ARE THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS RELEVANT TODAY?

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By Daniel Keeran, MSW
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada

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(Scripture quotes are from the New International Version)

Introduction: A young man in prison said he was an atheist when sentenced; he saw that people who lived by Jesus’ teaching were stable and happy; he now thinks there may be a superior intelligence who gave the teaching.

Jesus did not come to bring an economic or political system but to transform the individual. He said: “My kingdom is not of this world,” and “The kingdom of God is within you.”

The teachings of Jesus provide the fundamental principles for the well-being of individuals and communities. Setting a high bar of behavioural expectation, these teachings are at the moral and social foundation of Western civilization. Beside the word Relevance, the applications of Jesus’ teaching is given below the scripture passages organized in categories of social teachings, peace and nonviolence, and psychological well-being.

LUKE 6:20-42 (Sermon on the Plain)

Social Teachings
20,24,25 Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God....But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry.


37-38 “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you.

Relevance: Jesus provides principles to reduce conflict and live in harmony with others.
Peace and Nonviolence
27-29,35-36 “Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also.... But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

Relevance: This teaching was the core of the civil rights movement begun by Martin Luther King. Mahatma Gandhi, drawing the idea of nonviolent resistance from this teaching, said: “If Christians would really live according to the teachings of Christ, as found in the Bible, all of India would be Christian today.”

MATTHEW: chapters 5-7 (Sermon on the Mount)

ch5- Psychological Well-Being
3-12 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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 be shown 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 because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

Relevance: The values and qualities of Jesus’ followers contribute to harmonious and compassionate relationships.

ch5- Social Teachings
13 let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven....

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.

Relevance: Humanitarian acts should be done to glorify God rather than self.
ch5- Peace and Nonviolence
21-25 “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell. ‘Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.

Relevance: Avoiding anger and name-calling, is central to conflict resolution; seek peace in relationships and settle matters out of court to avoid maximum consequences.

ch5- Psychological Well-Being
27-28 “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

Relevance: This is an important key sexual management principle to prevent sex addiction, prevalent today e.g. through internet pornography.

31-32 “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Relevance: This principle supports family security and integrity especially important for healthy child development.

ch5- Social Teaching
33-37 But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all...All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’....

Relevance: Personal honesty is fundamental to basic trust essential to personal, professional, and business relationships in society.
ch5- Peace and Nonviolence
38-41 But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles.

43-45 You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven.

Relevance: The teaching of nonviolence and nonretaliation in personal relationships is key to a harmonious family and community and central to resolving conflict.

ch6- Social Teaching
1-4 “Be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of others to be seen by them... But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret.

Relevance: This concept promotes a selfless sincere motive in generosity, and in prayer vs.5-8, and in fasting vs.16-18.

9-13 This, then, is how you should pray: “...And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors....”

Relevance: This basic principle is the foundation of personal lending: forgive the debts of those who cannot pay you back.

ch6- Peace and Nonviolence
14-15 For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

Relevance: Forgiving others is highly valued.

ch6- Social Teaching
19-24 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth...But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven... No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Relevance: Value service to God by caring for the poor; build wealth for serving others rather than self.
ch6- Psychological Well-Being
25-34 *do not worry about your life*. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

**Relevance:** A key remedy for anxiety is to live each day at a time; live in the present. Plan for tomorrow but don’t worry about it.

ch7- Peace and Nonviolence
1-5 *Do not judge*, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. (John 8:7 He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her [adulterous woman]).

**Relevance:** Judgment of others will result in judgment in return; be nonjudgmental and reduce conflict.

ch7- Social Teachings
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. (See also Luke 10:27 – *Love your neighbour* as yourself; Matthew 25:31-46 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me... *as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.*)

**Relevance:** Reaching out to those in trouble is service to God.

ch7- Final Admonition
24 Therefore everyone who hears these *words of mine and puts them into practice* is like a wise man who built his house on the rock.

**Relevance:** Practicing what Jesus taught provides a solid foundation for wise living.