

What does Jesus say?

Text: Matthew 5-7

Introduction: Hear the words of Jesus from His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.

(Read Matthew 5-7...Pray)

“How long, O Lord? Will you forget us forever? How long will you hide your face from us? How long must we take counsel in our souls and have sorrow in our hearts all the day? How long shall our enemies be exalted over us. Consider and answer us, O Lord our God; light up our eyes, lest we sleep the sleep of death, lest our enemies say, “We have prevailed over them,” lest our foes rejoice because we are shaken. But we have trusted in your steadfast love; our hearts shall rejoice in your salvation. We will sing to the Lord, because he has dealt bountifully with us.” (Adapted from Psalm 13)

This week in our nation, a young man named Charlie Kirk was assassinated while leading an event on a college campus in Utah. He was a conservative political activist, husband, father, and professing Christian. His wife and children were apparently in attendance at the event and are now left without their husband and father due to this evil act.

Sadly, this is just one tragic instance of political violence that we have witnessed in our country in recent months and years. In June, there was the murder of Minnesota lawmaker Melissa Hortman and her husband and the shooting of state senator John Hoffman and his wife. In April, there was the arson attack on Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro and his family. And last year, there were the assassination attempts of then-candidate President Trump. There are undoubtedly more instances of political violence that we could mention.

Then there’s other kinds of violence like the brutal murder last week of a Ukrainian woman in Charlotte, NC or the steady stream of school shootings across the nation. There are those in our country and in our world who are bent on destruction. The truth is that it is all demonic. It’s an attack on the fundamental truth that we are all created in the image of God.

This world is broken. Things are not as they should be. Things are not as God created them to be. We were made to give life not take it.

It’s highly unusual for me to take an unplanned detour from my current preaching series. But it’s not just the events of this week that cause me to take this detour this morning. It’s the cumulation of it all. It’s also the way that I see people responding to these kinds of things. Some respond with a shrug. Others respond with blame for the victim. Still others respond with calls for revenge.

We can’t detour from our sermon series every time something terrible happens in our nation. But perhaps it’s good and right for us to do so on some occasions. Maybe you come this morning with all kinds of thoughts and feelings rolling around in your heart and your mind. How should we think about these things?

There’s the saying that was popular when I was a kid: “What would Jesus do?” I had one of the little colored bracelets with the letters “W.W.J.D” embroidered on it. The idea was that when you went to do something, you were supposed to ask yourself the question: “What would Jesus do?” And whatever you determined that Jesus would do in that particular situation, you should do that.

Well, this morning, I want to ask a different question: “What does Jesus say?” Thankfully, Jesus has spoken, and we have His words recorded for us in Scripture. We just read His Sermon on the Mount, and I am struck by how much of it is so very relevant to our contemporary culture of violence.

I wanted to read it for us because many of us have been told this week what we ought to think about these events. Cable news. Talk radio. Our social media feeds. Our coworkers, friends, and family. I felt it was important this morning to tune out the noise for a bit and hear the words of Jesus.

We obviously can’t walk through the whole sermon verse by verse this morning. We don’t even have time to look at the Beatitudes in verses 1-12 in an in-depth manner. But what I want to do is briefly mention some ways that you might be thinking and feeling and then point you to the words of Jesus in the Beatitudes in response.

First, maybe you're here this morning and you wonder if anyone cares. I want you to know that Jesus cares.

1) The text says, "Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them" (vs. 1-2)

Do you see the care of Jesus in those words? Yes, for the crowds. But especially for His disciples. He taught them. Why? Because He cared for them.

They needed Him. They needed His teaching. They needed His guidance. So too do we need Him this morning. We need His teaching. We need His guidance.

There's no shortage of people who want to tell us what we ought to think. No shortage of people who want to tell us how we ought to feel. Even those who claim the name of Christ. But there is no one better. No one more qualified. Than Jesus.

He cares for you.

Second, maybe you're here this morning and you feel helpless.

2) Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (vs. 3).

In order for us to receive help from Jesus, we have to first recognize our helplessness. So, it's not bad to feel helpless. As long as you allow your helplessness to point you to Jesus.

When we don't know what to do. When we don't know where to turn. We can look to Jesus. Because it is only through coming to the end of ourselves that we can truly place our complete trust in Jesus and receive the kingdom of heaven.

Third, maybe you're here this morning and you feel a need for comfort.

3) Jesus says, "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (vs. 4).

It's good and right to feel sadness that the state of our nation is such that people resort to violence to settle their differences. We can and should weep over the brokenness of our world. Things are not right. Things are not as God created them to be.

The Lord Jesus even wept over the brokenness of this world during His time on earth. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Our God is the God of all comfort. He comforts us in all our afflictions. And He enables us to comfort others with the comfort with which we are comforted by God.

But not only do we mourn the sin and evil around us. We also ought to mourn the sin and evil that is present in our own hearts. It seems that whenever something terrible happens in our nation, the finger pointing begins almost immediately. But we know as Christians that God calls us to examine our own hearts. We should be more concerned with the log in our own eye than the speck in our brother's eye.

Perhaps we haven't engaged in political violence. But have we always been careful with our tongues? Have we always been careful with our thoughts? In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus compares anger and hatred to murder. Brothers and sisters, we have to be careful. To guard our hearts. To examine our lives. To mourn over our sin. And receive comfort from God.

Fourth, maybe you're here this morning and you're wondering about the kind of posture you should take up as a follower of Jesus.

4) Jesus says, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" (vs. 5)

J.C. Ryle writes, "The Lord Jesus calls those blessed who are meek. He means people who are of a patient and contented spirit. They are willing to put up with little honour here below. They can bear injuries without resentment. They are not ready to take offence."

Goshen, many view meekness as weakness. But not those of us who truly follow Jesus.

Fifth, maybe you're here this morning and you long for justice.

5) Jesus says, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied" (vs. 6)

As followers of Jesus, we ought to have a deep longing for both personal holiness and justice for the oppressed. And there is coming a day when Jesus will return and bring perfect justice. We who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be satisfied.

Sixth, maybe you're here this morning and you struggle with the concept of mercy.

6) Jesus says, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (vs. 7).

Again, J.C. Ryle writes, "The Lord Jesus calls those blessed who are merciful. He means people who are full of compassion towards others. They pity all who are suffering either from sin or sorrow, and are tenderly eager to make their sufferings less."

God knows that you and I need mercy. May we be merciful to others and experience His blessing.

Seventh, maybe you're here this morning and you long to see and know God.

7) Jesus says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (vs. 8).

We know that on our own, our hearts are anything but pure. Maybe as you hold up the mirror of God's Word to your heart this morning, you can see ways in which your heart is not pure. Thankfully, through repentance of our sin and faith in Jesus, we have been given new hearts. Pure hearts. The heart of Jesus. And we shall see God.

Eighth, maybe you're here this morning and calls for political war get your blood pumping and ready to go to battle.

8) Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

It feels like the fabric of our society is unraveling. The truth is that you and I cannot fix the world. But are we people who use our influence to promote peace? There are those who want to incite us to anger and hatred. Yes, there are even those who want to incite us to violence. But Jesus says, "Blessed are the peacemakers."

As followers of Jesus, we know that we make peace in the world through the gospel. For truly, it is only the gospel that brings lasting peace. Peace with one another is downstream from peace with God. We don't become sons of God by being peacemakers. We are peacemakers because we are sons and daughters of God. Our peacemaking work flows out of our relationship with God through Jesus.

Ninth, maybe you're here this morning and you feel persecuted and reviled.

9) Jesus says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

He also says, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

When we face persecution as followers of Jesus, we join a long line of prophets, apostles, church fathers, and even Jesus Himself. If we stand for Jesus and the truth of His Word, we should expect to be persecuted.

Persecution for righteousness' sake doesn't earn us the kingdom of heaven. Rather, it is evidence that we already belong to the kingdom of heaven because of Jesus and what He accomplished for us on the cross. We can rejoice and be glad in the midst of persecution for righteousness' sake because Jesus has promised that our reward will be great in heaven.

Conclusion: At the end of his commentary on the Beatitudes, Danny Akin asks, “Why are the Beatitudes such a beloved portion of the Bible for a Christian?”

He answers, “We love them because they give us a portrait of Jesus and who we are becoming in him! No one sympathized with spiritual beggars more than Jesus. No one grieved over sin and a broken world more than Jesus. No one was more meek in submitting to God’s will than Jesus. No one hungered and thirsted for righteousness more than Jesus. No one showed mercy to others more than Jesus. No one sought peace between God and man, and between man and man, more than Jesus. No one suffered unjust persecution and evil against themselves more than Jesus.”

When we look at the Beatitudes we see Jesus. I pray we also see who we are becoming in Him.

Prayer:

In just a moment, I’m going to pray. I want to ask the praise team to stay where you are until we finish praying. Don’t come forward yet. If you’re able, I’m going to ask that you get down on your knees. Maybe you will do so in your pew where you are. Maybe you will step out into the aisle to have more room. Maybe you want to come down and kneel here at the front. If you’re not able to get down on your knees, that’s okay. Would you just sit where you are with your palms up and hands extended out as we pray. There’s nothing magical about our posture when we pray. But perhaps this posture communicates surrender to the Lord.

- Acknowledgment of the brokenness of our world.
- Evidence of brokenness through violence, especially political violence.
- Prayer for victims of violence and families of victims (Kirk and Hortman and others).
- Prayer for wisdom for our leaders.
- Prayer for spiritual awakening and the healing power of the gospel.
- Help us to be poor in Spirit (helpless before God).
- Comfort for those who mourn.
- Help us to be meek (patient and contented spirit).
- Help us to hunger and thirst for righteousness (holiness in our lives and justice for the oppressed).
- Help us to be merciful (because we have received mercy).
- Help us to be pure in heart (because of Jesus).
- Help us to be peacemakers (gospel proclamation and interactions with others).
- Help us to endure persecution and reviling with rejoicing and gladness.
- Give us the mind and heart of Jesus.