

**Gathering Question:** What kinds of images does the word “sermon” conjure? Why do you feel that way? What kind of image should “sermon” bring to a person? Do you think the day of effective sermons is over? What makes a sermon good?

## **Getting the Most Out of the Sermon on the Mount**

The Sermon on the Mount is probably the best known part of Jesus’ teachings but it might be the least understood and the least obeyed section of all. This sermon of Jesus is so important because it seems to be a compilation of teachings from the Son of God describing what he wants his followers to be and to do.

Soon after Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist and after he was tempted in the wilderness for 40 days and nights, Jesus began to announce the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Jesus was in many ways the embodiment of Kingdom life. He modeled what he preached. The new age was dawning and Jesus went everywhere crying out, “Repent! For the kingdom of God is near! (Matthew 4:17) “Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in the synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom.” (Matthew 4:23)

The coming of the Kingdom is the context in which we should study the Sermon on the Mount. And it should be seen in the context of repentance. Repentance is from a Greek word that means “to change your mind.” When God’s rule comes, people change and the way they act changes. People in the Kingdom of God were not to take their cue on living from the people around them but they were to imitate the life of Jesus in every part of their lives. One of the key phrases from the Sermon of Jesus could be Matthew 6:8, “You must not do what they do.”

Jesus in this sermon calls his disciples to live different lives. Their character is to be different (beatitudes). The characteristics and things the world values are different from what a follower of Jesus values. In every paragraph of the Sermon on the Mount the difference between life with a worldly perspective and kingdom living is brought into sharp contrast.

The Sermon on the Mount is the most complete description anywhere in the New Testament of the Christian counterculture. We will find here a Christian value system, ethical standard, religious devotion, attitude to money, ambition, lifestyle and network of relationship—all of which are the total opposite of the non-Christian world. The Sermon on the Mount presents life in the Kingdom of God, a fully human life lived under divine rule.

**Read:** Matthew 7:24-29

**Reflect:**

1. After reading this parable, describe why Jesus’ words are so important for a Christian to put into practice.
2. What made Jesus’ teaching different from all others? What does it mean that he taught with authority?