

# THE HIGHER LEVEL OF REPENTANCE AND

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

by Margaret Heide

Recent ventures into the word of God on our journey of understanding have yielded some surprising information. As stated in previous articles, I have found much enjoyment in finding the Covenant (or Plan of Salvation or Plan of Redemption) in unexpected places in the scriptures. We have previously discovered that the Covenant is often referred to simply by the words “faith” or “repentance” and often both words together. “Faith” has a number of near synonyms (words that have the same or nearly the same meaning). “Believe” and “not hardening one’s heart against God’s word” are two examples. A phrase that is close in meaning to “repentance” is “being diligent in keeping the commandments.” Thus Mosiah 2:9-12 in which King Benjamin lists the conditions whereby man can be saved agrees with the lists in Alma 9:54-55 and Alma 16:217 though different words are used. They all refer to the Covenant or Plan of Salvation. King Benjamin adds that we must come to the knowledge of the goodness of God. When referring to the higher level of repentance, the word “repentance” includes this, evidently; for the high degree of repentance attained by the Ammonites is defined by Alma as being brought to the knowledge of the Lord their God and to rejoice in Jesus Christ their Redeemer. (Alma 17:39)

What really has surprised me is to discover that the Sermon on the Mount found in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of Matthew is also the Covenant because it describes higher levels of faith and repentance. It is an especially exciting discovery because of its length and because it is expounded by Jesus, Himself. There is an important difference in the Inspired Version and the King James Version. In the Inspired Version, Matthew 5:3-4 speaks of having the higher level of faith which, as stated earlier, can be defined as not hardening one’s heart against God’s word. This reference to faith is not in the King James Version:

“Blessed are they who shall believe on me; and again, more blessed are they who shall believe on your words, when ye shall testify that ye have seen me and that I am. Yea, blessed are they who shall believe on your words, and come down into the depth of humility, and be baptized in my name; for they shall be visited with fire and the Holy Ghost, and shall receive a remission of their sins.”—Matthew 5:3-4 Inspired Version

Then in the rest of Jesus’ sermon, He gives example after example of what the higher level of repentance implies. For example, “Love your enemies; bless them that curse you; do good to them that hate you; and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you. . .” --Matthew 5:46 I.V. It was when reading the account of Jesus’ appearance in Mesoamerica that first caused me to wonder if the Sermon on the Mount, which Jesus reiterated for the people, were indeed the Covenant, and , if so, Jesus’ concept of the higher level of repentance. Specifically, it was III Nephi 5:32-33 which states that Christ’s doctrine is that everyone must repent and believe in Him that first attracted my attention as it seems to be in the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus gave in the Book of Mormon. (See III Nephi 5:29-6:37).

The significant thing to me about understanding this is that all the things Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount are things we can do if we diligently try. Our journey of understanding is helping to provide us with the tools. For example, in the case of “Blessed are the meek,” we already know that the great faith we are in the process of gaining as we are shown the mysteries of the Kingdom by the Holy Ghost will help us become meek people. (See Moroni 7:44) We hunger and thirst after righteousness as we ask to know the mysteries and “seek to” the Covenant. (D.C. 8:3f and D.C. 45:2d) Also, focusing our attention more and more on the Covenant as the Father continues to teach us about it (D.C. 83:7e) helps us have our eyes “single to His glory” and therefore making progress toward sanctification and becoming more “pure in heart.”

There was a time I thought the Sermon on the Mount somehow didn’t apply to me; I thought it

was unrealistic to think I could ever attain that high standard. But it is not only attainable, but also vital to our eternal well-being. It seems to be a “stepping stone” very close to the Endowment, itself. Matthew 5:21 I.V. shows the importance of the words of this sermon:

“Whosoever, therefore, shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so to do, he shall in no wise be saved in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach these commandments of the law until it be fulfilled, the same shall be called great, and shall be saved in the kingdom of heaven.”

One help in making the mental adjustment of viewing the Sermon on the Mount as a practical lifestyle may well be the recognition of the need for opposition. Then we will not be so surprised or dismayed by its existence. This need for opposition is described in II Nephi 1:81-82:

“(F)or there must be an opposition in all things. If not so . . . righteousness could not be brought to pass. . .”

Doing right in the face of opposition has more meaning than if there were no opposition. It would appear that it is opposition in its various forms that makes it possible to repent on this higher level. Thanking the Lord in all things would appear to be an aspect of this higher level of repentance. The positive and loving way of dealing with everyone and everything in life as described in the Sermon on the Mount may well release the power of the Endowment. Perhaps this is because these kingdom-quality behaviors raise our spiritual condition to a much higher level.

“The work of preparation and the perfection of my Saints go forward slowly, and Zionic conditions are no further away nor any closer than the spiritual condition of my people justifies.”—D.C. 140:5c

Hubert Case is said to have given this thought under inspiration: “Pray that love will abound; then we will be Endowed with the power to build Zion.” Practicing loving our enemies as described in the Sermon on the Mount would certainly seem to qualify as love abounding. It would seem that Jesus is giving us specifics about how we may keep the Second Commandment to love our neighbor as ourself. Evidently there must be the need for opposition so we have the opportunity to demonstrate this higher level of love, the pure love of Christ. We show ordinary love when we love the loveable and those who love us back; but charity is shown forth as we love those who persecute or harm us, etc. The opposition thus makes this higher level of repentance possible.

As we each press forward on our journeys of understanding by means of daily prayer, study of the scriptures, keeping the commandments, asking to know the mysteries, wise fasting and keeping the Word of Wisdom, we shall no doubt learn more about this higher level of repentance. The implications of understanding that the Sermon on the Mount is for us and our day as we seek the Endowment would seem to give us all much to think about.