



**Out of Chaos with 3 Big Words  
"Saying Yes"**

*(Biblical Text: Matthew 5:1-12)*

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**Well it's hard not to be a happy Royals fan today!** And Wednesday afternoon was the best. We watched the Royals, for the first time in baseball history; sweep the eighth game in a row to win the American League Championship!

When I was in Dodge City, and the Royals were like 32 ½ games out of first place, Lance Nichols, a recruiter for the Colorado Rockies, asked, "*Who's your favorite team?*" I said, "*The Royals.*" He answered with a line from the movie Major League, "*I didn't know they still had a team.*" Well, Lance, I've been waiting a long time to say this. "*They do! And they're in the World Series! Yes, yes, yes!*"

I've been waiting a long time for that "*Yes, yes, yes!*" But in real life, when to say "yes" and when to say "no" is nowhere near that clear cut. We often end up struggling to do it all. We overcommit our resources so there's too much month left at the end of our money. And, in our efforts to please our kids or grandchildren or work we lose any time for ourselves along the way.

Sometimes in exasperation, we just start saying "**no**" to everything. But that really doesn't help - since most often we leave out time for worship, or meaning, or rest, or even God. *We need to find the priorities for a happy and balanced life.*

Last week, I tried to help us start that process by learning to say "no" for the right reasons. I must have said five times in my message, "**We have to say "no" to some things so we can say, "yes," to God.**" When we fail to do that, like the Priest and Levite in Jesus' *Parable of the Good Samaritan*, we are unable, even if we believe in living a God-centered life, to actually live one.

One of our Church members told me how on-target that message was for her life, but also asked for some practical help in knowing just **what** to do about it!

**So here's a way to start.** Let's return to Jesus words from Luke 10:27:

*"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself."<sup>1</sup>*

**I believe Jesus put these in this order for a reason.**

**So what should our priorities be Biblically speaking?**

<sup>1</sup> Luke 10:27. *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version.* Copyright © 1989. All rights reserved.

**Number 1 - Put God first.** Let's be honest. Taking the time to worship every week, to read the Bible and pray daily, and to devote the first part of every dollar we earn to God isn't easy. **But unless we do that, the rest of our priorities will never be in order.** When we fail to do so, then we are placing our family, work, or own security above our love for God. And that's idolatry.

**Number 2 - Love other people as an extension of how God has loved you.** After Priority Number 1, make time for your family, for your children and grandchildren. It's important. Neglect is a form of harming the ones we are to love and we are to love them second only to loving God. After that comes loving our co-workers and the people around us. And then we are to love ourselves. Not first but certainly not last. **Everything else, that we often put first, should come last - including our work, and our pursuit of financial security, even baseball.**

And I'm not just saying this because I am a pastor. I am saying this because I am a Christian. Too many pastors that I have known in thirty-six years have failed to follow this order of priorities. And too many have had nervous breakdowns, heart attacks, affairs, divorces, or other things that have torn them apart. Just like everyone else. **We pay the price for misplaced priorities.**

So when should you say "yes?" If you can say yes without breaking these Biblical priorities, then by all means say "yes!" Otherwise say "no." **Why?**

I love baseball movies, Ann will tell you! *The Natural*, *Field of Dreams*, *42*, *The Trouble with the Curve*, *Major League* – I've dragged her along to all of them!

But my favorite of all of them is "*Moneyball*." It tells the story of Billy Beane of the Oakland A's and the invention of "*saber metrics*" where the idea of teamwork became a more valued commodity than individual "star power."

It's an important lesson for the Church! But I think the most important point of the film was that Billy Beane discovered his relationship with his daughter was more important than baseball or even money. It was a hard lesson for him to learn. **But it's one I need. And so do you.**

You may wonder what all of that has to do with the Sermon on the Mount in today's lesson. **Well, that's a good thing to wonder.** As you turn in your Bibles to the familiar passage known as the Beatitudes from Matthew 5:1-12, I want to review how it is often read.

Robert Schuller saw this as Jesus' sermon for us about our *attitudes as Christians* - he called them the "*Be Happy Attitudes*." It certainly can be read that way, and they are better than our usual attitudes!

Amy-Jill Levine sees them as a series of *ethical rules* that come from the Essene community that influenced Jesus. And they are better than the lack of ethics we see our political process! *I am so tired of robocalls – aren't you?*

But in context, Jesus' words were not for the crowds, then or now, that gather around him looking for some easy wisdom. Instead they are particular words chosen for those who put God first and choose to follow him.

***"<sup>1</sup>When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying..."***<sup>2</sup>

Just before our text, in Matthew 4:17, Jesus began his ministry. In Matthew 4:20 and 4:22, his first disciples left everything to follow him. By Matthew 4:24-25, less than 10 verses later, great crowds including sick, suffering and crazy people surrounded Jesus wherever he and the disciples went. I think they were *overwhelmed, frazzled, worried, anxious, and afraid*. Well, who wouldn't be? They didn't expect that following Jesus would turn out like this!

So, he began to teach them about what kind of blessings would be theirs – different than the way the world counts blessings in possessions and wealth and fame and happiness. And we've heard his familiar words.

***"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."***<sup>3</sup>

Later on, In Matthew 6:33, he offers this summary for them. *"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well."*

Why do we have such difficulty saying "yes" to what God asks and saying "no" to what keeps us back from doing so? There are as many answers as there are people in this room. But there's only one real reason. It's hard. It is.

But, as Tom Hanks put it in *A League of their Own*: *"The hard is what makes it good."* That's not just true of baseball. It's true about the Christian life.

What would life look like if we ever really trusted Jesus' promise? Blessed! Between frazzled and burned out or blessed. I'll take blessed every time.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. Matthew 5:1-2. *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Copyright © 1989. All rights reserved.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. Matthew 5:3-10. *Holy Bible: New Revised Standard Version*. Copyright © 1989. All rights reserved.