

THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 29TH-MARCH 1ST // BOOK OF MATTHEW

THE CROWDS (MATT. 5:1)

"WHEN HE SAW THE CROWDS"

The more Jesus traveled and taught, the more people came to listen. Though Jesus taught many people, His main focus was the disciples. So, He would often slip away to teach them.

- **Other people would usually join in on the discussion, which is probably the case in chapter 5.**

THE BOOK OF MATTHEW IS FOR THE HUNGRY

Many have called Matthew's gospel discipleship training. The masses will be drawn to Christ's teachings, but only the true disciples will dive in and submit to them.

- **People will always be drawn to the idea of hope and love, but many will abort the call when they realize it takes submission and hard work.**

THREE GROUPS OF PEOPLE AROUND JESUS

The 12: Almost everything Jesus did was to train the 12. Jesus also was teaching us that 1 person cannot do it all. **The "other" disciples:** Devoted followers of Christ, but not leaders like the 12. **The crowds:** All levels of belief or disbelief that kept an emotional distance from Jesus because they were cautious or critical.

JESUS FOCUSES ON THE TEACHABLE SEARCHER

Everyone is looking for happiness, but God wants to present something even deeper: a joy that is not contingent on circumstances, but who we are in God's Kingdom. Jesus was, and still is looking for **those who want to learn and dig deeper into purpose, meaning, and a connection with their Creator.**

TRUTHS (MATT. 5:2-12)

THE KING'S MANIFESTO

The Beatitudes are the over-arching moral principles of the Kingdom of God and the lesson that the leaders in Israel will reject in chapters 8-12. These are not cute little Hobby Lobby plaques, **these are rock solid truths that demand application for how to live our lives.**

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT"

Jesus is not referring to monetary poverty, but spiritual poverty. **The beginning of salvation is the recognition that we are incapable of goodness on our own.**

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN"

When we acknowledge our sin, our response should be mourning. **Do we hate sin and mourn when we rebel against God?**

"BLESSED ARE THE HUMBLE"

Humility is not a negative view of ourselves, but a realistic one. **We are blessed when we submit to God and know our place.** Humility is also learning to control our power.

- The inheritance of the earth is probably referring to the Millennial Reign in Rev. 20 or simply the Kingdom of God in eternity.

THESE FIRST 3 PRINCIPLES LAY A FOUNDATION

We learn that true followers of Jesus do 3 simple things: **acknowledge their sin, feel remorse for doing it, and then humble themselves and start to change.**

"BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO HUNGER..."

This refers to people who have a desire to do what is right regardless of culture. **We must place our feelings behind God's.**

THOSE WHO HUNGER HAVE A HEART TO CHANGE

The transformation of those "who hunger for righteousness" creates people who are **merciful, pure in heart, and peacemakers.** When we understand our own sin we show mercy to others. **Pure hearts don't come from our goodness, but God's grace. Peace is an internal spiritual change.**

"...FOR THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN IS THEIRS"

V10-12 talk about the reward set aside for those who are "persecuted because of righteousness."

Salvation isn't granted as compensation for the unfairness of life, but as a blessing to those who have actively pursued Christ and suffered for it. This doesn't mean we go looking for persecution.

OUR ULTIMATE REWARD ISN'T HERE

Jesus says, "Be glad and rejoice, because your reward is great in heaven." As Christians we need to realize that though we're blessed, the fruit of the seeds we sow now aren't fully realized until the life to come.

- **Our entitlement, lack of work ethic, and impatience has caused many to become discouraged.**

SALT & LIGHT (MATT. 5:13-16)

BEFORE THE MESSAGE, HE PAINTS THE BIG PICTURE

Jesus is about to give His most famous message, but before He does, He shares with His disciples the impact a follower of God can have on their community.

- Jesus is the Savior, but **He's chosen His followers to be the catalyst for how their world changes.** Jesus calls us the **salt and light** of the earth.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "SALT?"

Salt is a preservative against contaminants. In the days of Jesus, salt could literally be the difference between life and death. Salt also adds flavor and interest.

- The Christian is **to educate others on the contaminants of the soul that lead to spiritual death.** We are also to **add creativity and excellence to our world.**

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE "LIGHT?"

To be light is similar to salt. We are to be an example and good influence on the world around us. The function of light is to make truth and reality more visible. Light also offers guidance and direction.

- **To be the light we must be closely connected to the source of light.** Prayer, study, and community are essential!

WE ARE TO MODEL SALT AND LIGHT

Jesus said, "No one lights a lamp and puts it under a basket, but rather on a lampstand and it gives light for all who are in the house."

- This means **we must display integrity, honesty, clarity, hard work, and love to people around us. We must not shy away from our faith and the responsibilities of it.**

WE MUST ALSO BE HUMBLE WITH GOOD WORKS

Jesus is all about the state of the heart! We are called to do good works, but to give all the credit and glory to God. Later, Jesus will say to not do good works just so others can see them (6:1-6).

- **We must consistently take inventory of our heart because it can easily become corrupted and self-serving.**

LIVING IT (MATT. 5:17-20)

THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS IS THE OT

To the religious leaders, Jesus sounded like the antithesis of the OT law, but Christ came to be the perfect example of the law, not to oppose it, but to be the fulfillment of it.

- **The Law can only define sin, not save people. Even if we could keep the 10 C's, it is only by God's grace we can be saved.**

JESUS CLARIFIED WHAT WE HAD CONVOLUTED

Jesus didn't abolish the Law (10 C's), He fulfilled it by bringing clarity as to what the intention of the Law was. Humanity had taken something simple and distorted it.

- Jesus fulfilled the Law **by teaching its real intentions and keeping it, fulfilling OT prophecies, and by providing the means of salvation (cross).**

IMPOSSIBLE, BUT POSSIBLE WITH HIM

Jesus came to teach something that was impossible (without Him) to accomplish: following the 10 Commandments.

- We think external standards reveal the character of God, but **our identity in God flows from the inside out. We can only honor the Law if the author of it is in us giving us grace.**

MAKING UP THE DIFFERENCE

So, righteousness only comes through a dependence on God. **Works do matter, but our works can only have value when we first depend on the grace and love of God!**

- **It is not a life of perfection, but of dependence.** Even at our best, we fall flat without God in our life.

"...UNTIL ALL THINGS ARE ACCOMPLISHED"

Jesus said the Law will stand "until heaven and earth pass away" and shouldn't be tampered with. What does this mean for Christians today?

- **Though we are incapable of following the Law, we're to use it to define sin and highlight our need for God's help.**

SURPASSING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF RELIGION

Jesus always challenges us to **think and live deeper.** Jesus told His disciples that their righteousness had to surpass the religious leaders. This doesn't come from following laws, but by allowing God to change our heart.

- **Jesus wants us to think about the why before we try to accomplish the what.**

RELIGION VS. RELATIONSHIP

- Virtually every point Jesus makes contrasts pseudo-righteousness (religious practice) and true righteousness (relationship with Jesus). This means **what we do is irrelevant if why we do it is not from a love of God and others.**
- Our salvation is contingent on the state of our heart in relation to God, because apart from Jesus, we're never good enough.
- That being said, **what we do will always follow the condition of our heart. Intentions AND actions matter.**

WE TEND TO GET IT BACKWARDS

- Jesus didn't eradicate rules, in fact He came to educate us on the value of God's laws.
- We tend to go to extremes. We either diminish God's commands, or we become legalistic. **The Law defines sin and shows us the target, but God's grace enables us to hit the mark.**
- We should do our best to honor the 10 C's while still acknowledging that we can never fully uphold them. In other words, **our righteousness can only come from our dependence on God's righteousness.**

LET'S JUST BE REAL

- **We will all fail, but we need to keep repenting, leaning into Him and His grace, and trying our best to hit the target of God's expectations of how we are to live.**
- **We are not good enough, but that's what makes Jesus so amazing. He loves and wants us anyways, and stands in our place so we can be called righteous.**