



A walk through the Sermon on the Mount to discover the characteristics that should mark every follower of Christ

The Sermon on The Mount is one of the most famous, talked about, written about passages from the Gospels. St. Augustine gave it the name and it stuck. It is a comprehensive statement on what the Christian Life or Kingdom Life looks like. It is the best known, arguably the least understood, and the least lived out.

As you read through the sermon it is important to remember that this message was given specifically to individual believers. This is a sermon for Christians. It is not meant to be a message of salvation, but one of challenge and encouragement to those following Christ. In short it is a summary of Christian ethics.

Each week a principal will be introduced and then the following week's devotionals will serve to expand on that principal and explore the examples Jesus gives in His sermon.

Enjoy your journey and may God do a mighty work in you!

Pastor Matt

Week 1 Introduction
Humility

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

In these first three Beatitudes we see an overarching theme of humility. This is an essential quality for those following Christ that is prevalent in many other passages of Scripture as well. By poor in spirit Jesus is talking about those who have a correct view of themselves. They are not proud people, but understand their need for God in their life. Those who are mourning are not just grieving death or loss but the reason behind that loss, sin. Sin has brought pain and suffering into this world and it should disturb us. Those who mourn know where our comfort comes from, not in ourselves, but only from God. Those who are meek are those who know the source of their power – God. They have learned to trust in Him no matter what others are saying or doing. It truly is power under control.

The humility that leads to blessing is one that is going to affect every part of our life. It will affect our relationships, our attitude toward sin, and our worship. As you read through these different passages in the Sermon on the Mount this week look for and listen to the ways God wants to remove your pride and bring you to a place of humility. In that humility we will find the blessings God has for us.

God, make us humble. Amen.

Day 1 – Matthew 5:21-26

“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘You shall not commit murder’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ “But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell. “Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. “Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. “Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent.”

We have all been angry, right? But, how many of us have equated anger to murder as Jesus does in this passage? We usually keep the two very far apart. Jesus brings them very close together, in fact calling anger murder. Not all anger is bad, anger against sin is good (Ephesians 4:26, Matthew 21:12). The anger Jesus is talking about here is against people. The anger in this passage is characterized by pride. The person full of this kind of anger treats the other person as something far less than one of God’s created beings positioning themselves above, better than, them. To do that is to murder, to attempt to eliminate their place in this world, God’s created world. This anger is unjustified; it comes from the pride in our hearts and the selfishness it creates.

Jesus doesn’t want us to live in anger and broken relationships with others. He wants us to live in a healthy relationship with Him and with other people; this takes a lot of humility. This is so important to Him He wants us to make peace with those we are in conflict with (angry with) before even coming to Him in worship. He wants us to have a right heart and not just right rituals. This important step of seeking reconciliation is not easy because it may require us to admit wrong, apologize, or even forgive those who have wronged us. But, living this way is the mark of those who are living humble lives – those who have learned to be pure in heart, disturbed by sin and the destruction it causes, and surrendered to God’s plan and power.

God, make us humble. Remove the pride in our hearts that leads to anger and broken relationships. Show us how to be a humble people seeking reconciliation even in the most broken of relationships.

Day 2 – Matthew 5:38-42

“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 an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. “If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. “Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. “Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

Wait a second Jesus, I don't want to be abused or taken advantage of! Don't I have a right to protect myself! This passage definitely steps on our toes and challenges us in some difficult places – especially that place of pride in our life that clings to “our rights.” Jesus is talking about the people's rights, those civil laws that were set up in the Old Testament that were meant to define justice and restrain revenge. We have similar laws today for crimes, a max amount of time someone can go to jail or prison for the crime committed. Jesus is challenging us to show grace and not take full advantage of our legal rights. We can seek retribution if we want to, but that doesn't mean we should. Grace is a bigger and better way, a more humble way. Judges in our court rooms often show grace – “I could give you 20 years for that crime, but I will only give you 5.”

Jesus wants us to live in grace, which takes a lot of humility. If someone slaps you (the slap Jesus is talking about would have hurt your pride more than your cheek) we want to slap back. It takes a lot of humble restraint to not do anything, but to in fact let them slap you (insult) again. As followers of Christ we should do the unexpected and be different. The world expects retaliation, to do just what is asked, and to not help anyone out. We should do the opposite; we should go the extra mile.

God, give us the strength and the confidence to go that extra mile. Remove the pride that stops us and give us the humility to take those steps, to receive those insults, and to be the unexpected in this world. In that, may others see your love for them. Amen.

Day 3 – Matthew 6:1-4

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men to be noticed by them; otherwise you have no reward with your Father who is in heaven. “So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. “But when you give to the poor, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

This verse can seem contradictory to some other statements Jesus has made, like letting your light shine before men and letting others see your good works. We should let others see or we should not let others see, which is it? Others need to see and know what we are doing and how we are living, but what is most important is the why behind the what. Why are we doing the good and living this way? Jesus was addressing a crowd who were not strangers to doing good; many of the religious leaders of the day were good at doing good. Greeks and Romans did not support personal charity; wealthy contributions to public projects or to poorer clients were meant to secure the giver’s popularity. They would pretend to have compassion and concern for the poor when really all they were doing was an act for personal gain; it served to build up their pride.

When we do good it is not for our own good but for God’s glory. Think about the good you do, if you did it knowing that no one would ever know, you would never get a pat on the back, and there would be nothing done to you in return would you still do it? The reward for those who do good in great humility is way better than anything we could get if we did it in pride. If we want others to know, we will still be rewarded, but not by the Father. I want my reward from Him and not from man.

God, remove the pride that causes us to want to do good for an earthly reward and pat on the back. Show us the good you want us to do – we are willing to do it for you and no one else. Amen.

Day 4 – Matthew 6:5-13, 16-18

“When you pray, you are not to be like the hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on the street corners so that they may be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. “But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, close your door and pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you. “And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. “So do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need before you ask Him. “Pray, then, in this way: ‘Our Father who is in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. ‘Your kingdom come. Your will be done, On earth as it is in heaven. ‘Give us this day our daily bread. ‘And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. ‘And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.’ “Whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance so that they will be noticed by men when they are fasting. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. “But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face so that your fasting will not be noticed by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.

Jesus just finished telling us that we should not do good just so others can see and now He moves to the same idea with our worship. Is our worship defined by pride and our desire to be seen and applauded for how well we worship or is it defined by humility and applauded by God? In Luke 18 Jesus gives us an example of two men praying. One man was standing and praying very loudly, probably in the middle of a crowd with his arms stretched out. He was saying, “God, thank you that I am better than everyone else and not like this tax collector.” The other man, the tax collector, was also praying, but quietly where no one really even noticed. He was saying, “God, forgive me, a sinner.” This is what God wants, a humble attitude in worship, not a proud one.

It is easy for pride to creep into our worship, especially our corporate times of worship. We boast about how well we sing, pray, preach, dress, how often we pray, how regular we are in church, and it goes on. It doesn't matter if people are impressed. What matters is whether or not God is pleased with our worship. After all, it is for Him and because of Him that we even worship in the first place. As we gather for worship let's remember we are there, not to impress each other, but to worship God together.

God, may our worship be acceptable to you. May we sing, pray, fast, and preach all for you. Remove the pride from our worship and replace it with your humility. Amen.

Day 5 – Matthew 6:14-15

“For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. “But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.

Jesus doesn't hold anything back in this teaching. This one hits home for just about all of us. Some people have so hurt and offended us that it is very difficult to forgive them, if we even want to. But, not forgiving others is detrimental to our relationship with God. Before you read further, think about that one person you have not forgiven, why haven't you forgiven them? Is it because you don't want to condone their behavior, you feel like they would win, or do you feel like holding onto the grudge is getting back at them? Most of our reasons for not forgiving is born out of pride. Humility is absolutely essential to our being able to forgive others (which, by the way does not mean we are ok with the hurt or condone their behavior in any way).

Jesus was not teaching that believers earned God's forgiveness by forgiving others, which would be contrary to God's grace. However, if we have truly experienced God's forgiveness, then we should have a readiness to forgive others. In the rest of this passage Jesus was talking about prayer and in that prayer He taught us to ask for God's forgiveness. When God extends something to us He is almost always expecting us to extend that same thing to others. He gives us grace, we are to show grace. He gives us mercy, we are to show mercy. He forgives us, we are to forgive. I know it is hard, but to truly live in humble relationship with God and others means we have to be willing to forgive – all those who have hurt or offended us.

God, create in us a heart of forgiveness, one that does not hold on to grudges and past offenses. You have forgiven us of so much; give us the grace, humility, and strength to forgive as you have forgiven us. Amen.

Day 6 – Mathew 7:1-6

“Do not judge so that you will not be judged. “For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? “Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ and behold, the log is in your own eye? “You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. “Do not give what is holy to dogs, and do not throw your pearls before swine, or they will trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces.

To judge or not to judge, that is the question? We are often quick to judge, is that wrong? Jesus says two things in this passage. He first says to not judge and then tells us to judge. So, what exactly is it that we are supposed to do? It helps to understand a little bit of the Greek language. Judge carries two meaning or ideas in Greek. It has a positive meaning, to analyze or evaluate, and it has a negative meaning, to condemn. As followers of Christ we are not to be condemning. This kind of life comes from the assumption that we are better than someone else or that we have it all figured out. In reality, we are not better than anyone, which is what Jesus points out with the log and speck analogy.

While we are not to condemn people, He does encourage us to evaluate. However, this evaluation must start with us before it involves others. If we are going to evaluate someone else’s relationship with God we better first evaluate our own. Then, once we have correctly evaluated ourselves and made the changes we need to make we can see more clearly to evaluate someone else, if we decide to at all at that point. The point is this, when it comes to judgment we will be judged by the same measure we judge others. So, never condemn because we certainly do not want to be condemned. When it comes time to evaluate, do so with a tremendous amount of humility and grace after having evaluated yourself.

God, take any attitude of condemnation away from me. Show me the logs and dirt in my life before I attempt to remove the specks of dust from others. Give me eyes to see and ears to hear what you want to be different in me. Amen.