

ERSKINE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

NT 722

The Sermon on the Mount

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Due West Campus

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I. COURSE DESCRIPTION

The course is an exposition of the text of the Gospel according to Matthew, Chapters 5 through 7. Modern interpretations are surveyed, followed by literary and historical analysis of the Sermon and exposition of the text. Relationships of the Sermon to Judaism and the whole body of Jesus' teachings are considered. The ethical relevance of the Sermon is also considered. ELECTIVE (Exegesis). Three hours credit.

II. COURSE OBJECTIVES

"The mission of Erskine Theological Seminary is to educate persons for service in the Christian Church" (ETS 2008-2009 *Catalog*, p. 5). Understanding and embodying the radical teachings of Jesus is a direct expression of this mission statement. The ethical demands of Jesus not only call the student to a different kind of living, but they also provide the heart of Jesus' teaching which is to be shared with the whole Church. This course is a direct expression of the Seminary's mission statement.

More specifically, by the end of this course, the student should be able to:

1. Describe each of the approaches to interpreting the Sermon on the Mount and indicate the strengths and weaknesses of each one;
2. Summarize the various options for explaining the origins of the Sermon on the Mount;
3. Outline the structure of the Sermon on the Mount;
4. Show how the Sermon on the Mount is both like and unlike first-century Judaism;
5. Define Kingdom of God in the teachings of Jesus;
6. Show the relationship between the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God;
7. Compare and contrast the Sermon in Matthew with the Sermon in Luke;

8. Describe the place that the Sermon on the Mount has in the overall structure of Matthew;
9. Describe the relevance of the Sermon on the Mount for the Church today;
10. List and describe the value of major interpretive works on the Sermon on the Mount.

III. REQUIRED TEXTBOOKS (May be purchased from the Erskine Theological Seminary Online Bookstore at <http://www.ecampus.com/erskine>.)

Each student is required to purchase the following textbooks for the course:

Warren Carter, *What Are They Saying About Matthew's Sermon on the Mount?* (New York: Paulist, 1994).

D. A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World* (Grand Rapids: Global Christian Publishers, 1999).

George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom: Scriptural Studies in the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1959).

Brad H. Young, *Meet the Rabbis: Rabbinic Thought and the Teachings of Jesus* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 2007)

In addition, the student will need a copy of the New Testament in the translation of his/her choice. Students who are proficient in Greek are encouraged to use the Greek New Testament (either UBS or Nestle).

IV. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

- A. Students must attend every class meeting. If a student must be absent for all or part of a session, he/she is responsible for all work done and due for that session. Normally, a student who misses all or part of a session will be required to do additional work. This extra work must be negotiated with the professor. **A student who misses more than a total of one class session will not pass the course.**
- B. Students must be adequately prepared for each class session. Adequate preparation consists of completion of all reading and/or writing assignments for that day. Much of the format of this course will be lecture/discussion. Thus, it is imperative that each student be adequately prepared in order to participate in an informed manner in classroom discussions.
- C. Students may occasionally be given short, informal, research-type assignments on which to report back to the group. These are voluntary and will not be graded. Nothing written is required to be turned in.

- D. **Two one-hour tests will be given (Sessions 2 and 4).** See the **Course Outline** for the content of these tests. Students will be given instructions prior to these tests on how to prepare for them.
- E. **One major paper will be required.** If the student is taking this course to fulfill his/her New Testament exegesis requirement, then he/she must choose a passage from the Sermon on the Mount and do a thorough, detailed exegetical study of it using the exegetical procedure learned in the basis course in exegesis. To fulfill the exegesis requirement, the student must have successively completed **BI 502: Principles of Exegesis**.
 If the student is using this course simply to fulfill his/her Bible or free elective requirements, then he/she may choose to do an exegesis paper or a research paper related to the background, contents, structure, theology, etc. of the Sermon on the Mount. A list of possible topics is included in this syllabus. The student may choose one of these topics or may devise one of his/her own.
 The major paper for this course should be no more than 20 pages long (typed, double-spaced). It must be well researched, well-written, and show use of at least 10 scholarly sources. It must be fully documented with footnotes, bibliography, title page, and an outline of its contents. The documentation must be consistent with Kate Turabian, *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 7th edition or later. The paper will be graded primarily on the basis of content but also on style and form. **The finished copy of this major paper is due no later than Friday, August 28, 2009.**
- F. **One shorter paper will be required.** This paper will be a review of Brad H. Young, *Meet the Rabbis: Rabbinic Thought and the Teachings of Jesus*. A guide-sheet will be provided for this paper. This paper is due in Session 3.
- G. The student is encouraged to keep a loose-leaf notebook for the course. He/she can use it for class notes, reading notes, hand-outs, sermon/lesson ideas, bibliographical information, etc. If done properly, this notebook can be a great resource for further study, teaching, and preaching from the Sermon on the Mount.
- H. No specific bibliography is included with this syllabus. The student is encouraged to use the bibliographies in the textbooks used for the course. Major works of importance on the Sermon on the Mount will be suggested throughout the course.
- I. The student should review the following Seminary policies:
1. Incompletes. The grade of "I" or incomplete is given at the discretion of the professor. A grade of "I" is normally given when a student has substantially completed the requirements for a course but has been prevented by extraordinary circumstances from completing the remainder of the course requirements. A student who wishes to request an incomplete should normally complete an incomplete form prior to the end of the semester and ask the professor to grant the request. (Under unusual circumstances, the student may communicate with the professor by phone

or email rather than in person, and the professor may then agree to fill out the form at the student's request. Under exceptional circumstances, the professor may initiate the process by filling out the form on the student's behalf.) If the professor grants the request, he/she will sign the incomplete form and turn it in with his/her final grade report. An "I" in any course must be removed by March 1 for the Fall Term, April 1 for the January Term, August 1 for the Spring Term, and November 1 for the Summer Term. Only the Dean may grant extensions of incompletes beyond the established completion date. Otherwise, these grades automatically become "F."

2. **Drop/Add/Withdrawal.** Once a student has completed, signed, and submitted his/her registration to the Registrar for this class, it is a binding contract and billing will be based on this registration. If the student decides not to take this class, he/she must complete a "drop/add" form and secure the appropriate signatures prior to the drop/add deadline during the second week of the semester or term. If one wishes to withdraw from the course after the drop/add deadline, one must complete a withdrawal form, and tuition will be refunded on a pro rated basis. Failure to withdraw from the class properly will result in the student's receiving a grade of "F" for the course and full tuition charges will apply. No exceptions will be made to this policy.
3. **Plagiarism.** The student must be careful about plagiarism. Plagiarism means that the student uses someone else's work as his own without giving proper credit. A charge of plagiarism is a serious one which can result in the student's failing a course or being expelled from the Seminary.
4. **Returned papers.** Student mailboxes are unsecured. On tests and papers, a student who gives his/her box number is giving permission for the professor to place his/her graded work in the box. If a student does not desire to have his/her work returned in his/her mailbox, he/she should not put a box number on it.
5. **Portfolio requirements.** The Portfolio requirement applies to all students who enter any Master's program in the fall of 2002 or afterwards. Students in the M. Div. program are required to submit a New Testament exegesis paper. It is the student's responsibility to turn in a clean, corrected copy of his/her New Testament exegesis paper to the Seminary for inclusion in his/her Portfolio. Failure to do so will delay the student's graduation. Portfolio requirements are listed on the back of the academic worksheet of all degree programs.
6. I will not keep regular office hours (Office 20) during the summer, but I will be around all summer and will be available to students. It is advisable for the student to make an appointment with the professor before coming.

V. CLASS MEETING DATES

This class will meet on the following Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Session 1: May 22, 2009

Session 2: June 12, 2009

Session 3: July 10, 2009

Session 4: August 14, 2009

VI. EVALUATION

The Seminary grade scale (ETS 2008-2009 *Catalog*, p. 42) will be used. The student's final grade will be calculated as follows:

Two one-hour tests	=	40%
Review of Young book	=	20%
Major paper	=	40%

COURSE OUTLINE

Session 1: Friday, May 22, 2009

- I. An Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount
 - A. Approaches to interpreting the Sermon on the Mount
 - B. The possible origins of the Sermon on the Mount
 - C. The Sermon on the Mount and Judaism of the first century
 - D. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew
 - E. Literary forms used in the Sermon on the Mount
 - F. The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew and the Sermon on the Plain in Luke
 - G. The Sermon on the Mount and the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus

- II. Introduction (Matthew 5:1-2)
 - A. Introduction
 - B. Old Testament allusions in 5:1-2
 1. The mountain as the place of revelation
 2. The mountain as the place for the final Kingdom

3. Jesus as the new Moses

III. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)

- A. Introduction
- B. The place of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount
- C. The meaning of “beatitude”
- D. “Beatitudes” in Judaism
- E. An exposition of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount
 - 1. “Poor in spirit” (5:3)
 - 2. “The mourners” (5:4)
 - 3. “The meek” (5:5)
 - 4. “Those who hunger and thirst after righteousness” (5:6)
 - 5. “The merciful” (5:7)
 - 6. “The pure in heart” (5:8)
 - 7. “The peacemakers” (5:9)
 - 8. “Those who are persecuted on account of righteousness” (5:10-12)
- F. Beatitudes: laws, pronouncements, ideals?

IV. Metaphors for Followers of Jesus (Matthew 5:13-26)

- A. Introduction
- B. The metaphor of salt (Matthew 5:13)
- C. The metaphor of light (Matthew 5:14-16)

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 1:

1. Read carefully in a translation of your choice Matthew 5-7. Note the structure of this part of Matthew. As you read these chapters, what strikes you as “extreme” in the teaching of Jesus?
2. Read carefully Luke 6:20-49. Note the similarities and differences between these two passages.
3. Read carefully the book of James in a translation of your choice.
4. Read D. A. Carson, *Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, pp. 11-34.
5. Read Warren Carter, *What Are They Saying About Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount?* pp. 1-129. Note any questions you have about any of the critical matters dealt with by Carter.
6. Read in its entirety George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*. Be prepared to discuss its contents during the first session. Nothing written is required.

Session 2: Friday, June 12, 2009

TEST # 1 ON I – IV ABOVE (11:30 a.m.)

- V. The Theme of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:17-20)
- A. Introduction
 - B. Interpretive problems with Matthew 5:17-20
 - C. Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets
- VI. The Six Antitheses (Matthew 5:21-48)
- A. Introduction
 - B. The meaning of “antithesis” in Matthew 5
 - C. A new understanding of murder (Matthew 5:21-26)
 - D. A new understanding of adultery (Matthew 5:27-30)
 - E. A new understanding of divorce (Matthew 5:31-32)
 - F. A new understanding of oaths (Matthew 5:33-37)
 - G. A new understanding of the law of retaliation (Matthew 5:38-42)
 - H. A new understanding of the commandment to love (Matthew 5:43-47)
 - I. The commandment to be perfect (Matthew 5:48)
- VII. A New Kind of Religion (Matthew 6:1-18)
- A. Introduction
 - B. Piety in Judaism
 - C. Piety in the Hellenistic world
 - D. Synagogue life and worship in first-century Judaism
 - E. Jesus’ overriding principle to govern religious piety (Matthew 6:1)
 - F. Giving alms in a new way and for a new reason (Matthew 6:2-4)
 - G. Praying in a new way and for a new reason (Matthew 6:5-15)
 - H. Fasting in a new way and for a new reason (Matthew 6:16-18)

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 2:

1. Read carefully Matthew 5:17—6:18. What was Jesus fighting in these verses? In light of first-century Judaism, what is radical about what Jesus is saying here?
2. Read D. A. Carson, *Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, pp. 35-79.
3. In a Bible dictionary of your choice, read the articles on the following topics: almsgiving; prayer; fasting; synagogue.

Session 3: Friday, July 10, 2009

- VIII. Liberation From the Tyranny of the Material World (Matthew 6:19-34)
- A. Introduction
 - B. The economic, political, and social standing of Jesus' hearers
 - C. The metaphors of treasure, light, and slavery (Matthew 6:19-24)
 - D. The necessity of child-like trust (Matthew 6:25-34)
 - E. *Excursus*: Jesus and Wealth
- IX. Dangers in the Religious Life (Matthew 7:1-12)
- A. Introduction
 - B. A description of Pharisaic Judaism in Jesus' time
 - C. The biggest danger in religious life (Matthew 7:1)
 - D. God's assessment of the judgmental attitude (Matthew 7:2)
 - E. A grotesque example of the foolishness of the judgmental attitude (Matthew 7:3-5)
 - F. The opposite danger: an indiscriminating attitude (Matthew 7:6)
 - G. The danger of a lack of trust in the goodness of God toward His children (Matthew 7:7-12)

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 3:

1. Read carefully Matthew 6:19—7:12. What is it about Pharisaic Judaism that Jesus finds so objectionable? Think about the common forms of Pharisaic Judaism that appear in "Christian" dress. How would you describe in your own words the true life of piety that Jesus is calling for here?
2. Read D. A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and His Confrontation with the World*, pp. 80-121.
3. The review of Brad H. Young, *Meet the Rabbis*, is due in this session.

Session 4: Friday, August 14, 2009

TEST # 2 ON V – IX ABOVE (11:30 a.m.)

- X. The Conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:13-27)

- A. Introduction
 - B. The two paths of the way of Jesus (7:13-14) and the two paths of Judaism
 - C. The two trees (Matthew 7:15-20)
 - D. The two claims (Matthew 7:21-23)
 - E. The two houses (Matthew 7:24-27)
- XI. A Summary of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:28-29)
- A. The authority of Jesus vs. the authority of the scribes
 - B. The authority of the Sermon on the Mount in the Christian life
- XII. Issues Raised by the Sermon on the Mount
- A. Is the Sermon on the Mount a new law?
 - B. What place is the Sermon on the Mount to have in our daily living?
 - C. How is the Sermon on the Mount related to salvation by faith alone?
 - D. How seriously are we to take the demands of the Sermon on the Mount?
 - E. Is the Sermon on the Mount really practical?
 - F. Is living by the Sermon on the Mount really possible in this age?
 - G. How are we to communicate the radicality of the Sermon on the Mount to a contemporary audience?
 - H. What is the meaning of perfection in the Christian life?

ASSIGNMENT FOR SESSION 4:

1. Read carefully Matthew 7:13-29. What is the point of the metaphors used in this passage? Is this a too simplistic approach to life? What is the connection between this part of the Sermon to the earlier parts?
2. Read D. A. Carson, *Jesus' Sermon on the Mount And His Confrontation with the World*, pp. 122-145.

The major paper (research or exegesis) is due no later than Friday, August 28, 2009.

POSSIBLE RESEARCH TOPICS ON THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Below are some possible research topics for this course. Most of them will need to be narrowed down. The student may choose one of these or may devise one of his/her own.

1. The Kingdom of God in the Sermon on the Mount
2. The Meaning of Law in the Sermon on the Mount
3. The Meaning of Perfection in the Sermon on the Mount
4. A Comparison of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew with the Sermon on the Plain in Luke
5. Discipleship in the Sermon on the Mount
6. Almsgiving in First-Century Judaism
7. Prayer in First-Century Judaism
8. Fasting in First-Century Judaism
9. Authentic Religious Life in the Sermon on the Mount
10. A Review of Significant Journal Articles on the Sermon on the Mount Since 1980
11. Worship in the Jewish Synagogue in Jesus' Day