



ST. ANDREW'S IN THE PINES EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Sermon by Pastor Jami Anderson, Feb. 27, 2011

I. Description of Beit She'an

a. magnificent ruins revealing the Roman remains when it was called scythopolis and was part of the decapolis – the ten major cities of the eastern frontier of the Roman empire in Judea and Syria. They were centers of Greek and Roman culture. b. Beit She'an covered 370 acres – with colonnaded streets, temples, huge pools, coliseum, hippodrome, mosaics

II. Right down road is the mount where Jesus taught what we call the sermon on the mount.

a. been hearing from it for last few weeks – beatitudes, but I say to you.....love your enemies was last week, teachings on divorce and disagreements and being the salt of the earth, etc. Giving lots of instructions on how to live. b. was probably teaching the locals – villagers, herders, Jewish heritage, gathered around on the grass.

III. Today's teachings focus a bit on priorities – wealth or God? And what do you worry about? Do not worry about your life, he says. God cares for you and your needs will be met. "For it is the Gentiles who worry and strive for all these things."

IV. Those Gentiles – who would be living right down the road in an impressive city – with impressive rituals and parties and extravagances and power and authority and ruling over those Jesus was talking to.

Those Gentiles – who would happen to be related to you and me. That's what comes to my mind whenever I read about the Gentiles. Unless I'm mistaken, I'd guess most of us descend from the northern European heritage, bloodstock. Our ancestors were from the conquering classes and we now live in a conquering culture. We are used to being part of the dominant culture. It's in our blood and in our lifestyles. We are most probably all defenders of empire. It is how we know how to live in this world.

V. So, I take it seriously when Jesus talks about or makes examples of Gentiles. It's a personal thing. Are the Gentiles he's talking about similar in any way to me? And who are they being contrasted with? In this case it's the simple folk sitting on the grass at his feet.

a. It's the same people who he has just told that the meek will inherit the earth. The meek. People who don't toil or spin or conquer or rule or assume authority. The meek will inherit the earth and they don't have to worry about anything beforehand.

VI. Where does that leave most of us? I've been raised convinced that I have to strive to do my best. My country has to figure out ways to maintain its wealth and power. It's what we do with our energy and time.

VII. So, what is Jesus teaching me today? What is He asking of me? Are we talking about a lifestyle change? Perhaps. Here is a good translation of his teaching as found in The Message.

"What I'm trying to do here is get you to relax, to not be so preoccupied with getting , so you can respond to God's giving. People who don't know God and the way He works fuss over these things, but you know both God and how He works. Steep your life in God-reality, God-initiative, God-provisions. Don't worry about missing out. You'll find all you everyday human concerns will be met. Give your entire attention to what God is

doing right now, and don't get worked up about what may or may not happen tomorrow. God will help you deal with whatever hard things come up when the time comes.”

VIII. Now that is advice I can focus on and take into my soul. Relax, steep my life in God-reality rather than Jami –Imagining. After all, I was touring ruins at Beit She'an. We all know that the Roman Empire fell, as did the Greek empire, and the Byzantine and Assyrian and Persian empires. Some day our empire will fall also. But God-reality, God-provisions, and God-initiative will remain forever.

Thanks be to God.