

PATHWAY TO THE HEAVENLY LIFE

Happy New Year! Needless to say, 2023 was all but predictable and average. The last two months of the year were filled with major church leadership failure and exposure, war, natural disasters, and insane political decisions that are proving to erode the foundations of our American culture and sovereignty. We are entering this new year with way more questions than we have answers, or so it may appear on the surface. There is a great deal of biblical narrative describing the times and seasons we are currently living in. Even Jesus Himself spoke a great deal about these days. It was Jesus the Pastor and Shepherd who said in His final teaching to His disciples in John 13 to 17 and later addressed the 7 Churches in Asia Minor the way we should approach these times and position our hearts in order to remain sincere in love to Jesus. This is the posture I want to teach from in this new year.

Matthew 5:1-12- *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. ² Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying: ³ “**Blessed** are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴ **Blessed** are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵ **Blessed** are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶ **Blessed** are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. ⁷ **Blessed** are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸ **Blessed** are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹ **Blessed** are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰ **Blessed** are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 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.*

Luke 6:20-26- *Then He lifted up His eyes toward His disciples, and said: “**Blessed** are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. ²¹ **Blessed** are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled. **Blessed** are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. ²² **Blessed** are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man’s sake. ²³ Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. ²⁴ “But **woe** to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. ²⁵ **Woe** to you who are full, for you shall hunger. **Woe** to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. ²⁶ **Woe** to you when all men speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets.*

I. THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: THE ROADMAP INTO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN

- A. The Sermon on the Mount is the “constitution of God’s Kingdom.” It is the ‘litmus test’ to measure spiritual development and ministry impact. We measure our ministry impact by how much people seek to walk out the Sermon on the Mount values (not by the size of our ministry or reach of influence or amount of money collected).
- B. A wise man builds his “house” (life and ministry) on the “rock” which refers to relating to Jesus according to the Sermon on the Mount. This lifestyle is do-able for every believer and is the only way to experience God’s Kingdom. To neglect this lifestyle is to neglect and miss the Kingdom.
- C. **Matthew 7:24-25-** *24 Whoever hears these sayings of Mine (Sermon on the Mount), and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall...*

- D. Why do you want God to anoint your life? What is your dream for it? What would you do with more influence? What would you do with more money? Would you convince others to walk in this lifestyle (secretly/consistently)? How you answer these questions could determine whether you receive them from the Heavenly Father in this life or the life to come.
- **Mt. 5:1** says, “When Jesus saw his ministry **drawing huge crowds**, he climbed a hillside and began to teach them...” (Message).
 - What will we do with increase from Jesus? This is the test for eternity.
- E. **Matthew 5:19**- “Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, **he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.**”
- F. Jesus goes on to tell those listening that unless their “righteousness” EXCEEDS that of the religious leaders, they would not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.
- Righteousness= Whole-hearted living= Perfect/Mature obedience
 - Jesus called us to be perfect in our obedience. This is meant to be the primary issue in our spiritual life yet it is often overlooked and disregarded. We do this by seeking to walk in all the revelation that the Spirit gives us. The pursuit of **full obedience** is not the same as attaining it. Our responsibility is to focus on “seeking” to completely obey God.
 - We are rewarded for pursuing obedience, even before obtaining it. This should be great encouragement for us who “fail forward”.
- G. We trust God’s grace to empower us to “attain” full obedience in an ever increasing measure.
- **Matthew 5:48**- “You shall be perfect (**walk in all the light you receive**) as your Father...is perfect.”
- H. Jesus is declaring to His generation what the Kingdom of Heaven looks like when it comes to the earth and walks around in flesh!
- I. **Matthew 5:17**- “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.”
- Jesus is demonstrating the “continuum of Scripture”. From beginning till end for this human age the Father’s desire and dream is to cause man to know and love Him fully.
 - Jesus coming to the earth became the human expression of the Father’s heart and mind!
- J. Jesus is paving a highway (more like a dirt path) which leads to encountering His heart and eternal treasures!

II. THE BEATTITUDES: OVERVIEW OF THE HAPPY LIFE

- A. This is how Jesus uses His influence on others to teach them. He says “Live this way” & then, Lives this way Himself! Jesus was not declaring anything new for Himself. This is the way of the Kingdom! He was living this way for eternity’s past.
- B. There is No OTHER WAY to live happy!
- C. Jesus is teaching to a people who are all familiar with “process” as they were farmers, shepherds, teachers, etc. They were familiar with the seasons of living in the natural.
- Farming- Plowing, sowing seeds, watering, pulling weeds, watering more, & then “harvest”.
- D. The closest we can come is seen in Child-Bearing; 9 months to deliver a baby! We are disadvantaged by our “instant” culture. We neglect to understand the rhythms of heaven and even natural earth. We walk into a store, swipe our credit card, & walk out of the store with a pair of shoes.

- E. **Ephesians 1:17**- “that the...Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,”
- One of the primary things “**revelation**” does for our hearts is allows us to see Jesus rightly. “**Wisdom**” gives us insight and foresight into how to steward the “revelation” the Father of glory/Jesus gives us.
 - Revelation is two-fold: We see Jesus rightly & we see ourselves rightly. We will not seek Jesus fully unless we see ourselves clearly!
- F. Each one of these “**8**” **Beatitudes** serves as an entryway into encounter!
- G. The Beatitudes are “progressive”, building one on the other! These steps lead down into hiddenness. This place of hiddenness is actually where we find the Father (Mt. 6:6).
- H. Following Jesus will actually produce the characteristics of the blessed life in us.
- I. Jesus describes five “grace-releasing activities” in our devotional life that position our heart to receive more strength in the grace of God. Our heart receives more grace as we consistently and secretly **serve and give** (charitable deeds: giving service and/or money (6:1–4, 19-21), **pray** (6:5–13), **bless adversaries** (forgiving, 6:14–15; 5:44) and **fast** (6:16–18).
- J. Spiritual disciplines (prayer, fasting, meditation, etc.) are ordained by God as a necessary way to posture our heart to freely receive more grace.