

Grace to Walk Out the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7)

I. SERMON ON THE MOUNT: THE CORE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM

- A. I refer to the Sermon on the Mount as the constitution of God's kingdom. It is Jesus' most comprehensive statement about a believer's role in cooperating with God's grace, and is the "litmus test" to measure our spiritual development and ministry impact.
- B. Jesus called us to develop the eight Beatitudes (5:3-12); they are like eight beautiful flowers in the "garden of our heart" that God wants to fully blossom in us. They define love, godliness, and spiritual maturity, and describe the kingdom lifestyle.
- ³*"Blessed are the poor in spirit..."* ⁴*Blessed are those who mourn..."* ⁵*Blessed are the meek..."* ⁶*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness..."* ⁷*Blessed are the merciful..."* ⁸*Blessed are the pure in heart..."* ⁹*Blessed are the peacemakers..."* ¹⁰*Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Mt. 5:3-10)*
- C. ***Blessed:*** This blessedness includes having a vibrant heart, feeling God's presence, having grace to walk in love and humility, and ministering His love and power to others.
- D. These eight flowers must be cultivated as we "weed our garden" by ***resisting six common temptations*** (Mt. 5:21-48) and as we "water our garden" by ***pursuing five kingdom activities*** (Mt. 6:1-20).
- E. Jesus referred to two metaphors of salt (flavor, preservation) and light (direction, life) in describing the impact on society of people who walk out the eight Beatitudes (Mt. 5:13-16).
- ¹³*"You are the salt of the earth..."* ¹⁴*You are the light of the world..."* (Mt. 5:13-14)
- F. Jesus invites everyone to be great in His kingdom by walking in the Beatitudes. We cannot repent of the desire for greatness, because God designed our spirit with this longing. We are to repent for seeking it in a wrong way. God invites us to greatness without regard for outward achievements or the size of our ministry. It is based on the development of our heart in love.
- ¹⁹*"Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments...shall be called least in the kingdom...whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom." (Mt. 5:19)*
- G. In Matthew 5:21-48, Jesus spoke of six temptations to be resisted: ***anger*** (5:21-26), ***immorality*** (5:27-30), disregarding the ***sanctity of marriage*** (5:31-32), not ***keeping our commitments*** (5:33-37), ***retaliation*** (5:38-42), and ***passivity*** in loving our enemies (5:43-47).
- H. In Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus spoke of five kingdom activities to pursue: to ***serve and give*** (charitable deeds: giving service and/or money (6:1-4, 19-21), ***pray*** (6:5-13), ***bless our adversaries*** (fullness of forgiveness, 6:14-15; 5:44), and ***fast*** (6:16-18). These spiritual disciplines do not earn us God's love, but place our cold hearts before the "bonfire of His presence." He gives more to our heart, but does not love us more as we embrace disciplines.

II. POVERTY OF SPIRIT (MT. 5:3)

- A. Being poor in spirit is the foundational beatitude from which the other beatitudes flow. This beatitude is often misunderstood and misapplied. To be poor in spirit is to be aware of spiritual need—of experiencing more of God’s presence and power in our heart and ministry. We see the gap between what God has freely made available to us and what we are actually experiencing.
- ³***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Mt. 5:3)***
- B. To be poor in spirit is to see ourselves as spiritually poor in terms of our experience in light of all that God has made available to us. We see that we do not have the strength to establish godliness in our hearts or to inspire it in others *without the Spirit’s continual help*. We have no confidence in our own natural ability to obey or serve God without His constant help in the grace of God.
- C. We distinguish between our legal position and our living condition in grace. What Jesus’ death on the cross freely and instantly ***worked for us*** is what He now progressively ***works in us***, as we respond in faith by seeking deeper fellowship with God, serving people, and taking up our cross.
- D. Poverty of spirit is neither financial poverty nor feeling negative about our spiritual life. For example, feeling rejection or inferiority that come from comparing our gifts, achievements, or dedication to others is not poverty of spirit, nor is feeling condemned after we repent of a sin.
- E. ***Theirs is the kingdom***: This speaks of experiencing more of the kingdom in a personal way.
- F. Jesus addressed this as the root problem in the “successful” church of Laodicea (Rev. 3:14-21).
- ¹⁶***“So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. ¹⁷Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked...¹⁹As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.” (Rev. 3:16-19)***
1. ***I am rich***: The Laodiceans were seduced by their popularity and the growing wealth and enthusiasm related to their ministry. Believers in prosperous circumstances often lack the virtue of being poor in spirit. Feeling superior to others in gifting and accomplishments often results in self-confidence, which minimizes our awareness of our need for God.
 2. ***I have need of nothing***: We must not be comforted by the externals related to our ministry, i.e., big crowds, growing popularity, and human enthusiasm in meetings.
 3. ***Be zealous***: Jesus wants us to repent by being zealous in seeking Him. Do not let anyone put “kind humanistic water” on your fire to press in for God’s fullness in your life.
- G. The Lord spoke to Howard Pittman in 1979 that the church in the Western world was living like the Laodiceans, without knowing it. Read of Pittman’s heavenly encounter in his book ***Placebo***. I highly recommend ***Unrelenting Prayer*** by Bob Sorge, which develops being poor in spirit.

III. SPIRITUAL MOURNING (MT. 5:4)

- A. We mourn because we see how much God longs to give to our life, ministry, church, and in the nations. It refers to the pain we feel in seeing the gap between what God has for us and what we are experiencing. This beatitude is not about mourning over difficult circumstances, but about mourning for a greater spiritual breakthrough in light of what Jesus has made available for us.
⁴***“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” (Mt. 5:3-4)***
- B. Being poor in spirit speaks of how we *see ourselves*; spiritual mourning refers to how we *feel about what we see*. When we *see* differently, then we *feel* differently. The result of seeing our great need is that we feel pain as we mourn for more experience of God’s presence in our life.
- C. This mourning is God’s gift to us. Our desire for God is His gift to us. This gift of mourning is rare, precious, and powerful. Feeling the pain of this godly desperation causes us to reorder our life to spend our strength, time, and money to seek God for all that He has made available for us.
¹⁰***Godly sorrow produces repentance [wholeheartedness] leading to salvation [breakthrough]...***
¹¹***What diligence it produced in you...what indignation [against compromise], what fear [fear of God], what vehement desire [for Jesus], what zeal, what vindication! (2 Cor. 7:9-11)***
- D. ***Mourning and joy***: We hold these two truths in tension. We rejoice in who we are in Christ and what we are experiencing in God, while we are aware of how much more there is to experience. We are grateful for all that we experience in God’s grace, but we continually seek the Lord for a greater measure of His grace (Jas. 4:6). Mourning for more does not negate our confidence that God enjoys us and values our small efforts and ministry impact (Mt. 25:21).
- E. ***They shall be comforted***: We will progressively experience the breakthrough of the Spirit in our lives. Our culture so values comfort that our tendency is to seek and give the wrong comfort. We must refuse to be comforted by anything except the breakthrough of the fullness that the Lord promises us in His Word. Refuse to be comforted by anything less than God’s highest.

IV. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK (MT. 5:5)

- A. Meekness is power under control. It is the restraint of the use of our natural power for the accomplishment of God’s kingdom. It is not to be confused with weakness or a passive personality trait. Meekness involves the awareness of our need of wisdom from others.
⁵***“Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” (Mt. 5:5)***
- B. Meekness involves our indebtedness to God for all that He has given us spiritually, financially, physically, relationally, etc. It includes the revelation of His ownership over all that we possess. Our natural mindset is to see our resources (gifting, money, position, favor, etc.) as belonging to us (instead of the Lord) and as being the fruit of our hard work (instead of His kindness).
- C. ***They shall inherit the earth***: This promise includes influence and impact. It is partially fulfilled in this life and completely fulfilled in the age to come (Mt. 19:28; Rev. 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6).

V. HUNGERING AND THIRSTING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS (MT. 5:6)

- A. To hunger for righteousness is to press into God to experience more with Him. Jesus called us to press into God for the release of righteousness in our personal lives, for others, and in society. Part of hungering and thirsting for more includes the grace of fasting.
- ⁶“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.” (Mt. 5:6)*
- B. ***Righteousness***: Believers do not need to seek God for more of the free gift of righteousness—this was freely and fully given to us on the day we were born again (2 Cor. 5:17, 21). In our ***legal position*** before God, we were given Jesus’ righteousness instantaneously (Rom. 3:21-31). In our ***living condition***, we are to hunger for an increase of righteousness to fill our mind, emotions, and behavior. We experience this as a process throughout our Christian life.
- C. Hunger is one of the most important signs of life. Lack of hunger is a serious sign of sickness in the spirit. When there is no hunger for a sustained period, then there is no life. Many live in a “spiritual intensive care unit” without any hunger for prayer or the Word. This is abnormal Christianity. Hungerless and passionless Christianity is not normal from God’s point of view.
- D. Gaining new ground in the grace of God—growing in our hunger and pursuit of God—is the only way to keep the ground we have today. Our heart is either growing colder or hotter. It is not staying the same. There is no static position.
- E. ***They shall be filled***: We will progressively experience more grace for righteousness in our lives.

VI. BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL (MT. 5:7)

- A. There are various ways to express mercy. We are called to be tender towards those who mistreat us and complain against us, who annoy us, who are different, who are less committed to God than we are, who make mistakes, who stumble in scandalous sins, and especially those who suffer and are in great need due to poverty, sickness, oppression, persecution, or other trials.
- ⁷“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” (Mt. 5:7)*
- B. Jesus calls us to give mercy to those who mistreat us (Col. 3:12-13). We restrain our insistence on being treated fairly by showing mercy that refuses to take revenge even on any who betray us. To be merciful is to seek to help people who are suffering (Lk. 10:30-37). When we are moved to action to help those in difficult circumstances, we are seeking to reduce the miseries of others, even if it requires denying our personal comfort. Jesus calls us to be merciful to people who have significant spiritual failure, to cover people’s failures, and to tenderly seek to help them. Being merciful causes us to sympathize with those who deserve the trouble that they are in. It is not a call to be casual about sin (that believers do not repent of).
- C. ***They shall obtain mercy***: We shall receive more mercy in our circumstances from God and others as we give it to others. (This is different from freely receiving our salvation). We will reap mercy at the hands of others as we sow mercy. God gives more mercy to those who pass it on.

VII. BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART (MT. 5:8)

- A. We are to approach this beatitude with a deep sense of wonder and awe. The reality of seeing God is the highest privilege that a human being can experience in this age and in the age to come. God is light, and in Him is no darkness (1 Jn. 1:5). In the spiritual realm, light and darkness cannot mix. We will “see God” only to the degree that we think like Him.

⁸*“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Mt. 5:8)*

- B. Purity of heart includes purity in morals, motives, and methods. There is no substitute for it for those who want to see and experience more of God. Purity does not cause us to earn revelation of God, but it positions us so that our spiritual capacity can be enlarged to see and experience God.

¹⁴*Pursue...holiness [purity], without which no one will see the Lord... (Heb. 12:14)*

- C. They shall see God: The ultimate experience of Christianity now and for eternity is to know, or see, God (Rev. 22:4). The pure will have an increased capacity to see and experience God. This is one of the greatest promises in God’s Word. This great promise is partially fulfilled in this life.

VIII. BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS (MT. 5:9)

- A. Jesus calls us to be peacemakers. This includes working to reconcile and repair relationships, individually or in society, and not creating strife in relationships by promoting ourselves. The peacemaker sees the value of investing time and energy to bring peace between individuals, families, races, and ministries, in social, civic, and marketplace issues, and even in the nations.

⁹*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” (Mt. 5:9)*

- B. Peace is not sought at the expense of truth and righteousness. It is not a peace at any price. We are called to live peaceably with all men by humbling ourselves to serve them and by refusing to push our agenda or to complain against them (we make appeals in the right spirit and way).

¹⁸*If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. (Rom. 12:18)*

- C. They shall be called sons of God: Peacemakers will be called godly, or like God, by many.

IX. BLESSED ARE THE PERSECUTED FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS’ SAKE (MT. 5:10-12)

¹⁰*“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Mt. 5:10)*

- A. Jesus will bless any who will endure persecution for His sake with a rejoicing spirit. Persecution includes being penalized or harmed socially, verbally, financially, or physically. Most persecution in the West is social, verbal, or financial, by being reviled, resisted, or ostracized.

- B. Theirs is the kingdom: This speaks of experiencing more of the kingdom in a personal way.