

## Why It Is Called The "Sermon" On The Mount

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by Wayne S. Walker

"Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying" (Matthew 5:2). In the 2008 presidential election campaign, Barack Obama sought to justify his lack of experience in the real world, having been only an elected official and before that a community organizer, by saying that "Jesus was a community organizer." No, Jesus was NOT a "community organizer." He was a PREACHER. "From that time on, Jesus began to PREACH and to say, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matthew 4:17). Bible writers tend to put that which is most important first, so notice that in Matthew 4:23, teaching and preaching come before healing all kinds of sickness in the list of Jesus's activities.

In today's society, and even in many of today's churches, preaching has fallen on hard times. Some of it is certainly due to the hypocritical ungodliness of several famous individuals who have claimed to be preachers. But much of it is the result of a distinct change in attitude toward truth on the part of a multitude of people. A lot of folks will not attend church services at all because they "don't want to be preached to." Others go to a certain church because the minister there "doesn't sound too preachy." But, again, remember that Jesus was first and foremost a preacher. And he told His followers to "go into all the world and PREACH the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

In fact, it is His will that "repentance and remission of sins be PREACHED in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47). And that is exactly what His followers did in the first century. When commanded by the Jewish authorities to be silent, "they did not cease teaching and PREACHING Jesus as the Christ" (Acts 5:42). Even when persecution against them reared its ugly head and began scattering them, "those who were scattered went everywhere PREACHING the word" (Acts 8:4). What did they preach? It was not worldly wisdom, human opinion, politics, social justice, or community organizing. "Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and PREACHED Christ to them" (Acts 8:5; cf. v. 12). Jesus Christ was the center of their message (see 1 Corinthians 2:1-5).

In other words, they preached the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ. Why? "So, as much as is in me, I am ready to PREACH the gospel to you who are in Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first, and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:15-16). That is why Paul told Timothy to "PREACH the word!" (2 Timothy 4:2; all emphasis in scripture quotes is mine, WSW). Not everyone must, or even can, be a full time public preacher of the word. But if we claim to be followers of Christ, every one of us must find some way to PREACH His gospel message of salvation to others, because the one who is our example was indeed a PREACHER. And that is why it is called the SERMON on the Mount (not the "discussion" or "dialogue" or whatever).

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