

# Worship Chapel

## By Michael Wilkins

(inaudible until 14:11)

Speaker 1:

Heavenly Father, you are a mighty God you are awesome God. And Lord that's as true today as it was yesterday. Even amid financial breakdown in some of our markets, amid hurricanes, and then we pray for our our brothers and sisters, we pray for those in Galveston and Texas who are struggling with suddenly having nothing- many of them. But you are there also. You are mighty there also, you are holy and compassionate there also. And we come this morning, we present ourselves to you. Here we are in this place. Our bodies can't be elsewhere. But we know that you've created us for some definite service. You've committed some work for us to do which has not been committed to another. We are a link in a chain, we are a bond of connection between people. You have not created us for nothing. We shall do good, we shall do your work. We will be angels of peace preachers of truths in our own place.

And wherever you are today you cannot be thrown away. If you're in sickness today your sickness can serve the Lord. If you're in perplexity, your perplexity can serve the Lord. If you're in sorrow, your sorrow can serve the Lord because Lord you do nothing in vain. And so therefore we'll trust in you, In Jesus's name Amen. You may be seated. Hey let's give it up for these guys, Terry and company. That was Terry and Operation Liberation. Pretty awesome. Hey it's it's time for our once a week cleaning of the pews, so if you could move to the center just just drag your

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...Levi's across the center of your pew and move it in. We just have to clean these babies. I don't see anyone moving, moving, moving... now not just a clean, we got a few people we let in. There are spaces up in the left hand corner where they're selling hot dogs and peanuts up there. So if you need a new place to sit. Couple of announcements, we do today continue our series on the Sermon on the Mount, and I'll introduce our speaker in a minute.

Let me remind you that this Friday is the second week of the Women's and Men's discipleship groups, respectively. The beloved which is and is in its first year, meets from nine to ten thirty, I understand that there were a lot of women at that. Between 150 and 200 showed up this last Friday. That is pretty awesome but there is still time to get in there, so that's nine to ten thirty, and then the Men's Discipleship group in its third year is also meeting called "The Journey from Ten Thirty to Noon." So if you want to get in on either of those, there is still two more weeks before they close the doors and go with who they have.

Let me introduce to our speaker this morning. Everything else is OK. Today we have with us Dr. Michael J. Wilkins. He... you know Mike's life has been...I'm just reading through where he's been and what he's done and it's pretty amazing. He is...a he is a veteran, formerly served in Vietnam back in the late 60s. And it was after that experience that he received Christ, and he knows the day December 30 1st 1970. Happy New Year to him on that day.

He later on came back and went to Biola College. Have you heard a Biola College? It was on this site before Biola University received his degrees in psychology and social science; went on to get a master's of divinity... a place called Talbot Theological Seminary. And then received his Doctor Philosophy degree at a place called Fuller Theological Seminary in 1986. So he's been a he's a veteran, he's been a student a scholar, he's been a pastor helped to start the Ev. Free Church  
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...in Carlsbad California, and Cayucos Community Ev.. Free Church where he served as senior pastor for three years.

That's up near San Luis Obispo right is it. I run into people all the time like across California. I go yeah I Biola University go "Do you know Mike Wilkins?" They knew him from from one of the churches that he started. Since that time of course, he's been with us, as a friend for Biblical studies. He's just a busy man. He's written three commentaries lately on the book of Matthew for an NIV and Zondervan read a book on spiritual formation called in his image. He's currently doing something very cool, which is he gets together with 12 other scholars in the Institute of Biblical Research. Recently, they gathered in Jerusalem, and there are 12 scholars who are committed to really providing a defense for some of the crucial historical events in Jesus's life.

So they're on the forefront of showing that Jesus is who he really is and he did what he really said he did. And so we're very happy to have this morning continue with our series on the Sermon on the Mount. Please welcome me in... welcoming Dr. Michael Wilkins.

Dr. Michael Wilkins:

Thank you very much. It's a joy to be with you. I just finished my 25th year here teaching at Biola full time. Most of those years and actually as an adjunct, I started in 1977, I taught undergrad. Most all of those years was just five years ago that I moved to teaching primarily grad courses as well as being the dean of the faculty at Talbot.

So, I miss you. It's a joy to see you singing and worshipping and this is just a wonderful

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...place to be, and I'm privileged to have been here. It's something I wanted to bring to your attention. One of our adjunct faculty members in Biblical studies in theology, Dr. Kathy McReynolds. Her husband was on the Metrolink train this last Friday, and he is in critical condition and is in ICU.

They're hoping for God's healing in his life. Join me in prayer for him right now. Father it's a horrible incident that occurred last Friday. And for Cathy and her husband, it's even more horrible. I pray that your healing hand is upon him, and I pray that your hand of peace and grace is on Cathy and her family. All we can do is give it to you. We pray this in Jesus name amen. Well not only is it a privilege just to be with you, but it's a privilege to be joining you for this series on the Sermon on the Mount, especially to be following Dr. Lundy last week, and fall in precede Dr. Porter, and Dr. Leon Harris who will be with you the next two weeks. I've studied this sermon for many years. I plumb the depths of I...practically studied Matthew for the last 30 years daily. Each time I come back to Matthew, but especially each time I've come back to the Sermon on the Mount, I learn something new and I'm transfixed by its power and its splendor. It's a magnificent manifesto of Jesus intent for our life and the Kingdom of God as it now expresses itself in this world. Last week Dr. Lundy gave us an excellent start by rooting the sermon and God's continual, historical work of extending his grace to solve our need and the need of the world in our mission.

He especially focused on Matthew 5:13-16, where Jesus tells us that as his disciples we are not may, or could, or should, we are the salt and light of this world because of the transformation that has occurred in our lives, the moment that we met Jesus. It's a radical message for our lives today, but we can't read it lightly because there are truths here that must be

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...balanced, which is always hard work and I hope you have your Bible because we're going to look at it this morning. Matthew chapter five, six, and seven is the Sermon on the Mount. And as I say, it's hard work because there are passages that seemingly go in opposite directions. Last week Dr. Lundy had us focus on Matthew 5:16 and the issue of our good works. Notice what Jesus says in 5:16. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. Let your light shine before men.

That's an imperative. Now compare that statement to Jesus others saying in Chapter 6 verse one, where Jesus says beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them. Otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven.

On the surface we might think that these are contradictory statements, and throughout the years people have struggled. Do I let people see my good works or should I hide them so that only God can see them. But when we look a bit deeper we see that Jesus takes us to the heart, and the difference is in our inner motivation what is our purpose in doing good works? Who are they for? What do I hope to get out of this to understand how radical this is we have to understand how radical this distinction was in the world of first century Judaism. How would a Jew living in Galilee have understood this sermon? How would one of the religious leaders have reacted to Jesus words? So let's start with Matthew chapter 5 verse 20. Matthew 5:20 is considered by most scholars to be one of the most important key interpretive verses to understanding Jesus intent in the entire sermon and in understanding our entire discipleship to Jesus. Jesus states dramatically, "For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and scribes you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven." The crowds and even Jesus disciples and certainly the Pharisees must have been stunned at those words.

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...The Scribes and the Pharisees were the epitome of ethical righteousness committed to fulfilling all of the demands of the old testament through their elaborate oral tradition.

Their scrupulous adherence to the written and oral law was legendary in Israel. They were the most righteous people in all of Israel. If they weren't in the kingdom, how could anyone else hope to surpass their righteousness, but Jesus is not speaking of an intensification of the doctrine of salvation by works righteousness. He does not mean that the crowds must out count the scribes and Pharisees in performing the 613 commandments of the Old Testament. No... entrance to the kingdom is through a different kind and a different quality of righteousness, then the external legalism of some of the Pharisees and scribes. As Dr. Lundy pointed out last week, this kind of righteousness belongs in the realm of grace. Jesus proclamation of the good news is that the kingdom of heaven is now available to anyone who responds to it. God's saving activity has arrived on the earthly scene to deliver his people and this will produce a radical change in our lives, through the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit of God. This verse is one of Jesus first hints of the kind of grace filled righteousness that God produces on our hearts, not what we do through external ethical activities. Jesus declaration of verse twenty is the interpretive key to the entire sermon on the mountain by extension to all of life in the kingdom of heaven. It's the reality that underlies what Paul will later describe as justification and sanctification. Our being declared righteous, justification, because of the atoning work of Jesus on the cross is the only way that you and I can progressively grow and personal righteousness which is sanctification.

It's God's work not our work. All of the Christian life of discipleship to Jesus must work from the inside to the outside, or else we fall into the trap of Pharisaic hypocrisy, which is an external superficial self-righteousness. Jesus illustrates this inside out transformation six

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...profound statements in chapter five, and they run from verse 21 immediately following that key verse 20, all the way through 48. These are usually called antithesis because Jesus takes several examples from the law, often one of the Ten Commandments, and contrasts the Pharisees interpretations and external actions with Jesus called the inside out transformational discipleship in the Kingdom of Heaven. Six times Jesus used examples from everyday life to show that external obedience to the law is not sufficient.

That's not what he's called us to do. Obedience to the law works from the inside out. Let's note each briefly, in chapter 5:21-26 Jesus focuses upon murder. Not just avoiding physical murder, but opening up to the spirit of God to transform the inner source our anger and self-centered pride. To bring reconciliation in all of our relationships and versus 27 through 30, he focuses on adultery. Not just avoiding external adultery, but allowing this spirit to control inner lust and bring Kingdom purity to our closest and most intimate relationships.

My wife is quite happy that I have never committed physical adultery. That makes her very happy. But our marriage of nearly 37 years is rock solid, because I have eyes for only one woman. That's her. There is no room for flirting. There is no room for wandering eyes in a disciple of Jesus. In vs. 31 through 32. Jesus focuses on divorce. Spirit empowered Kingdom living affects marriages... so that external divorce is not considered an option in simply dismissing a spouse if it doesn't work. But brings an inner unbreakable bond of loyalty and commitment.

Next month, I have the wonderful privilege of going to the north shore of Wahoo Turtle Bay to perform the wedding of my younger daughter to a wonderful young guy. They have also given me the privilege asking me to perform their premarital counseling and the privilege has

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...been for me to see that for them as they enter into their marriage, divorce is not an option. That's what it is to be a disciple of Jesus. Chapter 5 verses 33 through 37 focuses upon false witness. Not just avoiding false statements of commitment, but allowing an inner life of integrity with God to confirm the reality of our every thought word and action. Verses 38 or 42 focuses on retaliation. Kingdom disciples do not need to resort to external retaliation when we're wronged, but the inner source of God's grace moves us continually to transform all of our relationships by seeking the higher good of the Kingdom of God. In verses 43 through 47 focuses on enemies. Not allowing external boundary markers such as nationality, or race or religion, to create division. But allowing the love of God to so transform our hearts that our love transforms all boundaries. The central principle of life in the Kingdom of Heaven is a kingdom righteousness operates from the inside out, not the outside in. But throughout Israel's history, there is a tendency to reverse the operation, as was the case with the scribes, many of the scribes in the Pharisees of Jesus' day.

The assumption seemed to be that if one worked hard enough to clean up the outside, then the inside there's going to be automatically clean, but the Pharisees should have known better. Because the clear teaching of the Old Testament, is upon inner transformation. How could the overlook the example of King David after his horrendous adulterous affair and murder? In Psalms 51, David recognizes a true repentance is not found in the religious activity of the sacrifice of bulls and rams in the temple, but begins with a broken and contrite heart. But there is a subtle temptation of religious circles, even in our own churches, and sometimes even here at Biola, to attempt to clean up the outside first. We do so to try to gain the attention of others, to try to impress others, to try to gain the approval of those around us, or sometimes just to hide our

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...inner corruption. But no clearly Jesus statement is 6:1. "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them. Otherwise you have no reward with your father who is in heaven." Jesus focuses on the three pillars of righteousness in Judaism in chapter six; giving alms and verses 2-4, prayer verses 5-15, and fasting in verses 16-18. And in each of those, and those are good things... giving to the poor, prayer, fasting. All of those are really good things. We should all be involved in each of those, but in each of them Jesus declares that if our motivation in religious activity is to gain the approval of people, we get absolutely no reward from God.

Your prayer stinks, if it's for other people. Our righteous deeds are of zero value, if they're wrongly motivated. Now... now don't get me wrong. The external life is important. Obedience to God's word is commanded but obedience has to begin on the inside with a mind that receives the truth of God, and a heart that is transformed by the word of God. So that a transformed heart directs our thoughts, our words, our actions, all of our social relationships. But if the heart is not transformed, we fall into the trap of attempting to promote our own self-righteousness, not the righteousness of God and the Kingdom of Heaven. But how do we go about doing this? Being transformed from the inside out. Let me use a specific example, forgiveness. Forgiveness is a central illustration of this inside out transformation. It's the very center of our relationship with God and other people, and actually through the very center of the Sermon on the Mount. The apex of this sermon is found in the so-called Lord's Prayer. Which is actually a model prayer that Jesus teaches his disciples with six petitions that establish three priorities in our life with God and three priorities in our life in this world. The fifth petition addresses the disciple's debt of sin in verse twelve.

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Chapter Six forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors. In Luke's parallel prayer, the term used is sins. These are basically equal expressions, but with the added nuance in Matthew that humans owe obedience to God. Sin creates an obligation or debt to God that humans cannot possibly repay. Jesus disciples have responded to his charge and repent in their sins are now forgiven, but they are not simply to relish their own state of forgiveness. We are to forgive others. Those who have received forgiveness are so possessed with gratitude to God, that they in turn will eagerly forgive those who are debtors to them. Now this doesn't teach that humans must forgive others before they can receive forgiveness, but rather forgiveness of others is a proof that his disciple's sins are forgiven. And that we now possess forgiveness and salvation, which in turn impels us to forgive others. The measure of whether or not a person's debt before God has been forgiven is the measure of his or her forgiveness of those who have debts against them.

A joyful experience of our salvation will impel us, to forgive those who have wronged us. And to forgive them from the heart. Now, let me ask this: how many of you have ever been wronged by somebody else? Anybody? Anybody? Every one of you has been wronged by somebody else. Now take a look around this gym. Has anyone in this room wronged you. Yeah. Yeah, I'm sure that... that you might even be sitting next to him. It might be your roommate. Now let's reverse that for a moment. How many of you have even once in your lifetime wronged another person? Oh yeah, every one of you and me. Have you ever wronged a person in this gym? No not me. That can range from someone hurting your feelings, or someone gossiping about you, or I can be more severe.

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Some of you have been abused as a child, or you may have been falsely accused of cheating, or you perhaps were wrongly fired from your job. So what do you do when you've been wronged? Or when you have wronged another person? Here is where Jesus leads us gently to a state of grace. When we experience God's forgiveness in the depth of our heart and live constantly in our mind with the recognition that God has forgiven us even the most horrendous of our sins, then forgiving others is the natural outgrowth of our relationship with God. And it's the impulse of our relationship with others. Let me share with you, one of my earlier experiences, actually one of my very earliest experiences as a Christian. My biological father left my mother and my older brother when he was just a baby, six months before I was born. Six months after I was born, my mother married another man. Basically she married him out of desperation. This stepfather caused by my family and me an incredible amount of pain. My very earliest memory as a child is waking up in the middle of the night and hearing my mother scream.

My mother spent most of her childhood in Children's Hospital in Los Angeles with tuberculosis to the bone. She had 16 operations on her legs. She walked with a limp. She had a big gash in her leg, and I remember waking up, I probably is only 2 years old hearing my mother scream, as this stepfather beat her, knocked her to the ground, lifted up her skirt, and yelled cripple at her. He regularly beat my mother, and older brother, and me up. On Christmas Eve, when I was in seventh grade, just a couple of weeks after this....well... On Christmas Eve, when I was in seventh grade, he left. He announced to our family that he was tired of being a husband, a father, and he left. Just a couple of weeks after he left, my mother told Bill, my older brother and me, took us aside and said, "Boys have some to say to you. Your stepfather is not your real

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...father."

No he had made us lie... He made me lie to you all these years because he wanted to have your attention, but your real father left before you were born Mike. He is not your real father...father. And I remember looking at her and looking at Bill. Bill's just couple of years older to me, and I went "Yes"! I was so stoked to find out that I did not have his genes, but I carried a deep deep deep animosity toward him for years. My mother says that in those years, junior high through all of high school, I developed an incredible anger. I became sullen, I became hurtful and hateful toward people. I enlisted in the Army right after high school for an airborne infantry training. I wanted to fight.

I went to Vietnam when I was only 19 years old. When I was in Vietnam, the animosity became almost obsessive toward this stepfather. And as I learned to kill, as I did kill, as I became more and more angry, I made a vow that when I returned from Vietnam the first time I saw him, I would kill him. You can't you can't imagine how deep that was. He beat my brother up, my older brother, up so badly that he lost any sense of personal identity. And when my brother was 20 years old, he became a homosexual and he left died of AIDS 15 years later. In all of that, Bill saw as a result of the treatment that he received as a child.

And I vowed I would kill this jerk, the first time that I saw him. I returned from Vietnam a few months later, and within a year I became a Christian. My world began to change, and I put that stepfather out of my mind. I had not thought much about him until about four years later. When he suddenly showed up where my wife and I were living with our new little baby; he had tracked us down somehow. Me... I would kick that guy out of the house but my wife is a nice person, and she invited him in and we sat on the couch and we were very polite in our discussion

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...with each other and as we chatted that vow for the first time in four years came to my mind. And then I told him said, "You know I made a vow when I was in Vietnam that the first time I saw you I would kill you."

And I says, "Today is that day."

I mean he started to sweat. He slid down the couch and he hit the look of terror because I was known as a very very violent person. But I said today is that day. But I now know that I'm no better person than you. God has forgiven me. And if God can forgive a jerk like me, I can forgive a jerk like you. I said, "I'll not allow you ever to hurt my family again, so I don't think that this is made out of weakness. Rather, I forgive you because I have been forgiven." I know I was as shocked as he was. I had not thought about saying those words of forgiveness but they came easily. I was deeply aware of the mercy and forgiveness that God had extended to me; I knew my sin better than anyone. I may not have been as abusive as my former stepfather. I may not have hurt people in the same way that he hurt our family.

I had also abused and hurt people in my own self-seeking way. When I came to that forgiveness, I knew that I needed mercy and forgiveness and in receiving the gift of life that Jesus extended me through his work on the cross, extending mercy and forgiveness to my former stepfather was a natural response. My vow had been the rash irresponsible reaction of a deeply hurt bitter young sin...sinner. However, my ability later to forgive came from the eternal loving act of grace and transformation in my heart because of Jesus sacrifice for my sin. You may not have the same testimony of explicit hatred of others, but our own hurt and resentment hinders true growth.

We've all been hurt deeply but the depth of our healing must come from a heart, that has  
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...been healed by Jesus and forgive those who have hurt us the most. You can forgive others but it comes through two things. One live each and every day in the center of God's forgiveness. And two, allow your heart to be transformed by God. A hard heart is when we harden our heart against God because we've sinned, or when other people have hurt us. Allow the Spirit of God to heal your hurting heart. Jesus teaches us to pray, "Forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors". Join me in saying those words from the inside out: "forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors". God bless you.

Speaker 1:

Why don't we stand? Won't you pray with me? I want you to just reflect for a minute on what's going on in you right now having heard that. Some of you may have really connected with it. Others of you may wondering what what is in that for me. Lord what kind of a response should I make? Many of us grew up as good Christian kids. We're good kids, we um... we didn't show anger, we learned to be kind, some of us learned to repress it to push it down and yet you may be here today...Um vaguely aware that there is some things you are angry about. Some people that I've hurt you some people that you've hurt and you're angry at yourself. You're angry at maybe God for not stopping you, or angry at God for not stopping others. Well, Michael encouraged us to to open the heart, to actually look and see what's in there. Not as... not for some morbid introspection. But to actually expose the heart to God. To expose it to him and say, "Lord I think some work needs to be done here."

It may not be obvious to us that some of us are angry, but it may come out in other ways,  
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...maybe a desire for control, or quickness to take offense, or sleeplessness, or anxiety. Well I encourage you to just open your heart, and say, "Lord what's going on with this?" What do you want to address? What kind of loving work do you want to do? So heavenly father we begin that conversation with you now. We open our heart and all of the crazy stuff that is there. From all the years of living with other sinners, of being with the sinner, of being a sinner ourselves, we open up all of that to you because we know you want to heal us. We know you want to transform us more into your image. We know you want to liberate us. So father whoever you want to continue that conversation our lives, we want to be open to what is there. Thank you that you know us, and thank you that knowing us, you still love us. In fact you love us as much today as you did yesterday, and the day before, and that will be true tomorrow. Well that is good news.