

Overview of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7)

I. SERMON ON THE MOUNT: THE CORE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM

- A. We refer to the Sermon on the Mount as the constitution of God’s kingdom. It is Jesus’ most comprehensive statement about a believer’s role in cooperating with the grace of God and is the “litmus test” to accurately measure our spiritual development and ministry impact.
- B. Jesus calls His people to make it their primary life goal to walk in perfect obedience by seeking to walk in all the light that the Spirit gives them. Pursuing this is not the same as attaining it.
⁴⁸*You shall be perfect [walk in all the light you receive] as your Father...is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)*
- C. Jesus calls us to live out the eight Beatitudes (5:3-12) as we pursue 100-fold obedience (5:48). The Beatitudes are like 8 beautiful flowers in the “garden of our heart” that God wants to fully blossom. They define love, godliness, and spiritual maturity and describe the kingdom lifestyle. Implied in all of God’s commands is the promise of the enabling to walk out the command.
³*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. ⁵Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. ⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. ⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. ⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. ⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. ¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Mt. 5:3-10)*
- D. These 8 flowers must be cultivated as we “weed our garden” by resisting 6 common temptations (Mt. 5:21-48) and as we “water our garden” by pursuing 5 kingdom activities (Mt. 6:1-20).

II. SALT AND LIGHT: OUR CALL TO MAKE AN IMPACT (MT. 5:13-16)

- A. Jesus referred to two metaphors of salt (flavor, preservation) and light (direction, life) in describing the impact of people who seek to live out the 8 Beatitudes (Mt. 5:13-16). They emphasize the impact that God’s people will have on individuals and on society.
¹³*You are the salt of the earth...¹⁴*You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand...¹⁶Let your light so shine before men, that they may see...and glorify your Father. (Mt. 5:13-16)**
- B. Jesus said that He did not come to destroy (nullify or minimize) God’s purposes, promises, or moral commandments as seen in the OT Law and Prophets (Mt. 5:17-18). He came so that the fullness of all that God originally promised and commanded would be expressed on the earth in the lives of His people. One day the earth will be filled with the glory of God as all the nations love Him and walk in love, righteousness, justice, and truth.
¹⁷*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets...but to fulfill it...¹⁸I say to you...one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. (Mt. 5:18)*

III. THE INVITATION TO BE GREAT: SUSTAINING OUR ZEAL IN GOD (MT. 5:19-20)

- A. Jesus invites anyone and everyone to be great in His kingdom by walking in the Beatitudes.
¹⁹Whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments...shall be called least in the kingdom...whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom. (Mt. 5:19)
- B. We cannot repent of the desire for greatness because God designed our spirit with this longing. We repent for seeking it in a wrong way. Without the paradigm of being on a journey to greatness, the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle is more difficult to sustain. God invites us to greatness without regard for outward achievements or the size of our ministry. It is based on the development of our heart in love, purity, and humility, and in understanding the Word.

IV. RESISTING 6 TEMPTATIONS: WEEDING OUR GARDEN (MT. 5:21-48)

- A. Jesus did not come to destroy the law, but to make a way to fully express God's original intent. Jesus highlighted six areas in which we wage war against sin in our hearts. They are **anger** (spirit of murder, Mt. 5:21-26), **adultery** (spirit of immorality, Mt. 5:27-30), **disregarding the sanctity of marriage** (disloyalty in relationships, Mt. 5:31-32), **false commitments** (spirit of manipulation to promote ourselves, Mt. 5:33-37), **retaliation** for personal inconveniences (spirit of revenge Mt. 5:38-42), and **inactivity** when mistreated (refusing active love, Mt. 5:43-47).
- B. These principles are practical ways of showing God's love by being salt and light. We progressively understand the practical outworking of resisting these six temptations. As we seek to obey them, we discover in practical ways *what they don't mean* as well as *what they do mean*.
- C. Jesus ends this section with the call to be perfect or mature in our obedience to God.
⁴⁸Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)

V. PURSUING 5 KINGDOM ACTIVITIES: WATERING OUR GARDEN (MT. 6:1-20)

- A. Jesus described 5 activities that position our heart to receive more grace and strength as we consistently **serve and give** (charitable deeds: giving service and/or money (6:1-4, 19-21), **pray** (6:5-13), **bless our adversaries** (fullness of forgiveness, 6:14-15; 5:44), and **fast** (6:16-18). These are spiritual disciplines that position our heart before God to receive more grace.
⁴That your charitable deed [giving service or money] may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly...⁶Pray to your Father...and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly...¹⁴Forgive men their trespasses...¹⁷When you fast... wash your face,¹⁸so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly. ¹⁹Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...²⁰Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven... (Mt. 6:4-20)
- B. Godly activities do not earn us God's love, but place our cold hearts before the "bonfire of God's presence." He gives more to our heart but does not love us more as we embrace these disciplines.

- C. Spiritual disciplines such as serving, giving, blessing, and praying the Word with fasting are ordained by God as a necessary way to posture our heart to freely receive more grace (Jas. 4:6).

⁶He gives more grace...God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. (Jas. 4:6)

- D. These five areas are expressions of “voluntary weakness” because we invest our natural strengths (time, money, energy, reputation, etc.) into kingdom purposes. The normal use of our strengths is to use them to increase our personal comfort, wealth, and honor. But in a fasted lifestyle, we bring our natural strengths to God, trusting Him to return our strength to us in a way that enriches our personal circumstances and transforms us with meekness.

⁹My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness [voluntary weakness]...I boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest on me. (2 Cor. 12:9)

VI. PURSUING JESUS WITH CONFIDENCE IN HIS REWARDS AND PROVISION (MT. 6:20-34)

- A. Scripture requires that we seek Jesus with confidence in His responsiveness to us (Heb. 11:6).

⁶Without faith [confidence in God] it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him. (Heb. 11:6)

- B. Jesus addressed the necessity of pursuing wholehearted love and obedience to God with **confidence**—especially related to our finances and possessions (Mt. 6:20-34). He calls us to have confidence in **His rewards** (eternal and temporal; 6:20-24) and in **His provision** (6:24-33).

⁴Your Father who sees [charitable deeds] in secret will Himself reward you openly...⁶Your Father who sees [you praying] in secret will reward you openly...¹⁸Your Father who sees [you fasting]...will reward you openly. ¹⁹Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...²⁰but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...²⁴No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other...You cannot serve God and mammon. (Mt. 6:4-24)

- C. How we pursue Jesus as related to finances is vital in sustaining grace to walk out the Beatitudes. God’s provision for us is necessary. Jesus calls us to escape the slavery to the fear of not having enough. Fear hinders our progress in walking out the Beatitudes in practical ways.

²⁵Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink...³¹Do not worry, saying, “What shall we eat?” or “What shall we drink?”...³²Your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. ³³But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. (Mt. 6:25-33)

- D. God promises that anyone with a good eye will have a vibrant heart that is full of light. Having a good eye means that our primary life vision is to obey and teach the 8 Beatitudes—refusing the six temptations (Mt. 5:21-48) and pursuing the five kingdom activities (Mt. 6:1-20). The lamp that brings light to our heart is the “eye of our heart” and the body is our whole person.

²²The lamp [source of light] of the body is the eye [of the heart]. If your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. ²³But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Mt. 6:22-23)

VII. LOVING JESUS IN THE FACE OF NEW RELATIONAL CHALLENGES (MT. 7:1-20)

- A. Seeking to walk out the kingdom lifestyle described in Matthew 5-6 will create challenges that result in new relational dynamics. Some will be positive and some negative. New relationships will be established as old ones are changed (sometimes improved and other times damaged).
- B. We must not be critical of others who pursue God with less intensity (7:1-5) or who oppose us (7:6). We must seek Jesus to intervene in our relationships (7:7-12), yet without drawing back from our wholehearted pursuit of God (7:13-14) as we discern false grace messages (7:15-20).
¹Judge not, that you be not judged. ²For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you... ⁵First remove the plank from your own eye and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother's eye. ⁶Do not...cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them...tear you in pieces. (Mt. 7:1-6)
- C. This exhortation to prayer is in the context of asking God to intervene in our relationships (7:7-12), to give us wisdom, to touch the hearts of those we relate to, and to intervene with good circumstances. Jesus calls us to pray at times when people do not treat us in the way we want (v. 12). We must not trust our natural strengths to war against them. We must be careful not to neglect prayer, knowing that the spirit of prayer is our best tool (not our only one) (Mt. 7:7-12).
⁷Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you...¹¹How much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!¹²Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them... (Mt. 7:7-12)
- D. We must not draw back from wholeheartedly pursuing Jesus by being discouraged by relational conflicts (7:13-14), nor by being seduced by false grace messages and false ministries (7:15-20).
¹³Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction ...¹⁴Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life...¹⁵Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing...¹⁶You will know them by their fruits... (Mt. 7:13-16)

VIII. OUR LOVE AND OBEDIENCE WILL BE TESTED AND PROVEN (MT. 7:21-27)

- A. Our love and obedience will be tested in order to be proved genuine under pressure (7:21-27). Will we persevere even when we face trials? The storms of pressures, the eschatological storm (2 Thes. 2:3-4), and the final judgment (1 Cor. 3:10-15) will show forth the truth of our lives.
²¹“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father...²²Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name...and done many wonders in Your name?’...²³I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me...’²⁴Whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man...²⁵the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall...²⁶Everyone who...does not do them, will be like a foolish man...²⁷the floods came, and the winds blew on that house; and it fell.” (Mt. 7:21-27)
- B. There are two different ways in which people seek Jesus. Some choose the broad way, others the narrow way. Both ways will be tested by pressure in this life and when we stand before Jesus.