



Lesson Five – June 23, 2020

The Sermon on the Mount

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:1 – 11:

Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. He said:

- Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.
- Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.
- Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.
- Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.
- Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.
- Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

What is different about Jesus' Sermon on the Mount from all his other teachings?

What kind of message do you think this crowd was hoping for and expecting from this potential Messiah?

And what do they hear?

The word translated “blessed” in the beatitudes is a weak translation of the original word and doesn’t do it justice. It should be something like a shout, something like “Happy are you” or “Oh, how blessed you are.” Its dictionary definition is “extreme blessedness.”

- Happy are you when you are poor in spirit. . .
- Oh, how blessed you are when you mourn. . .
- Happy are you if you are meek. . .
- Oh, how blessed you are when you hunger and thirst for righteousness. . .
- Extremely blessed are you when you are merciful
- Happy are you when you are pure
- Extremely blessed are you when you make peace
- Oh, how blessed you are when you are persecuted for righteousness’ sake
- Extremely blessed are you when others revile you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely

If you had gone to hear Jesus that day, what kind of mood would you be in as you left? Is this sermon more acceptable today than it was then? What is our take on it now—as Christ-followers—when we read it or hear a sermon on it?

“In the Beatitudes, strange sayings that at first glance seem absurd, Jesus offers a paradoxical key to abundant life. . . It represents value far more real and permanent than anything the world has to offer, for this treasure will pay dividends both here on earth and also in the life to come. Jesus places the emphasis not on what we give up but on what we receive. Is it not in our own self-interest to pursue such a treasure?” From *The Jesus I Never Knew* by Philip Yancey p. 125

Impossible Commands:

***Matthew 5:20:** For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.*

If you were the average everyday person listening to this sermon, how would you feel when Jesus said this? What kind of righteousness did the scribes and Pharisees have?

***Matthew 5:21 – 22:** “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire.*

***Matthew 5:27-30:** “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.*

With this teaching Jesus is accusing everyone there of committing murder and adultery in their hearts and minds. And his remedy is shocking: Tear out your eye, cut off your hand!

When Jesus said this, what would you have said to the person sitting next to you?

***Matthew 5:38 – 39:** “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.”*

What does “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” mean?

***Matthew 5:40 – 42:** And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.*

What is Jesus saying? Give away all your stuff? Give to every beggar who crosses your path? Is this any less radical today than it was when Jesus said it?

Matthew 5: 43 – 45: “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

No one had ever before even hinted that you should love people who hate you, who persecute you, who are evil. This teaching has never been heard of before.

Matthew 5:48: You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

And to cap it off, he issues this totally impossible command, to be perfect. Where does the Sermon on the Mount leave you and me?

“We are all desperate, and that is in fact the only state appropriate to a human being who wants to know God. Having fallen from the absolute Ideal, we have nowhere to land but in the safety net of absolute grace.” Yancey, P. 144