

Jesus in the Gospels

WEEK THREE

Matthew records the “Sermon on the Mount” (SOTM) as Jesus’ very first public teaching. Many writers and pastors have referred to the SOTM as the Constitution of the Kingdom. Similar to our own US Constitution, this teaching lays out the most fundamental virtues and principles that govern life in the Kingdom of God. In it we begin to see what it looks like for the Torah and the prophets to “stand up straight” as Jesus says in 5:17, getting past the “letter” of Torah’s commands and into the “spirit” of Torah, past outward behaviors and traditions (externalism) and into the hidden heart motives. 5 times in Matthew 5 Jesus says “You have heard that it was said...but I tell you...” (5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43) In this way Jesus sets up His own teachings and ministry as the full expression of Torah, not just another authoritative interpretation of it. His teachings reveal what Torah looks like when walked out practically and fully from the heart.

Jesus’ teachings also come with a warning not to set aside (disregard or be flippant about) even the seemingly subtle aspects of what He’s about to say. On the flip side, being careful to listen and obey every aspect of His teachings will bring great reward in His Kingdom (5:19). Luke’s more abbreviated version in Luke 6 indicates that Jesus, as an itinerate preacher, likely taught this message multiple times in different locations.

Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5-7

1. Context

- A. Ordered intentionally by Matthew as Jesus’ first teaching, giving it primary importance.
- B. Jesus’ “constitution of the Kingdom” requires an obedient lifestyle 1.) to experience the fullness of God’s Kingdom blessings and 2.) to stand firm in the day of trial and testing.
- C. **5:1-2** for Jesus’ closest followers (wanted to be transformed by Jesus’ teaching), not the crowds (wanted to be healed and fed and to see miracles) or the religious professionals (Pharisees and teachers of Torah who tended to focus on outward appearances, obeying the letter of the law while finding ways to get around it practically).
- D. **7:29** Jesus “taught with authority” - 1.) not just His own interpretation of Torah, but its’ fullness and 2.) demonstrated by divine healing and deliverance (Matt 8:1-3; Lk 4:35-36)

2. **Overview** - call to walk out the 8 Beatitudes by resisting 8 temptations and pursuing 4 Kingdom activities. We do these things not to earn God's love but to receive grace, all with confidence that God sees our hearts, cares for us, and rewards every step of obedience.
 - A. **8 Beatitudes** are God's foundational Kingdom principles or virtues upon which the rest of the sermon hangs. These principles or virtues are offensive to the natural mind and easy to ignore, but they come with tremendous promises.
 - B. **8 Temptations** that are easy to justify and embrace a lifestyle of sin.
 - C. **4 Kingdom Activities** that are hidden from people yet rewarded by God.
 - D. **The Goal** from 5:13-16 and 5:48 is the Kingdom working through us to influence people His way - 1.) as "salt and light" our influence in the world is directly related to our pursuit of this Kingdom lifestyle. 2.) "to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" meaning to be whole and walk in all the light we have as He walks in all the light He has.
 - E. **The Reward** for diligent obedience is blessing, life, and a solid foundation that brings legacy and eternal reward (7:13-14, 24-27). **1 Cor 3:11-13** "For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is."

3. **8 Beatitudes - Matthew 5:1-12**
 - A. God's Kingdom virtues are like flowers in the garden of our heart that must be nurtured. Together these are the character and practical kingdom lifestyle for every believer wanting to walk out biblical Christianity, not just being born again. This is what it looks like on the inside to love God with all of our heart.
 - B. "Blessed" - to have a vibrant spirit anchored not in circumstances but in Kingdom realities. To experience the presence of God, revelation, spirit of wisdom and truth, having the grace and empowering of God in our heart to desire Him, to love Him, to want what He wants.
 - C. I cannot make myself have these 8 beatitudes. I must seek them, ask for them, and then cultivate them as they grow.
 - D. **#1 Poor in spirit** - 1) deep sense of need and who I am without Him (John 15); 2) sense of what's available in Christ that I haven't yet experienced or received.
 - E. **#2 Those Who Mourn** - the most reasonable response to my spiritual condition. This is my emotional response to the revelation of my poor (weak) condition. Mourning for sin but also for breakthrough, deliverance in trial, or to experience and have the "more" in God that we desire and know is possible.
 - F. **#3 The Meek** - not timidity, fear of man, or a quiet personality. This is our posture before man as we fight in the Spirit. Meekness is strength under control, or measured power.
 - G. **#4 Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness** - supernatural appetite for God's way of making things right (Isaiah 53) with the willingness to give up self-preservation, self-protection, works-righteousness.
 - H. **#5 The Merciful** - opening my heart to the needs of others, willing to make my life vulnerable and accessible to inconveniences and even risk pain to enter into others' brokenness (intercession)

- I. #6 The Pure in Heart - willingness to submit to God's judgment at the heart level. Reconciliation of pride, fear, selfishness, bitterness. Willingness to partner with childlike faith in the face of sophisticated, demonic strategies working through temporarily successful people.
- J. #7 The Peacemakers - not peace "keepers" but intercessors and ambassadors who carry Kingdom DNA into a mess and release the power of the Gospel into dark places in a way that sets people free from sin, disease and demonic bondage.
- K. #8 The Persecuted - not satisfied with inactivity in the face of persecution, but willing to love, serve, bless, do good to, and pray for enemies. Persecution doesn't include consequences for our own sin or foolishness or rebellion, but trials we encounter because of our relationship to the Gospel and the truth of Jesus as God's Lamb, the only way of salvation and the only King over the earth.
- L. These 8 Beattitudes answer the deep questions of the philosophers of the ages: How should we live? How can we be happy and successful? How can we please God?

4. 8 Temptations

- A. These are the weeds of sin that want to grow up in the heart and choke the flowers of the beatitudes. We wage war against each of these with confidence that God helps us.
- B. **5:21 #1 Murder** - Heart issue is hidden rage. Don't be angry without a cause and say hateful things like "you idiot". Instead be reconciled with your brother (v24). Sin not confronted goes from bitterness to hatred.
- C. **5:27 #2 Adultery** - Heart issue is hidden lust. Take radical actions to escape (Joseph).
- D. **5:31 #3 Divorce** - Heart issue is devaluing the covenant of marriage. Be faithful to covenant relationships, especially the spouse of your youth over the years.
- E. **5:33 #4 False oaths or commitments** - Heart issue is self-promotion/self-provision. Don't say more than yes/no. Follow through on commitments. Resist the fear of man, other's expectations, to appear more successful than you are.
- F. **5:38 #5 Retaliation/vengeance** - Heart issue is self-protection. In the face of persecution or injustice, go the extra mile and be generous/giving.
- G. **5:43 #6 Hating enemies** - Resist the temptation to be inactive when mistreated. Proactively love, bless, and serve those who don't deserve it.
- H. **6:19 #7 Hoarding Wealth** - Heart issue is selfishness and natural focus. Based in fear and not trusting God for provision. Resist worry and anxiety about provision. **Matthew 6:33** "Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you."
- I. **7:1 #8 Judgment** - Heart issue is pride and religious criticism. Self-examine first with humility and repentance. **Psalms 139:23-24** "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

5. 4 Kingdom Activities

- A. These 4 Kingdom activities are what position our hearts to receive more of the grace of God (divine influence and empowerment) so the beatitude "flowers" can be watered and fertilized. We do these in secret, trusting God to reward us openly in His way and timing.

- B. **6:1 #1 Give:** to the needy—poor, widow, orphan.
- C. **6:5 #2 Pray:** praying the word, supplication, intercession, thanksgiving.
- D. **5:44, 6:14 #3 Forgive:** offenses from enemies or abusive family/church members
- E. **6:16 #4 Fast:** food and/or water is the context, not social media, caffeine, or pillows.
- F. These are expressions of “voluntary weakness” because we are investing our natural strengths (time, money, energy, reputation) into kingdom (invisible) purposes. The world uses strength to increase personal comfort, wealth, and honor. In the Kingdom, natural strengths are submitted to God, trusting Him to provide and promote according to His will and timing.
- G. These spiritual disciplines of giving, prayer, forgiveness, and fasting are not activities we do to earn God’s love or to get closer to Him or make ourselves more valuable to Him.
- H. As we give generously, pray fervently and often, forgive wholeheartedly and fast privately, we’re tenderized and receive more and more grace (divine influence or empowerment) so we can grow and mature into His character. As these activities become habits and then a more natural lifestyle, the 8 beatitudes blossom in our hearts, increasing our capacity to love God and receive and steward Kingdom rewards.

6. Good vs Bad Fruit - Matthew 7:15-23

- A. Good fruit isn’t the same as Christian activity or outward appearances: public giving, prophesying, praying, casting out demons, miracles, financial prosperity.
- B. Good fruit isn’t the same as gifts of the Spirit, natural talents, or big personalities.
- C. It’s possible to engage in powerful Christian activities and yet not have Kingdom fruit.
- D. It’s possible to be busy *for* God and yet not hear His voice or truly know Him.
- E. Good fruit is in word and deed: releasing the “fragrance of Christ” through the truth in love, an obedient lifestyle, godly character, humility, gentleness...the fruit of the Spirit.

7. Permanent vs Temporary Foundation - Matthew 7:24-27

- A. The key to stability and endurance through both good and bad storms of life is to hear Jesus’ words and obey them.
- B. **Romans 10:17** “Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.”
 - i) HEARING - I must first gain the knowledge of God by actively hearing and meditating on His words through prayer and study, which is the sacrifice of my time and attention, posturing my heart not to earn but to receive revelation and have the grace of God begin operating on the inside.
Proverbs 2:1-5 “My son, if you receive my words, and treasure my commands within you, so that you incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.
 - ii) OBEYING - I must take the revelation I have and begin stepping it out in practical ways. It takes years to cultivate a soft, obedient heart.

- C. Building a solid, kingdom foundation in our own life and heart will be very costly, in terms of our time and our resources.
- i) King Solomon (**1 Kings 5**) - a prophetic example of building both God's house and his own house with the greatest care.
 - Millions of dollars in cedar and cypress logs from Hiram, the King of Tyre
 - 30,000 servants to harvest logs, 70,000 carried burdens, 80,000 quarried stone
 - 3,300 supervisors
 - 7 years to complete the temple and 13 years to complete his own house.
 - ii) **Matthew 13:44** "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field."

HOMEWORK: Read Matthew 8-20. Circle or underline repeated words that emerge as key themes.