

# Seeking God's Holy Presence on the Mountain

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Most of us familiar with the Sermon on the Mount don't give much thought to why Jesus delivered it there—on a mountain. Couldn't it just as easily have been the Sermon on the Plain? Or the Sermon on the Beach? After all, just before the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew tells us, Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee; that's where he encountered Simon and his brother Andrew, as well as James and John, and called them all to follow him. Why does Matthew say he went “up the mountain”?

As with many of the stories in the New Testament that have to do with Jesus and his divinity, Matthew wanted those who heard or read this Gospel to think of parallels in ancient scriptures and connect them to what God is doing here, in and through Jesus. In this case, Jesus going up the mountain intentionally reminds us of Moses going up Mount Sinai to get the Ten Commandments. Moses' story in the book of Exodus begins with his birth and proceeds to his rescue from Pharaoh's murderousness. Jesus' story in the Gospel of Matthew begins with his birth and then relates his rescue from King Herod's murderousness. Moses had to be rescued from Pharaoh's intention to have Jewish boy babies killed, and Jesus and his parents had to flee from Herod's doing the same. Moses and the people

of Israel were sojourners in Egypt and then returned to Israel. Jesus and his parents spent a sojourn in Egypt and then returned to Israel. Moses and his people spent forty years in the wilderness before entering into Israel. Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness before entering into his ministry. Through Moses, God gave the people of Israel the Ten Commandments. Through Jesus, God gave the people of Israel the Sermon on the Mount. Moses was the first prophet in Israel. Jesus and John the Baptist restarted prophecy in Israel after there been no prophets for many years. In all these ways, Matthew tells us that Jesus is renewing and fulfilling the line of prophets who speak God's word to us. Moses began that line of prophets; Jesus is in this sense the new Moses—and more.<sup>1</sup>

## THE PRESENCE OF GOD ON THE MOUNTAIN

And here is the point: For Moses, as for Jesus, going up the mountain was about going *into the presence of God*, where God gave him the Ten Commandments, which as we'll see are not just rules and laws but a sign of God's just and merciful deliverance for his vulnerable people.<sup>2</sup> In Exodus 24 and 34, we read that when Moses went up the mountain he was in the presence of God, and God spoke to him. When Jesus "went up the mountain" at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, it means that just as Moses went into the presence of God and God spoke to him and Moses delivered God's word to the people, here Jesus brings us into the presence of God and God speaks to us through Jesus. As the outstanding New Testament scholar Ulrich Luz has observed, "The Sermon on the Mount is *Jesus'* sermon; in it Jesus the Son of God speaks, through whom God guarantees the truth of his claim."<sup>3</sup>

## GOD'S HOLY NAME—OUR DELIVERER

To be in God's presence is to be in the presence of the one who redeems us, *who delivers us*. This is certainly the case in Exodus 3 and 6, when *the hallowed name of God* is revealed to Moses, and it means "God is our deliverer." It tells us that Yahweh (the Lord) is the one who *delivered* our forefathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, when they needed deliverance; Yahweh is the Lord who hears our cries and sees our needs when we need deliverance; Yahweh is the Lord who promises to deliver us from our slavery to oppressive powers; and the Lord delivers on his promises. He did in fact deliver our historical predecessors, the people of Israel, from bondage in Egyptian slavery, and after having delivered us, he now reminds us that he is, as the prophet Isaiah says again and again, "The Holy One of Israel, our *Redeemer*," our Deliverer.

How does God redeem us? Though we do not usually think of the Ten Commandments as deliverance for those who are vulnerable but more as strict rules of conduct, this is God's intention. The one who gives us the Ten Commandments is the Holy Lord *who delivers us*, the Lord who hears our cries, sees our needs, and delivers us from our need and our slavery—as the Lord did in Egypt. This is why the Ten Commandments begin, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." This is also why the first three commandments make clear that we shall not have any other gods before the Lord; why God is revealed in the deliverance from slavery and not in some idol that we make for ourselves; and why we shall not make wrongful use of the hallowed "name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name" (Exod. 20:3–7).

The rest of the commandments continue in this way to deliver those who are vulnerable and in need of deliverance. All workers—including slaves, animals, and immigrants—need a

Sabbath day of rest each week to deliver them from their vulnerability to being overworked. Elderly parents who are vulnerable to neglect must be honored. People who are vulnerable to being murdered need a society that protects them from murder. Married persons who are vulnerable to betrayal and the destruction of marriage require protection from adultery. People who are vulnerable to stealing (originally this was a prohibition against kidnapping) should have protection from stealing. People who are being tried in a law court or whose reputation is being threatened must be protected from false witness. Neighbors need protection from other neighbors who might covet and steal their possessions. The Ten Commandments are about God's deliverance of the vulnerable from powerful forces that threaten them; they are also about God's command to us to participate in delivering those who are vulnerable.

If you are at the wrong end of a gun and vulnerable to being killed, you feel vulnerable and needy, and you appreciate the compassion of God who hears cries, sees needs, and delivers from bondage. You appreciate a covenant community that works together to reduce homicide and protect people from being killed. If you are an elderly parent who is alone in a retirement home, you greatly appreciate children who are thoughtful enough to come visit you regularly. If your reputation is being cheapened by gossip, you appreciate God giving us biblical teachings against false witness, gossip, and slander. The Lord, the Holy Redeemer of Israel, hears our cries and brings deliverance. The Ten Commandments are about God's presence, and God's delivering love for the vulnerable.

## **JESUS' MESSAGE OF DELIVERANCE**

So is the Sermon on the Mount. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives a way of deliverance for a people who need it just as desperately as their ancestors did when Moses led them out of

Egypt. On the mountain, Jesus brings the message that the kingdom of God or reign of God is at hand—is becoming present. The presence of God is important, good news for the people of Israel who were hearing Jesus' message because there had been no prophets for many years. In some of the most recent writings before Jesus came, such as Ecclesiastes, it seemed that God was not very present, not doing anything new. As the writer of Ecclesiastes says, nothing new is happening under the sun.

Vanity of vanities! All is vanity.  
What do people gain from all the toil  
at which they toil under the sun? . . .  
What has been is what will be,  
and what has been done is what will be done;  
there is nothing new under the sun [Eccles. 1:2–3, 9].

Ecclesiastes was probably written about two hundred or three hundred years before Jesus. Other books such as Tobit were written still later; they are called apocryphal or deuterocanonical books in some Bibles—often between the Old and New Testaments. They seem to suggest that people of the time did not sense God doing new things; instead, angels and magic caused things to happen. Or when God was seen as active, as in Judas Maccabeus' uprising, God was seen as supporting a nationalistic war, which led to disaster and disillusionment. Though not all scholars agree on this interpretation, it seems to me that after the close of the Old Testament and before the coming of Jesus, the literature of the time shows that people did not have the sense of God's dynamic presence that we see in the prophets. They were under the domination of the Roman Empire, and they were disheartened by moral compromise and moral corruption. They longed for God's return, for deliverance from the domination of the Roman Empire.

It is easy to imagine how so many welcomed John the Baptist and his proclamation that the reign of God is now at hand,

that Israel has a prophet again. Jesus, baptized by John, takes up the proclamation, telling all who have ears to hear that the reign of God is at hand. In his teachings, and particularly in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells us that God is speaking again, coming to be present again and to deliver us. God is coming to deliver us from our vicious cycles of anger and violence, unfaithfulness and adultery, manipulation and deceit, materialism and greed—and our double-mindedness, from our separation from God.

In the twenty-first century, we may be living in a time similar to that period before Jesus. We are living in what I think of as the backwash of the seventeenth-century Enlightenment (and the centuries following it), when it was thought that God does not do anything new because everything is determined by universal and fixed laws of physics. The Enlightenment, also known as the Age of Reason, is symbolized by Sir Isaac Newton's laws of physics, which described and determined the workings of the natural world. In Newton's view, atoms were like self-contained billiard balls rotating around each other according to preexisting and absolute physical laws. The philosopher Pierre Simon de Laplace even wrote that if we could know where all the particles are at one moment, and what direction they were going and how fast, we could predict the future of everything. If everything obeys fixed laws, "there is nothing new under the sun." There is no room in this fixed and closed universe for God to do anything new. Human beings—emotions, thoughts, bodies, actions—are but electrons obeying fixed laws. Our lives are determined by the laws of physics.

People believed this because clearly physics was able to explain much that happened at the level where it specialized (the movement of physical forces and objects). Its knowledge led to new physical discoveries and machines. Other disciplines, from chemistry to psychology and economics, tried to develop a similar kind of logic at the level where they each focused. The result was to reduce understanding of complex dimensions of life to fixed laws about basic elements. In this world of mechanical laws and behavioristic psychology, who are we ourselves? Only the

products of impersonal forces? With no room for God to create anything new?

My own undergraduate major was nuclear physics. I had a daydream of myself being reduced to nothing but a brain floating in a large bowl of chemicals, connected to mechanical arms by radio waves from the brain. But I realized that even the thoughts in my brain were grounded in the movement of electrons, which obey the laws of physics, so even my thoughts were predetermined by the laws of physics.

But now we know better. New discoveries such as quantum physics, wave theory, quarks and other particles in the nucleus, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, and Einstein's theory of relativity have opened up freedom in the most basic realities of life. Atoms are not self-contained billiard balls obeying fixed laws; they are more like clouds of energy, definitely not fixed. Now and then, basic elements transform into bursts of energy, and there is no predicting when they will do so. The basic building blocks of reality are fluid, open, and full of surprises.

There is much more to all of this, more than we can go into here. The upshot is that the world is not predetermined and closed, as Laplace thought.

So the universe is always changing. We live in an open universe. Life is full of surprises; God is always doing new things. In faith we experience that the new things God does bring us deliverance and the opportunity to participate in God's kingdom. We now live in a post-Newtonian time in which we can celebrate daily the new gifts that God bestows on our lives. It is time to open up to God's presence.

Recently my wife was gone for about three weeks, helping her brother and sister-in-law in the library of the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Prague. I was lonely, and a strained relationship in my own community was bothering me seriously. I was not only lonely but depressed—not clinically, but depressed off and on for several weeks. Then one day, while I was thinking about Jesus' teaching on God's presence, I practiced listening prayer. I did not ask God for things; I just

listened for God's word. It came to me just to be grateful that God is present in my loneliness, in the midst of my life. I just meditated on this presence. I sensed the presence of the Holy Spirit, breathing in me with every breath I breathed. I was not alone: God's Holy Spirit was present with me, over me, in me, around me. Lo and behold, my depression lifted. And it stayed lifted.

In telling this story, I want to be careful about what I am saying and not saying. Sometimes depression is caused by chemical imbalance, or by other causes that are very complex. I am not saying that everyone can meditate on God's presence amid loneliness, or that all depression will automatically be lifted. But God's delivering presence is good news, and available to us. I am giving my firsthand testimony; it means very much to me.

I believe this sense of God's presence is a crucial dimension of Jesus' proclamation that the kingdom of God is at hand. It is crucial for interpreting the Sermon on the Mount rightly. The Sermon on the Mount is not first of all about what *we should do*. It is first of all about what *God is already doing*. It is about God's presence, the breakthrough of God's kingdom in Jesus. It is about God's grace, God's loving deliverance *from* various kinds of bondage in the vicious cycles that we get stuck in, and deliverance *into* community with God and others.

## **GOD'S DELIVERING PRESENCE FULFILLS ISAIAH'S PROPHECIES**

In the verses in Matthew before the Sermon on the Mount, this emphasis on God's presence as Deliverer is expressed in three themes: God's presence as Holy Spirit, doing something new; God's delivering justice; and fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah, all happening in Jesus.

The text in Matthew 1:18–25 twice emphasizes the presence of God in the Holy Spirit doing something new: First, Jesus' mother Mary "was found to be with child from the Holy

Spirit.” Second, an angel of the Lord said to Joseph in a dream, “the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” Furthermore, twice we are told God is present in Jesus; “they shall name him Emmanuel,” and this means “God is with us.” In the incarnation of Jesus as a human being, God does something new here. This introductory verse and Matthew’s concluding verse (“I am with you always, to the close of the age”) serve as bookends, indicating a central theme of the whole Gospel: God’s presence.

This same set of verses also strongly emphasizes God’s delivering justice working in and through Joseph: Joseph “was just and did not want to cause disgrace for Mary” or expose her to contempt or public disgrace. In verse 24, “he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded and took her to himself;” thus delivering her from the disgrace of being pregnant alone. In contemporary culture, many have split the emphasis on justice from the emphasis on God’s presence as Holy Spirit. They have also split off salvation from justice. The result is pious people who think they are on God’s side even while doing nothing to prevent injustice (or helping cause it). Or they support injustice even as they cover it up with pious talk about God and salvation. But the Bible does not split them; it says again and again that God is a God of compassion who cares deeply about justice, and about delivering people from injustice. This passage clearly puts them together as one united action of God, a new action of deliverance, justice, and presence through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is also clearly the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies: “‘She will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus (which means “Yahweh is salvation”), for he will save his people from their sins.’ All this took place to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet: ‘Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,’ which means, ‘God is with us.’” This is a quote from Isaiah 7:14, which is being fulfilled in Jesus. Isaiah strongly emphasizes God as “the Holy One of Israel, our Redeemer,” whose redeeming action

very much includes delivering us from the world's injustice. Isaiah also emphasizes the Exodus led by Moses and the hope for a new exodus, a new deliverance, with justice, as we discuss in the next chapter. We see in this passage the three themes mentioned at the start of this section: God's presence as Holy Spirit, doing something new; God's delivering justice; and fulfillment of the prophet Isaiah, all happening in Jesus.

These three themes are likewise present in John the Baptist's announcement of the reign of God. His message was "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." John the Baptist fulfills the prophet Isaiah's prediction: "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight" (Matt. 3:2–3, quoting Isa. 40:3). To "make his paths straight" is to make justice happen, the kind of justice that delivers those who are separated from God's way, that brings them back to God. When John the Baptist talks about the kingdom of heaven, he means God's reign, God's delivering presence. Similarly, John says the one who is coming (Jesus) "will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire"—clearly indicating the presence of God, in deliverance and in judgment. When Jesus is baptized, "the heavens opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him" (Matt. 3:16). The Holy Spirit speaks the words of Isaiah 42:1: "'This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matt. 3:17). John calls on the Pharisees and Sadducees to "bring fruit which corresponds to repentance," which means to do justice that fits God's will.<sup>4</sup> The form that this justice should take is clarified in Luke 3:10–14: "Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise." Tax collectors should "collect no more than the amount prescribed." Soldiers should "not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation." Jesus insists on being baptized by John in order "to fulfill all righteousness," which means "all justice."

These themes of deliverance and justice continue in Matthew's telling of Jesus' temptations: "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil."

The Spirit is God's presence. Jesus replies to each temptation by quoting Deuteronomy on obeying and serving the Lord, which means doing justice and righteousness. Jesus is delivered from the tempter.

When Jesus goes across the Jordan River to the land of Zebulun and Naphtali, to Galilee of the Gentiles, Matthew tells us that the people there, who have been "living in darkness, have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned" (Matt. 4:13–16). This is a quotation from Isaiah 8:23–9:1. In Isaiah, light and the dawning of light signify the presence of God, God's coming deliverance (Isa. 9:2, 42:6, 49:6, 51:4). The German New Testament scholar Gerhard Lohfink states the meaning of this passage: "Precisely in Galilee, interwoven with Gentiles, the bright light of God is now shining through Israel to the Gentiles. We should see this as the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount."<sup>5</sup> Each of the teaching sections in Matthew has an introduction like this. Again, all three themes are here: presence (light), deliverance, and fulfillment of Isaiah.

In Matthew 4:18–22, when Jesus calls four disciples to follow him, this too is an act of God's presence: it surprises them and brings them into participation in the coming of God's reign. Likewise, we are all called to become participants by becoming followers of Jesus. Being called to become followers of Jesus is the good news of participating in the kingdom.

The emphasis on God's presence as Deliverer is also seen in Jesus' fulfilling Isaiah's prophecies that the Redeemer will come to all of Israel and will bring healing.

## **AN ALL-ENCOMPASSING AND HEALING PRESENCE**

In verses 4:23–24, Matthew uses two Greek words for "all" five times to emphasize the overall inclusiveness of Jesus' works: "Jesus went about in *all* Galilee, teaching in their synagogues

and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing *every* disease and *every* sickness among the people. So his fame spread throughout *all* Syria, and they brought to him *all* the sick, those who were afflicted with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, and paralytics, and he cured them. And great crowds followed him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and from beyond the Jordan” [NRSV translation, my modification].

In naming these places, Matthew describes the whole of Israel: the northwest (Galilee), the northeast (Decapolis), the southwest (Jerusalem and Judea), and the southeast (beyond the Jordan). This too is a fulfillment of Isaiah and a sign of God’s delivering presence to all of Israel.<sup>6</sup>

The healing of all kinds of disease and affliction also shows God’s delivering presence for all who come to Jesus. It is not, as we often think, about being worthy, about living a perfect life in order to deserve God’s blessings. It is about God’s love and deliverance shown in Jesus. Jesus’ actions, poured out on *all* who come to him and *all* he encounters, foreshadow the spirit and message of the Sermon on the Mount. Blessings are already happening. The healing is already occurring. The Sermon on the Mount is based on God’s grace, on God becoming present, delivering, healing, and calling us to participate; it is not based on our being highly moral or perfect.

My good friend Parush Parushev has described a personal experience of healing that perfectly illustrates this all-encompassing outpouring of God’s presence and healing.<sup>7</sup> Parush was a Communist, with a Ph.D. in applied mathematics, who had taught math in several leading universities of Europe. While teaching in Poland, Parush got to know a group of Christians and was so moved by what Jesus meant in their lives that he was converted to become a follower of Jesus himself. He returned to his home country of Bulgaria and soon received invitations to preach the good news of Jesus in various churches. With his background, you can imagine he had some of that skeptical backwash from the Enlightenment I mentioned earlier; it is part of what makes

the experience so extraordinary for my friend and others who participated.

One day Parush received an urgent call from the pastor of a gypsy village, who asked him to come pray over the sick body of a dying woman and anoint it with oil. They urged them to hurry because she was expected to die any moment. A growing crowd of mourners followed them as they approached the woman's home. The gypsies' custom is to wail with loud, high-pitched cries as someone is dying, and the wailing increased in volume and intensity as the crowd grew. Parush's own words best convey the story from here:

My heart echoed the mourners' pain with great trembling. This was the first time since my ordination that I was called to minister to a dying person.

The sight evoked my compassion. The woman was lying on one side. I could see the effect the illness had had on her. Her facial features resembled a skull. Her skin was transparent and so tight up around the bones that it felt painful to look at it. The color of her face and hands was turning dark blue. Her stomach was enormously swollen. It was obvious that the life in that body was fading fast. . . .

The procedure of anointing was short. Short, also, was the prayer that followed. In an instant, with my eyes closed, I lost balance. I reached for support and I leaned over, trying to hold onto the iron bed frame. Instead, my hand touched the woman's leg through the cover. The coldness I felt pierced me. In the midst of the summer heat, the woman's limb lay cold and hard as granite. Terrified, I stood there in tears, helpless before the signs of the coming death.

The woman made an attempt to talk; I approached the bed and leaned closer to hear. Her effort caused her mouth to arch, but it gave no sound. . . .

[A sister had] told me that the sick woman had had a dream. She dreamt that I would come, pray for her and

anoint her. After that, she would drink the water of a liter-and-a-half bottle, she would throw it up, and with this she would be completely healed. . . .

I observed in disbelief how the woman gathered what appeared to be her last traces of strength, how she lifted her head and drank the water slowly until the whole amount was consumed. A violent regurgitation followed after. . . .

Each woman present at the scene knew what to do to ensure that all would happen according to the dream. Their faith in the healing power of God stood against my rational mind. Their world, simple and modest, remained unshaken. My world, well built and sophisticated, was crumbling under me.

The transformation was immediate. Before our eyes, the sick woman sat on the bed. We observed how her skin regained its color and her limbs their flexibility. She spoke with a clear voice. She told us that she needed to use the bathroom. The woman got up, all by herself, and headed to the front door. (In those villages, the bathrooms are located outside.) When she appeared in the doorway, a loud scream of "Ghost!" ripped the skies. The gathered crowd scattered in fear. . . .

Some witnesses of this event were believers. Some were about to become believers. The power of the Spirit pervaded the place. The love of the Lord enveloped it. One by one, all souls joined in giving praise. The mouths of the meek proclaimed His name. . . .

The doctors had given up efforts to fight the disease. The desperately ill woman had been transferred from the local hospital to the capital's fine medical facilities in hope of help. The doctors repeatedly had drained the accumulated liquid in her stomach, but with time this procedure was not efficient anymore. The woman was sent home to die in peace among her family.

Today, the woman is alive and well.

One thing is certainly clear: This is not a story about moral perfection, or about living up to high ideals, or about human moral effort. It is a story about the presence of God, about God doing a new thing, about God bringing deliverance. This is how Matthew introduces the Sermon on the Mount: not as a story about human effort but about the presence of God, bringing deliverance.

Not all experiences of healing are so dramatic; nevertheless they occur. When our son David was a baby, he had a hole between two compartments in his heart, and a valve that wasn't working well between the heart and his main pulmonary artery. These could be repaired by surgery. But he also had a narrowing of the main pulmonary artery that could be repaired only temporarily. In the long run, it was unavoidably life-threatening. We prayed a lot—and worried a lot. So did his doctor. But when the surgeon repaired the hole and the valve, the artery straightened out “all by itself.” Everything works well now.

I'm not claiming that David's healing was an unexplainable miracle. Probably after the heart started working properly the artery could also function well. What I am claiming is that even ordinary healing is a gift from God. Every breath we breathe is a gift from God. God does new things all the time.

And God did something special in Jesus. This is how Matthew sets up the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount, and it is why we have spent most of this chapter looking at how these passages show us that God is about presence, deliverance, and healing. Let us not interpret the Sermon on the Mount as it has been interpreted so often: part of the story of Greek idealism, human effort to make ourselves perfect and live up to what seem like impossibly high ideals. Matthew shows as clearly as possible that the Sermon on the Mount needs to be interpreted as the good news of God becoming present to us in Jesus, doing something new; as God's delivering justice breaking through in Jesus; as disciples receiving the gracious call to become followers of Jesus, and people being healed; and as fulfillment of the prophecies of the prophet Isaiah.

Many in our culture (Christians and non-Christians) think of the Sermon on the Mount as high ideals or hard teachings. They admire it from a distance. Indeed, from a distance it does look like high ideals to be striven for by extraordinary effort. But holding at a distance and straining toward impossible standards of perfection are not what Jesus teaches here. Such an approach may indeed be another aspect of the backwash from the Enlightenment, because it does not expect God to do new things. If we believe living these teachings is about our own effort alone, of course it looks morally strenuous. This is not how the disciples saw it. They did not admire it from a distance. Jesus called them, and *immediately* they followed him. They just dropped their fishing nets and followed. They understood Jesus' way from within, as participants. From within, it was good news. It still is, if it is understood rightly.

Our preliminary explorations of the context leading up to the Sermon on the Mount already point us to the truth that the Christian life is not just hard human effort to live up to high ideals; nor is it just a bunch of duties. It is about God's grace. It is about living in the presence of God. It is the invitation of Jesus to participate in the new things God is doing all the time. We are allowed, privileged, and invited to respond to the call of Jesus to follow him as he shows us how to act in the way that fits with what God is doing in our midst. This is what I hope to show as we make our way through the wonders of Jesus' teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. I hope by the end that you can say with me, "Praise God! God is doing something new here! And I can have a part in what God is doing!"