

Hey, we're starting a new teaching series for this fall, Lessons from the Master.

It's from the Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5, 6, and 7.

So it's a great opportunity for you guys just in your own private morning or evening devotionals.

to read through the Sermon on the Mount, chapters 5, 6, and 7, over and over and over, because it's a great section of Scripture that's meant to just be a reality check in our lives.

For example, how do you know, how do I know, how do we know if what we consider right and good is really right and good?

I mean, there's so many grays in life.

And even the Apostle Paul said, it could be something that is sin for you is not sin for me and vice versa.

How do we know what true righteousness is?

How do we know if what we're doing is truly pleasing to the heart of God and not just some religious stuff, some phony baloney stuff to be good people?

How do we know that our righteousness is actually better than our secular friends who aren't believers?

And so we're going to be unpacking for many weeks this most important sermon that Jesus spoke, he preached, and he lived out as a lesson before his disciples.

So what I don't want you to say is, well, I know what's right and wrong because I'm a Christian.

That's a bad answer.

We're going to see from Scripture what these lessons on righteousness are from the master of righteousness.

See, the problem is even the religious professionals in Jesus' day, they thought they were doing the right things.

And Jesus said that

You guys are a den of vipers.

You're whitewashed tombs.

You think you're doing right?

You think you're being religious?

And so as we unpack this, we're going to see these lessons from the master teacher.

And by the way, is he not the one before whom we're going to stand one day and have everything evaluated in our lives as we stand before his Bema seat?

So we should, I think, listen up

as we study through this, what he's going to say to us.

In past kingdoms, in current kingdoms and countries where there are rulers, kings, presidents, those rulers have authority to set agendas, to change policies, to exercise executive privileges, to decree in some countries what the laws of the land will be.

But the thing is, we are citizens of what?

Heaven.

And we have a King of kings and Lord of the Lord.

And He has decreed, He has the authority to decree the laws of His land.

And He's done that.

He has given us the laws of what it means to be right with God.

Today, we're talking about how to be blessed.

And the thing about it is,

We often live like we're the kings, right?

Aren't you tempted to be in charge of your own life?

You're the king, you're the queen of your own life.

And yet we know that we have an ultimate ruler who desires to bless us if we would only listen and obey the laws for living and life that He has set down.

So where do we find the Cliff Notes version of Jesus' teachings?

And we've got four gospels, right?

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we can read them there, but where is the compact synopsis, the cliff notes of his teachings that teach us how to be right with God?

Well, in one of his sermons.

What sermon?

Well, the most famous sermon ever preached.

It's not one of my sermons, not Billy Graham, not Charles Spurgeon, not even Apostle Paul or Peter, it's Jesus Christ.

Just 2,300 words, it's like the short Gettysburg Address

and it's given for us.

So we're going to be talking about in the next few weeks how to live, truly live the salt and light, what true righteousness really means, how to deal with that murder in your heart.

Yeah, you have it.

Murder in your heart.

How to deal with adultery in your heart, integrity of speech and actions, the secret of living a grateful life,

Jesus is going to teach us how we should pray, the cure for anxiety.

He's going to teach us that what goes around comes around.

He's going to teach us on how to get out of a rut that we're stuck in.

Real versus fake believers.

And he's going to give us the choice and teach us about the merits of building one's life on the sand, that's so easy to do, or the rock.

So we're going to be covering all of that these next few weeks.

because it's such a famous sermon, there's lots of fallacies about this sermon, right?

So I'm giving you some background this morning as we kick this off.

It's one of the most misunderstood messages that Jesus ever gave because one group says it's God's plan of salvation.

You carry out these rules of Jesus, you go to heaven.

No, that's not what it's about.

Another group calls it a charter for world peace.

If we would only live the way Jesus says live, it would bring about peace on earth.

It would never happen.

And some would say the Sermon on the Mount does not apply to us today.

It's about the future tribulation or millennial kingdom.

I don't believe that.

See, Matthew 5:20 is the key to this important sermon.

Jesus says, I tell you the truth, unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

The main theme of this sermon is what does it take?

What is true righteousness anyway?

Not artificial external righteousness based on law.

See, the religious leaders around Jesus in His day all believed it was the outward appearance.

It was the external law.

That was what was important.

Other stuff could go on inside you.

That didn't matter.

It's what was outside.

And so they were all about conduct, but not character.

And Jesus turned that on its head, and He teaches about character.

Like, who is the real you?

on the inside that nobody can see what's going on there every day in your life.

That's what Jesus was concerned about, and that's what this sermon deals with.

These religious professionals all around Jesus were great at obeying the letter of the law, but killing the spirit of the law.

They believed that righteousness could be measured by how much you pray, how much you give, how much you fast, and are you doing it in front of other people.

And those things are good, but Jesus taught about Christian character and that it flows from within.

Now, when Jesus, we're going to look at the Beatitudes first this morning, that's what kicks off the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 5.

And when Jesus used that word, and Jesus taught in Aramaic, kind of a form of Hebrew, and He used that word for blessed,

People listened up because today we'll say, oh, you'll be blessed.

We use it for everything.

You're going to be blessed with that new car you just bought, right?

You're going to be blessed when you go to Disneyland.

You're going to be blessed by, oh, when you go to the Chiefs game.

You got ticket?

Oh, yeah.

You'll be blessed.

It's not what it meant.

The Latin word for blessed is beatus, and this comes from the word beatitude.

And for them, the hearers of Jesus day,

This was a power-packed word.

It meant nothing less than divine joy and happiness.

And it was not used for humans.

It described a land of joy experienced only by the God

or maybe the dead.

But Jesus used the term and told the listeners that they could be blessed right now, not just when they get to heaven.

Right now they could be blessed.

And it's more than happiness.

It's more than feelings.

It does not depend on outward circumstances.

And this is what Jesus offered His listeners.

And by the way, that's what Jesus offers you today.

He's the real deal.

Jesus offers you a blessed life.

You're not going to always be happy.

You're not going to have enough money all the time.

You're not going to be perpetually well and never have a sickness.

But He offers you a life of divine joy.

And so He's going to unpack what it takes to have that life of divine joy.

So the Beatitudes.

These are the B attitudes.

Attitudes that you should have if you want to be blessed.

And these radically fly in the face of what?

The me attitudes in churches today.

Would you agree with me?

That there's way too much me attitude in churches today across our country.

I've seen it.

I've been there.

I might have had that thought as well.

I'm guilty.

Me attitudes instead of beatitudes.

We're going to look at the beatitudes this morning.

And as we do, I'm going to unpack these, and this is an overview this morning, okay?

The Beatitudes in Matthew chapter 5.

So I'll start in verse 1.

You can follow along.

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, the disciples came to him.

By the way, an interesting thing when Jesus taught, he sat down and everybody else stood up.

Let's do that.

I'm going to sit right here.

You guys go ahead and stand up.

I'm going to sit.

Boy, you don't dance like the Africans.

You don't stand up like the Africans.

What's wrong?

And he opened his mouth and he taught them saying, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

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

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

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

Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice, be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

So, let's look at a description, according to Jesus, of those who can be blessed, those who are right with God.

See, when you're right with God, first of all, you know that you fall short and it grieves you.

It bothers you.

Jesus said, Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who are mourned, for they shall be comforted.

Do you ever

mourn.

Do you ever grieve because you're just not where you want to be with the Lord?

You've practiced Christianity for a lot of years, but you just fall short time after time, and it bothers you, it bugs you.

You grieve, you mourn because of it.

This is the realization that you're not quite as spiritual as you think you are.

Has anybody ever been hit with that realization?

I'm hit with that all the time.

23, All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

Can I say you're not quite there yet?

Isaiah says, Woe is me! I'm a man of unclean lips and I live among a people of unclean lips.

And this was the great prophet Isaiah who saw up into heaven the throne room of God, Isaiah 6, you can read it for yourself.

The apostle Paul in Romans 7, what did he say?

My paraphrase, I can't believe I did that again.

I can't believe I'm doing the things I don't want to do and the things I want to do I don't do.

Confessional preaching by the Apostle Paul.

But the Pharisees, the religious people, they thought they were rich in spirit, not poor in spirit.

They were devoted to God's Word.

They kept all its laws.

Even the hundreds of more laws in the Mishnah and Talmud.

And besides that, everybody knows that when somebody's rich in possessions, that's a sure sign that they're blessed by God.

And if somebody's poor, they're not blessed by God.

Yes?

Do you guys believe that?

No, you go like this, say no, we don't believe that.

But that's what the Pharisees taught.

Pharisees had a lot of money, especially Caiaphas.

I've seen the remnants of his house.

What a house.

What about mourning?

Certainly God is near to the brokenhearted.

And that's true.

You might be brokenhearted because the loved one just passed.

Loved one's just passed.

You've got this illness you didn't know you were going to have.

You're brokenhearted.

You have a son, a daughter, or grandson, granddaughter, and they're off doing their own thing and walked away from the Lord.

You're brokenhearted.

The Bible says the Lord is near to you, and you should take comfort in that.

But that's not what Jesus is talking about here.

Jesus is talking about here mourning over the fact that you are spiritually lacking, spiritually bankrupt.

from time to time.

It's mourning over your poor spiritual condition.

James 4, right?

James 4, draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Cleanse your hands, you sinners.

How dare He?

Purify your hearts, you double-minded.

Be wretched and mourn and weep.

Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom.

He's talking about the same thing as Jesus.

same thing his brother was talking about mourning over the fact that you fall short time after time after time we're supposed to grieve over that we're supposed to mourn over that so many don't so many practice me Christianity

or just the fact that I'm celebrating me.

I read the story in Oz Guinness's book called The Call, one of the best books I've ever read in my life, The Call, about this German-born turned American actress, singer, Hollywood idol from back in the 1930s and 40s and 50s, Marlene Dietrich.

Ever heard of her?

Okay.

Big star back then.

I wasn't born then.

I don't know.

And she cut some albums, made lots of movies, but cut albums of her performances.

Okay, yeah.

You know what?

She also cut an album of, guess what, from Vienna, America, cities.

She made a record of the applause after her concerts.

That's all it was.

Track one, that was Vienna.

Yeah.

Track two.

The whole record was people applauding her.

What an ego.

How much me can anybody stand?

And she would have parties and invite guests over and wouldn't play one of her singing records.

She would play the applause record.

Can you imagine?

Well, the Sermon on the Mount

is trying to get us to get rid of all that junk in our lives.

You might not be making albums of people applauding you.

But you know what I'm talking about.

Jesus says you're falling short of where you could be.

I'm here to help you.

But that's something good to mourn over when you have a spiritual condition that's lacking.

By the way, what do you do with that when you understand that you're not where you should be?

mope around and crawl around on the ground, stuck in the muck in the ruts of life.

Or when you get back up and say, God help me, I do love you, know that.

I want to do better.

God, I give my life to you again.

Help me.

I don't wonder if anybody here has never started a journey with Christ.

You've never admitted that Romans 3.23, I have sinned and fall short of heaven.

I can't get to heaven on my own.

I need a Savior.

Maybe today I'll ask the Savior

to come into my life and direct my life to be my Lord and my God and my sin forgiver.

And I'm going to start the journey.

Today could be the day that you start your journey with Christ.

If so, come up after the service and press and talk with us.

Fill out a card.

Let us know what your decision is.

So when

You're right with God.

You realize that you're falling short and it grieves you.

Next, you submit to God's leadership in your life.

Look at this, verse 5.

Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

So this is the opposite of what a lot of leaders today in the executive office and Congress would say, right?

Now you've got to be strong.

To understand this, you've got to understand what meek means.

And you guys have heard this before.

In the Greek, meek means strength under control, not weakness.

It's strength, but under control.

It's a channeled strength.

It's a guided strength.

It's the strength of a horse that's finally been broken.

That powerful animal now can be directed.

It's the strength of a team of oxen pulling a heavy load, and yet they can be directed by the one with the reins.

Apostle Paul experienced this in Second Corinthians 12.9.

When he asked God to take away these thorn, the thorn in his flesh, God said to him, my grace is sufficient for you.

For my power is made perfect in weakness.

Like your weakness, Paul.

So Paul says, Therefore I'm going to boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses so that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

That's being meek.

That's carrying out this beatitude.

But we've got it backwards in our world.

We want to be strong people.

We want to be leaders.

We want to be personalities.

We don't want to be meek.

It's not about how high you could attain.

It's about how low you can get on your knees to serve Jesus and serve other people.

So when you're right with God, you're willing to submit to God's leadership in your life.

I'm on a hurry through this.

Your hunger for God and His merciful righteousness is evident when you are right with God.

You hunger for God and His merciful righteousness.

Hungering for righteousness, verses 6,

and then seven, and then eight.

It all ties together.

Instead of being seduced by the physical and material possessions of the world, you hunger more for God.

In other words, it's like, God, I've discovered in my life that You are more desirable than stuff.

God, You are more worthy, and I get more satisfaction out of loving You and obeying You and following You

than out of following my signature sins.

And you start to hunger more and more, and you realize that God's righteousness is mercy He's given us through Christ.

It's a gift.

It's not anything that you or I have deserved.

We're surrounded by idols.

Romans 1 teaches it.

Surrounded by idols of every type and is coming to the decision that no,

I want God more than my favorite idol, and I'm going to seek Him.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

And when you see things that aren't righteous, they start bugging you more.

Maybe it's something just like war worldwide or depression of women or abuse or poverty, whatever it is, and it just starts to eat at you more.

And you want righteousness, you want justice.

You know, those things are Jesus things, not just women and souls.

Justice and righteousness, Jesus cares about those.

And when there's a twisting of righteousness and truth, it starts bothering you.

When people believe about themselves or someone else that is totally unbiblical, it starts to bother you.

When somebody twists the very nature of identity or gender or sexuality or the absence of any absolute truth, it bothers you.

And so God, through this important sermon, through Jesus,

He tells us that we can be blessed the more that we hunger and thirst for righteousness.

And then, because we have been forgiven, received mercy, the only righteousness you have is Christ's imputed righteousness.

Oh, then I can be merciful to somebody else because I didn't earn to deserve this myself.

And so we start showing these beatitudes just stack one on the other.

And so, blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

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

All of these follow each one.

See, when you're right with God, you're going to have that increasing hunger, and you're going to treasure the merciful righteousness that He's given you, and you're going to grant it to others.

But also,

The last one, when you're right with God, you're persecuted for right living and extending true peace.

Look at verses 9 and 10.

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

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

See, today, would you agree with this?

Peacemaking is seen today as

It's assimilation, it's affirmation.

We must affirm every lifestyle, every belief, every religion equally, every choice.

And when we do, the world's going to have peace.

I mean, that's what you see on social media.

How dare you push back on anybody?

You'll be canceled.

How dare you disagree with someone?

Well, that's not peacemaking.

That's the easy path.

You know, Jesus said, Enter by the narrow gate, right?

For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter it are many.

For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those are few who find it.

It's your peacemaking.

Yeah, it's respectful communication.

I was just reading or actually listening to this morning.

The verse that says, sanctify Christ in your heart, set apart Christ in your heart.

Always be willing to share of the hope that you have, but with gentleness and respect.

Right?

Sure.

We treat people who disagree with us with gentleness, with respect, with honor.

They're human beings made in the image of God.

However, Jesus ties

in the aspect of what's right here.

Righteousness here.

That's what he's talking about.

He doesn't let us off the hook.

True peacemaking involves speaking the truth in love.

And we got to do it to our spouses, to our family members.

We have people do it to us.

We need it.

How can you find true peace without true truth?

It's redundant.

How can you find true peace without finding God?

right relationships without righteousness.

It doesn't work.

And the world is trying to do it.

But the thing is, when we try to live, even in speaking the truth in love, we get pushback, right?

We're going to get canceled.

We're going to get judged for being judgy.

And so Jesus said, you're blessed.

when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

See, when you do speak the truth in love, some will revile you.

The Greek word there means to defame, to have somebody rail at you, to chide you, to taunt you.

Some will persecute you.

Some will speak lies about you behind your back.

And yet Jesus gives this assurance.

You can rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

So Jesus says it's possible to have a blessed life, to live a life of joy, even though there are people who are talking about you behind your back.

And they think you're putting on airs because you go to church every Sunday or you talk about Jesus.

They think you're judging them.

They think you're better than them.

Jesus says you can still have joy in your life.

Jeremiah the prophet cried out to his own people that judgment was coming to Judah, but nobody listened to them.

You know his story.

He was arrested multiple times, put in a dungeon, thrown in a pit, eventually at the end of his life kidnapped and taken to Egypt.

Isaiah the prophet, same thing, rejected.

He was speaking the truth.

And I was just reading this yesterday in the book of Hebrews, some were sawn in two.

That's a tradition that evil King Manasseh put Isaiah in a hollow log, had his men do it, and then sawed him alive in half.

People aren't going to respond all the time.

And yet, many are your crowns in heaven.

I just read this week there's a new crackdown on house churches in China.

Anybody read about that?

Your brothers and sisters in China who've had to meet secretly in house churches, there's a ramped up effort to find out where those house churches are and to shut them down.

You ought to be praying for your Christian brothers and sisters in China.

By the way, China is the greatest missionary force in the world.

Well, let me close this up.

All I'm saying is that to be blessed might be something hard.

To be blessed might have something happen in your life, some pushback, some things you don't want to have happen, but you can be blessed.

Closing application.

Questions.

Have you confessed to God and others that you are spiritually poor and that you need God's mercy?

That's a yes or no.

God, I need your mercy.

I need Jesus every day, every moment.

Is that your confession?

Two, are you allowing God to direct your daily choices?

I mean, your relationships, the language you use, what you see on the internet, social media, how you use it, how you use God's money, right?

Are you allowing God, are you meek?

But

strong and allowing God to direct you in the resources in your life?

Third, can you say that you truly hunger for God's righteousness in your life and in the world and it bugs you when it's not there?

That God is more attractive, He's more desirable than anything.

And lastly, have you ever been put down?

I don't know, canceled, excluded?

because you are a Jesus follower, not just a Christian, but a Jesus follower.

And how are you going to respond to that?

Last story.

You remember the book of Esther, right?

The book of Esther, for such a time as I love that story of Esther.

Remember what the name of the

was in Esther?

Ahasuerus is one of these names, but Xerxes, right?

King Xerxes?

Well, in history, there was a King Xerxes, yes, married Esther.

Esther was his wife.

And he decided he was going to overtake the Greek islands, the Greek city-states.

And so he amassed a huge army of some scholars would say,

250,000 soldiers, a quarter of a million soldiers, and they went on a march to attack the armies of Greece.

7,000 from five city-states.

And at their core, though, there was 300 Spartans.

You might have seen the movie The 300.

And the Spartans were trained to stand or die.

And in fact, the mamas, the Spartans' mamas, would send them off to war and they would say this was the famous quote, come back with your shield or on it.

They were led by a 55-year-old Spartan prince, Leonidas.

And as they took their stand in a narrow pass,

20 yards wide, and I've been there in one of my trips to Greece.

You can walk up the mountain and you're there, and you can see that's not much room, that narrow pass, but that's how they want to protect the five city-states of Greece.

It was bounded by one side on the sea and a 5,000-foot cliffs of Mount Kalidromas on the other.

And then there was hot sulfur springs, and that's where you get Thermopylae, the Battle of Thermopylae.

Well, for two days, the unstoppable, that was the Persians, were stopped.

Late on the second day, Xerxes, fearing panic of his men, sent in his crack division the immortals.

And they were pushed back too.

They were repulsed as well.

then,

Disastrously for the Greeks, they were betrayed.

By night, a traitor led the Persians over a pass of the mountains and came up behind them.

So now the Greeks were surrounded.

The game was up.

Death was coming as surely as the dawn.

So Leonidas dismissed most of his men except for the 300, and there they stood their ground.

And there the little band fought to the last man and died.

When their swords were gone, according to the Greek historian, they fought on with their hands and teeth before they died.

And before they died, Leonidas made sure that a messenger took a message back home with him.

And this was the message.

Stranger, tell the Spartans

that we behave as they would wish us to and are buried here.

I say that to say this.

One day I want to stand before my Lord and said, yeah, I read your teachings and I behaved as you wanted me to behave.

And then I died.

I listened to you, Jesus.

I obeyed you the best I could.

I messed up some.

But overall, I tried to behave as you would want me to behave.

See, the life of Jesus is a different behavior.

I have to break it to you, and it's tough sometimes.

But as we go through this Sermon on the Mount, he's going to be tugging at us and pushing at us, and he's going to be encouraging us all the way to behave like he wants us to.

So