

MATTHEW 5:1–16

AN INVERTED PARADIGM; BLESSED SALT SHAKERS AND SPOTLIGHTERS!

We have now come to Jesus' first sermon. The groundwork has been laid by John the Baptist and followed up by Jesus: "Repent for the kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" After having called some of His disciples; namely Peter, Andrew, James and John, Jesus pulls them to the side in order to begin to further their education as to the principles and ethics of the kingdom life.

The sermon on the mount is the bedrock of ethics when it comes living out the kingdom life, openly manifesting the power of the Holy Spirit in our lives and giving glory to God as the one empowering us to live out what we say we believe. This message is so powerful that Dr. Martin Luther King used it as the basis for his civil rights platform as a means of non-violent protest and being able to weather the violence that was so prominent to those that followed and fought alongside him. Mahatma Ghandi used it as the basis for his non-violent movement, which eventually obtained freedom from British colonial rule for the native Indian people. Both of these men were successful in their endeavors, showing the power of the message and its ability to change society.

As was stated last week, Jesus has been combing the countryside and synagogues with His message of repentance and the kingdom of Heaven. Great multitudes have been following Him. There are basically three groups of people in the crowd, as we will see later.

- Disciples – defined as learners, believers, the word discipline comes from this word. (Disciplined learners) True followers as whereas apostle, defined as future church leaders.
- Opponents – religious aristocracy; Pharisees, Sadducees, scribes, et al.
- Followers – curious onlookers listening and watching the miracles, possible future disciples.
- These can represent various states of decision or indecision.

THE BACKSTORY TO THE BEATTITUDES/ SERMON ON THE MOUNT

- History of the synagogue
- The eventual atrophy
- The paradigm of who was seen as righteous. *Not these people!*
- *Just the four or a great multitude?*

Jesus now wants to take His disciples to the side and expound on kingdom specifics. We must realize that these words are a severe paradigm shift from the religious and political systems present at that time.

Paradigm – a theory or a group of ideas about how something should be done or thought about

Have you ever wanted to belong some sort of group or club but couldn't gain admission?

Jesus literally inverts the paradigm regarding who is righteous and who is powerful. Everything He says is

contrary to the way the world and the religious system of Judaism worked. Let's look at the specifics.

1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

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

*4 Blessed are those who mourn,
For they shall be comforted.*

*5 Blessed are the meek,
For they shall inherit the earth.*

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

*7 Blessed are the merciful,
For they shall obtain mercy.*

*8 Blessed are the pure in heart,
For they shall see God.*

*9 Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.*

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

11 "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Blessed – literally, blessings on, congratulations, happy

Defining "blessed" is very important here, because of the way it reads in English. If we are not careful, we can see the beatitudes, literally, "blessings" as a sort of quid pro quo, meaning that we will

be blessed if we are good enough to possess or exhibit these characteristics. Taking the text this way does nothing but exacerbate the very thing Jesus is trying to end; namely external righteousness/works-based salvation. It isn't that we will be blessed if we do/ are these things. In fact it is just the opposite. We are blessed because we ARE these things.

- Poor in spirit – those that have reached the end of themselves, those that have given up on acquiring or creating their own righteousness; theirs is the kingdom of Heaven.
- Those who mourn – those who see the world as it really is and mourn its condition; those who mourn sin and injustice: they shall be comforted.
- Meek – quiet peace, not weakness. They shall inherit the earth as opposed to those that attempt to take it by force, lording over those around them. They shall be comforted.
- Hunger and thirst after righteousness – they shall be filled. The hungry and thirsty are not blessed because OF their possession of righteousness but because of their desire of it! BIG DIFFERENCE!
- “Those hungering and thirsting do not believe they can live until they find or see righteousness. They long for what is right, they crave justice, they cannot live without God's victory prevailing; for them right relations in the world are not just a luxury or a mere hope but an absolute necessity if they are to live at all.” (Bruner)
- The merciful shall obtain mercy.
- **For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. Mt. 7:2**
- Pure in heart – true moral uprightness, not just ritual cleanness.
- The Apostle Paul wrote of the impossibility of perfect purity on this side of Heaven. The focus here is rather a

lifestyle characterized by pleasing God: **a single-minded devotion to God that stems from the internal cleansing created by following Jesus. Holiness is a prerequisite for entering God's presence. The "pure in heart" pass this test.**

- Peacemakers – those who work for wholeness and harmony rather than strife and discord in all aspects of life. Those who reconcile others to God will be called sons of God.
- Those persecuted for righteousness sake – those reviled for being morally upright, living out the changes wrought in them by following Jesus. The persecution must be the result of righteousness, not weirdness.
- Verses 11 & 12 repeat and amplify verse 10. With these words Jesus links believers to the prophets of old. Also: "Because of ME!"

With this preamble to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus has totally turned the religious world of these people on its head. He has neutered the "machismo" of the world!

God looked down on this world and had compassion for those that had been denied access to the kingdom because of the man-made religious system that was thrust upon them by the religious aristocracy. These people felt they had no way to get to God. They felt as if Heaven was out of their reach, hence the declaration that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand. These people were seen as unclean, unworthy and inept when it came to attaining righteousness or any standing in the kingdom of Heaven and Jesus comes along, contrary to all that had been taught, following up on John's rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees and tells them that they, the ones that had come to realize that very inadequacy would inherit the kingdom! Just think about that!

It may not strike us quite as hard today because we don't live in that same religious environment, but believe you me, there are those that feel they are unreachable by the grace of God! They are the very ones primed for the grace of God! Those that had been deemed as the "dregs of society" were the very ones to whom Jesus went. The light was being shined in the darkness.

Believers Are Salt and Light

13 "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.

14 "You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.

Now we come to the point where Jesus takes the downtrodden and gives a part in His plan. Believers are the salt of the earth!

- The use of salt and its importance in the ancient world as a preservative, antiseptic, spice and currency.
- **We don't just possess the qualities of salt. WE ARE THE SALT!**
- Our very presence has a preserving effect on society.
- "The Only Thing Necessary for the Triumph of Evil is that Good Men Do Nothing." Edmund Burke
- He who letteth will let.
- Salt, sodium chloride is a stable compound. So how does it lose flavor? Salt and impurities, salt in the temple. Salting the Roman roads.
- If we don't act as a preservative, what purpose are we serving?
- Light of the World.

- **12 Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, "I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life." John 8:13**
- We don't only possess light; we like Jesus are the light! We bring light to the darkness! Our very lives are to be light to the darkness. By living as Jesus empowers us to live, we shine a light on this present dark age.
- **19 And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. 21 But he who does the truth comes to the light, that his deeds may be clearly seen, that they have been done in God." John 3:19 – 22**
- **Deeds** – not salvation by works but evidence of our salvation by our works.
- **18 But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. JAMES 2:18**

ONCE UPON A TIME... (Maybe)

- Have you felt unworthy? We all are! That is what grace is all about!
- Do you feel as if barriers have been placed in your way when it comes to gaining access to God? They have been removed!
- You too fit into this Jesus' preamble.