

The Beatitudes Sermon Notes
July 26, 2020 - Zachary Miller
Plain Community Church

Matthew 5:1-12 (NIV)

3 *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

4 *Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.*

5 *Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.*

6 *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*

7 *Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.*

8 *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.*

9 *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.*

10 *Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*

11 *“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

Isaiah 57:14-19 (NIV)

And it will be said: “Build up, build up, prepare the road! Remove the obstacles out of the way of my people.” For this is what the high and exalted One says — he who lives forever, whose name is holy: “I live in a high and holy place, but also with the one who is contrite and lowly in spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite. I will not accuse them forever, nor will I always be angry, for then they would faint away because of me — the very people I have created. I was enraged by their sinful greed; I punished them, and hid my face in anger, yet they kept on in their willful ways. I have seen their ways, but I will heal them; I will guide them and restore comfort to Israel’s mourners, creating praise on their lips. Peace, peace, to those far and near,” says the Lord. “And I will heal them.”

Introduction to Matthew

- The Old Testament
 - Starts with the Pentateuch (meaning five books) more commonly referred to as the Torah, or the written Torah in Judaism.
- The New Testaments
 - Starts with the four gospels. These are four different accounts of Jesus life from 4 different individuals. They originated sometime after Jesus resurrection and before the death of original eyewitnesses. Mark and Luke were friends and companions of Peter and Paul respectively, and therefore recorded their information based on the information of firsthand witnesses to the events of the gospels. A rich oral tradition would have kept Jesus’ stories and teaching alive after his departure into heaven. Eventually, these authors saw the need to write this down.

- Mark most likely came first (friend of Peter), and the goal was to tell the basic and most important part of Jesus life, death, and resurrection. That is why it starts with John and the baptism of Jesus. No genealogy or childhood stories, and it ends with Jesus resurrection.
- Luke came afterward and is actually one long book that encompasses Luke and Acts together as one long narrative about Jesus. Luke was a doctor and traveling companion of Paul, who had had his own experience with Jesus when he was blinded on his way to Damascus. Luke explains at the beginning of his gospel that, *“Many people have set out to write accounts about the events that have been fulfilled among us. 2They used the eyewitness reports circulating among us from the early disciples. 3Having carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I also have decided to write an accurate account for you, most honorable Theophilus, 4so you can be certain of the truth of everything you were taught.”* Luke’s gospel is also therefore the most chronological.
- Matthew and John are the only ones written directly by disciples of Jesus. John’s gospel came much later and feels the most different in tone and what events and teachings it includes. When you read John, you get the impression that John, having read all the other gospels, felt that there was more that needed to be said. John was not educated as well as the other three and uses a much smaller vocabulary to describe Jesus life.
- That leaves us with Matthew, and the big distinction is that Matthew is writing for a Jewish audience. Mark seems to be the most general, and Luke is writing to a gentile audience, and John is writing much later than the rest, so Matthew has the distinction of being written for Gods people, the Jews.
- With Luke you can see how is trying to explain Jewish history and customs in a way that was accessible to the gentiles, but with Matthew he targets those things that would be most widely understood by the Jews. That is why the genealogy is key, because it demonstrates where Jesus came from, and how his birth was the fulfillment of old testament prophecy. At the onset it says, *“This is a record of the ancestors of Jesus the Messiah, a descendant of David and of Abraham,”* Matthew is letting the people know his connection to Abraham and David, the two most key people in the family tree that would lead to the messiah. That is why we get the birth story, and that is why when Herod asked the religious scholars where the messiah would be born they said Bethlehem. Because it was prophesied in Micah 5:2 *“And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.”* And so the gospel of Matthew is going to emphasize Jesus Jewishness and speak directly to that audience.

Introduction to Matthew Chapter 5

- The beatitudes, or blessings have their roots in wisdom literature, and most predominately in Psalms.
 - *Psalm 1:1-3 “Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers.*

- *Psalm 144:15 "Blessed is the people of whom this is true; blessed is the people whose God is the Lord"*
- Luke is the only other gospel that gives account of these "blessings," but it stops at 4, while Matthew has 8. This doesn't give any less weight to what Matthew is sharing, because of the different audience and focus each writer had when creating their account of Jesus life.
- When you look at verses 5:3-12 in the original language, you see a literary structure that is called inclusio, which means that everything included from beginning to end is part of the same subject. Verse 3 starts with God's kingdom, and verse 12 ends with it, meaning that we can interpret verse 4-11 as being a narrative on God's kingdom. Basically, these 9 verses are painting a picture of what God's kingdom is like, and how it functions.

Introduction to God's Kingdom

- And so to properly interpret these, let's talk about God's kingdom a little. There are entire books, thousands of sermons, messages and articles about the kingdom, and so I will give you just a brief and simple meaning for our purposes today. God is good, and God has both a plan and purpose for humanity (this is also called sovereignty). This plan of God's perfect rule, if everything were in order, functioning as he desired and causing the explosion of blessing, wholeness, and goodness that he desired is his kingdom. When we think of heaven, we think of everything being set right and living in that space. But Remember that God is not confined to Heaven, and his blessing is not only something to be experienced after death. No, he is a present God, and his blessings are mean to be experienced in this life.
 - John the Baptist, the one who came before Jesus to prepare his way, started getting people focused on what was about to happen by declaring, *"repent, the kingdom of heaven is near."* We talked about this last week at VBS, that repent means to stop, and rethink your life. What was often implicated by this was an action of changing course. Paul was a great example of this because although he once persecuted and even approved of the death of Christians, after he had a personal encounter with Jesus he changed the course of his life. John was letting people know that once they met Jesus they would be exposed to God's kingdom, and that that kingdom was already there.
 - That is the key, the light bulb going off, the big reveal – that our focus should not only be futuristic, but that we should be determined to exposed God's goodness behind every crack of humanity, in every corner of life, at every place on this planet. The kingdom here means that the focus needs to be here.
 - What is interesting, is that Peter, Paul and John all in subsequent letters to churches had to remind their communities about it, because the tendency when you get to future focused is not care about what is happening now. "I don't have to fight for justice now, God will judge everyone eventually, I don't have to steward the home I have been given, there will be a new earth, and finally, it's probably right around the corner so I don't really need to be disciplined or actively pursuing it because it will be here soon enough – just look at how bad the world is right now!" So those pillars in the faith had to come back hard, saying that it wasn't right to sit back and let your morality go to shambles, you had to stand up for what was right (see Paul's letters

to the Corinthians). Of you can't just let go of stewardship and ignore your home in front of you (see Peter's letters), and finally don't think what you see is the end times, trust me, you will know when it is happening (revelation).

- Finally, look at Jesus' example of how we should pray to God, *"Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."*
- The upside-down Kingdom
 - *Matthew 18:1-5 At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.*
 - *Matthew 19:30 (at the renewal of all things) Many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first.*
 - *Matthew 20:1-16 For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard.2He agreed to pay them a denarius. 3 "About nine in the morning he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing.4He told them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.'5So they went. "He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing.6About five in the afternoon he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, 'Why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?' 7 " 'Because no one has hired us,' they answered. "He said to them, 'You also go and work in my vineyard.' 8 "When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, 'Call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.' 9 "The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius.10So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius.11When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner.12'These who were hired last worked only one hour,' they said, 'and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.' 13 "But he answered one of them, 'I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius?14Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you.15Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?' 16 "So the last will be first, and the first will be last."*

3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- **Meaning:** Not poor in the sense of no material possessions. This Poor is derived from *"ptochos"*, meaning someone who is completely dependent on another for survival, in Galatians this is translated as beggar. But it isn't only for those that need food or resources, this is speaking about being at a total loss to even go on in life.
- **Story:** When David was still not yet the king, Saul wanted to kill him, and David had to leave his hometown and all that he knew and loved and hide with his enemy. But he knew they would want to kill him because of what he had done to them. So he pretended to be insane before Achish. Later

David said in *Psalm 34:4-6*, “I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. 5Those who look to him are radiant: their faces are never covered with shame. 6This poor man called, and the Lord heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.

- Example: Where are you at in the middle of 2020? Do you feel that so much is lost, are you struggling to go on one more step and have just given it toward God to say that you don’t know how to go on? Jesus says that in that place, you can experience God’s Kingdom.

4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

- Meaning: To mourn means to care. To feel or show deep sorrow or regret or grief over someone or their death.
- Story: *Matthew 28:1-10* 1After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. 2There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. 3His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. 4The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. 5The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. 6He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. 7Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.” 8So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples. 9Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. 10Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”
- Example: Are you mourning those who have died, or mourning the way things were? Are you mourning how racial injustice or disparity in the world has been exposed by the pandemic? Are you mourning those that are hurting most during this difficult year? That mindset and year of your heart are things of God’s kingdom, and he desires to comfort you.

5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

- Meaning: From the Greek “praus” meaning strength under control. It was term used in war horse training, where they needed the animals to be strong but gracious, and willing to go where needed. Could be viewed as something between reckless and cowardice.
- Story: *John 19:25-27* Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. 26 When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, “Woman,[a] here is your son,” 27 and to the disciple, “Here is your mother.” From that time on, this disciple took her into his home. John hadn’t been perfect. He had deserted Jesus in Gethsemane, but he found his way back Jesus at the cross, where no other disciples made it. He might have been killed, but he showed strength and grace to go stand before his dying Lord. Where are the places in your life where you can show this balance?
- Example: Can you be humble, have a true and honest view of yourself? Remember this upside-down picture of the kingdom, because when we think of those that would inherit the earth, or rule the world, or outlast everyone we think of warriors. Those who are the strongest, smartest, and most brave. God says it is in fact the meek that will make it to the end.

6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

- **Meaning:** Another way this is commonly translated is justice. In verse 10 it says talks about those that are persecuted for righteousness, and because many of the original words are rich with meaning, you can see that righteousness and justice only help us with a larger understanding of the original word: *díkaios* (an adjective, derived from *dikē*, "right, judicial approval") could mean "approved by God" or "just in the eyes of God" or "conformity to God's standard for justice".
- **Story:** *Matthew 16:13-23* 13 *When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" 14They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" 16Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." 17Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by flesh and blood, but by my Father in heaven.18And I tell you that you are Peter,16:18 The Greek word for Peter means rock. and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades16:18 That is, the realm of the dead will not overcome it.19I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be16:19 Or will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be16:19 Or will have been loosed in heaven."20Then he ordered his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Messiah. 21From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. 22Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" 23Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns."*
- **Example:** I think people all around this county, on both sides of the political isle and on the full spectrum of the culture are searching for what is right and looking for justice. Like Peter, I feel the passion of those around me, and I feel it running through my own veins – but in meekness, and with a poor spirit that helps me to see myself as the broken sinner who needs God, I know that I (and we) are like Peter. The passion is there, but sometimes our feet get ahead of our head, and we rush forward before we see the bigger picture, and sometimes we even fall over. I know for me, when I reflect on my past it is easier to see how my passion sometimes kept me charging forward even before I fully understand where I was going. Yes, God says that those who thirst for it will find it, but the journey can sometimes be a bumpy one if we don't also look to balance our quest with the qualities of these other blessings.

7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

- **Meaning:** Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone whom it is within one's power to punish or harm. At its core, mercy is about forgiveness. This has been demonstrated to us through God, and all that he has done to restore humanity. We are called to model that.
- **Story:** *Philemon 1:17-19 (Paul speaking to Philemon)* *if you consider me a partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. 18If he has done you any wrong or owes you anything, charge it to me. 19I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand.*

- Example: Mercy could do a lot of good in our culture today. A phrase that you hear a lot is “cancel culture.” This is where people’s past is brought up to discredit their present and take away their current prospects. Obviously, this happens on a spectrum, and there are legitimate reasons for this, but this idea has also been taken to the other extreme where the full context of a situation doesn’t even matter anymore. Before we go any further, can we all agree the none of us would like a sign around our neck that said the worst thing we have ever thought or done. We have all fallen short of God’s standards, we all have regrets, and we all know we should be better. Here is a wild story from about a year ago. A man put up a sign at a college football game that said, “please send beer money to this Venmo account.” He got over \$1,000,000 from this stunt. Then, in a truly kind gesture he donated that money to charity. Then, some reporter dug through his twitter history and found something unsavory that he had said to get this person and his gesture discredited. Then, people that didn’t like what the reporter did, dug up his twitter history and low and behold he had made some really bad remarks as well – and that journalist got fired. The point is that we are all messed up, and while we need justice, but before you get ready to hit the launch codes in your vocal chords or on your thumbs against someone, remember that God desires mercy, and that we should treat others the same way we want to be treated.

8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

- Meaning: How often in the new testament do you land on teaching that says it’s not about what is going on with the external, but the internal? Jesus says to wash the inside of the cup, not the outside. And he used the word hypocrite quite often when describing those who come off as righteous, but are really just putting on a show. When you only focus on making a good presentation of yourself, your focus is where? It is on you. When you focus on making God look good, where are you looking? To God. When looking inside your heart who do you see – yourself or God?
- Story: *Matthew 9:9-13 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 10While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. 11When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” 12On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. 13But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice (a quote from Hosea 6:6)’”*
- Example: Right now I think there is a lot of focus on the outside of the cup, how we externally present ourselves. Are we standing for the right things, are we voting for the right people, are we living through a pandemic the right way. And those are good questions to ask, but if we want to see God remember we must ask how He would navigate these times. We must ask ourselves tough questions like, “am I thinking, posting, doing this thing for me, or for God?” And remember what Jesus said in *Matthew 20:28, “the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

- Meaning: A person who brings about peace, especially by reconciling adversaries.

- Story: Acts 9:10-19 *In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. 11The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying.12In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." 13"Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." 15But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel.16I will show him how much he must suffer for my name." 17Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit." 18Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, 19and after taking some food, he regained his strength."*
- Example: We need more peacemakers in the world. We have all felt divides creep up in the last several years that expose just how different we are. But instead of celebrating that diversity, and using it to build a better, more well-rounded world we have used it as an excuse to categorize and disparage those that think differently than we do. I want to be a child of God, and Jesus says that peace is in the DNA of his kids. Is this something you strive for, or is winning the most important thing for you?

10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

- *Meaning:* To stand up for what is right in God's eyes.
- *Story: Philippians 4:8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*
 - *Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.*
- But remember that all these blessings run together because they compliment each other. To "stand up" is not an aggressive thing. For example take Peter, he stood up to Jesus being arrested (a very un-righteous thing) by physically trying to stop it through violence. And what did Jesus do – he told people to stop, said that those that live by the sword die by the sword and then he healed and restored the damage. So if your "standing" for righteousness doesn't include mercy, meekly, or a spirit that recognizes your own brokenness and need for God so that you can go after justice with purity of heart, then you need to check yourself.

11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

- Meaning: We need to look at this one carefully because of the ending line. The same way they treated the prophets - wait who were the prophets talking to – the Israelites. Who persecuted the prophets – the Israelites, their own community, their own bothers. Therefore, where should we watch out from? Our own community. The church has a long and sad history of being incredibly judgmental of itself, and

all its own factions. How often have you thought another denomination wasn't "really in?" How quick are you to label someone a heretic because their theology differs from yours? Jesus says that you are ultimately in good company when this happens against you, but the bigger point is that we need to look at everything that preceded in this list and let ourselves live in those places before we cast the first stone. Even when the sin seems clear, Jesus was the first to encompass the previous blessings.

- *Story: John 8:3-11 As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. 4 "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?" 6 They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. 7 They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" 8 Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. 9 When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. 10 Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?" 11 "No, Lord," she said. And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."*

Matthew 5:1-12 (MSG)

3 *"You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.*

4 *"You're blessed when you feel you've lost what is most dear to you. Only then can you be embraced by the One most dear to you.*

5 *"You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought.*

6 *"You're blessed when you've worked up a good appetite for God. He's food and drink in the best meal you'll ever eat.*

7 *"You're blessed when you care. At the moment of being 'care-full,' you find yourselves cared for.*

8 *"You're blessed when you get your inside world—your mind and heart—put right. Then you can see God in the outside world.*

9 *"You're blessed when you can show people how to cooperate instead of compete or fight. That's when you discover who you really are, and your place in God's family.*

10 *"You're blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God's kingdom.*

11-12 *"Not only that—count yourselves blessed every time people put you down or throw you out or speak lies about you to discredit me. What it means is that the truth is too close for comfort and they are uncomfortable. You can be glad when that happens—give a cheer, even! - for though they don't like it, I do! And all heaven applauds. And know that you are in good company. My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble.*