

18th January 2017.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.I.
THE BEATITUDES.

Matthew 5:1-12.

Following on from our teaching of the priority of Christ's ministry as studied last week, where we observed the mode of Jesus Christ's ministry, as well as it's scope and content, which though so simple was so powerful and extensive and therefore a model of all godly service in and for the kingdom of God, tonight we'll start on a sample of those teachings that Christ Jesus gave, well known as "The Sermon on the Mount", which actually is three chapters i.e. 5,6,7 of the gospel of Matthew, giving the first and perhaps the most extensive of Christ's teachings to His disciples and even the great multitudes that followed him.

This also shows that though Matthew didn't write chronologically as noted last week, he sure had a sequential flow of his topics, therefore having an order in his narration.

The first verses under our consideration today termed "Beatitudes" from the Latin word for "Blessed" which is "Beatus". This was a powerful word to those who heard Jesus that day. To them it meant "divine joy and perfect happiness." The word was not used for humans; it described the kind of joy experienced only by the gods or the dead. "Blessed" implied an inner satisfaction and sufficiency that did not depend on outward circumstances for happiness. This is what the Lord offers those who trust Him to be a part of His Kingdom. Presented as His manifesto.

The Beatitudes describe the attitudes that ought to be in our lives today, though they clearly are paradoxical(being self-contradictory). Which also is a pointer that His kingdom is not of this world, yet it governs this world positively. And wisely observed Jesus was teaching that you cannot find happiness and fulfillment in this life by the way the world sees you should or can. Truly external things do not give comfort to the soul. (Eccl. 5:13, "There is a sore evil which I have seen under the sun, namely, riches kept for the owners thereof to their hurt.") said wise King Solomon, who had it all, and woefully exclaimed it was all VANITY!

The stress on the Sermon on the Mount is being, not what a man can do, it is what one is and not what one has/ possesses.

[Let's read verses 1,2]

The setting as noted was one of those days the great multitudes spoken of in chapter 4:25....., then He took the official Jewish rabbinical posture of teaching – seating, then with the disciples being his primary audience, we are told he opened his mouth and taught, saying.....

[Let's read verses 3 – 12]

The sequence leads to from the first step of entering into a relationship with God that produces happiness and that is being poor in spirit. That is simply admitting spiritual bankruptcy. That leads us to dealing with my attitude toward my spiritual bankruptcy. Spiritual bankruptcy simply means I'm in sin and nothing else, and that leads to mourning, mourning over my sin. And the consciousness of my sin and the sorrow over my sin leads me to meekness, I feel small and insignificant in the face of a holy God. And that leads to a hunger and thirst for a righteousness I know I need and do not have. And when that righteousness manifests itself to me, it manifests itself in mercy, purity and peacemaking and a willingness to suffer persecution and insult. That's the flow of these beatitudes. It is a rich and profound sequence.

Vs 3.....

Jesus begins here because this is where you've got to begin and this is where you've got to begin to get saved, and this is where you've got to begin to live the Christian life in blessedness. There is no room for pride. (James 4:6 “....God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble”)

And as you live your Christian life you'll never know the other graces of the Christian life as long as you violate poverty of spirit. And this is tough. Jesus is saying, “Start here. Happiness is for the humble.”. Until we are poor in spirit, Christ is never precious to us. Because we can't see him for the looking at ourselves. Before we see our own wants and our own needs and our own desperation, we never see the matchless worth of Christ. Until we know how really damned we are, we can't appreciate how really glorious he is. Until we comprehend how doomed we are, we can't understand how wondrous is his love to redeem us. Until we see our poverty, we cannot understand his riches.

What does this term mean, “poor in spirit?”

We now know why it’s here because it’s a start, but what does it specifically mean? What kind of poverty is he talking about?

It means with reference to the spirit, which is the inner part of man, not the body, which is the outer part. That’s all. He’s begging on the inside, not necessarily on the outside.

Isaiah put it this way. Isaiah 66:2. “But to this man will I look.” Here’s God talking. Now listen. “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at my word.” It’s the man who shakes on the inside because of his destitution. Psalms 34:18 put it this way. “The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart and saves such as be of a contrite spirit.” Psalms 51:17. “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, Oh God, thou wilt not despise.”

Isaiah 57:15 adds this. “For thus says the high and the lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is holy, ‘I dwell in the high and holy place with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit to revive the spirit of the humble and revive the heart of the contrite ones.’ ” Listen, people. God identifies with people who beg on the inside, not people who are self sufficient, not people who can work out their own salvation, not people who believe in their own resources, but those who are destitute and beggarly.

It doesn’t mean poor spirited, in the sense of lacking enthusiasm. It doesn’t mean lazy or quiet or indifferent or passive. It doesn’t mean that at all. A poor in spirit individual is one with no sense of self sufficiency. He is bankrupt.

So we ask two questions. Why does Christ begin with this? Because it’s the beginning. What does it mean? It means humility. Poverty of spirit. What is the result? And these are shorter questions, so you can relax. What is the result? Well, look and see. “Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” This is a pronouncement, not a wish. This is it. Theirs – and by the way, theirs alone – is the thrust. Just theirs.

What does it mean? It means to be spiritually bankrupt and know it. What is the result? You become a possessor of the kingdom here and now and forever. How do you become poor in spirit? Look at God. Starve your flesh. And ask, beg. He doesn't mind a bit. Well, how do you measure up? Why do the Beatitudes begin with this one? Because it's the foundation. What does it mean? Oh, a deep sense of spiritual helplessness. What is its result? The present possession of the kingdom of heaven. How do I become like this? Look to God, starve the flesh, pray. How will I know if I'm there? You'll be weaned from yourself, lost in the wonder of Christ, never complaining of your situation, esteeming others above yourself. You will spend much time in prayer. You will take Christ on his terms. And you will thank God for everything. Then you possess the Kingdom of God's spiritual ID.

Even being a follow up is the next verse 4.....

There are in the Greek language nine different verbs used in the New Testament that speak of grief. This is the strongest of the nine. This is the most severe. But the very fact that there are nine different verbs in one language to express the concept of grief is a pretty good indication that it is a way of life, that it is part and parcel of just living. And, in fact, the whole of man's history is the story of tears, and it's the story of sorrow, and, by the way, we have had a lot of it but we haven't had anything like what is yet to come.

But for a consideration to time we'll just read II Cor.7:10.....

Listen, you can cry your eyes out about your problems and you can weep all you want about loneliness, and about discouragement, and about disappointment, and out of earnest love, and you can weep all you want about all those things, and you can cry your head off about your unfulfilled lusts, and when you're said and done, every bit of that worldly sorrow will not bring you life.

There's only one kind of sorrow that brings life, and that is godly sorrow, which leads you to – what? - repentance. Therefore, we conclude that it is sorrow over – what? - sin that is the issue. It is godly sorrow, sorrow over sin. The sorrow of the world is useless. It works death where godly sorrow works repentance, which brings salvation, which brings comfort. That's the whole idea. That's the key. Godly sorrow is linked to repentance, and repentance is linked to sin.

Such poverty in spirit, beloved, in verse 3 will lead to mourning in verse 4, true mourning over sin. Only the beggar can say, “Woe is me for I am undone.” Only the beggar can say, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord.”

The word conveys the idea of a deep inner agony, not just an external wailing. There’s another Greek word that has to do with just shouting out a wailing. This is a deep inner pain. We see it with David if you go back to Psalm 32. Let me just read you a few verses. Psalm 32;3...., “When I kept silence my bones became old through my groaning all the day long.” You know when David wouldn’t confess his sin to God, it just tore him up. It just ate him up inside. “Day and night thy hand was upon me, my moisture - ” or my life juices, the blood and the lymphatic juices and all of those things, saliva and everything else in the body, “ - was turned into the drought of summer.” His whole person was just wrenched. And then he says, “I acknowledged my sin unto thee, my iniquity have I not hid. I said I will confess my transgression to the Lord and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.”

And you know what he said in Psalm 32, when he got it all out? He said, “Blessed, happy. Happy is the man who mourns, because happy is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Happy is the man unto whom the Lord does not impute iniquity.” You know why mourners are happy? Because mourners over sin who are the only ones who are – what? - forgiven. The rest of the world has to live with that guilt endlessly with no relief.

Beloved, let me say this. The happiness doesn’t come in the mourning. It comes in what God does in response to it. You just try as a Christian to keep sin in your life and bottle it up and you just see how ruinous it becomes. You confess it and see the freedom and the joy that comes in forgiveness.

Listen. David had experienced the tears of loneliness. David had experienced the tears of rejection. He had experienced the tears of frustration, the tears of discouragement and disappointment. He had experienced the tears of defeat. He had even experienced the illicit tears of his own guilt where he tried to atone for his own sin, but nothing ever broke the heart of David to tears like his own sin. And then God comforted him, and he said, “Happy is the man whose transgression is forgiven.”

Now when you're spiritually bankrupt and when you're a sinner you can respond several ways. First, you can deny it like the Pharisees did and just put on a phony front and live a whole life of deception and make everybody think you're really perfect. Or, when you face your spiritual bankruptcy, you can admit it and then you can try to change it yourself by saying, "Man, am I going to get this one on. I'm going to roll up my sleeves and make myself a better person." Moral rearmament. Or, you can admit it and then despair so much that you go out and hang yourself like Judas. You just can't hack it. You're a sinner and you know it and you just can't handle it.

Here are the hindrances to mourning. These are the things that make the heart stony. One: Love of sin. Listen. If you love your sin, you will freeze your heart into impenitence. You will petrify your heart if you love sin. Second: Despair, despair. You know what despair says? God can't forgive this. It undervalues God's power. It minimizes the blood of Christ. It devalues God's grace. It is drawing God down from the reality of who he is.

Listen. I don't care how bad it is. I don't care how evil you are. God's grace is able to reach you, change you. One of the hindrances to mourning is love of sin, and the other is despair that wants to hide God's mercy behind the cloud of death.

Third: Conceit. Another hindrance to mourning is conceit. And that says, "Well, I'm not that bad. You don't know me if you think I should get sad about what I am. I'm all right. In fact, I'm pretty good." This is a foolish doctor treating a deadly disease as if it was a cold. Listen. If Jesus Christ had to shed his blood and die on a cross for your sin, you're bad, you're real bad. So am I.

And by the way, if you think you're not bad, you're worse than everybody else because that's the worst sin of all. So love of sin, despair, and conceit are hindrances. So is presumption, number four. You know what presumption is? That's cheap grace. Remember Christ's parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector in Luke 18:9...

Listen. If you've got hindrances in the way, take a look at the cross, a good look, and see how much you need Jesus Christ, how much you need to face your sin. Look what it cost him. So first remove the hindrances. Second, study sin in the scripture. Study it. David said, "My sin is ever before me." Study David. Study Isaiah who said, "O woe is me, for I am an unclean man. I dwell amidst a people of unclean lips." Study Jeremiah, who wept over sin.

Study Peter who said, “Depart from me I’m a sinful man.” Study Paul who said, “I’m a chief of sinners.” And listen to them talk about their sinfulness. And then when you’ve compared yourself with the greatest of men who ever lived, try to convince yourself you’re not a sinner.

Sin tramples on God’s laws. Sin slights his love. It grieves His spirit. It spurns His blessedness. Sin affects us drastically. It makes us naked. It makes us impure. It robs our robe and our crown. It spoils our glory. It leaves us in filthy rags and filthy garments. Made in God’s image, we become like beasts that perish. Eliminate the hindrance and study sin.

Third, pray for a contrite heart. After all, only God can do that and he’ll not turn down one who really asks. So, what does it mean? It means to mourn for sin. What are the results? Comfort and happiness. How can I be a mourner? Remove the hindrances, study the Scripture, and pray.

In conclusion, how can I know if I’m a mourner? How can I know when I get there? Very simple. Are you ready? Ask yourself if you’re sensitive to sin. Are you? How do you react to sin? Do you laugh at it? Do you let it pass by? Do you take pleasure in it? Some of you are doing it. Some of you are living in it, all kinds of sin, and you never deal with it. Maybe it’s the sin in an immoral area. Maybe it’s a sin in your business. Maybe it’s dishonesty. Maybe it’s a failure to pray. Maybe it’s a failure to think good thoughts, a failure to be loving. Maybe it’s - who knows what? How do you react to it?

Do you mourn over your sin? Let me go further. I believe if you’re a true mourner, you’ll not only mourn over your sin, but you’ll mourn over the sins of the world. You know I see Jeremiah, Jeremiah cried and he said, “Oh, that my head were a fountain of waters that I could weep and weep.” You say, “Jeremiah, what do you want to cry about?” “I want to cry about these people. These people are sinful people and they’re damned. These people are going to be judged.” Do you feel that way about other people’s sin?

Jesus sits at the top of the mountain and looks down on Jerusalem and says he wept. And he said, “Oh Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often I would have gathered you as a hen gathers her brood, but you would not.” He wasn’t weeping over himself, he was weeping over them.

You see Ezekiel, and you must see Ezekiel weeping in Chapter 9, the whole of 9 and 10, you can look at, but in 9:4, “The Lord said unto him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that are done in the midst of it.’” You go find the mourners. You go find the people that cry for their brothers and sisters.

An invitation in closing to the prayer service tomorrow thus suffices, because it’s time we really understand the need to seek the Lord till the church of Jesus Christ, truly is one that is salt and light.