SERMON TAKE-HOME NOTES — February 8, 2026

Question of the Day: Which person in the last century has done the most to promote genuine Christian discipleship?

Pastor Paul's answer: Mahatma Gandhi, by reviving Jesus' loving, nonviolent politics for our time. By re-centering Jesus' Sermon on the Mount as a central guide to Christian discipleship.

Gandhi revived the original center as exemplified in the *Didache* — a catechism of the early church. The *Didache* contains a lot of what our typical catechisms contain: the Lord's Prayer, sections on Baptism and Holy Communion (called the Eucharist in the tract). But the opening section is on basic Christian discipleship, mapping out what it calls the "Two Ways," the way of living that leads to life and the way of living that leads to death. And the portion of the Bible most prominently featured to map out the way of life is, you guessed it, the Sermon on the Mount from Matthew. In training the first Christians what it really means to follow Christ, the *Didache* centered on the loving, nonviolent politics of God's reign in Jesus, as especially found in the Sermon on the Mount. Turn the other cheek. Love your enemies. This is what is most distinctive about following Jesus as a disciple.

This distinctiveness was lost in the Fourth Century when the Church allied itself with the violence of empire. Luther provides and example. He taught that much of the Sermon on the Mount was meant by Jesus as impossible demands so that we might fall on our knees in need of God's grace.

Gandhi not only revived the distinctiveness of the Sermon on the Mount bu used it as a basis for both his life and his movement of standing nonviolently against the violence of empire. Other examples since Gandhi:

- Dietrich Bonhoeffer (who planned to visit Gandhi but couldn't make it) featured the Sermon on the Mount as the central third of his book on *Discipleship*.
- Martin Luther King, Jr. did visit the disciples of Gandhi in 1952 in order to center the Civil Rights movement on the principles learned in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

St. Paul also understood how politics of nonviolence trip up the rules of this age who live by violence, when he says in our Second Reading:

> "None of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

Do you see? Nonviolent politics work precisely because violent human rulers cannot see it coming. So, as we talked about last week, they tip their hand. They *reveal* what they're really about. They reveal their violent ways as nothing but violent ways of death.

Specific examples of these principles at work:

The **Dharasana Salt Works** in India where protestors let themsleves get beaten down. A newspaper report said, "Whatever moral ascendency the West held was lost here today. India is free. For she has taken all that steel and cruelty can give, and she has neither cringed nor retreated." Echoes of, "None of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."

The **March on Selma** in 1965. The Selma mayor (Joseph Smitherton) and police chief (Wilson Baker) were against using violence; but the County Sheriff Jim Clark (and Gov. George Wallace) were segregationists who used violence to put down protests. They failed to understand the lessen of the cross for rulers.

I.C.E. agents beating down a protestor in Minneapolis. History we are living through. Will we as a nation learn the lessen of the cross and Gandhi's turning the principles of nonviolence into a political movement? The people of Minneapolis are inspiring us to live by Jesus' politics of loving nonviolence. Might we join in solidarity with them?