**Pastor Tim’s Message Notes from 1-2-2022
The Best Sermon Ever!**

It was about 10 years ago now that Kara and I attended a worship service in the heart of winter during a big snowstorm. Now, as you might expect, the attendance was way down that day. I think that there was between 5 and 10 people there.

And on that Sunday, my pastor decided to do something that he had always wanted to do. He preached the best sermon ever. Pastor Barry read Jesus’ famous Sermon on the Mount. He shared that, with the storm he decided to put his sermon series on hold for a week and to simply preach the Sermon on the Mount by reading Matthew chapters 5-7.

Friends, there is so much power in God’s Words and in this amazing sermon that of all the sermons that I heard from Pastor Barry, this was the one that I remember the clearest and mist vividly. And it wasn’t exactly in his plan, but I think that it was in God’s plans.

Jesus’ most famous series is filled with amazing truth about God and what God desires for His people. It is spoken with authority with Jesus up on a mountainside, which is reminiscent of the Yahweh delivering the Law to Moses from Mount Sinai.

This sermon is so filled with profound teaching from our King that I decided to take the next couple of months to slowly unpack it with you. I believe if one grasps this sermon from Jesus and then chooses to live according to it, with God’s help, that they will shine brightly in this world for our Lord.

Our new vision statement here at Chestnut Grove Church is to be a light on a hill, sharing the love of Jesus Christ. I truly believe that there is no better place to grow in realizing this vision than to let Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount sink deeply into our hearts and minds.

So brothers and sisters, as we begin to hear and reflect on this unequaled of sermons today, I invite you to pray with me that Christ will do amazing things in and through each of us as we begin to unpack these words of our Lord.

Let’s pray…

Please now turn with me to Matthew, chapter 5. We will be hearing from verses 1-12.

**1Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2and he began to teach them.**

**He said:**

**3“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
    for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
4Blessed are those who mourn,
    for they will be comforted.
5Blessed are the meek,
    for they will inherit the earth.
6Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
    for they will be filled.
7Blessed are the merciful,
    for they will be shown mercy.
8Blessed are the pure in heart,
    for they will see God.
9Blessed are the peacemakers,
    for they will be called children of God.
10Blessed 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. 12Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

The first words of a sermon are typically critical for two reasons. First, they can help a speaker connect with his or her hearers. But second, and equally important, the beginning usually reveals something of top importance.

This was certainly the case with Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Jesus immediately captures his hearers and He reveals a list of traits that describe a truly blessed life is from God’s perspective.

From man’s perspective, a blessed life is often seen in material things, such as the amount of stuff that someone has. But from God’s perspective, a blessed life is not about one’s possessions, but in being rich towards God.

These statements of blessing are known as the beatitudes, which simply means blessed. And this is a better translation than happy, because people can be blessed even in their pain and struggles and may not be happy at all.

These beatitudes are critical to grasping Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount. Without getting these right, Jesus’ Sermon will make little sense. But as one seeks to live according to these beatitudes, Jesus’ sermon will make perfect sense.

This morning I would like to briefly touch on each of these beatitudes. I have done a sermon series on the beatitudes before and each of these could be discussed in greater detail. But today we are taking an overview.

Before we dive into these beatitudes a bit, the verses leading to Jesus’ sermon show Jesus taking the teaching position of sitting. Typically today, when someone is giving a message or preaching a sermon, they stand. But Jesus walked up on this unnamed mountainside and sat down, which was the position of a teacher, this sitting position of being at rest in what they are saying.

And so Jesus begins with what is likely the most important beatitude. Jesus says, **“Blessed are the poor in spirit, but theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”**

To be poor in spirit is to recognize one’s need for God. No matter how much wealth or power one might have, they are called to be poor in spirit.

To be poor in spirit recognizes that without the grace of God in Jesus Christ, they would be bankrupt spiritually and without hope. To be poor in spirit recognizes that he or she cannot do a thing without God’s help and enablement.

Jesus is saying that if someone wants to follow the way of God, this is where to begin.

Jesus then says, “**Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted**.” While our Lord does comfort those that are grieving the fall of a loved one, what Jesus is stating in this beatitude is a little different. Jesus is speaking about mourning over sin and its effects in this world. Jesus is calling His followers to grieve over the many ways that sin has damaged this world. It is not hard to find things to grieve about, as sin has infected our race far more than any virus ever has. And we are called to mourn and grieve and pray for the Lord’s hand to help our world in its brokenness. And God promises His comfort as we do it.

Jesus’ next beatitude is “**blessed are the meek**.” Meekness, friends, is simply gentleness. Meekness is not weakness, but it’s actually a sign of strength. The meek speak with humility and gentleness. The meek are self-controlled and are able to hold their tongue.

Jesus desires His people to live a life characterized by meekness.

His fourth beatitude is “**blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness**.” Jesus is saying that He is looking for followers that desire to do what is right, just as our body’s desire food and water when we get hungry or thirsty.

Jesus wants His people to be all about discovering and following His right path in their daily living and He promises to satisfy those that are hungering and thirsting in this way.

His fifth beatitude is “**blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy**.” Here Jesus is instructing His followers to be quick to forgive others. All people stand in need of God’s mercy. Everyone will stand before God one day. Those that live lives of mercy and forgiveness towards others will be blessed to receive mercy from God as well.

Jesus then states “**blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God**.” Living a life of purity and devotion to God is very important. Instead of allowing one’s eyes to behold sinful things, Jesus calls His followers to behold the things of God. And those that are pure in heart will one day see the One who is perfect pureness and holiness – God Himself.

Jesus’ 7th beatitude is “**blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God**.” Jesus desires His people to be all about bringing healing and reconciliation between people and between God and people. And truly, it is only through Jesus that true peace can be established. Our Lord calls His people to be intentional in seeking to promote His peace, rather than to sow discord and strife.

And lastly, Jesus’ 8th and 9th beatitudes go hand and hand. Jesus says, **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. 12Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

This is a hard one, but an important teaching from Jesus. Jesus is saying that He wants followers that are so willing and ready and eager to do what is right, they would be willing to suffer for it.

Suffering is not something that anyone enjoys in and of itself. And people are not to have a martyr complex and to look for suffering, just for the sake of suffering. But when someone is willing to suffer because of their faithfulness to Jesus and to living a godly life, God promises to reward them in heaven greatly.

Friends, again, each of these beatitudes can be unpacked in far greater detail. Jesus lived each of these out perfectly. He always practiced what He preached.

***Friends, as we seek to process these beatitudes for our lives today, what is the main takeaway for us?***

I believe it is for us to remember how important these beatitudes are to Jesus and for us to seek to live faithfully to Jesus in all of these ways, with the help of His Spirit.

These beatitudes are so different from worldly understandings of what a blessed life looks like.

If we do not pursue grasping and living out these beatitudes, with God’s gracious help of course, then the rest of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount will not make sense to us.

The beatitudes are God’s way of orienting us to all that Jesus would continue to say through this greatest of sermons.

***I have a handout that is a cheat sheet to understand what each of the beatitudes means and it is an attachment in the email as well as a handout in the lobby.***

On a personal note, one of the things that I have been doing as I get spiritually dressed each day in prayer is to go through these beatitudes. I ask the Lord to please help me to be poor in spirit that day. I confess my need for Jesus and His gracious help in all things.

And I just take a few minutes in prayer through each of these beatitudes. For me, it has been a huge help to my walk with Christ. It helps to prepare me for the day ahead and I feel spiritually strengthened and refreshed as I take these moments to do this.

It is not about a formula, but about letting Jesus’ words of what a truly blessed life is to look like sink deeply into our hearts.

I’m really excited friends to continue to unpack this unequally sermon of Jesus next week with you.

**Sources:**

BibleGateway.com

English Bible Matthew – Course Taught by Dr. H. Douglas Buckwalter – Fall ‘15

The Gospel & Acts – Course Taught by Dr. H. Douglas Buckwalter – Fall ‘13