

Summary of SM thus far

Distinct

Beatitudes: spiritually dependent and relationally focused

**Title:** Kingdom Standard: Perfection

**Scripture:** Matt 5:48

**Main Idea:** Kingdom citizens are to embody the perfection of our heavenly Father.

Intro:

- Debate over whether vs 48 belongs to 43-47 alone or to the whole of 20-47. Some claim one or the other and no matter which choose will disagree with some scholars. I think it is both.
- Vs 48 is both a summary of the way we are to love in vs 43-47 and a summary of the way we are to be in general from vs 20-47.
  - The repeated word translated “surpasses” in vs 20 and “out of the ordinary” in vs 47 seems to bookend this section of Jesus’ sermon.
  - Then the phrase itself – what it states and the manner in which it is stated seems to involve more than just what Jesus was teaching re our love
- One of the incentives for keeping vs 48 connected solely with love and vs 43-7 is that it ever so slightly softens the sting of the challenge contained in Jesus’ words
- This is our tendency – we read this “be perfect” and think to ourselves “well, no one is or can be perfect.” So, we just dismiss it and continue reading.
- And yet, as perplexing as the implications are, Jesus’ words are pretty clear.
- So what in the world are we to do with this passage?

***Kingdom citizens are to embody the perfection of our heavenly Father.***

1) Jesus is giving a command

- “be” is future indicative, which can and often means future promise such as “will be” or “will become” such as in the beatitudes will be filled, will be comforted, will see God; but is used in the LXX (OT) as a divine command with great solemnity

- The future makes no sense here since everything Jesus has been teaching to this point is for his disciples in the here and now, in the daily struggle of living as a kingdom citizen here in this life on the earth, not in heaven
- Jesus is Mirroring a statement here of the repeated and recognized OT refrain, “be holy because I am holy” Lev 19:2; 11:44; 20:7; 21:8; also Deut 18:13 “ you must be blameless before the Lord your God”
- Thus we are to take this as a command and as a command for now
- We need be reminded of the implications of a command
  - It’s not optional
  - We don’t get to dismiss it if we don’t understand it, don’t like it, don’t want to obey it, or any other reason

## 2) Jesus’ command is intense

- “therefore” or “so then” – this Gk word is used to emphasize the intensity of Jesus’ command; it is not necessary for the grammar nor the idea, but gives weight to the statement
- Οὖν is inferential and with a command has an “intensive force”
- This intensity is tied to the logic of the connection between what Jesus has been saying and what he is commanding

## 3) Jesus’ command is shocking

- Perfect - Struggle dealing with this word
- Attempts to soften its meaning – it is often said that this word means mature, and it is sometimes translated as mature, even in the NT – but
  - mature just doesn't make sense given the context
  - mature is not a way that we think or talk about God
  - and even if we were to consider God as mature, how would attaining God's maturity be any easier than his perfection?
- This word can also have the idea of complete, as in not lacking in any way. This really is
- Yet, every single English translation does not read “be mature as God is mature” nor “be complete as God is complete” but reads “be perfect!”
- “Despite efforts to dilute the sense of the adjective “perfect” (telei-oi), the word in this context clearly does not mean “mature.” It is a reference to moral perfection. Jesus defined this moral perfection as matching God's own perfect character.” Quarles SM

- We want to soften the blow, but we need to feel the sting of the statement – the command is clear and the standard is high.
- Were we to end here we would left hanging in futility – with a command to a standard that we could never achieve. This would relegate Jesus' teaching to the realm of some kind of divine joke or means of torture
- Thus why so many simply give up here
- But Jesus' teaching here is not negative in tone at all. Rather it is hopeful and encouraging.

4) Jesus' command is personal

- "You" is included and again not necessary but is there for emphasis
- Jesus' statement was targeted specifically to his followers
- His command is not directed toward people in general
- "The emphatic "you" in verse 48 reminds believers that they have the power to pursue perfection that others lack.

5) Jesus' command is empowering

- As your Heavenly Father
- Could have said "as God" as in the OT, but here is much more personal – God as our Heavenly Father
- The unique relationship in closeness and power to "be"
- "One should not read this command to be perfect as a frustrating demand for the impossible that is irrelevant for modern-day disciples. The ethic of Jesus' kingdom is full perfection. Believers should strive for this ideal with the conviction that, as children of God, they are heirs of his character and will resemble Him."

Conclusion:

- Not a progression
- Not a burden – not talking about an absolute perfection where one never again sins – Jesus would be contradicting himself if this were the case
  - Hunger and thirst for righteousness
  - Will pray to forgive as forgiven
- But opportunity for blessing
- Birds – the kind that fly not ostriches;
  - we've been given wings to soar yet remain content to stay on the ground

- and if any one dare spread his or her wings, we are quick to shoot them down “who does she think she is?” “oh he thinks he’s better than everyone else” if we hold up any standard at all, “you’re just being legalistic”
- Kingdom citizens [possess and] personify [a standard of] righteousness that is so exceptional as to be more closely aligned with God’s perfection than with mankind’s sinfulness.
- Turn us inward and back to where we started!
- Lloyd Jones - God grant that as we examine ourselves we may discover something of the uniqueness and the separateness that not only divides us from others, but which proclaims that we are children of our Father which is in heaven.