

# Sermon on the Mount - Lesson 1

## Matthew 5:1-4

Good morning! This coming Thursday is Thanksgiving. As I was preparing for this sermon it struck me of the many things in life for which I am thankful. While we could go through a list this morning that is extensive, I want to speak about one of the New Testament sermons that I have been grateful for over the years.

Back in June and July I had a request from several Christians for a series of lessons on the Sermon on the Mount. At that time, I had quite a bit on my plate plus that is the time of year when many of us travel. So, I agreed to begin this series after school started and we “settled in” for the winter. Well, I hope everyone is settled in as this series may take a while.

For many years I have been fascinated by the blunt way in which Jesus deals with our inner man. Jesus does not pull punches, He just simply states things the way they are. Take it or leave it - but it is the truth. I’m simply going to go through this great sermon on Sunday mornings until I complete it. I may need to suspend things for a short time but for the most part this will be where we are on Sunday mornings for quite some time. There are huge lessons for each of us to learn. Some will convict us of strengths and some will show us weakness in our inner man. Each time I preach this series I find myself needing to make changes and strengthen areas of my life. I want to show some lessons we can learn from the attitudes found here in Matthew 5.

Those who write about such things state without hesitation that this is the greatest sermon ever delivered. Even critics suggest that it is the best written piece of literature in history. Homer Hailey once said that the Sermon on the Mount was everything a person needed to know to personally please God. At the time I took exception to that, but over the years I have come to embrace Hailey’s view.

Matthew says that Jesus was proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom of heaven. The gospel is the good news. **The good news cannot be that we have all fallen short of the righteous demands of God’s law.**

**That is not good news at all.** This is one of the reasons we try to lessen God's regulations. We want to feel like we are accomplishing all that God has commanded us to do. But we will only feel that way if we lower God's standards. We are inadequate for the kingdom. We are inadequate for his righteous demands.

The apostle Paul had to write a number of letters to help people remain grounded and realize they cannot stand before God on their own acts of righteousness.

Yet, notice how the Sermon on the Mount begins. The first word from Jesus' mouth is the word, "blessed." Nine times in this sermon Jesus begins his sentence with the word "blessed." What does this word mean? It is frustrating to see some translations try to simplify the word "blessed" to simply mean "happy." But "happy" is not the picture at all, which should be evident from verse 10. You are not going to be "happy" when you are persecuted. "Blessed" is the correct word here because it causes us to dig into the rich meaning of this word.

When we read about someone being blessed in the Old Testament, we are seeing that God's favor is upon them. God created Adam and Eve and **blessed** them (Genesis 1:22,28). God's favor was on them both. God **blessed** Abraham according to the scriptures. God **blessed** Isaac according to the scriptures. God also **blessed** Jacob in Genesis. What did this mean? It meant that these people were the privileged recipients of God's favor. To be blessed is to be in the best state of all. You have divine favor and delight. You are enjoying the favor of God.

The Sermon on the Mount opens with descriptions of the people who have the favor of God. In the first 11 verses we read about who have God's favor and the blessing that God gives that person. We will see that the condition of being blessed is in the present (5:3,10) and in the future (5:4-9). The favor of God, while its focus and fulfillment is in the future, it begins now in Christ. This is the good news of the kingdom. Sinful people can receive God's favor. Sinful people can be blessed by God and enjoy the benefits of the kingdom of heaven.

To put all of this together, a blessed person is someone who, because of God's love and grace, enjoys presently and is promised in the future God's favor regardless of one's personal status or earthly condition. So, let's begin this series by digging right in Matthew 5:1

## **The Beatitudes**

What are the beatitudes? The teachings in Mt. 5:1-12 are referred to as the Beatitudes. They deal with the state of one's heart. Man puts so much emphasis on the outward, but Jesus emphasizes the inward.

The term "Blessed" is deeper than happy, it includes peace and content. Blessed is being in a state where peace prevails because of our deep contentment that we are following God in every way possible. The first two under consideration set the stage for the remainder of the 9 blessed statements of Jesus.

### **Blessed are the poor in Spirit (v.3)**

These are individuals who know and understand their spiritual dependence upon God. This person understands God's grace and mercy extended to them as a person. They fully understand their sin, their separation and their redemption before God. This results in a changed inner man.

Paul was poor in Spirit – 1 Tim 1:15 ***"This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."***

Those who are poor in spirit understand their total dependence upon Christ.

As followers of Christ today, we too should be poor in spirit, we should be dependent on Christ, because without Christ we have no hope.

The result of this attitude is that ***"They will inherit the kingdom of heaven"***.

The kingdom of heaven is theirs because they are humble and are dependent upon Christ. This is not because of their human behavior. This is because they have modified their thinking and living to conform to the mind of Christ. They no longer live for themselves, they live in and through Jesus Christ. Our actions as being “poor in spirit” will lead us to be Christ like in every part of our life.

## **Blessed are those who mourn (v.4)**

When we hear the word mourn we think of loss. What Jesus speaks of here is the person who mourns over their own sins as well as the sins of others. He speaks of those that mourn over their sins and repent.

Godly sorrow which brings true repentance. This is not sorrow over being caught in a sin, this is being sorry for our sin and what that does to our relationship with God. If/when we get to a point where we are able and willing to mourn our sins and repent of them Jesus tells us that we will be comforted by God.

The Psalms are full of statements by David where he demonstrates how he mourned over his mistakes. Paul was well acquainted with impenitent people. In 2 Cor. 7:9-10 he said, *“Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that your sorrow led to repentance. For you were made sorry in a godly manner, that you might suffer loss from us in nothing. For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death.”*

These Christians held grudges, were gossips and said hurtful things to one another. Paul addressed it, they saw their sin and they repented. Just like them, we must be able to mourn/ have godly sorrow for our sins too.

The person Jesus talks about in this sermon are those individuals who mourn because they have fallen short of the glory of God. Paul tells us in Rom. 3:23 that we have all fallen short. So, we all have plenty to mourn over. Again, the result of this behavior is that God will comfort those who mourn. They are comforted because they repent.

We have seen two important attitudes a Christian should have. Blessed are those who are Poor in Spirit and Blessed are those who mourn.

Do I have these attitudes? Jesus reminds us each time that those who have these attitudes will be blessed. Do I want God's blessing? Think of what the alternative is to that!!!