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Matthew 5:1-12

Introduction

As I was preparing this sermon, I considered just how impactful Jesus' "Sermon on the Mount" has been in the history of the world. In particular I considered this as it relates to the Beatitudes that we look at this morning.

How is it possible that such words would gain such traction and essentially turn the world upside down. Of course there's nothing in the Beatitudes that is in disagreement with what the Old Testament teaches, but when we come across the religious and political leadership of Israel in the gospels they are certainly not characterized by the Beatitudes.

Moreover, when you consider Israel's position in the wider Roman world, it was largely considered a backwater and a place where political leaders were sent to rule in exile. In addition to this, the Roman world was built on the a firm commitment to an honor culture. Being in a position of poverty or weakness was not esteemed in any degree.

And yet, as the gospel went forth from Jerusalem and Judea, to Samaria and all throughout the Roman empire, it is the message of this king who came to give up his life for others that ultimately spreads and would eventually transform the Roman Empire.

You continue to look at its impact on history and wherever the Christian faith has gone, there has been concern for those in society who were in a position of weakness and need.

Of course the slogans of the beatitudes have been obscured and twisted in many ways to accomplish unbiblical ends, but one cannot deny the potency of Jesus' message. It resonates deeply and has been profoundly impactful.

And this morning we will take a closer look at the beatitudes, and I hope that we will come to understand why they resonate so deeply with so many people.

I want to propose to you this morning that one of the main reasons the beatitudes are this way is because are the words of a king Jesus, speaking about the coming of his kingdom that will encompass the entire world.

With that said, our passage breaks into three parts this morning:

1. In vv. 1-2, we see that Jesus is presented as a New Moses
2. In vv. 3-10 we see that Jesus inaugurates the Kingdom
3. In vv. 11-12 we see that the kingdom brings conflict

Jesus is a New Moses (vv. 1-2)

At the beginning of [Matthew 5](#) we see Matthew continuing to follow the pattern of Israel's own history from the Pentateuch. Chapter 4 ended with a great crowd of people following Jesus because he had proclaimed the kingdom and healed every disease and every affliction. In [Matthew 4:24](#) we read "So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them."

Now Jesus ascends a mountain and delivers teaching to his disciples as a great crowd gathered round to listen in. This follows the Exodus pattern where God delivers His people from oppression in Egypt and then brings them to Mount Sinai where He gives them His Law. Here Jesus is like a new Moses, upon a new Mount Sinai, delivering God's Word to God's people.

This pattern is very important in order to understand the relationship between God's salvation and God's commands. You'll notice in **both** the Exodus story and here in Matthew's gospel, the people have first been delivered and saved and **then** they are given God's word as commands to follow.

The second thing to note about the immediate context of Jesus' teaching is how Matthew has set things up a small moment of climax. So far Jesus has barely spoken in Matthew's gospel. He offered short rebuttals against Satan in his wilderness and we are only told the very minimum of his preaching in Galilee

(“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”). The call of his first disciples was likewise very brief.

In the Sermon on the Mount the reader is given nearly 3 uninterrupted chapters of Jesus’ words. Why does Matthew wait all the way until this point to give a significant voice to Jesus? The answer to that question is because Matthew wants his audience to feel the weight of these words.

Everything up to this point has been preparation for this moment. Consider all that Matthew has done to prepare his audience to hear these words. Matthew has shown how the OT prophecies, John the Baptist, God the Father, and even the devil have all attested to who Jesus is. He is the Messiah, the Son of David, and the Son of God. He fulfills the prophecies from of old, he is the one anointed with the Spirit beyond measure, and is a great healer.

Because of the way Matthew has set up his gospel, when Jesus opens his mouth, it is clear that all should listen and obey, he speaks with all the authority of God.

- › And you too should remember such things as you hear God’s Word. What God’s Word says **must** be obeyed. Not in order that you may be saved, but because you have been saved and God in his immeasurable grace comes to you in His Word to guide and direct you into fullness of life.

Jesus Inaugurates the Kingdom (vv. 3-10)

This brings us to the actual beatitudes themselves.

Before getting into what Jesus is saying, it is important to understand what Jesus is **not** saying. These are the the **be-**attitudes explaining how Christians are to live. Nor are these chiefly about the emotional state of individuals.

As is the case with most things in the gospels, the main background is found in the Old Testament. In this case the background is [Isaiah 61](#).

In the final chapters of Isaiah’s prophecy, Isaiah speaks about the future restoration of God’s people from exile. In [Isaiah 61](#) Isaiah speaks of the Messiah who would be raised up and deliver God’s people.

Here’s what [Isaiah 61:1-2](#) says,

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn;

In the beatitudes, when Jesus says, “blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn, blessed are the meek, and blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” He is harkening back to the promises that God would raise up His messiah, establish His kingdom, and deliver His people.

In these beatitudes, Jesus is saying that the promised deliverance and salvation that God promised to His people has arrived. This is why Jesus speaks about the kingdom of heaven being at hand.

But even though the kingdom is at hand most of these beatitudes are still future oriented: those who mourn ***shall be comforted***, the meek ***shall inherit the earth***, those who hunger and thirst for righteousness ***shall be satisfied***, the merciful ***shall receive mercy***, the pure in heart ***shall see God***, the peacemakers ***shall be called sons of God***.

However, the first and the last beatitudes (blessed are the poor in spirit & blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake) both contain a present aspect to their blessings: ***for theirs is the kingdom of heaven***.

What we see is that as Jesus inaugurates the kingdom, those who have been waiting for such days are blessed. Their status has fundamentally changed. They went from a state of oppression and subjugation to now being subjects in the kingdom. “The kingdom of heaven ***is*** theirs.”

However, while this status has changed, the reality of this change may still be off in the future. The blessings for these people might not yet be fully realized. This is what theologians refer to as the “already, not yet” nature of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom has already come, but it has not yet been fully consummated. You are already saved, but you are not yet fully glorified.

As the Book of Acts notes, you are walking in “the Way” in this life. As you follow Christ with his people you grow in our love toward God and your neighbor. This

process is known as “sanctification”. It is this idea that as we walk in “the Way” the Holy Spirit is sanctifying us, which means all our impurities are being removed.

The beatitudes point to this reality. As the good news of the kingdom comes to people and they repent, a very real change takes place. Whereas before they were poor in spirit, mourning, meek, and hungry, now they are inheritors of the kingdom of heaven. But the final blessings offered to citizens in the kingdom are often still out in the future. We must content ourselves to hunger and thirst for righteousness even though we might have to wait for satisfaction.

- › As a point of application, this is why you must seek to cultivate the fruit of the Spirit in your life. Consider how the fruits of peace, patience, and self-control are aligned with the beatitudes. They are fruits cultivated by those who are united to Christ.
- › Seek peace, patience, and self control in your union with Christ by the Spirit so that you can learn to live in the already and the not yet of the kingdom.

The Kingdom Brings Conflict (vv. 11-12)

This brings us to verses 11 and 12.

These verses land outside of the other beatitudes because they are simply an expansion on the last beatitude in verse 10.

Verse 10 states, ““Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” and verse 11 continues that theme by stating ““Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.”

As Jesus announces these beatitudes he is also setting expectations for the inbreaking of the kingdom of heaven into this world. Jesus teaches that allegiance to the kingdom of heaven, and therefore to him, will bring conflict.

Those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake and have all kinds of evil uttered against them falsely are those who stand in the line with the prophets who were heralds of the coming kingdom.

When the prophets of old spoke of God's coming judgement, they were reviled by those who stood opposed to God's Word. And Jesus is saying that the same thing will be true for those who follow him in his kingdom.

What Jesus claims in the pronouncement of the gospel is a claim of total authority and sovereignty. Consider Jesus' words at the end of the Matthew's gospel, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."

The gospel is not so much a request for people to invite Jesus into their hearts as it is a declaration that Jesus is the king over every man, every king, and every kingdom. The gospel is not about asking Jesus into your heart, it is about Jesus declaring that every knee **will bow** before him. As such, when people and kingdoms are confronted with the gospel they respond with hostility because it means that their only way forward for them is by humbling themselves before Jesus.

This is why totalitarian societies are never tolerant of the Christian faith. Because at its core, Christianity teaches that any claim to absolute sovereignty is a false claim. Only God is sovereign and only God can be appealed to as the ultimate authority. All other authorities must submit to the rule of God and order themselves appropriately under the rule of God.

Conclusion

But the glorious news of the gospel, is that this king who claims absolute sovereign authority over every man and every nation, is a kind and loving king who desires mercy. He laid down his life in order to make a way for rebels like you and I to enter his kingdom and to be robed with the glorious clothing of the children of God.

Yes, every knee will bow, but for those who have loved the appearing of his kingdom, we bow in order to have crowns placed on our head so that we might be lifted up and reign with our king.

In the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.