

Sermon Outline

“The Beatitudes,” Matthew: The Life and Words of Jesus, Part 7 Matthew 5:1-12 – Robin Boisvert – June 24, 2012

Introduction

1. The Sermon on the Mount is *famous*. Even those who have little acquaintance with Scripture are familiar with at least a few of its well-known sayings. What makes this sermon truly great, however, is the person who preached it. The sermon cannot be understood and lived out apart from a relationship with Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God.
2. The Sermon on the Mount is *familiar*. Our familiarity with these sayings of Jesus can dull the edge of his powerful words. It is important to give careful attention to what Christ would say to us.
3. The Sermon on the Mount is *foundational*. Jesus began his ministry with a command and an announcement: “repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.” The Sermon on the Mount fills out what the Kingdom of Heaven means. Its Jesus’ description of life in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is the life Jesus himself lives.

Who is Jesus Talking to?

1. Like Moses, Jesus goes up onto a mountain and lays down the law. Remember Deuteronomy 18:15, “the Lord will raise up a prophet like me from among you—it is to him you shall listen.” Prophets teach. They teach what God says. Moses did. And Jesus does, right here. And he relates all that he says to the Law and the Prophets. “Don't think I've come to abolish the law and the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them” (Matthew 5:17).
2. Matthew 5:1-2 tells us that “Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them...” So is he teaching the crowds or his disciples? Both! Matthew 5:1 makes it clear that he is teaching his disciples and Matthew 7:28 makes it clear that he is also teaching the crowds. Jesus continues to speak to disciples and interested listeners down through the ages.

The Beatitudes

1. First thing that strikes us in this passage is the repeated word, “blessed.” What does it mean? It is a word that describes the person who is favored by God and is therefore happy. The person who is blessed is the man or woman who is approved by God, favored by God. It is as if God were to pat you on the head and say, “Good boy!” Blessedness is exemplified in the blessing that the sons of Aaron were to place upon the people of Israel. Some of the most beautiful words in the Bible: “The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. The Lord lift up his countenance on you. And give you peace” (Numbers 6: 24-26). It’s the smile of God upon you.
2. Each beatitude has a blessing and a corresponding moral exhortation. The blessings are wonderful, but the exhortations can seem daunting. But we must remember Jesus’ announcement of the Kingdom. God’s saving reign has broken into the world, releasing believers from the power of sin. It has been inaugurated by Christ’s coming and will be consummated at his return. We live in overlap of the ages. We are called to be what we are not, but what we will be by his grace. The full blessedness of the Kingdom awaits the future, but it can be experienced in some degree even now.
3. We will take an extended look at the first three beatitudes because they form the basis for the rest.
 - a. What does it mean to be poor in spirit? It means to realize your spiritual poverty before God in the sense that you and I have nothing that we can bring before God in order to commend ourselves to him. It recognized our sinfulness apart from Christ. It is the recognition of our desperate condition before God that says, “I cannot, of myself, do anything to warrant God looking on me with favor.” The hymn-writer Augustus Toplady captured the thought in Rock of Ages when he wrote, “Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling. Naked, look to Thee for dress, helpless cry to Thee for grace.” Those who know they are bankrupt before God and look to him, receive the kingdom—as a gift of grace. You can’t do it. But God can, so why not ask him? He promises the Kingdom to the poor in spirit!
 - b. Jesus also says, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” This mourning has to do with how we feel about our low condition. Charles Bridges wrote the following, “It is important that we feel our abasement, and maintain it with a corresponding and proportionate exercise of faith. Let us lie low, but let us look high.”

Sermon Outline

- c. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."
 - i. Jesus is expounding these beatitudes, he undoubtedly has in mind Isaiah 61 and the Psalms. Here, he quotes directly from Psalm 37. The meek will inherit the earth is essentially the same thing as saying they will receive the Kingdom of God.
 - ii. Who are the meek? It is a commonly misunderstood virtue. It is helpfully expounded in the story of Moses being challenged in Numbers 12.
 - iii. Jesus actually referred to himself as meek. It is the only time I'm aware of where he called attention to his own character. "Come unto me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls."
 - iv. The meek person (also gentle, humble) does not assert his own rights. He looks to God to defend him.
- d. The next four beatitudes
 - i. To hunger and thirst after righteousness, Sinclair Ferguson says, is multifaceted. It is to long for a right relationship with God, personally. It is also to desire to live in a way that pleases him. Right living. But it also involves the desire to see others in right relationship. So there is a community aspect to it.
 - ii. And this leads to mercy. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy." To extend mercy is to be gracious and forgiving to those who do not deserve it. Citizens of the Kingdom are never to seek revenge.
 - iii. Purity of heart. Probably the background to this is Psalm 24:3-5, "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? ... He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who does not lift up his soul to what is false and does not swear deceitfully. He will receive blessing from the Lord and righteousness from the God of his salvation." This means to be single minded in our commitment to God. This is the person who is sincere in his relationship with God and with others.
 - iv. This naturally leads to peacemakers. The peacemakers get a special designation—they will be called sons of God. This means they are like God. God is a peacemaker. He has gone to great lengths to reconcile sinners to himself. Those who seek to imitate him in this reconciling work are like him in this significant way.

Sermon Outline

- v. Finally, the persecuted are blessed for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Verses 11 and 12 amplify the final beatitude, so as to emphasize it. "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." That is a great promise. But it is foreboding also, is it not? Jesus exemplified the qualities in the beatitudes. As I said earlier, he practiced what he preached. He was persecuted and put to death. The death he died and his subsequent resurrection, we call the gospel. The good news that Jesus lived a righteous life and died a death that was both substitutionary and sacrificial. That means he died in my place and to pay for my sins.
4. There is life and blessing promised to those who follow him. And not just in the life to come. Blessings promised in these beatitudes are both *present* as well as future. And we do not earn these blessings. They come to us as a gift of God's grace. But God's grace is not cheap.
5. In 1945, only weeks before the end of WWII, a man was hung by the Gestapo. His name was Dietrich Bonhoeffer. He was a pastor and theologian and martyr who fiercely resisted the Nazi program of euthanasia and genocide against the Jews. His most famous book, *The Cost of Discipleship*, contains the following contrast between what he called "cheap grace" and "costly grace":

"Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price for which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: 'ye were bought at a price,' and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God."

Sermon Outline

Fellowship Starters

1. Matthew 1-4 has taught us that Jesus is the long awaited Messiah, the divine Son of God, and the promised savior. How does the identity of Jesus inform our perspective of the Sermon on the Mount?
2. The Sermon on the Mount has become familiar ground to many believers. Has familiarity with this great sermon dulled your heart to its weight?
3. Robin describes blessedness as “a word that describes the person who is favored by God and is therefore happy. The person who is blessed is the man or woman who is approved by God, favored by God. It is as if God were to pat you on the head and say, ‘Good boy!’” Believer, are you aware of God’s blessing and approval that you already have in Christ? Is it something that delights your heart and motivates your obedience?
4. Jesus is our savior. He lived the life we couldn’t live and died the death we should have died. He is also our example. These beatitudes characterized his life (e.g. Matthew 5:5 and 11:29). Do these beatitudes characterize your life? Would those who are close to you characterize you this way?