

"A Study of
the Sermon
on the
Mount"

June 2012

Introduction

Tonight as we start into a study of "The Sermon on the Mount" there are a few things that we need to consider before we jump in. Our study will come from the book of Matthew so we need to first of all understand some things about Matthew's gospel. Each one of the Gospel writers presents Jesus in a different way.

1. **Matthew** presents Jesus as the **King of the Jews**.
2. **Mark** presents Jesus as the **Servant**.
3. **Luke** presents Jesus as the **Son of Man**.
4. **John** presents Jesus as the **Son of God**.

Therefore, each of the writers sees Jesus in a different light. The Holy Spirit allowed each writer to use his own literary style and at the same time revealed Jesus in a different light to each man. It is very interesting that while each writer saw Jesus in a different light there are no contradictions between the Gospels. There is actually a great harmony between the historical accounts.

Matthew's Gospel breaks 400 years of silence. The book of Malachi had been written 400 years before Matthew wrote his Gospel. The years in between were silent years. There had been the Old Testament promise of the coming Redeemer but in those 400 years there was no prophet or any Word from God.

In the beginning of the book of Matthew we are given the genealogy of the King. At the end of chapter 1 and in chapter 2 we are told of the birth of the King. In chapter 3 we are given the account of the King's baptism. When we step into chapter 4 we find the King being tempted by Satan in the midst of the wilderness. In the last half of chapter 4

we find the King beginning His public ministry. As we come to chapter 5 we find the preaching of the King and that is where we find the Sermon on the Mount.

Now let us consider some details of the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount does **not** give to us the way of salvation. The Sermon on the Mount describes the way of righteous living for those who are saved. It is really a detailed description of "repentance". The Sermon on the Mount is in contrast to the teaching of the scribes and the Pharisees of Jesus day.

If we were to pick a verse or verses that would be the theme of the Sermon on the Mount it would have to be **Matthew 5:13-16**. Here Jesus told His disciples they were the salt and the light of the earth and they were to let their light shine before men. In other words the disciple of Jesus Christ is to be different from the world and he or she is to live what is recorded here in this Sermon on the Mount.

That now brings us to our study of the Words of the King as He delivered the Sermon on the Mount.

I. The Beatitudes

Part 1

Matthew 5:1-12

Notice Matthew 5:1-2

Here in these two verses we have the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. In verse 2 we are told that Jesus opened His mouth and

taught them. When I read this I am reminded that Jesus also taught without even saying a Word.

Isaiah 53:6-7

⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

⁷ He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.

When Jesus was led to the cross He never said a Word and in His silence He was teaching all of His disciples how to be submissive to the will of the Father.

Here in Matthew 5:2 He will open His mouth and teach us how we are to live as His disciples. On the mountain that day I can imagine that Jesus raised His voice and spoke very loudly to the crowds that had gathered. This also brings to mind a verse.

Proverbs 8:1

Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth her voice?

Now as we approach the "Beatitudes" we will notice that the word "blessed" is used 8 times in verses 3-12. The word "blessed" would have been very interesting to those of Jesus day. To those people the word meant "divine joy and perfect happiness". The word was not used to describe humans but it was used to describe joy that could only be obtained by gods or the dead. The word "blessed" implied an inner satisfaction that did not depend on outward circumstances.

I want to stop here and consider 3 reasons why Jesus opened His sermon with the word "blessed".

- 1. The word "blessed" is spoken for the purpose of correcting the world's teaching that says joy and happiness is found in the riches of this world.**

Notice the words of Matthew Henry;

The general opinion is, Blessed are they that are rich, and great, and honourable in the world; they spend their days in mirth, and their years in pleasure; they eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and carry all before them with a high hand, and have every sheaf bowing to their sheaf;

The belief of this world is that joy and happiness are found in worldly possessions and in earthly relationships. In the book of Ecclesiastes Solomon did an experiment in which he was searching for happiness.

Ecclesiastes 2:3-17

³ *I sought in mine heart to give myself unto wine, yet acquainting mine heart with wisdom; and to lay hold on folly, till I might see what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life.*

⁴ *I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards:*

⁵ *I made me gardens and orchards, and I planted trees in them of all kind of fruits:*

⁶ *I made me pools of water, to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees:*

⁷ I got me servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me:

⁸ I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, as musical instruments, and that of all sorts.

⁹ So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me.

¹⁰ And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour.

¹¹ Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.

When Solomon arrived at the end of his search he concluded that trying to find joy and happiness in the riches of this world is **vanity and vexation of spirit**, in other words it is like trying to catch the wind in your hand and it will leave you empty.

2. The word "blessed" is spoken here to remove the discouragements of the weak and poor who receive the gospel, by assuring them that his gospel did not bring happiness only those who possessed gifts, graces, comforts, and stood in a place of great usefulness; but that even the least in the kingdom of heaven, whose heart was upright with God, was happy in the honors and privileges of that kingdom.

3. The word "blessed" is spoken here to invite souls to Jesus Christ.

It is very interesting that the announcement of the blessings is at the beginning of His sermon and not at the end. Jesus used the blessings to draw the hungry souls into His presence. You see the blessings are at the beginning so as to prepare the hearts of the people for all that will be taught in this sermon. With all of that in mind let us consider the first of the beatitudes.

Notice Matthew 5:3a

The first thing we need to do here is to define the term "*poor in spirit*". Some teach that those who are poor in spirit are believers that are aware of their sin and are under a cloud of guilt because of their sin. That cannot be the case for we have all been in that very situation and I can assure you that there is not any joy or happiness in that standing. That is a place of discouragement and depression not joy and happiness. I guess we could say that a person in that situation is poor in spirit but that is not the poor in spirit that Jesus has in mind here.

Please allow me to use the words of Matthew Henry again, for he best describes the poor in spirit;

"The poor in spirit are happy, v. 3. There is a poor-spiritedness that is so far from making men blessed that it is a sin and a snare—cowardice and base fear, and a willing subjection to the lusts of men. But this poverty of spirit is a gracious disposition of soul, by which we are emptied of self, in order to our being filled with Jesus Christ.

To be poor in spirit is;

1. *To be contentedly poor, willing to be emptied of worldly wealth, if God orders that to be our lot; to bring our mind to our condition, when it is a low condition. Many are poor in the world, but high in spirit, poor and proud, murmuring and complaining, and blaming their lot, but we must accommodate ourselves to our poverty, must know how to be abased,.*

Philippians 4:12

¹² I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Acknowledging the wisdom of God in appointing us to poverty, we must be easy in it, patiently bear the inconveniences of it, be thankful for what we have, and make the best of that which is. It is to sit loose to all worldly wealth, and not set our hearts upon it, but cheerfully to bear losses and disappointments which may befall us in the most prosperous state.

It is not, in pride or pretence, to make ourselves poor, by throwing away what God has given us, especially as those in the church of Rome, who vow poverty, and yet engross the wealth of the nations; but if we be rich in the world we must be poor in spirit, that is, we must condescend to the poor and sympathize with them, as being touched with the feeling of their infirmities; we must expect and prepare for poverty; must not inordinately fear or shun it, but must bid it welcome, especially when it comes upon us for keeping a good conscience. Job was poor in spirit, when he blessed God in taking away, as well as giving.

2. *It is to be humble and lowly in our own eyes. To be poor in spirit, is to think meanly of ourselves, of what we are, and have, and do; the poor are often taken in the Old Testament for the humble and self-denying, as opposed to those that are at ease, and the proud; it is to be as little children in our opinion of ourselves, weak, foolish, and insignificant. Laodicea was poor in spirituals, wretchedly and miserably poor, and yet rich in spirit, so well increased with goods, as to have need of nothing. On the other hand, Paul was rich in spirituals, excelling most in gifts and graces, and yet poor in spirit, the least of the apostles, less than the least of all saints, and nothing in his own account. It is to look with a holy contempt upon ourselves, to value others and undervalue ourselves in comparison of them. It is to be willing to make ourselves cheap, and mean, and little, to do good; to become all things to all men. It is to acknowledge that God is great, and we are mean; that he is holy and we are sinful; that he is all and we are nothing, less than nothing, worse than nothing; and to humble ourselves before him, and under his mighty hand.*
3. *It is to come off from all confidence in our own righteousness and strength that we may depend only upon the merit of Christ for our justification, and the spirit and grace of Christ for our sanctification. That broken and contrite spirit with which the publican cried for mercy to a poor sinner is that poverty of spirit. We must call ourselves poor, because always in want of God's grace, always begging at God's door, always hanging on in his house."*

Notice Matthew 5:3b

Jesus here tells His listeners that the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit. But what does He mean with this statement?

The kingdom of heaven is for the poor in spirit; they only are fit to be members of the family of God, the kingdom of heaven is prepared for them. Those who thus humble themselves, and comply with God when he humbles them, shall be thus exalted. The great, high spirits go away with the glory of the kingdoms of the earth; but the humble, mild, and yielding souls obtain the glory of the kingdom of heaven. We are quick to think concerning those who are rich, and do good with their riches, that, no doubt, theirs is the kingdom of heaven; for they can thus lay up in store a good security for eternity; but what shall the poor do, who have nothing to do good with? Grace says the same happiness is promised to those who are contentedly poor, as to those who are usefully rich.

Conclusion: To be poor in spirit is to be in complete dependence upon God for every situation (even the deepest poverty) we face in our lives. To live in complete dependence upon Him is to trust Him with every situation that we face. It is holding tightly to His promises and living by faith in what His Word says about us and submitting to every situation that He allows in our lives. It is that faith in Him which pleases Him and thus floods the soul with joy and happiness for that kind of faith is a result of knowing Him deeply.

John 17:3

³ And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.