

*The Sermon on the Mount and Healing of the Leper*, by Cosimo Rosselli

Art selection by [Heidi J. Hornik](#) and [Mikeal C. Parsons](#)

This artwork appears in the [November 7, 2018](#) issue.



Photo © Scala / Art Resource, NY

When Pope Sixtus IV commissioned the building of the Sistine Chapel in the papal residence, he called on Cosimo Rosselli (1439–1507) to paint several frescoes on the long north wall. *The Sermon on the Mount and Healing of the Leper* is iconographically traditional: in delivering the sermon on the mount, Jesus is the new Moses, delivering a new law from a mountain top. The apostles in Rosselli's composition stand in rapt attention, but the people in the foreground vary both in their dress and attention span. Some wear 15th-century clothing in contrast to the Roman drapery worn by Jesus and his first-century followers. Most of the figures are captivated by Christ's words, but two prominent figures in the foreground are in a conversation of their own. In the lower right Rosselli depicts Christ a second time: closely followed and watched by his disciples, he heals a kneeling man who suffers from leprosy (Matt. 8:1–4).