

The Sermon on the Mount

The Declaration of the Kingdom

The gospel of Matthew is the gospel of the kingdom, as Matthew's intent is to identify Jesus as the promised king.

- Calling of Joseph to - Care for the King
- Calling of John to - Prepare for the King
- Preparation of the King - Baptized and Tempted
- The Declaration of the King - Inauguration
- The Demonstration of the Kingdom - Increase

As we come to chapter 5, we come to one of the best-known teachings of Jesus, that we call the sermon on the mount.

A psychiatrist by the name of J.T. Fisher said this in his autobiography called A Few Buttons Missing, and I paraphrase:

"If you took all the good advice for how to live ever uttered by any philosopher or psychiatrist or counselor, took out the foolishness and boiled it all down to the real essentials, you would be left with a poor imitation of the sermon on the mount."

He goes on to say,

"For nearly two thousand years the Christian world has been holding in it's hands the complete answer to it's restless and fruitless yearnings, here rests the blueprint for successful human life with optimism, mental health, and contentment."

The Christian author Josh McDowell speaks of a time when a student at a California university shared that his psychology professor confessed that *"all he has to do is pick up the Bible and read portions of Christ's teaching to many of his patients. That's all the counseling they need."*

We do err if we began to read the sermon on the mount as if it were merely a guide to self-help, or a teaching about mental health. The reality is that this sermon is the King describing the standards of His kingdom to those who desire to be a citizen in it.

There are different ways to break down this sermon, but I see each chapter dealing with one major subject.

Chapter 5: Righteousness

Chapter 6: Worship

Chapter 7: Judgment

READ: Matthew 5:1-2

Place:

- We shouldn't get the idea that Jesus was fleeing from the multitudes, but that Jesus was going to a place where those who desired to be His disciples could follow and hear His teaching.
- The mount wasn't chosen merely to give the sermon a name, it was chosen for the pragmatic reason that Jesus had something to say, and it was a message that he wanted to hear. The location would serve then practically as an outdoor amphitheater.

Posture:

- In sitting, Jesus takes the posture of a teacher or a rabbi. In this day it was common for a herald to stand and teacher to sit down. As Jesus sat down, it would have signified to the crowds that Jesus was preparing to teach.
- Jesus taught the disciples in so many ways, but on this and many other occasions He opened His mouth!

READ: Matthew 5:3-12

- Jesus begins by highlighting the inward character of those who belong to His kingdom before addressing their conduct, in a portion of text that we call the Be-Attitudes.

NOTE: This is so named because Jesus points out the blessings associated with the characteristics, qualities, or attitudes that are to belong to those who are the citizens of His Kingdom.

- Jesus will address the conduct of His followers by telling them what to do, He first addresses their character by teaching them what they ought to be! *“A Christian is something before he does anything”*

NOTE: Something that I hope to present this morning is the connection that I believe exists between these characteristics, the first setting the tone for those that follow.

1. **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

- The word blessed is often translated as happy, and while the Greek word *makarōis* may include the idea of happiness, it means considerably more than that. You could add to it the ideas of being fortunate, well off, and supremely blessed!
- Something that we would seldom relate to blessedness is poverty, but Jesus equates spiritual poverty to be blessed in that to such people belongs the kingdom of heaven!

QUESTION: What is spiritual poverty? Whereas material poverty is the absence of material wealth, spiritual poverty is the absence of any spiritual wealth. The poverty of spirit is the realization and recognition that when it comes to spiritual matters, you are bankrupt with nothing to offer to God.

- The word that Jesus uses here for poverty is a strong word that indicates destitute need, a poverty so deep that one must beg for whatever they receive. It's the same word that Jesus uses in Luke 16 to describe the beggar named Lazarus.

QUESTION: Why is it that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit?

ANSWER: Because the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who have recognized their spiritual need before God and came to Him as a beggar for His spiritual wealth. Only when we recognize our destitute need will we come to the only one who can offer to us spiritual wealth.

2 Cor 8:9

9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.

Eph 1:3

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual

blessing in the heavenly places in Christ

2. "Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted."

- Happy are the mourners sounds like a strange oxymoronic sort of statement, and it lends to the understanding that blessedness is deeper than and emotion like happiness.

QUESTION: Why is the mourner blessed?

ANSWER: Mourning is the proper response of the person who recognized their state of spiritual poverty before God, and those who mourn will be comforted.

NOTE: So many people are seeking blessedness, and perhaps just as many are faking it. There is promised blessing of eternal comfort to those who mourn.

- After warning his reader in his letter about friendship with the world, James says this:

James 4:6-10

"God resists the proud,

But gives grace to the humble."

7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. 8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. 9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

APPLICATION: Have you come to recognize your spiritual need? Have you come to the place where you have before God mourned over your condition?

3. Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.

- In these things we see a deep contrast between how Jesus expects His people to be and how the world expects its people to be, and certainly this is the case with meekness.

NOTE: Meekness is the opposite of aggressiveness or asserting one's dominance. The Bible describes Abraham, David, Jesus and Paul as meek, and through these examples we can see that meekness is surely not weakness.

To be meek means to show willingness to submit and work under proper authority. It also shows a willingness to disregard one's own "rights" and privileges. David Guzik

- This is a person who rather than assert themselves toward greatness, they submit themselves to God and recognize His greatness.

NOTE: The world would tell us that meekness means we will miss out, but Jesus promises that the meek shall inherit the earth!

QUESTION: What does it mean to inherit the earth? Some connect it to a spirit of contentedness, but I believe there is a more literal fulfillment with this promise described as a time when the citizens of Christ's kingdom will rule and reign with Him on the earth. Rev 20:1-6.

4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.

- The person who recognizes and mourns over their spiritual poverty is someone who learns meekness and hungers and thirsts after real righteousness!

NOTE: This is not the righteousness of the world, or that of the pharisees, but what Jesus mentions here is the righteousness that He will go on to describe in the rest of this chapter.

Matt 5:20

For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

QUESTION: How can this hunger be filled?

Phil 3:7-10

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith;

- True righteousness comes through faith in Jesus, and only in His righteousness will this hunger be completely satisfied.

5. Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.

- In Luke 8:36, Jesus instructs us to be merciful as your Father in heaven is merciful. The mercy we receive from God we ought to extend to others, and when we do we can expect continued blessing through the mercy of God.

MATTHEW 18:21-35 -A Parable of an unforgiving servant.

- Mercy has often been defined as not getting what we deserve, and to the person who has experienced the generous mercy of God – how could we not show mercy to others.

APPLICATION: If you are not a merciful person, it is most probably because you have either never really come to experience God's mercy or you have forgotten your own neediness of mercy from God and others!

6. Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.

- Whereas most people focus on external purity and external righteousness, Jesus emphasizes inward character, and the purity of heart speaks more of motivation than action.

NOTE: Why we do - is just as important as - what we do! A pure heart will increasingly produce righteous fruit.

- Purity speaks of more than cleanliness and holiness; it may also refer to a state of singleness toward God. A pure heart is an undivided heart, making the Lord its primary object of affection.

NOTE: Those who live with the hope that they will see God, live to ensure that their hearts are pure toward Him!

1 John 3:2-3

Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. 3 And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Heb 12:14-15

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord:

- True absolute holiness and purity can only be found through God's mercy and grace. We are cleansed and made pure by the work of the Lord.

EXAMPLE: Luke 18:9-14 the Tax collector and the Pharisee

7. Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.

- Another quality very much lacking in the world, but also sadly within the church is peacemaking. I would say there are far more troublemakers in the church than peacemakers.

NOTE: As citizens of Christ's kingdom, we shouldn't be quarrelsome, and we should strive to live in peace with all men.

James 3:13-18

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. 14 But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. 15 This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. 16 For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there. 17 But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. 18 Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.

- What's more, is that we are to live in and encourage others toward a deeper spiritual peace.

NOTE: We do well to remember that making peace is not what we do, its who we are! In times of conflict the citizens of the kingdom of Christ, and those who are the children of God make peace!

- There may be times when entering conflict with the wicked is necessary if we are to make peace. We commemorate those who have paid the ultimate sacrifice to bring peace to this world, which reminds us of the ultimate peacemaker who sacrificed Himself to make peace between His father and us!

8. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- Peacemakers are not always successful at making peace, sometimes peacemakers suffer persecution instead.

NOTE: This is seen often in the ministry of the Apostles, and even the ministry of Christ Himself who is called the prince of peace. Even when peace is proclaimed and pursued it can be met with persecution rather than peace.

- Importantly, this isn't a blanket promise to those who are persecuted, but to those who are persecuted for righteousness!

NOTE: There are a lot of Christians today who have what I call a persecution complex. When life is too easy, we read a scripture like this and falsely claim persecution for righteousness when we are really being fairly treated for foolishness.

1 Peter 4:12-16

12 Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; 13 but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy. 14 If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. On their part He is blasphemed, but on your part He is glorified. 15 But let none of you suffer as a murderer, a thief, an evildoer, or as a busybody in other people's matters. 16 Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter.

- When we suffer persecution because we are living right with and before God we can and should rejoice!

NOTE: Jesus attached further blessing to this, adding more context to the reason they might receive and rejoice in persecution.

11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

When we are persecuted for the right reasons, we can rejoice in our eternal rewards!

NOTE: The first reaction to such hardship is rarely joy, or exceeding happiness. We would respond with discouragement, depression, questioning our calling and blaming God for our problems.

- Jesus makes a great point – the righteous have always been persecuted by the world, but we must remember that they are never forsaken by the Lord! He knows and will reward accordingly.

Luke 6:26

26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you,

For so did their fathers to the false prophets.

FINAL NOTES: Those who stand firmly upon the truth in the time that we are living in ought to expect increasing levels of persecution. How we respond to those times is important.

Rom 12:17-21

17 Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. 18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. 20 Therefore

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him a drink;

For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.