

*A dad was talking to his son and was explaining to him that his great-grandfather fought with Napoleon, then he told him that his grandfather fought with the French and his father fought with the Americans.... The little boy responded, Your relatives couldn't get along with anyone, could they?*

## LET'S PRAY

Tomorrow, in the US, we will be honoring all of the fallen soldiers that fought and lost their lives during times of war. In the U.S., During the civil war, women would go to the grave sites of soldiers and decorate them. Originally it was called decoration day and after world war 1 is when the name memorial day was applied. Memorial day was adopted because it represent all soldiers killed during war.

## TODAY'S MESSAGE

Over the last number of weeks, God has put it on my heart to talk about prayer and about taking our thoughts captive. As Christians, we do believe that God knows all things and sees all things.

Today, I would like to use scripture to support why it's beneficial to believe that our thoughts can be viewed as a form of prayer. In Matthew 5, Jesus starts with "The sermon on the mount". It's common for pastors to present messages about the beatitudes and then stop there. Today, I'm going to talk more about what Jesus says after the beatitudes. The sermon on the mount is actually 3 chapters long and Jesus' sermon on the mount is all of chapter 5,6, and 7. After the beatitudes, Jesus starts explaining a deeper meaning to the law. No longer is it just an outward law but Jesus goes on to tell us that it's about how we think.

Before we continue, I need to present a very important point about the mind. In Deuteronomy 6 it says; **4 Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.[a] 5 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. 7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.** Mark 12, is when Jesus adds the word mind. Starting in verse 28, **28 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?" 29 "The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.[e] 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your MIND and with all your strength.'**[f] **31 The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'**[g] **There is no commandment greater than these."**

**MIND** is very important and when we go back to Matthew 5:20, Jesus starts to explain. Jesus tells us this; **20 For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.** Then from verse 21 to the beginning of chapter 7, Jesus takes time to explain how it's our minds that cause us to sin. I'm going to use a couple of examples.

Murder 21 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,[a] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ 22 But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister[b][c] will be subject to judgment. Anger is generated from our thoughts. Adultery 27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’[e] 28 But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. Once again, it starts in the mind but then it connects with our hearts.

**Eye for Eye 38 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’[h] 39 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also.** This too, is a mental choice

**Maybe the hardest one for us is Love for Enemies 43 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor[i] and hate your enemy.’ 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. 46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? 47 And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? 48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.** If we don’t chose to do this in our minds, we will never have a reason to take Christ to the lost.

Jesus is being very bold about how we think. He keeps telling us that thinking on these things is no different than the very act of doing them. Outwardly, we can look great. Jesus is explaining that it’s no longer just the outward act of obedience that matters. It’s about our character. Chapters 5 & 6 go on to redefine murder, adultery, divorce, oaths, eye for eye, love for enemies, giving to the needy, prayer, fasting, treasures in heaven and worry.

I would ask that you take the time to just read these chapters as a sermon. After that, I don’t think anyone can look in the mirror and say they’re not guilty of what we think about. Yes, our minds can cause a tremendous amount of sin. But, thankfully, because of the blood of Christ, were totally forgiven. It’s only by the MERCY and GRACE of God, that were washed white as snow. Without Christ, just by our thoughts, we would be condemned to death. I take tremendous comfort in Romans 8:1 **Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus,**

My main point for today comes from MATTHEW 7:1-6. I’ve heard many people use this section as a way to get people to believe that this is how God is going to judge us. I’ve heard it used as a way for people to know when they can “HELP” a brother. If we stay with the theme of Jesus’ sermon, then it can mean something different.

Let’s read them together. 7 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. 2 For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. 3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? 4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye. 6 “Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

Looking at chapters 5,6 & 7 as an entire sermon, we see that Jesus has been talking about our minds. These verses are about what we do with our minds. We tear each other up and

the more we do that, the more we're going to receive this from others. Think about how many times you've heard someone gossip or judge someone. It probably caused your thoughts to examine them and to think about how they do the same thing. When we use specks in other's lives to condemn them, that's going to happen to us. What's worse, by only thinking these thoughts, God is still hearing us. Let's talk about the word plank. If we think that a plank is just one object, we may be missing the point. It isn't saying that we just have this one major sin in our lives and when we conquer it, we can address others. Think about a speck. How many specks does it take to make a plank. We've got plenty of work to do on our own. This is how GRACE is taught. Those who've been forgiven much, forgive much. Those who've been forgiven little, forgive little. This teaching is also how we learn to love better. When we understand how much we use our thoughts to judge each other, then we can change and become like Jesus. That's the beatitudes. This is also how we come to realize just how much we need Christ. Without taking our thoughts captive, we can become really evil. In the United States, we're fortunate to not live in a physical war zone like the people in the Ukraine. We're bombarded with expressions of hate and with expressions of disbelief. We live in a very negative society and Satan is having a field day by using our minds as a way to keep us at war with God. How we justify our anger and how we can use self-righteousness can be very dangerous.

I'd like to go back to the beginning of chapter 5 and read the Beatitudes. I love the poetry of it and the gentleness.

He said: **3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

**This is who Jesus is!!!** Becoming like this is what Christ desires. It can only be achieved in our mind. The mind is where we learn how to develop the character of Christ. All of our prayers are generated by our minds. When we chose to make all of our thoughts prayers, then we can become more like Jesus. War isn't just outward. War can be internal. Our only weapon for war is prayer. We can use prayer for all things and we can make prayer a way of life. God wants our citizenship to be in heaven. God wants all of our heart, **mind**, soul and strength. Jesus' sermon isn't finished yet. The rest of chapter 7, Jesus gives us the tools needed for changing how we think.

**Ask, Seek, Knock 7 "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. Sounds like prayer to me.**

**The Narrow and Wide Gates 13 "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. 14 But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it. Sounds like prayer is needed again**

**The Wise and Foolish Builders** 24 “Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.” It’s all about prayer. It starts with taking our thoughts captive.

If we choose to accept that our thoughts are prayers, then we will be able to achieve 1 Thessalonians 5:16 Rejoice always, 17 pray continually, 18 give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

In closing I’d like to share 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, Paul says this; 10:3 For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. 4 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. 5 We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. Then verses 7 & 8 7 You are judging by appearances.[a] If anyone is confident that they belong to Christ, they should consider again that we belong to Christ just as much as they do. 8 So even if I boast somewhat freely about the authority the Lord gave us for building you up rather than tearing you down, I will not be ashamed of it.

PRAY, PRAY, PRAY

Think about how we’re getting ready to celebrate Memorial Day. Jesus came to all of us when we were dead in sin. Accepting Christ and confessing that we are all sinners is what allows us to celebrate Heaven every day.

**LET’S PRAY**