Father in heaven. Our teacher for our advanced class on the Sermon on the Mount, Dr. Ernie Bursey, tells me that this is first time that the words “Father in heaven” are used in Scripture. We’ll hear this expression numerous times in this great

sermon on the mount, including the great model prayer that we'll study, called "The Lord's Prayers." Jesus is inviting us to relate to our Great and Awesome God in a new and intimate way: our Father in heaven! And Jesus tells us that our good works will bring glory to our Father in heaven.

In the section of the sermon that follows, Jesus will provide several examples of those good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven. We are going to study those examples today. At the end of our study today, you'll still have many questions. We could preach a sermon on each example. But I want you to see the big picture. We'll study these examples in greater detail in our advanced class every Tuesday evening with Dr. Ernie Bursey! If you can't join us on campus on Tuesday evening, join us online at www.forestlakechurch.org.

The context for these examples of good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven is found in Matthew 5, beginning with verse 17. Some people were accusing Jesus of not caring about holy living. After all, He didn't abide by all of the man-made rules to protect the Sabbath. Jesus boldly declared, "The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath" and "It is good to do good on the Sabbath day." And Jesus didn't require His disciples to fast, like other teachers, including John the Baptist. We'll study about that next week.

So some people accused Jesus of not caring about holy living. You can hear Jesus' response to this accusation in Matthew 5, beginning with verse 17. Let's read the words of Jesus together. Matthew 5, beginning with verse 17. "....."

Those words must have shocked the people who were listening! Our righteousness has to exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees? Now you have to remember that to the people who heard those words, the Pharisees were the holiest people that they knew. When we

hear the word Pharisee we think “hypocrite” or “self-righteous legalist.” But to the people of Jesus’ day, the Pharisees were the spiritual heroes. All they ever thought about was trying to be holy, and correcting everyone else who wasn’t measuring up.

So the words of Jesus were startling. Your righteousness must exceed that of the Pharisees. Yes. Your holiness but go beyond the letter of the law, beyond the external, to the spirit of the law, the internal. Jesus cares a great about holy living. In fact, Jesus wants us to be a beautiful reflection of the character of our Father in heaven.

So Jesus gives us six examples of good works that will reflect the beautiful character of our Father in heaven and bring glory to His name. None of these good works is a means of earning salvation. None of these works gains us entrance into the kingdom of heaven. But to those who have received the kingdom of heaven as a gift of grace, poor in spirit, with nothing to recommend us except our need and our heavenly Father’s abundant mercy and grace and love, to those who are part of the kingdom Jesus gives six examples of good works that will bring glory to our Father in heaven.

The first example is found in Matthew 5:20-26. Let’s read the words of Jesus together. “.....” Jesus says, “Don’t just not murder. Don’t be angry . Seek reconciliation. Love. Be a beautiful reflection of the character of your Father in heaven.

Then Jesus gives another example of good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven. Matthew 5, beginning with verse 27. Let’s read together. “.....” Those are startling words. Please don’t take them literally and go and pluck out your eye or cut off your hand. I heard a story of someone who actually did that, or at least tried to. But losing one eye won’t stop you from looking lustfully at another people. Having one less hand won’t stop you

from touching inappropriately or stealing things that don't belong to you. Jesus is using a hyperbole here. An exaggeration. He is saying, "Don't let anything stop you from being the person that your heavenly Father is calling you to be!" Jesus wants you to be a beautiful reflection of the character of your Father in heaven.

Let's read on. There is a third example of good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven, starting in Matthew 5:31. "....." Those are challenging words. On another occasion, Jesus had this to say about divorce. Matthew 19:4-6,8: "....." I know. You have many questions. We will study this passage more deeply in our advanced class on Tuesday evening. But would you agree with me that God doesn't want us to discard relationships like pieces of used clothing? If you get tired of it, you just throw it away. That does not reflect the character of our Father in heaven. God is love. Faithful, unselfish, self-sacrificing love. And Jesus calls us, in our relationships as husbands and wives, to be a beautiful reflection of the character of our Father in heaven.

Jesus gives a fourth example of good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven, beginning with Matthew 5:33. Let's read those words of Jesus together. "....." Why do people use an oath? Is it to convince people that they are really being honest this time? People use expressions today like "cross my heart and hope to die if I'm not telling you the truth" or "I swear on my mother's grave" whatever that means. You may have even heard someone say, "May lightning strike me dead if I'm not telling you the truth!" and we all run for cover, don't we?!

Why not be honest all the time? If a person is a liar, is putting a hand on a Bible and promising to tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth going to turn that person into

an honest individual? Just let your yes be yes and your no be no. Speak the truth at all times.

Jesus was a perfect reflection of His Father, and He was full of grace and full of truth. And Jesus wants us to be a beautiful reflection of the character of our Father in heaven.

If you think that the first four examples have been challenging, listen to the last two examples that Jesus gives of good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven. The fifth example is found in Matthew 5, beginning with verse 38. Let's read the words of Jesus together: "....." Does that mean that we have to stop for every beggar, and lend things to people even if we know that they will never give them back? I have lots of questions about this fifth example of good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven. I'm going to ask Dr. Burse to explain this passage to us in our advanced class on Tuesday evening! But as I think about Jesus and His life on this earth, I realize that He modeled the truth of this passage. The apostle Peter gives this testimony about Jesus, recorded in 1 Peter 2:21-24. "....." Jesus did not retaliate. He did not threaten. He could have called ten thousand angels. But Jesus gave all of Himself and His self-sacrificing love is a beautiful reflection of the character of our Father in heaven.

Then comes the sixth and final example that Jesus gives of good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven. Matthew 5, beginning with verse 43. Let's read the words of Jesus together: "....." Moses records the word of the LORD to love your neighbor. That's found in the book of Leviticus, chapter 19:18. But there is no mention there of hating your enemy. That was a man-made addition. Oh, I'm sure that there were people who said "Love your neighbor and hate your enemy," but only half of that was found in Scripture. People still do that today, don't they? Try to add things to the Scripture that aren't written there? Like,

“well, it says somewhere in the Bible that God helps those who help themselves.” That’s not in the Bible! Try Poor Richard’s Almanac, published in 1735 by Benjamin Franklin. I know, it’s not original with him either. But don’t try to add it to the Bible! That’s what people did when they took the word of the Lord “love your neighbor” and added “but hate your enemy”!

Jesus stops that idea dead in its tracks and boldly declares, “Love your enemies....”

Jesus wants you to be a beautiful reflection of the character of our Father in heaven!

Did you notice the expression “Father in heaven” again in Matthew 5:45? We find it again at the end of these six examples of good works that bring glory to our Father in heaven, Matthew 5:48. Jesus says, “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Some people get bogged down with the word “perfect”. They come up with all kinds of doctrines about being sinless in order to deserve heaven. And they miss the main point that Jesus is trying to make. We’ll study the true meaning of that word “perfect” in our advanced class on Tuesday evenings! But I want to point out that in Luke’s account of the sermon of the mount, Jesus doesn’t even conclude the section of the sermon with the word “perfect”. We read these words of Jesus, recorded in Luke 6:36. “Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.”

The message of this section of the great sermon on the mount isn’t about being perfect or not being perfect. The message of this section of the great sermon on the mount is this: Jesus wants you to be a beautiful reflection of the character of your Father in heaven. Be loving, be forgiving, be merciful. Be a beautiful reflection...not to earn salvation! No! But to bring glory to our Father in heaven. Jesus wants you to be a beautiful reflection of the character of our Father in heaven.

A member of our church family, Gayle Murphy, has captured that truth in the words of a song. I want you to listen to the words. And as you listen, you're going to see some beautiful reflections of the character of our Father in heaven. I share these beautiful reflections with you not to bring glory to any person, but to bring glory to our Father in heaven.

Look now, and listen, and may your heart respond with this simple prayer: May my life be a beautiful reflection of the character of our Father in heaven.

(Listen to song and watch Powerpoint presentation)

Prayer: Yes, Lord. That is our prayer. May our lives be an example of your love and grace...all our days. Father in heaven, may we be beautiful reflections of your character and bring glory to Your name. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.