# Congregational-Presbyterian Church

 **“The Teaching of Jesus”**

**Matthew 5:1-10**

 **January 8, 2023**

We have a mission statement in our church: “To Know Christ, to Become Like Christ, and to Share Christ.” As we begin a new sermon series today on the Sermon on the Mount from the Gospel of Matthew chapters five through seven, it is my prayer that this series will empower our mission statement to not just be words we speak but truths we live. I invite you to turn with me to the beginning of Jesus’ sermon in Matthew 5:1-10

One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, and he began to teach them. “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs. God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted. God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth. God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied. God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy. God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God. God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God. God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

This morning I would like us to think together about Jesus as a teacher, focusing on the first two verses of the chapter. Then, beginning next week, we will spend a Sunday on each of the eight Beatitudes in verses three through ten. I encourage you to follow our daily Bible Reading Plan and accompanying devotions as we study our way through these teachings of Jesus. Each daily Scripture passage connects with the coming Sunday’s topic. The new plan was distributed last Sunday. If you did not receive one, you will find it in the pew rack. You can also download it, together with the devotions, from our church website.

So, Jesus as a teacher. The first thing to explore about Jesus as a teacher is to ask what he intended his teaching to accomplish. This is important for us to consider, because our default assumption is that a teacher is someone who conveys information about a topic. Our teachers in school did this, wanting us to learn math or science or a foreign language. It would therefore be natural for us to think that Jesus’ purpose for his teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is to give us information about how to live the Christian life. But, he wants to do much more than merely give us information. Jesus intends for his teaching to launch a transformation in our lives so that we become like him.

The verses that we read from Matthew this morning say nothing about becoming a Christian. That is because Jesus’ teaching in these verses, and those that follow in the Sermon, is for those who have already accepted him as their Lord and Savior, who have become his disciples, his faithful followers, and as a result have the Holy Spirit living within. This is Jesus’ teaching for those who already know him, who are committed to becoming like him, and who desire to share him with others. What he taught his disciples that day, and what he teaches us today, is how to live our life in the manner he lived his life.

To put it a little differently, and to help make it more personal for each one of us who seek to become like him, Jesus is teaching us how to live our life as he would live our life if he were us. That’s quite a mouthful, so let me use myself as an example. To apply the teaching of Jesus to myself in such a way that I am becoming like Christ, I need to ask myself how Jesus, if he were me, would be the pastor of Congregational-Presbyterian Church. How would he preach and teach, give pastoral counseling, visit the sick and the homebound, lead the staff, moderate the board meetings, and do the many other things that are a part of my regular routine? Moving beyond the church, how would he integrate his role as pastor with that of husband, father, neighbor, and friend? Even on the soccer field where I am a referee, I need to ask myself how Jesus would referee if he were me.

In his Sermon, Jesus speaks of living in the Kingdom of Heaven, and in order to live in heaven’s kingdom, we must be willing to live like heaven’s chief resident. Later, in Matthew 13:44-46, Jesus speaks two brief parables that illustrate the *value* of following his teaching for how he lives in and through us:

The Kingdom of Heaven is like a treasure that a man discovered hidden in a field. In his excitement, he hid it again and sold everything he owned to get enough money to buy the field. Again, the Kingdom of Heaven is like a merchant on the lookout for choice pearls. When he discovered a pearl of great value, he sold everything he owned and bought it!

What treasure is worth selling all we have in order to possess it? What pearl is so valuable that we would do anything to own it? The treasure and the pearl are one and the same thing: it is the blessing we receive when we live our life as Jesus would live it if he were us. The blessed Christian life, the happy Christian life, the Christian life filled with love and joy and peace – this is the kind of life that Jesus is offering in his Sermon. Would you like this kind of happiness in 2023? Would you like a taste of the abundant life that he came to bring? Would you like to bear fruit for him? Then listen closely to his words in this Sermon and, having listened, decide that they are for you more valuable than any treasure, of more worth than the choicest pearl this world has to offer.