

The Culture of Heaven — Delivery Transcript

Matthew 5:6–8 (CSB) • Wes Terry • Sunday, March 15, 2026 • Kingdom Culture

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The idea of the Sermon on the Mount just being a sermon is a misnomer. Jesus, like many of the great philosophers who came before him, through this sermon is giving a vision for what human flourishing looks like. And flourishing is the one thing everybody wants. Everybody wants to be happy, everybody wants to live a good life. You may not know that's what you want, but most of us are born with that craving deep within us. And the reason we do what we do and spend the money that we spend and take the jobs that we take are generally speaking in an effort to try to obtain that.

A life of flourishing. And that life is what Jesus said he came to bring. He said the enemy comes to kill, still and destroy, but I've come to give people life and life to the full. And for Jesus, he locates that life in this thing called the kingdom. We don't talk about kingdoms much in a in American culture. We're a democratic republic, but kings and kingdoms were very common in the first century. And for the Jewish people, the word kingdom conveyed more than just the Roman Empire. It was something that they had been kind of trained up with.

A promise from Yahweh to David, King David, and Old Testament Israel's history. And the kingdom of God, in their mindset, was a world in which there would be no more suffering, no more pain, no more injustice, there would be perfect peace, there would be no more danger, lion laying down with the lamb, child with the serpent, so on and so forth. And Jesus when he comes on the scene he comes declaring the kingdom of God is at hand. And so it was a shocking thing for Jesus to sh. And when he gives the Sermon on the Mount, he's a base basically saying this is what the kingdom looks like.

This is what kingdom citizens. This is how kingdom citizens live, and these are the type of people who possess it. And it's hard to overstate just how shocking that would have been, not just to make that claim. But to attach that claim to the content of his sermon, because his vision, Jesus' vision for flourishing was upside down and inside out. And I want to try to show you that this morning in our study of the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes are a series of

statements that Jesus makes at the introduction of a sermon, they're called the Beatitudes because of the Latin *beatus* means blessed, and that's how Jesus starts each statement.

At the beginning of this sermon, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who mourn. And in doing so, Jesus is really giving us a vision of the culture of heaven. And that's why we titled the series I can't remember what we titled. Something about the culture of heaven. Something like that. And so the culture of any given thing is basically the unspoken norms of how a group of people live together. And Jesus is saying the same thing when it comes to the kingdom of God. There are unspoken norms, there are patterns of thinking and general dispositions that characterize the people who inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Just like American culture is marked by certain things. You don't you don't have to like have anybody tell you to live a certain way. You just do it because you're an American and in the same way culture works like that across the world. Different groups of people manifest different cultures. This those cultures are those actions, the way people act in those cultures are evidence that the culture is within them, and Jesus is saying the same thing is true of the kingdom of God. When the kingdom of God is within you, it will manifest a certain culture, and that means you will live a certain way because that culture is down inside of you.

And again, his description of that culture was shocking to those who were listening because he was taking what most people saw as hard times and bad circumstances, and he was saying, actually those people are more blessed. Than you may think. We looked at this last week and the first three Beatitudes. If you're if you're there in Matthew chapter five, you can go ahead. And read a few of them. Jesus says, blessed are I'm sorry, before I read these Beatitudes, I want to show you a different counterfeit vision because Jesus was not the first person to use this.

This literary device, this thing called Beatitudes. There was another Jesus. By the way, do you know there's multiple Jesuses around that time of the first century? This guy lived before the birth of Jesus. His name was Jesus Ben Sira. He also gives a list of beatitudes for what a life of flourishing would look like. I want you to see this to help you get a contrast between what Jesus is saying and what the dominant culture was of the Roman Empire, specifically among Jewish people within the Roman Empire. This is Jesus bin Sira.

He wrote a book called Sirach or Ecclesiasticus, depending on what language you're reading. He says in chapter 25, nine have I conceived of that I accounted as blessed. And a temp will I speak of with my tongue. In other words, here's ten top ten ways to know you're blessed of God. Number one, a man that has joy of his children. In other words, his children do what he says to do someone who lives to see his enemies fall. Blessed is the husband of an understanding wife, and all the men said.

Amen. Blessed is the man that doesn't plough with an ox and donkey. Blessed is the man that hath not slipped with his tongue, and he that hath not served someone that is inferior blessed is the man that hath found a true friend, and blessed is the one that speaks unto ears that hear. How great is he that discovers wisdom, but even he is not above him that fears the Lord. Now on one hand you look at that and say, well that sounds nice. You know, even almost sounds biblical. Fear of the Lord's the beginning of wisdom.

But there are some things in this list that you go not sure that sounds like Jesus. For example, living to see my enemies fall or never having to serve an inferior. For this vision of human flourishing Your wife and children need to be just right. You never need you should never have to serve someone that you think is below you. And I think that vision of flourishing would have been very popular in Roman culture. In fact, even though this was a Jewish scribe and teacher, the Roman culture only hardened those assumptions.

Most people, when they thought about a blessed life, they thought of it along these lines, and Jesus comes on the scene and turns it totally upside down. He says the true blessed life, a true life of flourishing, doesn't mean the absence of hard times. In fact, hard times can create it. Meaning they're empty-handed, they are helpless, they have really nothing left to give. Most people look at that and say that's not a life of blessing. I want to be kind of self-reliant and have what I need to get things done.

And Jesus says those with empty hands are actually of all people blessed because they have an open hand with which to grab the kingdom. Blessed are those who mourn, the heartbroken, because they'll be comforted. They look at the world and recognize it's not how it should be. Most people would say a blessed life is a life where you look at your world and say everything is awesome. Everything is just like I want it to be. There's nothing wrong. Everything is as it should be. Jesus says no those people will not inherit the kingdom because the kingdom of God comes to those who recognize this world is broken Finally, Jesus says, blessed are the humble.

Some translations say meek. It's the idea of humiliation, this idea of being insignificant, afflicted, marginalized, and mistreated. Those people most would look at and say that is not a good life. And Jesus says those people are actually of all people blessed because they have become forced to learn to trust in God. They instead of asserting themselves, leave vengeance in the hands of God. And their hope is not in this world, but in the kingdom that is to come. And so in all of these ways, Jesus is flipping the apple cart and he's talking to people who would have been characterized by these conditions.

He's talking to poor people. He's talking to religious outsiders. He's not talking to the religious establishment or the elites or the politically connected. He's talking to blue-collar. Normal people under the boot of Roman oppression, and he's not glorifying their poverty, and he's not glorifying their heartbreak, but he's saying there's a silver lining, because it

positions you for the kingdom. That which the world avoids the happy can abide. In other words, true blessedness does not require the absence of these hard things. In fact, sometimes it's these hard things that God uses to bring about the kingdom.

And those who possess the kingdom will be characterized by those dispositions. They will be helpless in the fact that they don't rely on themselves for salvation. They will be heartbroken in the fact that they don't look at this world and think it's heaven on earth. And they will be humble in that they leave vengeance in the hands of the and in all of these ways, Jesus is saying the kingdom is for those who died of themselves, those who come to the end of their rope and recognize God's kingdom comes by grace.

There's nothing I can do to inherit it or deserve it or you know make it my own. It's something that God gives to me when I humble myself before Him. And if those three beatitudes describe that condition, then the next three beatitudes will show what takes its place. Once you die to yourself, the kingdom of God will begin to transform you into a type of person who models the culture of the king. You will become transformed in your attitudes and actions. To mimic those of the Lord Jesus because the culture of the kingdom is the character of the king.

So if you'll go to the next slide, we'll look at the rest of our passage this morning, which is the next three Beatitudes, the second set of three. Jesus says, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. And blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. And people disagree on whether there's eight or nine Beatitudes. We're treating them as nine, and this second triad is saying one big thing. Namely, once you die to yourself, when the kingdom of God fills your heart, you will become a person that is that is characterized by these things.

It's really important that you not read these Beatitudes as a set of spiritual conditions. In other words, quid pro quo that you must meet in order for God to give you the kingdom. If you read the Beatitudes that way, you will misread the Beatitudes. He's not saying, become poor in spirit, so that God will bless you. He's not saying, become merciful so that God will show you mercy. They're not commands, they're not conditions to merit the kingdom. Jesus is giving us a description of the people who already have it. He's saying these people are flourishing.

They're flourishing. Why? Because they have the kingdom. How do you know they have the kingdom? Because they're characterized by this thing. They're characterized by a poverty of spirit, by mercy. And by hunger for righteousness. And because they are demonstrating those actions, it reveals the kingdom is alive within them. So he's not saying you better hunger for righteousness if you want to go to heaven. He's saying one of the ways you know you're going to heaven is you never stop craving righteousness. He's not saying be merciful so that God will give you forgiveness of sins.

He's saying one of the ways you know your sins have been forgiven is you become a person of mercy. You hear what I'm saying? It's a big difference, but it's an important difference if you want to understand the Sermon on the Mount. He's not saying you better be pure in heart if you want to go to heaven. He's saying those who have heaven in them are people who are spiritually sincere. They're not hiding before the Lord. They're not hedging or pretending. They are laid bare before the Lord because they know God's love.

Is greater still. They know God's grace is greater than all of their sin. So instead of hiding their sin, they're laying it all out on the table. And in all of these weights, Jesus is saying this is the culture of heaven. And it's important we know this culture because we're called to model it as Christian people, as Broadview Baptist church. We want people to come into our church and walk away from our church and go, man, there's something different there. There's the culture of those people. Is not like the culture of the world.

They are Americans, but they are weird and that they don't really adopt the same attitudes and actions that other people do. That's what Jesus is creating when he fills us with his grace and we want to measure our culture and you want to measure your culture and your family against the standard of these beatitudes. And so that's what we're going to do with the rest of our time if you're taking notes the actions of your life reveal the king of your heart. The actions of your life reveal the culture in your heart.

You do not act a certain way to inherit a culture, right? This is nonsense. Nobody says, so if I do this and that, then I'm going to become an American. That's not how it works. You become an American and then you start acting like this or that. You possess the culture and it's the culture that transforms you. Similarly with the kingdom, you possess the kingdom and it transforms you. You possess the kingdom and then you'll act a certain way, which means your actions reveal the king in your heart. Who's ruling in your heart?

Is it your spouse? Is it yourself? Is it the mighty dollar? Is it substance addictions? Whatever it may be, the king of your heart will be made manifest through your lifestyle, and your lifestyle reveals the cultural waters in which you're swimming. So let's look at these cultural waters so we can really understand whether or not God's kingdom is in our church and in our family. So the first one is verse six blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Pretty pretty basic, pretty simple. Jesus is describing a state of desperate craving.

It's not a preference. It's not saying, hey, it would be nice if I had a drink of water. This is descriptive of someone who says if I don't get some water, I'm going to die. It's not like Brussels sprouts. You if I take it or leave it, and unless they're roasted, then I'll always take it. But it's not like Brussels sprouts, it's like you've been fasting for 40 days. And there is pain in the pit of your stomach because you need to eat something or you've been going without water for however many days.

Some there's this one day I forgot to let the chickens out of the chicken coop and they didn't have water in their chicken coop because I had moved it out the day before. I'd never seen chickens move so fast. When we let them out of that chicken coop, they're like, that's the image of this Beatitude. It's also described in the Psalms more than any other book. David is poetically you know gifted at at at describing this condition. These psalms often get put on coffee mugs, but I think they miss the context because it's always this scenery of waterfalls and green pastures.

That's not what David is talking about when he says, as the deer longs for flowing streams, so I long for you. God, I thirst for God, the living God. He's saying, God, where are you? God, I don't see you. I don't feel you. I don't where where have you been? All of us kind of know the craving for God when you're in that season. It's a pain, it's an ache, there's a void, there's a lack. It's not passive acceptance. Well God if you reveal yourself, that would be nice. It is a active seeking God.

If I don't find you, I will despair. Same thing in Psalm 63. 1, God, you're my God, I eagerly seek you. I thirst for you. My body faints for you. In a land that is dry, desolate, and without water. Again, notice the description. You're in the desert. You're not at a waterfall. That is what's going on behind this word. But notice the object is not general. He's not saying hunger and thirst for God. He's not saying hunger and thirst in general. He's saying hunger and thirst for righteousness. And righteousness is one of those words that the Bible uses a lot.

And sometimes we attach a meaning to that word that may not necessarily fit. I did a couple of I spent a little bit of time looking at how the Bible uses the word righteousness. And there's a lot of different ways. I'm going to give you just four. So that you can distinguish what Jesus is and is not saying sometimes the word righteousness is used in the Bible to talk about what God speaks over his people when they have faith. Noah had or Abraham had faith, and the Bible says God credited it to him as righteousness.

Meaning there was a legal justification, a legal pronouncement, you are good. And that's what the word righteousness technically means. It means to be in right relationship. Or in right standing to be good in relationship to another. Sometimes that's what the Bible means by righteousness. For example, Romans 3, Paul quotes the story about Abraham, and he says the righteousness of God comes through faith. That's not a lived righteousness. It's not righteousness in like a fulfillment sense. It is God speaks righteousness over you and sometimes that's what it means. But I don't think that's what it means in the Sermon on the Mount.

Sometimes the word righteousness talks about God's righteous judgment. They would call this vindication righteousness, where God punishes the wicked. He vindicates the righteous. You see many passages about that in the Old Testament, but I don't think that's what's going

on in the Sermon on the Mount. Sometimes righteousness is what I would call proving right. Proving that God's will is the right thing to do. This is an example in 2 Peter 3. 13. There's a new heavens and a new earth, and it says that righteousness dwells. In other words, God's design is proven as that which is long lasting, eternal, proper, glorious, etc.

This is what Jesus was talking about in this in his baptism by John. John says, why do you want me to baptize you? And Jesus says, to fulfill all righteousness. He's not saying because I'm morally deficient. Jesus isn't talking about his character, he's talking about the will of God. He's saying the Father wills that I do certain things, that I fulfill certain requirements, one of which is baptism. And sometimes that's the word righteousness in the Bible. It's an umbrella term of God's general will. But again, I don't think that's what Jesus means in the Sermon on the Mount.

It's not vindication, it's not legal or spoken, and it's not necessarily fulfillment. In a strict sense, maybe a little bit of this, but the reason I don't think it's those things is because of how Jesus will use the word later. In fact, if you have your Bibles, I don't have this on the screen, but if you look at chapter 5, verse 10, he uses the word righteousness again. It's a literary device to kind of tie it all together. He says, blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness. So if we're being persecuted because of righteousness, then it's not vindication.

It's not future punishment because believers are getting hit by it. It's not legal righteousness because people see it within us. They see it and they respond with hostility and persecution. He uses the word righteousness again in verse 20. The thesis statement for the entire Sermon on the Mount is dealing with righteousness. In fact, if I had to pick one word for the whole Sermon on the Mount.. It would be kingdom. But if I had two words, it would be kingdom righteousness. He says I the whole sermon, what I'm doing is to give you a blueprint for how your righteousness can exceed that of the religious leaders.

Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will not get the kingdom of heaven. This is not a righteousness that is legal or future vindication. This is a righteousness that is lived out here and now. You know that because Jesus literally says in chapter 6 verse 1, be careful not to practice your righteousness in front of people to be seen by them. In other words, your moral character, going to church, giving money, praying. Those are good things, but you better be doing those good things for the right reasons.

Same thing in chapter 6, verse 33. Still the Sermon on the Mount. Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and everything else will be added to you. When he talks about righteousness that exceeds the scribes and the Pharisees, he continues in the rest of chapter 5 by listing moral commandments from the Torah. He said in the Old Testament law, you've heard it said you shouldn't murder. But I say to you, do not be angry. You've heard it said, don't commit adultery. I'm saying don't even lust at a woman.

Don't break an oath, don't make an oath. Eye for an eye, turn the other cheek. Hate your enemy, love your enemy, noticing a trend, they're all actions, they're all lifestyle commitments, they're all ways of doing things, and that's what Jesus means by hunger and thirst for righteousness. He's saying you should have a craving in your heart to do what God says, to do your marriage the way God says to do marriage. To do your praying the way God says to pray, to spend your money like God says to spend your money.

In other words, there's always new ways in which you can experience righteousness, where you can recover righteousness. Display righteousness in your life. That's what Jesus means by hunger and thirst for righteousness, which means the worst thing. That can characterize any Christian person is to lose a hungry heart and replace it with a haughty heart is a, I'm all that heart. I don't need to grow in righteousness because I've already arrived. I don't need to overcome this sin in my life because I've already tried without success. And so I guess God's just going to be cool with this sin.

As long as I can keep the other ones in order. That haughty heart, that haughty spirit is not the kingdom of God. That is not kingdom culture. That is a satanic lie. Jesus describes this dynamic in one of his kingdom parables. It's in Luke chapter 18. It's the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector. I think it's also in Matthew's gospel. But notice how he introduces the parable. Jesus told the parable to some who trusted in themselves. They trusted in themselves and they thought that they were righteous. They thought they weren't, but they thought, and that's why they looked down on other people.

Jesus says, if that's your attitude, the kingdom is not in you. Kingdom citizens will never have a haughty, arrogant spirit if you don't know the parable. Two guys go to the temple and pray. One's a Pharisee, one's a tax collector. The Pharisee stands and prays about himself. In other words, he says, God, I thank you. I'm so awesome. I thank you I'm not like this tax collector I pray I tithe I XYZ But the tax collector can't even look up to heaven. He beats his chest and he says, God have mercy on me, the sinner I'm not who I should be.

I've not yet arrived. And Jesus says actually the tax collector went home justified, not the Pharisee. So, for you and me, if we want to embrace kingdom culture, we must reject a spirit of complacency. And this looks a couple of different ways. Sometimes people become spiritually complacent in that they grow too comfortable in their sin. You have a besetting sin, a habitual sin, and you've just accepted it as the status quo. I've done the same thing. Seasons, extended seasons of rebellion. Either because you think you can't or because you've tried and didn't have success.

You've you've you've you've kind of made it about your personality type, or you've made it about maybe something you can't control, and as a result, you've stopped craving God's righteousness in that arena. Sometimes it's different. Sometimes it's a arrogant self-righteousness. It's a I don't need to work on myself because I'm better than everyone I know.

If people compared me to this person or that person, I'm obviously impressive to God because of how unimpressive they are. That is a spirit of complacency. It is not evidence of the kingdom. And so ask yourself the question, what does your attitude reveal about you?

What does your attitude reveal about who's ruling in your heart? If the culture of heaven is has taken root in your heart, then you will have an unquenchable thirst for new levels of righteousness. You will never, even if you're 80 years old, you will not think to yourself, I guess I'm out of grace. I guess that God's finished making me into the man or woman I'm going to become. He will not be finished until you get to heaven and stand in glory until that day you should be hungry and thirsty.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They will be filled. So commit to be a person that sets right what is wrong in your own life morally. Do not accept a life of sin. Do not accept I'll just have this addiction forever, or I will just struggle with this forever. You may struggle with it forever. I'm not saying you won't, but you should never be okay with that. You should never be happy. Never quit, never surrender. Always press for more. Learn to be a person that sets what's right in the world.

Do not accept that things are just going to be broken in that relationship. Things are just going to be broken in that organization. Things are just going to be broken in my church. It's never going to get better. Don't be that person. Be a person who hungers and thirsts for what God wants. Ask yourself the question, what would God want in this situation? What does righteousness look like in this grievance or this brokenness here? If you refuse to ask that question, the kingdom has gone dormant. Because the kingdom people are characterized by hunger and thirst. You hear what I'm saying?

I think I'm beating a dead horse. Let's move on. So the next one, blessed are those who are merciful. Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy. I'm going to define this as blessed are the helpful is not the best word, but neither is merciful. Most people hear merciful and they think being nice. And Jesus is not talking about being nice. My mom is nice and she's a merciful person. But that's not what is going on behind this phrase. The reason I know that is because the word translated merciful the root word shows up all over the place, but this type this construction only twice.

Here in Hebrews 2. 17, where it talks about the priestly work of Jesus. Jesus is a merciful and faithful high priest. I think what's fascinating is this Greek word for mercy is used in the Greek Old Testament to replace a Hebrew word very important. The Hebrew word that this Greek word takes the place of in the Septuagint is the Hebrew word hesed. Which maybe you've heard before. Hesed, God's Hesed love is his covenant love. It's his special love for his people. And the way the Bible talks about God's Hesed love is that it is what moves him to intervene and help.

It's what moves him to alleviate the bondage of his people. It's what moves him to bring them out of the dark pit of despair. God's hesed is what causes him to never break relationship. Even though he could break covenant, he decides, no, I will love you still, even though you don't deserve it, even though you've broken the terms I will choose to remain and heal what was broken. That's hesed. The my favorite definition comes from the Jesus Storybook Bible. Sally Lloyd Jones says God's Hesed is his never stopping. Never giving up, unbreaking, always and forever love.

That's mercy. Mercy is a commitment to relationship even when it's hard. Even when it's costly, even when it's uncomfortable. We all know what this looks like in your in relationship with your family. You know you can pick your friends, you can't you can't pick your family sometimes. And when they do something, or even you do something that creates a fracture in the relationship, there's a tendency to want to avoid, alienate. Remove, that isn't mercy. Mercy is intentional. It steps in, it shows compassion, it takes on the awkward. It takes the hit to the reputation.

It's mercy, by the way, that says in the New Testament when it describes why Jesus would eat with tax collectors and sinners. It was because of mercy. When Jesus would heal blind people on the Sabbath. No, no, no. He would heal people on the Sabbath because of mercy. He would actually rebuke the Pharisees and says, go learn this Bible verse in Hosea 6. I desire mercy and not sacrifice. Go figure out what that means. It was mercy that Jesus says describes his kingdom people. It's what mercy that moved him to forgive people of sin.

And that's exactly how the word mercy is used in the Old Testament. Hesed. Because of God's Hesed love, we do not perish. If you look at Lamentations 3, the dude's in a big dark pit, and God's mercy brings him out. Give thanks to the Lord for he's good. His hesed love endures forever. It never quits. It maintains relationship. Be gracious. This is when David committed adultery with Bathsheba. And Nathan calls him out and he repents in Psalm 51. Be gracious to me, God. According to your hesed love, according to your mercy, according to your abundant compassion, blot out my transgressions.

So one of the ways you can know you're a person of mercy is that your life is not characterized by a hardness of heart. Just like the haughty heart excludes the kingdom of God, so also does a hard heart exclude the kingdom of God. Jesus would say, woe to you if you are characterized by cold-hearted indifference. If you go to the next slide, there's another kingdom parable on this on this dynamic. It's the parable it's another parable of two two people, two servants who owed a debt one servant owed a debt and he went to the master.

He said, master, I can't pay my debt. And the master said, okay, I forgive you. But that servant who had been forgiven of a great debt had another person who owed him money. And when that guy says I can't pay the money, the forgiven servant says too bad. And he throws him in the debtor's prison until the last penny is paid. And then when the original

master hears about that forgiven servant's unforgiveness, he calls him on the carpet and he says, how dare you! Don't you just love the look of this guy's face?

That's AI at its prime. Shouldn't you also, he says, have had mercy on your fellow servant as I had mercy on you? Should you not forgive that guy of his debt? If you've received mercy, in other words, if the kingdom is in you will be a merciful person. Because God has forgiven you of a great, great debt. This is why Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount of the Lord's Prayer, if you forgive people their trespasses, your Father in heaven will forgive your trespasses. But if you do not forgive others their trespasses, Your father in heaven will not forgive you of your trespasses.

Jesus is not saying you've got to forgive people to go to heaven. He's saying one of the ways you know you're going to heaven is you're forgiving people. The kingdom manifests itself through your forgiveness of people who have wronged you because you're a merciful person. That's what Jesus means. Blessed are the merciful. Beware of a hardened heart. I had a mentor that would tell me in ministry, dealing with hurting people. Is exhausting and that's true. And that's not just true of ministry. Any of you who love people and try to help them in their pain, you know it can wear you out.

But if you're not careful, people who work in that type of work do it all day, every day. And you can become kind of calloused in your heart. You become heart-hearted. And he said you always want to pay attention for this red flag. It's not that you're tired in the work, but that you become tired of the work. When you become tired of the work of ministry, it is a red flag that your heart is getting hard. The opposite of love isn't hate. The opposite of love is indifference. And when you are marked by indifference, the kingdom has gone dormant in you.

He didn't say that. I said that part. But that's what Jesus would say. One of the ways you know the kingdom is within you is you are tender and you still feel something even for people who've wronged you. So blessed are the merciful. Avoid a hardened heart. Learn to be a person that seeks to relieve what is hurting. Learn to be a person that will relieve people of bondage. Especially relational bondage. I'm not saying that you have to say what they did was okay. It was not okay. Mercy is not sweeping something under the rug.

You can call it wrong. It is wrong. But what mercy says is I won't let that wrong ruin us. I won't let that wrong cut you off from my love, from my relationship. I'm not even saying you have to be best friends, but it's a willingness to release them. It's a willingness to say, I don't have to get vengeance here in order to feel good. I can actually let you go and release you from your debt. That is so Christian you have no idea. That is the telltale sign that you are a Christian.

And it's also the telltale sign that you may not be a Christian because you cannot forgive. Those who forgive much have been forgiven much. Those who have not been forgiven are not really ever willing to forgive. So be a person that relieves the debt. Finally, Jesus says, blessed are the pure in heart. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. I'm going to use the language of blessed are the whole or blessed are the whole-hearted. Because most of us read purity and think moral blamelessness. That's not what this Greek word means.

Rather it's an integrity, it is a wholeness before the Lord. It comes from Psalm 24, which is a psalm about ascending the hill of the Lord, going into God's presence, enjoying communion with God. And the psalmist asked the question, who can do that? Who can enter into the presence of God? Who can stand in this holy place? And the answer is the one who has clean hands and a pure heart. It's not that You know, sin is unimportant. You need to be cleansed of your sin. But more than just being a forgiven person, you need to be a sincere person a pure heart who has not appealed to what is false, who has not sworn deceitfully.

In other words, they're not saying, God, I'm this person, when the reality is you're not. Have you ever talked to someone and they wouldn't look you in the eye? Isn't that always kind of a little bit weird? Especially when they're shifty, shifty eyes. When someone won't look at you in the eye, it's usually for one of three reasons. One is they are afraid of you and maybe they have good reason because you're a jerk. One reason may be because they're afraid of what you'll find. One reason could be they're insecure or maybe they're hiding something.

Maybe they're hiding something they don't want you to see. When I've not looked someone in the eye, typically those things are going on but when you do look someone in the eye, especially if it's your spouse or someone you love, you know, you look lovingly into their eyes, you kind of like see down deep into them. What that requires is a level of sincerity that gets at what this word is trying to describe. It is, I'm all in, I'm hiding nothing. I am with you. I am for you. What you see is what you get.

That's what Jesus means by pure in heart. And I've experienced the overwhelming presence of God a few times in my life. It's not like it happens every day. The transforming encounters with the presence of God in my life have always been accompanied by this. Almost to the degree that I was even lying to myself. You know, you can be a really good liar to yourself. But when God's grace kind of oh opens your eyes to see who you really are. And all of those attempts at pretending that maybe you didn't even know, you weren't intentionally even trying to do so.

But when all of that comes out in the open and you can just be bare before the Lord, God, this is me, this is who I am. And in that moment, it's the most terrifying thing in the world. Because you can really see me. I don't want you to really see me. But when you do that in front of God who can really see you and you kind of really show yourself and the love of God

meets you in that area of vulnerability, you will see the Lord. You will experience God's passed love.

You will experience His amazing grace. You will experience this fatherly affection. That literally melts you. It melts you. Not in fear, not in condemnation. There is just this sense of release and freedom. And that's what it means to see God. Now, seeing God in the Old and New Testaments is kind of a mixed bag. Sometimes the Bible says you can't see God, and then sometimes it says our greatest goal is to see God. You can't see God because he's a holy God, and if you stand before a holy God in sin, it will consume you.

But you can see God because of the work of Jesus Christ. Jesus is the image of the invisible God on the one hand. But if you if you go to the next slide, when the when the Bible talks about the new heavens and the new earth and the return of Jesus and the establishing of the true kingdom, it describes it in terms of seeing God. In Revelation 22, they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. In Revelation 21, he wipes every tear from their eye. Death will be no more.

Grief, crying, and pain will be no more. The previous things have passed away. Behold, all things are new. And 1 John 3. 2 makes this contrast. We are children now. The kingdom is now, but what it will be has not yet been received. We know that when he appears, we will be like him because we will see him. We will see him as he is. Can you imagine what that day is going to be like? When you see the Lord. Jesus is not just talking about a better devotional life. It's at least that, but it's so much more than that.

Blessed are the people who are sincere. What do you need to avoid? You need to avoid a halfway heart. That's it. One of my brothers, I won't say which one, we would sing that old hymn, I surrender all. I surrender all. All to Jesus, my blessed Savior. He would say, I surrender half. Oh, it drove my mom crazy. She hated it stop it, Kyle. Oh. That's the halfway heart. It's God, I'm all yours, just don't mess with this area of my life. God, I'm all yours so long as you don't have to talk about this issue You know what I'm saying.

You know exactly that arena of your life where you're holding back. And here's what it takes if you're going to have the kingdom. If you're going to live in the kingdom, you've got to reject. What is false? You've got to reject pretending. You've got to reject having God on your terms. He only plays ball one way, his way, and his way is you got to be all in. You've got to be pure in heart. And so learn to be a person who rejects what is false. In all of those ways, the kingdom of God is evidenced.

These are not things you do to inherit the kingdom of God. These are things that you reveal that prove it is within you. And the reason I think it's important to think of it that way is because the Beatitudes are really a picture of Jesus Himself. If you think about the Beatitudes as a spiritual quid pro quo, you're going to miss the most beautiful part of this

preaching. Not mine, but Jesus' preaching. Jesus is forecasting what he's about to do. Because the kingdom of God comes through his person. It's the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus that inaugurated the kingdom of God and will complete it when it comes again, when it comes in its fullness.

But when you begin to see that the culture of the kingdom is the king, you begin to understand what Philippians mean when it says that even though he was equal to God, he not he did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but he emptied himself. And he became obedient to take the form of a servant, became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Jesus became poor in spirit so that you and I could become rich. Jesus wept at the tomb of his friend Lazarus because he recognized this world is not the way it should be.

There was no death in the garden. There's no death in the future garden. The only reason there's death here and now is because this is not right. He modeled his kingdom in his life with meekness and mercy and sincerity of heart. It was his sincerity of heart that moved him to lay down his life on a Roman cross and because of his death and resurrection, you and I can receive the kingdom. We can receive the kingdom by grace, even though we don't deserve it because of the person of Jesus, because of the hero of heaven.

And so as we enter into this time of taking the Lord's Supper, I want to encourage us to put our hope where it belongs. Your hope should not be in your purity of heart. Your hope should not be in your mercy, your merciful actions. Your hope should be in the hero of heaven. Your hope should be in the king of the kingdom. And that means your hope should be in Jesus. And so as we take the bread and we drink the cup, we can remind ourselves that Jesus modeled what kingdom culture looks like, but Jesus also secured the gift of the kingdom in you and me.

And if you've never made Jesus Lord of your life, then sincerity of heart requires you being open and vulnerable before Him. Admitting your sins have separated you from God and appealing to God's mercy revealed through the person of Jesus. Jesus took the punishment for your sin upon the cross and you can be forgiven of sin and clothed with the righteousness of Christ, but it requires you Repenting of your sin, putting faith that Jesus alone can save.