

## MESSAGE - SOTM - Part 24 - From Me to Us - 7.13.25

As I was preparing this week's sermon, I was reminded of the day Amanda and I got married. I was thinking about a certain moment during the reception. You know how people always hype up the wedding party entrance? Well, Amanda was kind enough to let me choose our entrance song.

It wasn't a top-40 hit. I bet most people at the reception had never heard it before. In fact, I bet most people *here* have never heard it!

The song's called *Overture 1928* by a band named Dream Theater. It's a 3-minute instrumental that opens their album *Scenes from a Memory*. That album is a favorite among Dream Theater fans because it tells a rich story from start to finish—but the really cool thing is that the storytelling isn't just done with lyrics. It's known for masterfully weaving its musical themes that repeat and evolve throughout the album.

But what I really love is the intentionality behind the music. There's so much depth in *Scenes from a Memory* that even the drummer repeats specific rhythms and fills—building on them as the story moves forward.

In an interview, he explained that the idea was to use those moments as *musical signposts*—designed to help the listener reflect on what came before.

**I love that. It's *patterns with purpose*.**

So what does any of this have to do with the Sermon on the Mount? Maybe more than we think.

The biblical writers also loved patterns. Just like the writers of *Scenes from a Memory*, they embedded *audible cues*—intentional phrases and rhythms designed to stand out to the listeners and signal a return to something earlier.

In that way, these cues weren't just *literary signposts*—they were *spoken patterns with purpose*. Not just to help with memorization, but to draw readers and listeners into deeper reflection on the wisdom of God's Word.

In fact, this was one of their primary ways of teaching *wisdom*. They didn't just state a truth and move on—they built it into the rhythm of the text.

And we see that kind of rhythm in the Sermon on the Mount. Across all three chapters, Jesus is building a pattern. And in Matthew 7:12, we reach a kind of callback to the very heart of what He's been saying all along.

**[SLIDE 1] Matthew 7:12 - So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.**

Basically every scholar I read said that this is the most well-known thing Jesus ever said. It's *The Golden Rule*.

And it's everywhere! We hear it in movies, politics, workplaces, schools—even in the books we read.

But here's the question: **Does our culture use the Golden Rule in the same way Jesus meant it?**

Not really... Our modern culture has kind of trimmed down what Jesus said.

*"Do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets"* becomes:

- *"Treat others how you want to be treated"*
- which then gets flattened even further to: *"Just be nice"* or *"Don't be a bully."*

It gets watered down into a message of tolerance, coexistence, and surface-level kindness.

**But Jesus was doing something way deeper than just saying, "*Can't we all just get along?!*"**

He wasn't just giving us a social ethic—He was teaching a **kingdom ethic**.

In other words...

**[SLIDE 2] The Golden Rule isn't just about getting along—it's about representing God's heart.**

It's about loving others in a way that reflects how **God first loved us**.

And Jesus said this way of life **sums up the Law and the Prophets**. The Law and the Prophets is a phrase that basically means the entire Old Testament.

Now, at first glance, we might read over that phrase and think nothing of it. But here's the thing—it's not random or even an insignificant little detail. It's what you might call a **memory trigger**. It's a cue that would have brought to mind more than just words—it triggered their story.

In our culture, we appreciate it when a movie or a song brings back a theme in a powerful way. But for Jesus' audience, that kind of callback wasn't just a cool feature—it was how their minds were wired. Their faith was formed through memory, repetition, and story. So when Jesus says, 'the Law and the Prophets,' He's not just referencing Scripture—He's awakening a whole story in their hearts.

He's intentionally stirring up *scenes from memory*—moments when God revealed His character, gave His commands, and called His people to love Him and love others.

And Jesus doesn't just use this phrase once—He brings it up twice in the Sermon on the Mount—once with the Golden Rule, and once earlier...

**[SLIDE 3] Matthew 5:17 - Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to FULFILL them.**

This repetition isn't just a neat connection or coincidence—it's intentional. It's a signpost in the journey, inviting us to pause and reflect. It's Matthew's way of saying, ***"Pay attention—these two moments belong together."***

So let's pay attention—Let's investigate this a little bit...

**Jesus says in 5:17 that He didn't come to rewrite the Law—or get rid of it. He came to *fulfill* it.**

That means He brings it to its true completion—not just by obeying it, but by *revealing* what it was always meant to be. He shines a light on what the Law and the Prophets were *truly* pointing toward all along.

And as the One who fulfills it, He invites us—just a few verses later—to follow Him in that same way of life. He said...

**[SLIDE 4] Matthew 5:20 - 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.**

He's saying that this isn't simply about following the rules—it's about following Him. His very life is fulfilling the Law, and now He's calling us to pattern our lives after His.

**He's calling us to a greater righteousness—a way of living that reflects the heart of God.**

The Sermon on the Mount is His invitation to that kind of life. It shows us what it means to live out the Law and the Prophets **the Jesus Way**.

And so check this out...

**[SLIDE 5] Bible Project Diagram**

- **Matthew 5:17** says **He** fulfills the Law and the Prophets.
- **Matthew 5:20** says **we** are called to a **greater righteousness**.
- **Matthew 7:12** says **that kind of life** is the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

Notice what Matthew's doing here...

It's like he's tracing a full story arc—Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets... He calls us to live a greater righteousness and shows us what that looks like... And then He sums it all up with, *"Do to others what you would have them do to you..."*

This isn't just a series of good teachings—it's a movement. It's a pattern that's meant to stick with us.

**That's where I think the musical imagery comes back into play.**

Earlier I talked about how music can use repeated themes to guide the listener—to pull them back to something familiar—Like a musical cue that says, *“Hey, you’ve heard this before... Now think about what it means right here.”*

Well, in written music, there’s a little symbol called a **repeat sign**. It looks like this...

### **[SLIDE 6] Repeat Sign Diagram**

See the two blue symbols that look like a colon with two vertical lines? Those are repeat signs. There’s one on the left and one on the right—they bookend each other.

Music reads from left to right, and when you get to a repeat sign, it tells you to go back to a certain point and play it again (note the blue arrows).

And that’s intentional. It’s not like the composer ran out of ideas and just needed to fill space. When the music repeats, the meaning deepens through repetition. Same notes... deeper impact.

**I think Matthew is giving us a repeat sign right here.** He’s saying:

- Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets (5:17)
- He calls us to a greater righteousness (5:20)
- That kind of life—a life that reflects His heart—is what truly fulfills the Law and the Prophets (7:12)

And Matthew’s saying: Now go back and re-read the sermon with that in mind. Re-listen to His words. Re-consider the wisdom of Jesus.

Because the more we reflect on it... the more we live it... the more we discover the depth of what it means to love God and love others. And Jesus summarizes this with a statement that reflects back on everything that came before it. It’s the Golden Rule...

### **[SLIDE 7] Matthew 7:12 - So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.**

And so, again, this isn’t just about being nice. It’s about reflecting God’s heart of righteousness. Jesus isn’t simply calling us to be a bunch of rule followers. He’s

calling us to be image bearers—we represent Him through our words and our actions so that others would see our good deeds and glorify His name.

And, if you remember last week, James would say: *if we're following the Golden Rule, then we're living in a posture of wisdom.*

That posture of living out God's wisdom is the foundation beneath the whole Sermon on the Mount.

And if wisdom is the **foundation**—then **desire** is the **engine** that drives it. Let's take a closer look at the Golden Rule...

**[SLIDE 8] (don't read) "would" = *thelo***

The Greek word behind "would" is *thelo*. *Thelo* is about what you **desire**—what you *want*, what you *will*—what you *long for deep down*.

So, Jesus is saying, "Do to others what you *desire* to have them do to you."

That begs the question: *What do I truly desire? What are those things that I long for deep down, that only God and I know?*

If we answer those questions honestly, our desires tend to fall into one of two categories: they're either **self-centered**... or **Jesus-centered**.

So let's take that question seriously: *What do I truly desire?*

Because the word Jesus uses in 7:12—*thelo*—isn't just about surface-level preference. It's about will. Intention. Longing.

And here's the thing... that word only shows up one other time in the entire Sermon on the Mount. It's yet another signpost or literary cue that points us back to what was said earlier...

**[SLIDE 9] Matthew 6:10 – "Your kingdom come, your will (Gk=*thelo*) be done, on earth as it is in heaven."**

The interesting thing about Matthew 6:10 is that we now find ourselves in the exact center of the Lord's Prayer—which is at the center of the Sermon on the Mount.

Let's pause on that for a second... God's will... His desires... what He wants done on earth as it is in heaven... that's planted in the center of the sermon as if it's the seed from which everything else grows outward.

And if God's will is the seed—then the rest of the Sermon on the Mount is the fruit—fruit that looks like those with humble posture... people who hunger and thirst for righteousness... communities that love their enemies, give generously, pray sincerely, forgive deeply, and treat others the way they want to be treated.

### **So let's connect the dots...**

If my *thelo*—my *desire*—is aligned with *God's thelo*... Then I'm not just living for me. I'm living for the kind of life Jesus describes here—a greater righteousness, rooted and growing in love for God and love for others.

### **That means:**

I don't just do what's polite—I do what's loving.

I don't just avoid harm—I pursue what's good.

I don't just tolerate people—I **invest** in them.

**What does it mean to invest in someone?** It means I desire and am willing to devote time, effort, and resources for their well-being... Their physical, emotional, financial, and spiritual well-being.

Or as Jesus might say it...

**[SLIDE 10] Matthew 7:12 - So in everything, do to [invest in] others what you would have them do to [invest in] you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.**

I really like the word “**invest**.” It's not the exact word Jesus used, but it's connected. The Greek word behind “do” is *poieo*. But *poieo* doesn't just mean to act—it's about the kind of action that flows from something deeper.

**It's the kind of action that's the result of an investment.** It's action that grows from care, intention, and purpose.

**[SLIDE 11] (don't read) Matthew 7:17 - Likewise, every good tree bears (poieo) good fruit, but a bad tree bears (poieo) bad fruit.**

**In fact, just five verses later**, Jesus uses the same word when He talks about trees bearing, or *producing* fruit. Good trees (*poieo*) produce good fruit. Bad trees (*poieo*) produce bad fruit.

**Their fruit is the *result* of an *investment*...**

It's the result of a farmer who's put time, care, and effort into the tree. (I wouldn't know this firsthand—but I've seen Cherry Hill Orchards and it looks like they know what they're doing!)

That's the heart behind Jesus' words: "*do to others.*" But I have to say, this isn't just a suggestion or a heart-felt nudge to do the right thing. This is yet another one of Jesus' commands!

He's not telling us to try our best to be nice...

**[SLIDE 12] Jesus is commanding His followers to act in such a way that they're investing in others with the same care, intention, and love we would want for ourselves!**

There's a weight behind that. A responsibility. It implies cost, care, and intentionality.

This isn't just about good behavior—this is about desire-driven action. It's about embodying God's will and putting His heart on display through our lives as we invest in loving Him and loving others.

That's a Jesus-centered life. A life where my desires aren't just about *me*—they're about *us*.

The Apostle Paul illustrates this beautifully in his second letter to the Corinthians Churches. He says...

**[SLIDE 13] 2 Corinthians 1:5-4 - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who**



**comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.**

Do you see the investment in this—This is the fruit of “do to others”?

**God, who enacts His will, invests in us.** He loves His people—He comforts them...

You guys know I love the fact that God’s peace—His peace that transcends all understanding—guards our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. What could be more comforting than knowing the Lord’s peace is standing guard over us?

But God doesn’t just comfort us so we feel better. He desires to comfort us so that we might *learn* from Him—and *do the same for others!*

In other words, He’s given us the “good gift” of comfort so that we can wisely invest it in others. That’s “*do to others what you would have them do to you.*”

Paul goes on to say...

**[SLIDE 14] 2 Corinthians 1:7 - And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.**

Paul’s riffing off of this idea of reciprocity—it’s a back-and-forth sharing, rooted in relationship. **It’s faith in action with repeat signs around it.**

“Just as you share in our sufferings” — The people Paul is writing to can relate to the suffering he’s endured for his faith in Jesus. They’ve been through it too.

And together—through their shared experience of Christ—they strengthen one another with the comfort that comes from God.

And maybe it’s just me, but I feel like I need to lean into this a little more...

Paul's not saying, "Hey, we've been through a lot, and God helped us, so now we're better at helping people." I mean, on the surface... sure. But Paul's talking about more than just a shared learning experience...

He's saying, "*We're in this together.*"

The comfort we receive from God isn't meant to stop with us—it's meant to *flow through us*. That's what happens when our desires begin to align with God's desires. It's when our hearts shift from inward to outward—from *me*, to *us*.

That's what happens when we "do to others" out of a genuine desire for their good. It's an investment that produces real fruit. It's the heartbeat of a community that's learning to live in sync with the Golden Rule.

And I love how the Bible Project guys captured this. They said...

**[SLIDE 15] "If my desire really is just for me, then the 'self' is me. I am 'me,' and that's it. But if my desire is extending out to the community, my sense of self is expanded. I am not merely 'me,' I am an extension of this community. I am 'us.' My well-being is wholly wrapped up with the well-being of my neighbor." (Bible Project, SOTM, Ep33)**

That's exactly what the Golden Rule is all about. It's about letting go of the mindset that says "me first" and learning to live with a heart that says "we belong to each other."

Not just because it's the right thing to do. But because this is what God desires for us. It's the essence of what His will being done on earth as it is in heaven *actually looks like*.

Think about it from the perspective of Jesus...

**[SLIDE 16] Matthew 7:12 - So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.**

What did Jesus do for others?

**He gave up His life.**

That's the heart of the gospel: While we were still sinners... while we were still *enemies* of God... Jesus died for us. That's the ultimate act of love.

He didn't love us because we were lovable—He loved us because that's who He is. And now, He invites us to follow Him in that same kind of love.

Not a love that's cheap or easy.

It's a love that's *costly*. A love that *forgives*. A love that *invests*.

A love that puts the good of others before ourselves—because that's what Jesus did for us.

And so this week I was reminded of a story of someone that embodied this kind of love when she was faced with an unimaginable situation...

### **[SLIDE 17] The Hiding Place by Corrie ten Boom**

Years ago I read *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom (thank you Josie for the recommendation!). If you're not familiar with her story, she and her family were arrested by Nazis during World War II.

She ended up being imprisoned in a concentration camp where she was literally stripped of her dignity as a human being. The horrors she saw and experienced were... like I said... unimaginable.

But years later, after surviving the camps, she went around speaking at different churches, explaining her story and sharing the gospel.

And at one particular speaking event, she came face to face with a man that triggered a horrible scene from her memory. And just like that, she had to decide—*will I reflect God's heart in this moment?*

### **She said in her book...**

"It was at a church service in Munich that I saw him, the former *[Nazi officer]* who had stood guard at the shower room door in the processing center at Ravensbruck. He was the first of our actual jailers that I had seen since that time.

And suddenly it was all there—the room full of mocking men, the heaps of clothing, Betsie’s pain-blanching face (Betsie was her sister).”

“He came up to me as the church was emptying, beaming and bowing. ‘How grateful I am for your message, Fraulein.’ he said. ‘To think that, as you say, He has washed my sins away!’”

“His hand was thrust out to shake mine. And I, who had preached so often to the people in Bloemendaal the need to forgive, kept my hand at my side.”

“Even as the angry, vengeful thoughts boiled through me, I saw the sin of them. Jesus Christ had died for this man; was I going to ask for more? Lord Jesus, I prayed, forgive me and help me to forgive him.”

“I tried to smile, I struggled to raise my hand. I could not. I felt nothing, not the slightest spark of warmth or charity. And so again I breathed a silent prayer. Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give Your forgiveness.”

“As I took his hand the most incredible thing happened. From my shoulder along my arm and through my hand, a current seemed to pass from me to him, while into my heart sprang a love for this stranger that almost overwhelmed me.”<sup>1</sup>

**Corrie’s story of forgiveness embodies the Sermon on the Mount.** Her posture of *doing to others as she would have them do to her* is a real example of what it looks like to live the Jesus Way.

It’s what it means to desire what God desires—to love others the way He loves us, and to let His love shape the way we live. As Paul once wrote...

**[SLIDE 18] 1 Corinthians 13:13 - And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.**

**Let’s Pray - as Jesus taught us to pray...**

*Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into testing, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.*

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<sup>1</sup> Corrie ten Boom, *The Hiding Place*. Page 239.