

LIVE TOWARD LIFE'S END

SERMON ON THE MOUNT: MATTHEW 7



A Scriptorium Study from The Fellowship of Ailbe

T . M . M O O R E

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Sermon on the Mount: Live toward Life's End: Matthew 7

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Matthew 7: Introduction

In Matthew 7, Jesus continues to develop the theme of righteousness. He also returns to the subject of prayer to emphasize the importance of persevering in it. Life in the Kingdom follows a difficult path, and they who walk it can be identified by the fruit of righteousness borne in their lives. At the end, they will stand through the judgment, while others whose works were merely outward and superficial will perish.

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We hope you find this study of Ecclesiastes a challenging and stretching experience of journeying more deeply into the Word of God. Thank you for joining us.

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1 Care in Judging

Pray Psalm 82.8.

Arise, O God, judge the earth;
For You shall inherit all nations.

Sing Psalm 82.8.

(Aurelia: [*The Church's One Foundation*](#))

Rise up, O God, in splendor according to Your worth!
Rise up in pow'r to judge all the nations of the earth!
Rise up, O God our Savior, and hear our fervent call,
for You possess and rule o'er the nations one and all.

Read and meditate on Matthew 7.1-6.

Prepare.

1. How does Jesus warn us with respect to judging others?
2. What is the prerequisite for being able to judge others with righteous judgment?

Meditate.

This passage ranks high on the “Most Misunderstood” list of Scriptures. Many people are of the opinion that Jesus’ teaching here gives them a pass on having opinions about anything, or prohibits them from pointing out sins in others. But this passage does not forbid exercising righteous judgment, whether about issues or people. It simply raises some caution flags for practicing righteous judgment.

Jesus elsewhere commands us to judge with righteous judgment (Jn. 7.24). He further told His disciples – and by extension, us – that we are to judge one another, with Him, as He would (Matt. 19.28). So *not* judging is not an option.

We cannot avoid judging others. But we must make sure that we judge people the way we want to be judged (v. 2). Judging this way anticipates the Golden Rule, which Jesus will put forth in verse 12. In order to judge righteously, fairly, truly, and in love, we have to first judge ourselves (vv. 3-5). It would be hypocrisy to try to correct someone else as long as sin remains with our own souls. We must exercise continuous vigilance over our souls, and all our lives, lest sin take root there (cf. Prov. 4.20-27). If we are clean and clear of sin in ourselves, we’ll be in a position then to help our neighbor with the speck we have observed in his eye (v. 4). We are called to admonish and correct one another, and to build one another up; we can’t do that without exercising righteous judgment.

Verse 6 is added for two reasons. First, we who are entrusted with the Good News of the Kingdom must broadcast it widely, paying careful attention to receptive hearers, that we might cultivate them for Kingdom fruit. If we spend all our time trying to argue hard-hearted people into the Kingdom, we’ll end up with them running roughshod over us and our teaching, with little Kingdom fruit to show for it. Second, Jesus wants us to understand that some people who hear the Good News from us will regard it as something to be trampled underfoot. Don’t be alarmed when that happens. Instead, realize that you’re just fulfilling what Jesus spoke of here and elsewhere.

Reflect.

1. What are some ways that Christians *must* judge one another?
2. What are some aspects of life in the world that require Christians to exercise righteous judgment?
3. What can we do to help ensure that all our judging is righteous judging?

The word hypocrite is aptly employed here, since the denouncing of evils is best viewed as a matter only for upright persons of goodwill. When the wicked engage in it, they are like impersonators, masqueraders, biding their real selves behind a mask, while they portray another's character through the mask. Augustine (354-430), Sermon on the Mount 2.19.64

Help me to make righteous judgments today, Lord, especially as I...

Pray Psalm 82.1-7.

God calls His rulers – those to whom He has entrusted His Kingdom – to judge righteously. Pray that He will enable you to do so today.

Sing Psalm 82.1-7.

Psalm 82.1-7 (Aurelia: [*The Church's One Foundation*](#))

God stands amid His people to judge their rulers all:
How long will they oppress those who on His favor call?
How long will they the wicked show partiality,
and treat with scorn the meek who their proper care should be?

Behold the weak and orphaned in need of loving care;
the destitute and smitten are with you everywhere.
Do justice, then, you rulers, to all God's needy lambs.
Redeem, revive, retrieve them from wicked, sinful hands.

They do not understand, they in darkness walk around,
while Zion's walls are shaken and scattered on the ground.
God says to them, "My children, the sons of God Most High,
though you be high exalted, like all men you shall die."

2 Persevering in Prayer

Pray Psalm 63.1, 2.

O God, You are my God;
Early will I seek You;
My soul thirsts for You;
My flesh longs for You
In a dry and thirsty land
Where there is no water.
So I have looked for You in the sanctuary,
To see Your power and Your glory.

Sing Psalm 63.1, 2.

(Nun Danken: [*Now Thank We All Our God*](#))

O God, You are my God, and earnestly I seek You!
My soul thirsts and my flesh in weariness now greets You!
Thus I would see Your face, with glory and pow'r arrayed,
in this Your holy place – Your beauty here displayed.

Read Matthew 7.1-11; meditate on verses 7-11.

Prepare.

1. What incentive does Jesus give us for persevering in prayer?
2. How does He emphasize the importance of keeping on in prayer?

Meditate.

Jesus has already spoken at length about prayer (Matt. 6.1-10). Prayer is the most characteristic Christian practice. We know the Lord, and we love Him. It only makes sense that we should want to talk with Him all the time. Praying without ceasing is the goal of a life of prayer (Lk. 18.1), but most of us fall far short of that objective.

Which is why, I suppose, Jesus returned to prayer at this point in His sermon, to emphasize its importance, the need to persist at it, and the promise that attends to it.

The promise is that God is ready at all times to bestow heavenly gifts upon us. He is more eager to give than we are to seek! Our Father surrounds us with all manner of good gifts throughout the day, most of which – sight, breath, transport, work, etc. – we take for granted. These are from God, and should prompt us at some point in our day to reflect and give thanks.

But God has more in store: He wants to give us more of His Holy Spirit, for spiritual fruit and gifts, transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ, and power for witness-bearing (Lk. 11.9-13). Why don't we ask more frequently for these things?

Prayer is hard work. So hard, in fact, that most of us don't work very hard at it. We have a few minutes of prayer in the morning and evening, and probably at meal times. But that does not match the expectations of prayer Jesus holds out for those who are seeking His Kingdom and righteousness. We need to take up the struggle of prayer at every moment – asking, seeking, knocking – and persevering in prayer throughout the day. Thus we grow in faith and love for the

Lord, and we show that we believe His Word and embrace the way of life to which He calls us.

We will not make progress either in righteousness or the Kingdom apart from an active, persistent, ongoing, and joyful life of prayer. The sooner we get to work on this, the sooner Christ's Kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven, beginning in our souls.

Reflect.

1. Why is it so important to persevere in prayer?
2. What are some of the heavenly gifts our Father wants us to have more of?
3. How can believers encourage one another for greater persistence and consistency in prayer?

So even we who are evil know how to give what is asked. How much more confidence ought we to have that God will give us good things when we ask. God will not deceive us by giving us one thing rather than another when we ask of him. Even we do not deceive our children. And whatever good gifts we bestow, we give what is God's and not our own.
Augustine (354-430), *Sermon on the Mount* 2.21.73

Lord, call me to prayer throughout the day today, and I will...

Pray 63.3-11.

Think ahead to what you'll be doing throughout the day. Give thanks for each activity or task, and ask Him to remind you to give thanks again as you do them.

Sing Psalm 63.3-11.

Psalm 63.3-11 (Nun Danken: [*Now Thank We All Our God*](#))

Your steadfast love, O Lord, than life is better to me.
So I will praise Your Name, and bless You, Lord, most truly.
My soul is richly blest; to You my hands I raise,
and open now my mouth to offer joyful praise.

By night, Lord, fill my mind with pleasant meditation;
for You have been my help as 'neath Your wings I station.
My soul clings, Lord, to You; I rest in Your Right Hand.
May all who seek my life in Your displeasure stand.

Unto the sword's strong pow'r let our foes be delivered!
Pursue them to devour their mortal lives forever!
In God will we rejoice and glory in His grace;
but all who live by lies shall perish from His face.

3 The Right Gate and Path

Pray Psalm 101.1, 2.

I will sing of steadfast love and justice;
to you, O LORD, I will make music.
I will ponder the way that is blameless.
Oh when will you come to me?
I will walk with integrity of heart
within my house...

Sing Psalm 101.1, 2.

(Jesus I Come)

I will of lovingkindness now sing – praise to You, Lord! Praise to You, Lord!
Justice and mercy, Lord, let me bring – praise to You, holy Lord!
I will the blameless way ever heed; no worthless thing my eyes shall impede.
When will You come and care for my need? Praise to You, holy Lord!

Read Matthew 7.1-14; meditate on verses 12-14.

Prepare.

1. How does Jesus summarize the entire Old Testament?
2. Which gate leads to life?

Meditate.

Life in the Kingdom proceeds contrary to our natural way of thinking. It is not natural for us to love others the way we love ourselves. What's natural is to try to get them to love us the way we love ourselves, whatever that may require. Loving others as we love ourselves entails, ironically, denying our own interests and needs so that we can attend to the interests and needs of others, as Jesus explained in Matthew 5.43-48. That is, we don't love ourselves properly by constantly guarding ourselves, indulging ourselves, and looking out only for ourselves. We love ourselves properly when we look to Jesus and follow His example of self-denial and sacrifice. Loving our neighbors in this way "is the Law and the Prophets." If we neglect or despise the Law or the Prophets, we will not have the wherewithal to fulfill the Golden Rule.

We enter the Kingdom, and conduct our life's journey in it, through the narrow gate of faith in Jesus Christ, and along the path of self-denial, suffering, persecution, and perseverance. Jesus is the Gate to the sheepfold of the Lord (Jn. 10.7-9). He alone is the Way into the Kingdom of God, and the life of self-denial and works of righteousness that characterize life in the Kingdom.

The Kingdom path is "difficult", obviously. The Greek word translated "difficult" in NKJV derives from the verb *θλιβω*, *thlibo*, which means "to cause someone to suffer trouble or hardship – to cause trouble to, to persecute, to cause to suffer hardship" (Louw and Nida). At the beginning of Jesus' sermon He warned that men would persecute us and that we would need to work at humility, meekness, mercy, self-denial, and putting others first. Here He reiterates, as His sermon moves toward its denouement. He will make this point over and over during His earthly sojourn. Why should we not think this applies to us?

It is not natural for us to choose the more difficult path. We want the easy road, or at least, the less

strenuous, in everything we do. But the way of the Kingdom is not “natural”; rather, it is supernatural, and requires help from beyond and within us, even the indwelling Spirit of God.

No wonder it's so important to work at praying without ceasing, and at bringing all our needs and requests to our Father, Who has only good things in store for us.

Reflect.

1. Why is there only one “gate” into the Kingdom of God?
2. What makes the Kingdom path so “difficult”?
3. How can believers encourage one another to stay the difficult course of the Kingdom path?

*It is with difficulty that we are brought to renounce the world, and to regulate ourselves and our life by the manners of a few. We think it strange that we should be forcibly separated from the vast majority, as if we were not a part of the human race. But though the doctrine of Christ confines and hems us in, reduces our life to a narrow road, separates us from the crowd, and unites us to a few companions, yet this harshness ought not to prevent us from striving to obtain life. John Calvin (1509-1564), *Commentary on Matthew 7.12**

Give me strength to walk the narrow and difficult path today, Lord, so that I...

Pray Psalm 101.3-8.

What lies in your path for today? Commit it all to the Lord, and to following His lead in righteousness.

Sing Psalm 101.3-8.

Psalm 101.3-8 ([*Jesus I Come*](#))

I will the works of wicked men scorn – praise to You, Lord! Praise to You, Lord!

They will not grip me, evening or morn: Praise to You, holy Lord!

Separate every sin from my heart; slanderers all from me shall depart.

I will not suffer pride in my heart: Praise to You, holy Lord!

Let me with saints and faithful ones dwell – praise to You, Lord! Praise to You, Lord!

He Who is just shall care for me well: Praise to You, holy Lord!

Naught of deceit or falsehood shall be ever allowed a place within me.

Daily let sin and wickedness flee: Praise to You, holy Lord!

4 Known by Their Fruits

Pray Psalm 135.1-7.

Praise the LORD!
Praise Him, O you servants of the LORD!
You who stand in the house of the LORD,
In the courts of the house of our God,
Praise the LORD, for the LORD is good;
Sing praises to His name, for it is pleasant.
For the LORD has chosen Jacob for Himself,
Israel for His special treasure.
For I know that the LORD is great,
And our LORD is above all gods.
Whatever the LORD pleases He does,
In heaven and in earth,
In the seas and in all deep places.
He causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth;
He makes lightning for the rain;
He brings the wind out of His treasuries.

Sing Psalm 135.1-7.

(St. Gertrude: [*Onward, Christian Soldiers*](#))
Praise the Savior, praise Him, for His Name is good.
Sing, for it is pleasant, to our glorious God!
All whom He has chosen and redeemed by grace,
praise His Name together, praise Him in this holy place!

Refrain v. 1

Praise the Name of Jesus, you who serve His Word!
Raise your voice and praise our good and glorious Lord!

Great and sovereign, Jesus rules o'er all above,
doing as He pleases, sovereign in His love.
Clouds and seas obey Him, lightning, too, and rain;
He the winds brings forth in pow'r and sends them back again.

Refrain

Read Matthew 7.1-20; meditate on verses 15-20.

Prepare.

1. How is Jesus using the word *fruit* in these verses?
2. What does the *fruit* of a person's life reveal about that person?

Meditate.

One wonders: What might be the fruit of false teachers? What should we be looking for in those whose teaching brings bad fruit? There's no shortage of false teachers in the world. We're well aware of that. But the really dangerous false teachers are in the Church, assuming the guise of *prophets* (v. 15). We know that teachers, pundits, academics, journalists, and writers of various sorts who have no faith in Christ, no belief in God, and no commitment to absolute truths – we know we have to keep

both eyes wide open when we're interacting with them or their writings. It's the *prophets* who are really troublesome, the ones who, in the Name of the Lord, are leading people away from Him. False prophets bear bad fruit, leading people away from Christ, away from His Word, and away from His Kingdom. False prophets use all the most current religious language. But they use it to undermine Christ and His agenda, and to stoke the fires of mere self-interest in the name of religion.

False prophets minimize the Law of God, which Jesus highly commends (Matt. 5.17-19). False prophets go easy on sin, which Jesus condemned in all its forms. False prophets insist that the Gospel is all about you, but Jesus reminds us the Gospel is about the Kingdom and righteousness of God. The end of all such teachers, and all who heed them, is just (v. 19).

Watch out for false prophets. Test them by the Word, by Christ, by their commitment to the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and by the fruit that issues from their teaching.

True teachers are like vines and trees that bear good fruit, the fruit of righteousness and Kingdom living. This kind of fruit comes only by following the example of Jesus – standing firmly on all of God's Word, pointing to Jesus as the end of all our learning, and insisting on lives that bear holy spiritual fruit. Those are the good and true teachers, and, like the false teachers, you'll know which are which by the type of fruit that grows from their lives.

Reflect.

1. What kind of good fruit should we expect from those who are good trees?
2. What are some examples of bad fruit, that issue from the teaching of false prophets?
3. What can we do to make sure we know the good from the bad when it comes to the fruit that comes out in our lives?

The tree, of course, is the soul itself—that is, the person—and the fruits are the person's works. So a bad person cannot perform good works, nor can a good person perform bad works. Augustine (354-430), *Sermon on the Mount* 2.24.79

Lord, help me to bear good fruit and to be known by...

Pray Psalm 135.13-21.

Seek the Lord and His judgment in all matters. Make no room for any idols – including false teachings – that will draw you away from Him. Bless the Lord and go forth to praise Him in your life.

Sing Psalm 135.13-21.

Psalm 135.13-21 (St. Gertrude: [*Onward, Christian Soldiers*](#))

Evermore Your Name, O Savior, shall endure!

Your renown throughout all ages is secure.

For You have compassion, vindicating all
those who serve Your Name and on Your saving mercy call.

Refrain, v. 1

Praise the Name of Jesus, you who serve His Word!

Raise your voice and praise our good and glorious Lord!

Vain the nations serve the idols of their hands.

Mouths and ears they have but cannot understand.
Every idol vain is, lacking life or breath.
All who serve them, like them, shall be lost to lasting death.
Refrain

Bless the Lord you people, all who love the Lord!
Bless Him, you who trust His sovereign, holy Word!
Bless the Lord from Zion, Him Who in it dwells.
Praise Him! Lift your voices, all His grace and glory tell!
Refrain

5 Never Known

Pray Psalm 140.6-8.

I said to the LORD: “You are my God;
Hear the voice of my supplications, O Lord.
O God the Lord, the strength of my salvation,
You have covered my head in the day of battle.
Do not grant, O LORD, the desires of the wicked;
Do not further his wicked scheme,
Lest they be exalted.

Sing Psalm 140.6-8.

(Old Rockingham: O Lord, Most High, with All My Heart)

You are my God, O God, my Lord!
Give ear, show mercy to my pleas!
Salvation grant by Your strong Word.
Grant not their wicked, evil schemes.

Read Matthew 7.1-23; meditate on verse 21-23.

Prepare.

1. What does Jesus mean by “that day”? To which “day” is He referring? What happens on “that day”?
2. Who are described as those “who practice lawlessness”?

Meditate.

My good friend and colleague Mike Slay says this is the scariest passage in the Bible. I do not doubt but that this is so. It would be difficult to overemphasize the importance of this passage, much less to bring out its full meaning and significance in a few short paragraphs. Nevertheless, let’s have a look.

Here, at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus advises His hearers to focus on the end of their lives, and the end of all things. A day is coming – “that day” (v. 22) – when, according to Jesus, an accounting will be given for how we have spent the minutes, hours, days, and years of our lives. The prize for those who pass muster is full and final entrance into the Kingdom they have been seeking all their lives (v. 21). These are they who have done the will of the heavenly Father (v. 21): they have sought His Kingdom and righteousness, labored to increase in His perfections, nurtured a deep and vital inward relationship with Him, and have hung on every Word that proceeds from His mouth and the mouth of Jesus. The result is that they *know Jesus Christ*. They know Him personally and intimately, truly and lovingly; and what’s even better than that, *Jesus Christ knows them* (v. 23)!

Another way of saying this is that those who know Jesus can be recognized by their having followed His example of loving, delighting in, contemplating, and fulfilling the Law of God – increasing in love for God and neighbor, and thus always increasing in Kingdom greatness (Matt. 5.17-19).

Those, on the other hand, who account for their lives in terms of works *they have done* – works which they intend to hold forth before the eternal Judge as somehow deserving of His approval and earning them a place in His Kingdom – such people will be sorely disappointed. Because it will be seen that

all their many and impressive works had but one end: to commend them to Jesus as having earned a place with Him (v. 22).

But their works were not according to God's Law, but were *lawless*, appearances to the contrary notwithstanding. They were done to satisfy themselves and impress others; they were done as manifestations of self-love, and for self-serving ends. Jesus *knows* – loves, communes with, receives, delights in – none who practice lawlessness, who think that somehow their good works, even works done in Jesus' Name, merit them some eternal place in His presence. They do not.

We must pass the days of this life with an eye on the end, when we will stand before Jesus to give an account of ourselves. On that day, let us be seen as loyal and obedient servants, who have faithfully, albeit haltingly, sought the Kingdom and righteousness of God in all our ways, and who plead not *our* faithfulness, but that of Jesus, Whom we know, and Whom we know knows us.

Finally, let us not fail to notice in this passage how Jesus teaches us to relate to Him: "Lord, Lord" (v. 21). He is our Redeemer and Savior, but He is also our Lord. Let us live the reality of this in all our minutes, hours, days, and years.

Reflect.

1. Why did Jesus reject the works proudly held forth by the "Many"?
2. How would you explain to an unbelieving friend what is necessary to enter the Kingdom of heaven?
3. What does it mean for you to live toward the end of all things?

Christ again summons hypocrites to his judgment-seat, as we showed a little ago from Luke. So long as they hold a place in his Church, they both flatter themselves and deceive others. He therefore declares, that a day is coming, when he will cleanse his barn, and separate the chaff and straw from the pure wheat. John Calvin (1509-1564), Commentary on Matthew 7.22

Show me Your will, Lord Jesus, so that today I...

Pray Psalm 140.1-5, 9-13.

Pray that God will keep you in His path today, that He will guard you from all evil and through every temptation, and that He will keep you focused on your eternal dwelling place with Him.

Sing Psalm 140.1-5, 9-13.

Psalm 140.1-5, 9-13 ([Old Rockingham: O Lord, Most High, with All My Heart](#))

From evil, violent men, I pray,
deliver me, preserve me, Lord!
Their hearts they bend to evil ways,
and serpent's venom is their word.

Guard me, O Lord, from wicked hands,
from violent men preserve my life!
They sow my path with wicked plans,
with nets and snares and cords of strife.

As for the head of all my foes,

let all their evil bring them down.
Let burning coals and endless woes
on all their sland'rous words abound.

The Lord, I know, my cause shall take,
and justice for me surely do;
The righteous will thanksgiving make,
the upright e'er shall dwell with You.

6 Solid Rock

Pray Psalm 40.1-3.

I waited patiently for the LORD;
And He inclined to me,
And heard my cry.
He also brought me up out of a horrible pit,
Out of the miry clay,
And set my feet upon a rock,
And established my steps.
He has put a new song in my mouth—
Praise to our God;
Many will see it and fear,
And will trust in the LORD.

Sing Psalm 40.1-3.

(Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

I waited patiently for God; He inclined and heard my cry,
lifted me up above the sod, set me on a Rock on high!
New songs in my mouth He gave; may He through me many save.

Read Matthew 7.1-29; meditate on verses 24-29.

Prepare.

1. How does Jesus describe the wise person? The foolish person?
2. How did the people react to Jesus' teaching?

Meditate.

We recall that this sermon began with Jesus saying, “You have heard it said...but I say to you...” His own words were the only authority Jesus drew on in His teaching. He brought the Old Testament into His teaching, but only so that He could clarify and enlarge its meaning in Himself. The scribes could not teach anything without citing some human reference: “As Rabbi So-and-So puts it...” Jesus did not need to support His words with authorities beyond Himself and the Word of God. He spoke with authority – as if He were the author of what He taught, for indeed, He is.

He insisted that His teaching was reliable and sure, like a person who builds a house on a solid rock foundation (the word for “rock”, meaning the bedrock that spreads out and supports the earth’s mantle, is, in the Greek, πέτρα, *petra*; we’ll consider the importance of this when we get to chapter 16). External threats, in the form of false teaching, trials, or temptations, cannot move the person who stands squarely on the solid rock of Jesus’ foundation: “On Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand...” Every other foundation for building a life other than the Word of Jesus Christ is shifting, sinking sand. It will not last.

The reason the people “were astonished” at Jesus’ teaching is not hard to understand. He continued, throughout His sermon, to teach about the righteousness of God and His Kingdom, referring to Old Testament texts and teachings, but assigning them deeper significance on the authority of His own understanding. He thus put Himself above all the rabbis of Israel as supreme Interpreter of Scripture, and more than that, as the Lord to Whom all will one day give an account. The people had never

heard any teaching like this, but they must have sensed the truth of it.

Reflect.

1. How would you explain to a new believer what it means to build his house on the solid Rock of Jesus Christ?
2. Why are all other philosophies, worldviews, and ways of life like houses build on sand?
3. How does Jesus teach us to read and understand the Old Testament?

*But most of all they were astounded at his authority. For when he said these things, he did not refer to another, as even the prophet Moses did, but everywhere he showed that he himself was the One who had the authority to decide. For even when he was establishing laws Jesus continually added, "But I say to you." And when he was reminding them of the final day of judgment, he showed that he himself is the One who will bring justice, both through the punishments and through the honors. John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 25.1**

Let me build on the solid Rock of Your Word, Lord, so that I...

Pray Psalm 40.4-17.

Thank God for His blessings and protection, and call on Him to empower you to proclaim the good news of righteousness in your Personal Mission Field.

Sing Psalm 40.4-17.

Psalm 40.4-17 (Dix: [*For the Beauty of the Earth*](#))

Blessed are all who trust in You, turning both from lies and pride.
Countless wonders, Lord, You do, and Your thoughts with us abide.
Lord, Your worth who can declare? None with You can e'er compare.

Offerings You do not require – open now my ears, O Lord.
What from me do You desire? Firm delight to do Your Word.
Take my life in ev'ry part; write Your Law upon my heart.

Lord, Your truth will I proclaim to Your people gathered 'round,
nor will I my lips restrain – let Your precious ways resound!
Of Your saving grace and Word I would speak, most loving Lord.

Keep Your mercy not from me; let Your love and truth prevail.
Evil and iniquity make my trembling heart to fail.
Lord, be pleased to rescue me! Let my shelter with You be.

Bring to shame my ev'ry foe, all who would my life destroy;
Bring them down to scorn and woe who at my hurt sing for joy.
Let them come to grief and shame who heap scorn upon my name.

Let them shout for joy and sing who in saving grace delight!
Let them praise to Jesus bring, though affliction be their plight.
Christ, our help, our Savior He! Of us ever mindful be!

7 The End of Christian Life

Pray Psalm 15.1, 2.

Lord, who may abide in Your tabernacle?
Who may dwell in Your holy hill?
He who walks uprightly,
And works righteousness,
And speaks the truth in his heart...

Sing Psalm 15.1, 2.

(Arlington: [*This Is the Day the Lord Has Made*](#))

Lord, who may dwell within Your tent, or on Your holy hill?
All those who keep Your covenant and walk within Your will.

All they who with integrity work peace and righteousness,
forever in God's house shall be forgiven, kept, and blessed.

Read and meditate on Matthew 7.1-29.

Prepare.

1. How do you see this part of the sermon pointing to the end of the Christian life?
2. How does Jesus liken the Christian life to a journey in these verses?

Meditate.

We may think of the *end* of Christian life in three ways.

First, *end* refers to the terminus of our lives, our final disposition and estate. The sermon on the mount begins with those who enter the Kingdom (the beatitudes) and ends with all people coming to the judgment throne of the Lord. Having entered the Gate of the Kingdom through Jesus, we travel all our lives the difficult path of seeking the Kingdom and righteousness of God, building everything on the solid Rock of our Lord Jesus Christ.

At all times, the *end* of life in the Kingdom is to participate in God – to know Him and be known by Him – which we do through His Word and prayer. The sermon on the mount teaches us how to pray so that we may connect truly with our Lord (Matt. 6.1-10), and instructs us to pray continually in order to maintain that participation (Matt. 7.7-12). Only by thus abiding in the Lord will we know Him working in us for true righteousness.

For true righteousness is the *end* of our lives – our purpose, goal, and defining motif – as citizens of the Kingdom of God. We expect to see increasing fruit of righteousness in our lives as we continue along the difficult path that leads to our eternal dwelling with God.

Christians live toward the *end realization* of their calling to the Kingdom of God in everything. We are always seeking to abide in the Lord, to bring forth the fruit of righteousness in all our ways, and to keep looking forward to the day of our standing before the Lord and, because of Jesus, finding our eternal dwelling place with Him. Thus, the sermon on the mount provides a precis and overview of what it means to know, love, and serve Jesus – to be His disciples to the end (Ps. 119.112).

Reflect.

1. What can you do to keep the ultimate *end* of the Christian life more continuously before your mind?
2. How can you improve on the *end* of abiding in the Lord more consistently?
3. How are you growing in the *end* of Christian life, which is righteousness?

He said "whoever does the will of my Father" shall enter, not whoever does my will. Why? Nothing is insufficient if they do the will of the Father. What he did say was itself a very difficult thing to accept in view of their weakness. He implied that to do his Father's will is to do his will. There is no other willing of the Son than the will of the Father.
John Chrysostom (344-407), *The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 24.1*

Help me always, Lord, to keep the end of my life in sight, so that I...

Pray Psalm 15.1-5.

Today you will walk the difficult path that marks the course of your journey in the Kingdom of God. Seek Him to help you keep the end of your life in view throughout the day ahead.

Sing Psalm 15.1-5.

Psalm 15.1-5 (Arlington: [This Is the Day the Lord Has Made](#))

Lord, who may dwell within Your tent, or on Your holy hill?
All those who keep Your covenant and walk within Your will.

All they who with integrity work peace and righteousness,
Forever in God's house shall be forgiven, kept, and blessed.

Let truth from every heart proceed, and slander disappear:
Thus shall we know God's grace indeed and feel His presence near.

No evil to your neighbor speak, nor turn against your friend:
Thus shall you know the end you seek – God's presence without end.

Let every sinner be despised; but those who fear the Lord
Shall honor have before our eyes, according to God's Word.

All they who keep their word in faith, though suffering may ensue,
Shall know the favor of God's grace, His presence ever true.

No greed and no injustice shall they do who seek the Lord;
But on His mercy ever call and stand upon His Word.

Questions for Reflection or Discussion

1. Why is prayer so important for life in the Kingdom of God?
2. How would you explain to a new believer the kind of fruit God is looking for in us?
3. What is involved in building our lives on the solid Rock of Jesus?
4. Why is it important always to keep the end of our lives in view?
5. What's the most important lesson you've learned from Matthew 7.1-29? How are you putting that lesson to work in your Personal Mission Field?

For prayer:

The Fellowship of Ailbe

The Fellowship of Ailbe is a spiritual fellowship in the Celtic Christian tradition. Our goal is to promote revival, renewal, and awakening, following the teaching of Scripture and the example and heritage of our forebears in the faith.

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Thank you.