

# THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

August 14, 2016

By Pastor Stan

Matthew 5:1-2

**PASTOR STAN WEESE**

**SERMON SERIES: MATTHEW: JESUS, THE SOVEREIGN KING**

**SERMON TITLE: "THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT: LIFE IN GOD'S KINGDOM"**

**SCRIPTURE TEXT: MATTHEW 5:1-2 / (P. 809)**

**TOPIC: MATTHEW**

**DATE: AUGUST 14, 2016**

-- Let's begin with a quick review of what we've seen so far in our journey through the first four chapters of the Gospel of Matthew. In chapters 1-2 Matthew tells about Jesus' birth and infancy (the appearance of the angel to Joseph to announce Jesus' birth, the visit by the wise men, and the escape from Herod's decree to kill all male infants in Bethlehem). Then in chapters 3-4 Matthew leaps ahead about 30 years to tell about the beginning of Jesus' ministry (Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, and Jesus' calling of His first Disciples).

Now, starting in chapter 5 Matthew is going to present to us the events of Jesus' public ministry (actually just the second and third years of that ministry because John is the only Gospel that gives any account of the events during the first year). Matthew's presentation of Jesus' ministry will be built around 5 discipleship discourses made by Jesus during those two years. He starts right away with the longest and best known of those discourses - the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7.

## I. The Sermon's Theme

### A. The Irony Surrounding the Sermon on the Mount

-- There's a real irony surrounding the Sermon on the Mount. Many of those who reject just about everything that the NT reveals about Jesus hold the Sermon on the Mount in high esteem. Those who reject the idea that Jesus is the Son of God or that His death is the provision for our salvation or that He rose from the dead look upon the Sermon on the Mount as the highest example of moral and ethical instruction. Jesus, however, would not take that as a compliment. About the last thing that Jesus wanted to do in the Sermon on the Mount was to give a moralistic lecture or to present humanistic ethical guidelines. Jesus wasn't offering fallen humans some nuggets of moral advice to make their lives better and to improve their societies.

### B. The Theme in Jesus' Preaching & Teaching

-- In chapter 4 Matthew has told us the central theme in all of Jesus' teaching and preaching.

Cf., v. 17, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand"

v. 23, "the gospel of the kingdom"

-- The "kingdom of heaven" is the theme of the Sermon on the Mount, and that expression occurs several times in the Sermon. Basically, the "kingdom of heaven" refers to all those who have declared the Lord to be the ruler over their lives. Right now, the world is in rebellion against God. One day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, but right now the only ones who have done that are those who have repented and turned to believe in and to follow after Jesus. So when we come to the Sermon on the Mount, we're looking at what it means to live in submission to God, what it means to confess Jesus Christ as Lord and to be His disciples.

### C. An Important Observation about the "Kingdom of Heaven"

-- There's an observation about the kingdom of heaven that's important for us to understand as we look at what Jesus is going to say to us here, and this is it: the kingdom of heaven is something that is both present and future. Jesus inaugurated or started the kingdom in His life and death and resurrection, but it won't be fully realized and completed until He returns. There are both "already" and "not yet" aspects to the kingdom of God as it exists in the present age. The kingdom of God is already here, and we're part of it; but the kingdom is not yet fully established, and it won't be until Christ returns. What this means in regards to the Sermon on the Mount is that its teachings are the goals and ideals that we strive to live by, but they won't be lived out perfectly until Christ comes back and completes our redemption and transformation and fully establishes His kingdom throughout the earth.

## II. The Sermon's Setting (5:1-2)

-- The first two verses of Matthew 5 give some important details about the setting for the sermon.  
vv. 1-2

#### A. The People (v. 1)

-- You can think of the audience for this sermon as being two concentric circles of people.

1. The inner circle, the primary audience, is Jesus' disciples (those who have come to believe in Him). The Sermon on the Mount is first and foremost for disciples, to instruct them in how to live under God's reign, how to live as those who have confessed Jesus as Savior and Lord.

2. But Jesus is also speaking to the crowd, which contains not only believers but also people at various stages of unbelief (some seekers, some skeptics). Jesus wants them to consider what it means to be a part of God's kingdom and wants to invite them also to follow Him and enter God's Kingdom.

Cf., 7:28

3. By the way, this is very much like the way I picture our Sunday morning worship services. What we do here is primarily for believers - for believers to come together and enter into God's presence with praise and to find nurture and strengthening through the ministry of God's Word. But we also desire and pray for unbelievers to be present. We invite unbelievers to come and listen, to observe and participate and pray that through what they see and hear among us and in us God will act to draw them into His kingdom, know and follow Christ.

#### B. The Place: A Mountain

-- The Sermon on the Mount, of course, took place on a "mount," that is, a mountain.

Traditionally, the mountain was a hillside overlooking the northern end of the Sea of Galilee.

The mountain location was both practical and symbolic.

Practically, the hillside enabled the large crowd of people to see and to hear Jesus more easily.

Symbolically, throughout the Bible, mountains were associated with the presence of God; mountains were often the places where people in the Bible went to meet with God. Probably, the first person who would come to mind would be Moses. Just as Moses went up Mt. Sinai to receive the 10 Commandments from God, Jesus now goes up a mountain to instruct about the God who gave the Law to Moses.

-- Notice, however, the difference between those two mountains. Mt. Sinai was covered with a cloud and quaked with thunder, fire and lightning; and the people were warned to stay back away from the mountain. But the mountain where Jesus gave His sermon was very different. That mountain was carpeted with grass and decorated with wild flowers. The warm sun glowed in the blue sky, and the gentle breezes blew off the lake. And the people came up on the mountain and gathered around, close to Jesus, looking at Him and listening to Him.

#### C. The Posture: Sat Down

-- Notice also Jesus' posture in giving this sermon. He did something I would find very difficult to do - He sat down. Sitting was the typical posture for rabbis when teaching their followers. Sitting was the posture of authority - like the judge seated in a courtroom or the king seated on the throne. Jesus sat down and prepared to speak with authority on the things of God.

Matthew says "he opened his mouth and taught them," which emphasizes the anticipation and importance of what we're about to hear.

**Hebrews 1:1-3** Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, <sup>2</sup>but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. <sup>3</sup>He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

-- The one whose word holds such authority and power is the one who is about to speak to us.

#### D. The Pronouncement: Blessed (v. 3a)

1. And what was the first word Jesus spoke? "Blessed" (v. 3a). Jesus will make this pronouncement of "blessed" eight times in the next eight verses. We call these verses "The Beatitudes" which is the Latin word for "blessed."

2. It's an interesting word. The Greeks originally used it to refer to the blissful existence of their gods - a life that was free from all the work and worries and hardship and sorrows of this world.

3. Some versions translate this word "happy." But it seems to me that there is a difference. Happiness is based mostly on your circumstances and on what you have, but blessedness is rooted in who you are. Happiness depends on your circumstances; blessedness on your character.

a. Indeed, the word "happy" comes from the root "hap," which is also the same root for the word "happen" and has a primary idea of chance. Happiness, therefore, is the result of favorable circumstances.

b. Blessedness, on the other hand, results from God's favor. It's interesting to me that the first word in the first Psalm is this same word - blessed.

**Psalm 1:1-3** Blessed is the man<sup>></sup> who walks not in the counsel of

the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup>but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

-- Jesus doesn't say blessed are those with wide-screen, high-definition TVs, or a new car, or a big house on the lake, or a good retirement plan. Instead, He says blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, blessed are the merciful, blessed are the pure in heart. These are the character qualities of those are Jesus' disciples, those who know and follow Him, those who lives are being transformed by time in God's Word and fellowship in Jesus' presence.

Here's how R.C. Sproul puts it in his great book The Soul's Quest for God:

"What we want is not temporary happiness; we ache for a happiness that is permanent. Such is the quest of the soul, the destiny for which we were created. ...

The biblical word that captures and crystallizes the idea of happiness is blessedness. It includes a wholistic satisfaction that touches the soul, the mind, the will, indeed the entire person. Beatitude is what we seek.

Blessedness is never an achievement. We cannot earn it, nor can we manipulate it. It is the fruit of divine grace, a gift only God himself is able to bestow upon us. Though we have the capacity to receive it, we are powerless to produce it. Though we are active in its search, we are passive in its reception. Blessedness is something God does for us, to us, and in us."