

## THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

FEBRUARY 29TH-MARCH 1ST, 2020 // BOOK OF MATTHEW

### THE CROWDS (MATTHEW 5:1-2)

Everything is in its place for Jesus to “go large” with His public ministry- He’s been baptized, endured temptation, and chosen His disciples.

- His public ministry started small in the little villages in Galilee, but quickly His fame spread to Syria, the Decapolis, and even to Jerusalem.
- The time has come for His inaugural message, the first of five blocks of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew’s gospel.

Verse 1 tells us that Jesus saw these “crowds” following Him, He slipped away from them to group on a mountain.

- “He went up on the mountain” is the same wording used in the O.T. to describe Moses going up to the mountain to receive the law (Exod. 19:3).
- Just as Moses spoke God’s law to the covenant people with authority, so Jesus brings understanding to that same law with authority.

It’s important to note the audience for Jesus’ discourse- they were the “disciples” (vs. 1b).

- This teaching is NOT about behaviors that we have to practice perfectly to earn entrance into the Kingdom, but rather characteristics that describe the inner character of those who have already received the Kingdom.
- It’s essentially a constitution- a public declaration of what life in the Kingdom looks like.

To understand this “Constitution of the Kingdom”, we have to understand that true righteousness is the necessary condition for entrance into the Kingdom.

- The only kind of “righteousness” that could ever exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees is a righteousness that comes from God.
- It’s given as a gift, begins internally, and then manifests externally in our conduct.

This isn’t a teaching on how to earn salvation from God, a charter on world peace, or a discourse on philosophy.

- This “Sermon on the Mount” is a description of the inner character and lifestyle of a true disciple of Jesus.
- So Jesus sat down (as Rabbis with great authority would often do), and “opened His mouth” pronouncing with authority this new teaching.

### THE DISCIPLE’S HEART (MATTHEW 5:3-5)

The “Beatitudes” are a list of nine benedictions that describe the inner character, attitude, and conduct of a true disciple.

- Linked with each character trait are unique blessings that show how God will reward His disciples that seek His Kingdom over the world’s.
- Keep in mind that Matthew is writing to believers that were experiencing persecution & expulsion from the synagogues & Jewish community.

The idea of being “blessed” or “happy” is much different than our modern understanding- happiness for us is largely dependent on circumstances.

- But the “blessed” or “happy” life in God’s kingdom is dependent on the assurance that God will bring about rewards to those who faithfully trust, obey, and follow Him.
- It’s an “upside down” Kingdom- one where the “last” will be “first” (Matt. 20:16).

Vs. 3- To be “poor in spirit” is to have a recognition of one’s spiritual bankruptcy- the inability to become righteous on one’s own.

- Blessing or happiness belongs to the ones who recognize their own poverty of spirit because it’s only then that they can receive God’s righteousness as a gift- therefore entering into the Kingdom of heaven.

Vs. 4- The truly repentant person who recognizes the weight of his or her sin and spiritual bankruptcy can only respond with mourning.

- And only when we’re truly sorry for our sin can the grace of God be introduced into the picture and we can “be comforted”.
- If we don’t think we need to be forgiven, we probably won’t ask for forgiveness!

Vs. 5- Meekness is not weakness- it is power under control.

- The meek (or “gentle”) are those who may be powerful, but have the maturity, humility, and grace to allow themselves to be controlled and made gentle by God.
- It’s those who trust in God’s power, not their own, who will “inherit the earth”.

### THE DISCIPLE’S APPETITE (MATTHEW 5:6)

Hunger and thirst are characteristics of those who are poor, downtrodden, and oppressed.

- The ones who “hunger & thirst” for righteousness are the ones who know that they have no righteousness of their own.
- It’s those who understand the true condition of their heart and earnestly want God’s righteousness to transform them that are “blessed”.

We often spend so much time focusing on why God doesn’t fix all the evils in the world.

- But a true disciple understands that there is an inner evil and a brokenness inside of us.
- A true disciple hungers deeply that such a restoration would begin in their own heart.
- Their appetite is for God’s Kingdom and redemption to begin in them!

What reward awaits those who “hunger and thirst”? They will be “satisfied”.

- The most elusive thing in our world today is satisfaction.
- God’s promise to those who long to be made righteous is that in the Kingdom to come, all of the brokenness in us will be fixed- and we’ll be satisfied with that restoration.

### THE DISCIPLE’S RELATIONSHIPS (MATTHEW 5:7-12)

Vs. 7- A disciple is aware of their own poverty of spirit, mournful over their sin, submitted to the Father’s control, and hungry and thirsty for God’s righteousness.

- So it follows that they dispense mercy because they have been shown it abundantly.
- Mercy is seeing things from another’s point of view and being willing to not take offense or focus on others’ shortcomings.

Vs. 8- Purity of heart is a gift from God’s mercy (vs. 7) to those who mourn their spiritual bankruptcy (vs. 3-4) and seek His righteousness (vs. 6)

- It’s not only being “declared pure”, it’s the removal of corrupting impurities from the heart.
- A disciple’s heart in the process of being transformed so that one day we can “see God”- and we will be pure in His sight in all the areas that matter.

Vs. 9- A characteristic of God’s true people is that they “seek peace and pursue it” (Ps. 34:14).

- Because disciples are at “peace with God” (Rom. 5:1), they are at peace with people.
- Part of our identity as “children of God” is that we don’t engage in drama, gossip, fighting, backbiting, and offense- we show forgiveness, grace, and mercy.

Vs. 10- The pursuit of righteousness can result in opposition from those who may misunderstand the disciple or feel convicted or threatened.

- This shows us that a true disciple is engaged in society, but that engagement has its cost.
- No matter how marginalized a disciple might be, in the Kingdom there is great reward.

Vs. 11- Part of the opposition we can expect as a disciple is for others to treat us unfairly.

- False accusations and unmerited abuse towards true disciples shouldn’t surprise us.
- Notice that the blessing is only for persecution that is given “on my account”- this isn’t talking about Christians that are rude, insensitive, and combative and then play the victim card whenever they’re held accountable.

Vs. 12- The prophets of the OT were regarded as heroes to the Jews because their endurance of persecution elevated them to such a status.

- Heaven’s heroes are those who are willing to suffer for Jesus and not retaliate.
- Jesus gave special hope and courage to those whose commitment to God is so unwavering that even those who are enemies to the Kingdom can’t snuff them out.

### THE DISCIPLE’S WITNESS (MATTHEW 5:13-16)

After Jesus gives the inner character, attitude, and conduct of a true disciple, He gives us two word pictures that explain the impact a disciple will have on his or her world.

- The rest of the sermon shows us how to live as “salt and light” in the world.
- As believers we are to be involved in our world in order to expand the Kingdom.

The two central usages for salt in the 1st century were for preservation and for flavoring.

- Salt preserves from corruption- therefore a disciple is to prevent or confront corruption.
- Secondly, salt adds flavor- the influence of a disciple should bring interest, life, and flavor to whatever group or community they’re a part of. The world needs the Church!

But if the “salt loses its taste, it’s no good”- disciples that don’t live according to their nature as salt are useless to the King’s advancement of the Kingdom on earth (one might even question their Kingdom citizenship).

### HOW DO WE LOSE OUR SALTINESS?

1. **Worldliness**
2. **Isolationism**

The function of light is to make reality or truth visible, giving direction to all who see it.

- Jesus tells His disciples that this is what they “are”- our identity is that we make reality & truth visible to the world by giving direction and guidance.
- If that light becomes hidden, it ceases to serve a purpose- when we’re ashamed of who we are as disciples we act contrary to our nature and function.

But when we as make our devotion visible and obvious, it causes people to glorify our Father.

- What Jesus wants us to know is that this Kingdom involves a deeply personal relationship with God as a Father.
- And part of our role as a disciple is to point others to the heart of God as a Father.

### TO TRULY CHANGE AND BECOME A “DISCIPLE” ...

We have to recognize our inability to change ourselves and make ourselves righteous. Instead of simply “trying harder”, we “draw closer” to the only source of righteousness- Christ.