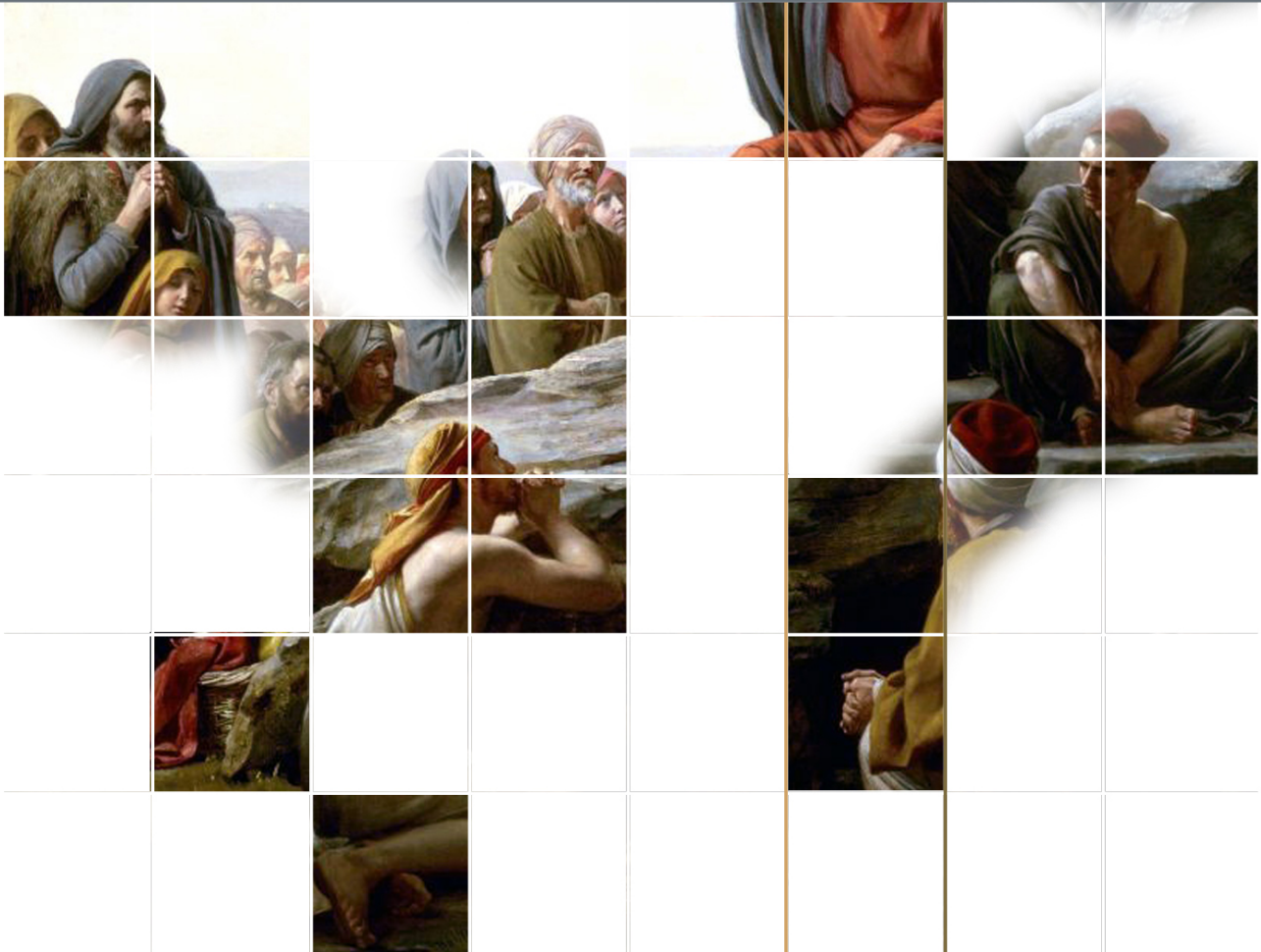


THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

THE FALLACY OF THE PHARISEES



**PINE
COVE**

SUMMER STAFF
BIBLE STUDY 2012



Dear Summer Staff:

The Sermon on the Mount could possibly be one of the most important sections of teaching we have from Jesus in the Gospels. It's not simply a manual for how we ought to live as followers of Jesus, but it is also a beautiful picture of citizenship in the Kingdom of God. To the extent that we begin to live out Jesus teaching and become conformed to His image, we will give the world a foretaste of the Kingdom Jesus is going to return to inaugurate. This sermon shouldn't just affect us on a behavioral level; it must affect us at the core of our being. When we realize the extent of Jesus' provision of righteousness for us, we are properly oriented to live out a righteousness that *far* surpasses that of the Scribes and the Pharisees.

It is my hope that through studying Matthew 5-7 this summer that you not only gain a more accurate understanding of the Sermon, but that you are also inspired to follow Jesus as the salt of the earth and light of the world – not because you hope to be, but because you are.

Remember, don't be the end user of this study. Re-invest what you have learned into the lives of the people you minister to back at home and school. It will not only be a blessing to those whom you choose to spend time with, it will further cement what you have learned this summer.

And don't forget – not only do you have the notes to this study, you also have access to the audio recordings as well! If you're not already subscribed to the podcast, you can find the feed and download the episodes by visiting the summer staff blog at www.pinecove.com/staffblog. There you can find the audio file for each week as well as the link to the podcast feed on iTunes.

I'll look forward to next summer when we'll get to do this all over again! In the meantime, don't forget about the opportunity you have at the Forge. If you are interested in applying, please give me a call – I'd love to speak with you about it.

Grace and peace be with you,

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Promised Redemption

Instructions for Teachers & Bibliography

How To Use This Study:

- Step 1: Familiarize yourself with the Text. These notes assume that you are already familiar with the passages being studied, so don't expect to be able to sit down with the note pack and easily walk through the study without a little prep work on your part.
- Step 2: Decide which parts of the passage are the ones you want to focus on. These lessons are NOT designed to teach the lesson for you. You have more things to teach here than you could/should possibly teach in a 30-45 minute lesson. You must decide which parts of the Text and notes are most pertinent to the group you're teaching.
- Step 3: Don't bore or insult your study group by reading the study to them point by point. Instead, have a general outline of thoughts and your own personal illustrations that make the study come alive. Think of these notes like the bone structure and skin. It is your job as the teacher to make the study come to life. Feel free to change the study as you like.
- Step 4: Look for opportunities for application. The thrust of this note pack is focused on helping you, the teacher, prepare well for your study. You will need to encourage application with your small group based on who they are and what your relationship is with them. Whatever the case, don't skip this step – otherwise this study will just be an exercise in information transfer.
- Step 5: Copy these notes and distribute them each week to your small group. No need to give them lessons in advance – once per week will be good. Encourage them to use the notes as a guide for the rest of the week for their quiet times so they can dive deeper into the lesson if they would like to.

Remember: These notes are *mine*. You have to make them *yours*. Until the Text becomes something you are passionate about and familiar with you will have a lot to say but nothing to teach. Change this up as much as you want – add more quotes/references. *Make it your own*. The most inspiring and effective teachers are those who own what they teach.

Tough Questions:

It's hard to replace the value of a good question that will keep your students learning even after they leave your study. Each week there will be a question or two at the end of the study that is designed to make your students (and you!) think hard about the subject just discussed. Sometimes the questions aren't even answerable – but that's not the point. The point is that they are engaging the Word on their own (and they're motivated to do so!). Don't worry about your answers – there is more to be learned in the investigation of the question most of the time than in determining what the right answer is.

Sample Schedule for Summertime:

6:50am – Arrive before they do & make sure there is coffee!

7:00am – Start your Bible study promptly on time. No need to waste time asking “how was your week” or “how are you feeling.” They will get that in their small group time. Get straight to the meat – you'll need every minute!

7:40am – If you want to have time for Q&A at the end, plan on ending the study a little early. Then you can have some dialogue about the text or discuss the tough question from the week before.

7:45am – Dismiss the study *promptly*. Do not go over on time as it obstructs the flow of camp.

Bibliography:

There are not many single volumes out there about the covenants themselves. Most of my research has come from a few sources and then random commentaries. As I compiled my notes and thoughts, these were the resources that I found to be the most helpful. If you would like to study further, I would recommend these resources to you first as good entry points. So, to the degree you find this study helpful, you need to know it really comes from the wisdom of these brothers in Christ. I'm just the young guy standing on their shoulders.

Primary Sources:

- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. New York, NY: Touchstone. 1995.
 - Why haven't you read this book yet? You should. It's a masterpiece, a classic, and a must-read on the topic of following Jesus. Buy it and read it slowly.
- Constable, Tom. *Expository Notes on Matthew*. 2008 edition.
 - Dr. Constable, a retired professor of Dallas Theological Seminary, makes his expository notes on the entire Bible available online for free! You can download them at www.soniclight.com.
- Jones, Martyn L. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. 1976.
 - The masterful preacher's complete exposition of the sermon. This is the first place I would send you for further study on the Sermon itself. It's more accessible than a commentary and filled with great application as well.
- MacArthur, John. *Matthew 1-7* (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary). Chicago, IL: Moody Press. 1985.
 - John MacArthur just finished preaching through the entire Bible at his church. It took him over 30 years. I appreciate his commentary because he remains close to the Text while also using helpful illustrations and applications.
- Turner, D. L.. *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.
 - The Baker Commentary series is a great one and a worthwhile investment. Turner's commentary was concise and helpful.
- Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. San Francisco, CA: Harper Collins. 1997
 - One of the most important books I've read in the past 5 years. Although there are some points that are controversial, his treatment of the Sermon has been the most helpful to me.

Special Thanks To . . .

. . . Jon Foreman, David Wilcox, Gungor, Andrew Peterson, and James Horner whose music helped to drown out all the distractions and keep me focused.

. . . My gorgeous, thoughtful and nurturing wife who put so much of her own wants and needs aside to help me write this study. Darcie, your love is a gift; I treasure it. You are precious to me.

The Sermon on the Mount

The Fallacy of the Pharisees

Week 1: Introduction & Background – Matt. 4:12-25

Week 2: The Beatitudes – Matt. 5:1-12

Week 3: Our New Identity – Matthew 5:13-20

Week 4: True Righteousness pt. 1 – Matthew 5:21-32

Week 5: True Righteousness pt. 2 – Matthew 5:33-48

Week 6: Review for Incoming 2nd Half Staff (no notes)

Week 7: True Spirituality pt. 1 – Matthew 6:1-15

Week 8: True Spirituality pt. 2 – Matthew 6:16-24

Week 9: True Spirituality pt. 3 – Matthew 6:25-34

Week 10: Entrance pt. 1 – Matthew 7:1-12

Week 11: Entrance pt. 2 – Matthew 7:13-29



The Sermon on the Mount

Introduction & Backgrounds

Why Study the Sermon on the Mount?

1. Jesus died in order that we might now live the life He describes in this sermon.
2. This sermon has been misunderstood from the moment it was preached. Ironically, it was preached to correct misunderstanding.
3. Lived out in our lives, the Sermon is an excellent means of evangelism. "The world today is looking for, and desperately needs, true Christians. I am never tired of saying that what the Church needs to do is not to organize evangelistic campaigns to attract outside people, but to begin herself to live the Christian life."¹
4. These are some of Jesus' most popular words – and yet there is a *wide* range of interpretation on what He meant by what He said. So many opinions on how it ought to be applied more often leads to paralysis rather than direction.
5. "The command 'Be ye perfect' is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command."² We need to understand the important teachings within this sermon so that we live the life He intended.

Matthew's Account of the Sermon:

- The sermon is located both in Matthew & Luke's Gospels (Luke 6:17-49).
- Key things to remember about Matthew's account:
 - He was Jewish and wrote to a Jewish audience (using Jewish terms, literary style, images, and themes). He references the Old Testament more than any other Gospel writer.
 - "About 60% of the book focuses on Jesus' teaching."³ He records six major sermons that Jesus gave.
 - *Matthew is the least chronological of the Gospels*. His arrangement of material was somewhat topical rather than strictly chronological. Chapters 1–4 are in chronological order, chapters 5–13 are topical, and chapters 14–28 are chronological.⁴
 - Matthew's purpose in writing his gospel was to illustrate Jesus (Messiah) as King and to relay the King's message to His people: "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." (4:17)
 - The separate parts of the discourse are to be interpreted in the light of this single purpose. They are not to be read as one disconnected statement after another.⁵
 - "The Sermon on the Mount should be seen as the representative ethical teaching of Jesus, developing the summary statement of 4:23, which presents a word/deed complex. Accordingly, 4:23 and the similar summary in 9:35 provide a frame, or "bookends," for Jesus's ministry of teaching and doing miracles. Both the words (Matt. 5–7) and the works (Matt. 8–9) demonstrate the authority of the kingdom of heaven (7:28–29; 8:9; 9:6–8)."⁶
- Key verse: Matthew 4:17, 23 – This verse summarizes all of Matthew Gospel as well as gives us a framework for understanding the context of the Sermon on the Mount.

¹ Jones, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*.

² Lewis, C.S. *Mere Christianity*.

³ Constable, Thomas Dr. *Notes on Matthew*

⁴ Thiessen, Henry C. *Introduction to the New Testament*, p. 139.

⁵ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. (emphasis mine)

⁶ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (142). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. Emphasis mine.

Popular Interpretations of the Sermon:⁷

These are at least six major ways that people have interpreted the Sermon on the Mount over the years:

- Soteriological - to enable people to know what God required so that by obeying they might obtain salvation.
- Sociological - a guide to the salvation of society
- Penitential - to convict hearers about their sins and to make them realize that their only hope of salvation and participation in the kingdom was His grace.
- Ecclesiastical - Jesus' ethical teaching on the church
- Millennial – a description of what life will be like in to the earthly messianic kingdom exclusively.
- Interim - ethical instructions for disciples that apply between his coming and the beginning of his millennial kingdom.
- Critical – a correction of misconceptions about the Law and being the people of God.

"The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus's authoritative teaching about the way believers should live today. Those who repented when they heard the gospel preached by John and Jesus (3:2; 4:17) needed to know how to live under God's saving reign. As Jews, they especially needed to know how Jesus's teaching related to Moses and the Hebrew Bible. Fulfilling biblical values is the framework of the sermon (5:17; 7:12), and Jesus's disciples are those who long for the time when these values will be fully realized on earth (6:10)."⁸

Background to the Sermon: Matthew 4:12-25

Audience for the Sermon – Who was there?

1. The Crowds
 - All kinds of people: those who had been healed, those who wanted to be healed, wanna be disciples, skeptics, believers, etc. They were people who believed in his power to heal & teach (Mt. 4:25, 7:28)
2. The Disciples
 - Remember, Matthew's Gospel is not chronological. If you read Matthew as if it were chronological, then it appears that only a handful of the disciples were there.
 - Evidently Jesus had called Simon, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel earlier (John 1:35-51). Probably they returned to Galilee and resumed their former work. This would partially explain their quick response to Jesus here (v. 20). If the miracle of Luke 5:1-11 took place the night before this calling, we have another reason they followed Jesus "immediately."⁹
 - It is also likely that "disciples" doesn't refer strictly to the twelve here; it could refer to the larger group of disciples beyond the twelve. Regardless, it was a large audience with people who wanted to hear Jesus' words because of Jesus' works in and around Galilee.

Context for the Sermon – What was going on?

1. John the Baptist had just been arrested (4:12).
2. Jesus has returned to Galilee. Because of John's arrest, Jesus relocated the base of his ministry to Capernaum because it would have been easy for him to teach there without much interference from either the Romans or the Pharisees (4:12-13).
3. The fulfilling of prophecy. Matthew quotes Isaiah 9:1-2 – a text that looks down on Galilee as a region. If Jerusalem is where all of the 'educated' Jews were, Galilee was the

⁷ Constable, Thomas Dr. *Notes on Matthew*.

⁸ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (144). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁹ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*

back-woods. It was populated with Jews and Gentiles, but was predominantly regarded as a non-Jewish place where Jews had chosen to live. Jesus has located himself in Capernaum which is also on the main trade route through the region, called the Via Maris ("way of the sea"). God will send His son to minister to the despised and rejected region to proclaim a kingdom available to those who are "poor in spirit."

4. Jesus was teaching in the synagogues. Synagogue is a Greek word for gathering or assembly. The Jewish synagogue in Jesus' day was less like a church and more like a community center. Everything happened in or around the synagogue: worship, school, legal matters, celebrations, etc. Synagogues developed when the Jewish people began to return to the land after the exile to Babylon. Jesus taught all over the Galilee region (4:23).
5. Jesus was healing the people. Jesus was healing *every* kind of sickness and disease. These are recorded and emphasized in Matthew 8-9. His healing ministry did not seem to require repentance either.
6. Jesus' popularity was spreading so that people were following him from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and beyond the Jordan (all of Israel).
 - a. Galilee: A rural region of north-central Israel populated mostly by religious Jews and Herodians (Hellenized Jews).
 - b. Decapolis: "Ten Cities" the region on the East side of the Sea and the Jordan River that were exclusively Roman. They were unbelieving cities and centers for pagan worship & hedonism.
 - c. Jerusalem: the place where all the 'well-educated' Jews would live and worship. The Scribes, Pharisees, & Sadducees all lived there.
 - d. Judea: the large southern region of Israel.

Probable Chronology surrounding the Sermon on the Mount:¹⁰

<u>Location</u>	<u>Event</u>
Bethany	Preaching of John the Baptist (John 1:19-28, Matt 3:1-12)
Bethany	Baptism of Jesus (Matt 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Lk 3:21-22)
????	Temptation of Jesus (Matt 4:1-11; Mk 1:12-13; Lk 4:1-13)
Bethany	<u>Calling</u> of Peter, Andrew, Phillip & Nathanel (John 1:19-28)
Cana	Jesus turns water into wine (John 2:1-11)
Jerusalem	1 st Passover & cleansing of the temple (John 2:23)
Jerusalem	Jesus & Nicodemus (John 3)
Sychar	Woman @ the Well (John 4)
Cana	Healing the Nobleman's son (John 4:46-54)
Capernaum	<u>Following</u> of Peter, Andrew, Phillip & Nathanael (Matt 4:18-22)
Galilee	Various healings (Mk 1:21-28; Lk 4:31-39; Matt 8:14-17, 9:1-8)
Jerusalem	2 nd visit to Jerusalem (John 5)
Galilee	Return to Galilee (Matt 12:1-21; Lk 6:1-16)
Galilee	Selection of the 12 disciples (Mk 3:13-19; 6:12-16)
Galilee	Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7; Lk 6:17-49)

Tough Questions:

1. Matthew summarizes Jesus' entire message into one sentence: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." How are we to obey this command? How should it be explained?
2. How do the Beatitudes help explain the meaning of Matt 4:17?
3. Why do you think Jesus was so widely popular at the beginning of his ministry?

¹⁰ Constable, Thomas. *A Harmony of the Gospels*

The Sermon on the Mount

The Beatitudes :: Matthew 5:1-12

The Sermon on the Mount begins famously with the beatitudes. These nine beatitudes provide the introduction to the content of the sermon Jesus is about to present to the multitudes. As famous as this part of Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom of God has become over the course of history, the church remains somewhat divided over how they ought to be understood. There are several popular ways of interpreting them:

1. Are they commandments? Is Jesus presenting his audience with a list of positive character traits that they should strive to embody & practice daily? Are they ethical requirements for them to be able to enter the Kingdom of God & possess God's favor?
2. Are they pronouncements? Is Jesus presenting descriptions of those who have come to live underneath the reign of the Kingdom of God? Are they available realities that believers possess as a gift from God?
3. Are they rhetoric? Is Jesus describing the deplorable conditions of the world that the Kingdom of God has come to heal and redeem (that the world continues to ignore)? Are they proofs that God's Kingdom is better than the world's and aimed at convincing the audience to come and see?

What are Beatitudes?

The Greek word that is translated in English as 'blessed' is *makarios*. In Latin, the first language the Bible was translated into, the word *beatus* and it is from the Latin word that we get the title, beatitudes.

Makarios refers to a happy condition that is the direct result of God's favor.¹ In other words, because God's Kingdom has been made available to mankind, we experience the happiness and enjoyment that comes from such a reality. The focus of the beatitudes, then, is not on the feeling of happiness, but on the reality of citizenship in the Kingdom of God that is being made available by Jesus Christ.

Thus, the opposite of 'blessed' is not 'unhappy'. Instead of 'blessed are the poor in spirit', the opposite would be 'cursed are the poor in spirit'. The Scriptures don't suggest opposites for the beatitudes specifically, but it can be a thoughtful exercise to think of each one's opposite as a beatitude of the kingdom of this world. They also help us re-frame our idea of what it means (and looks like) to have God's favor and approval.

Matthew 5 is not the only place we can find this kind of language by the way. There are some 45 other instances of 'beatitudes' in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Psalms 1:1, 31:1-2, 84:4-5, 144:15; Prov. 3:13).

The Structure of the Beatitudes²

The structure of the beatitudes is chiastic; it has pairs of verses that are grammatically or stylistically related to one another. Each beatitude in 5:3-6 has a companion in 5:7-11 as illustrated below. The first half of the pairings emphasizes the disciple's horizontal relationship to God while the second half of the pairings emphasizes the disciple's vertical relationship to others.³

¹ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

² Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (147). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker

³ The beginning of many similarities in the Sermon to the giving of the 10 commandments: similar structure (God first, then others), and in a message delivered from a mountain by the leader of the people.

- 5:3 Poor in spirit are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of heaven
 5:4 Mourners are blessed because they will be comforted.
 5:5 Meek are blessed because they will inherit the earth
 5:6 Hungry are blessed because they will be filled
 5:7 Merciful are blessed because they will be mercied
 5:8 Pure are blessed because they will see God
 5:9 Peacemakers are blessed because they will be called sons of God
 5:10-11 Persecuted are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of heaven

The disciple's
relationship to God.

The disciple's
relationship to others.

5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

- "Poor" is *ptochos*, meaning "reduced to beggary, begging, asking alms...destitute of wealth, influence, intelligence, position, honor."⁴ (Also translated as "beggar" in Luke 16:20, 22.)
 - Beggars cannot rely on themselves because they have nothing. They must turn to the charity of others for help, sustenance, shelter, warmth....for life.
 - So, happy are those who have realized their own spiritual poverty and have turned to God for both their physical and spiritual sustenance. The experience of God's provision is more blessed than all the riches of the world.
 - See also Matthew 19:23. The more we have in terms of material & intellectual possessions the more difficult it will be for us to see our own spiritual poverty.
- To be poor in spirit means to no longer rely on our natural birth for anything.⁵
 - No longer depending on your family name, nationality, wealth, education, personality, intelligence, morality, good behavior, etc. for personal gain.
 - "It is nothing, then, that we can produce; it is nothing that we can do in ourselves....It is to feel that we are nothing, and that we have nothing, and that we look to God in utter submission to Him and in utter dependence upon Him and His grace and mercy."
 - It is a renunciation of rights, entitlements, previous achievements, as no longer meritorious. The only glory this type of person can receive or wants to receive is that which comes from above.
 - Examples? Gideon, Moses, Isaiah, Peter, Paul, Jesus (See also Psalm 34:18, 51:17; Luke 18:9-14; c.f. Isaiah 57:15, 61:1-2)
 - *Everyone* is poor in spirit – there are those who realize it and those who don't. Those who do, turn to the King in their *ptochos* of spirit for provision.
- "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" is used with the first beatitude and with the last.
 - Notice that the promise in verses 3 & 10 are the only promises that are in the present tense. All the rest are future.
 - This is a common literary device called an *inclusio*. The writer would use it to provide unity – indicating that everything within the two uses of this term refers to the entity mentioned. So, this literary form shows that all the beatitudes deal with the kingdom of heaven.⁶
 - To be poor in spirit in the kingdom of the world is reprehensible, weak, and foreign. You will be left out, forgotten about and ignored in this world if you are poor in spirit. The current religious system of the day was evidence of that. Here, Jesus is proclaiming the Kingdom of Heaven as available to anyone who repents.

⁴ Thayer's Greek Dictionary.

⁵ Jones, Martin Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. p.40-41

⁶ Constable, Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted

- Those who mourn over what? Anything. Death, personal sin, bankruptcy of spirit, social injustice, loss, failure, inadequacy, etc. Blessed are those who don't avoid their failures. Blessed are those who don't pretend death will never come. Blessed are those who don't forget their sin is grievous to the heart of God. Blessed are those who mourn.
 - Consider Eccl 7:2-8 and James 4:8-9. How can mourning be a blessing?
 - "The disciple does not shake off sorrow as though it were no concern of its own, but willingly bears it. They do not go out of their way to look for suffering, or try to contract out of it by adopting an attitude of contempt and disdain. They simply bear the suffering which comes their way as they try to follow Jesus Christ, and bear it for *his* sake."⁷
 - The things which we mourn over are no longer to be feared or avoided because the Kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- "comforted" is *parakaleo*, meaning to call near or to invite.⁸ It is the same root word that Jesus uses to describe the ministry of the Holy Spirit in John 14:16.
 - It is here that we see that these beatitudes begin to build on one another. Someone who is not 'poor in spirit' will not have any need for comfort – nor will you find them mourning over anything.
 - In the Kingdom of God, there is freedom to mourn – because our Comforter has come along side us. The Kingdom of God is not the survival of the fittest or some elite club where those who "have it all together" get in. Even those who mourn are a part of this kingdom (see Isaiah 61:1-3).

5:5 Blessed are the meek

- "meek" is *praus* which means "mild" and implies a distinction of humility.⁹ As with the other beatitudes the humbling can be abstract, but it can also be as a result of being humbled through injustice, persecution, loss, etc. (see Psalm 37:7,9,11)
 - "Meekness is an unassuming humility that rests in God (Ps. 37:7) and renounces self-effort to relieve one's oppression and to achieve one's desires. Jesus perfectly models this humility (Matt. 11:29; 12:18-21; 21:5; see also 1 Peter 2:21-29)."¹⁰
- A meek person is one who has surrendered every right of his/her own and live for the sake of Jesus Christ.
 - "When reproached, they hold their peace; when treated with violence they endure it patiently; when men drive them from their presence, they yield their ground. They will not go to law to defend their rights, or make a scene when they suffer injustice, nor do they insist on their legal rights. They are determined to leave their rights to God alone."¹¹
 - Such an attitude will not only have an effect on your relationship with God, but also on your relationship with others.
- "inherit the earth"
 - Why inherit the earth? Why not riches or a great name? Because that would be too little. Those who claim right or entitlement to riches and fame shall lose them all. Those who lay no claim to such things, shall be entrusted the honor of shepherding not just riches – but the entire earth.
 - Remember the Jews inherited the promised land. With the reign of a new Messianic King, they believed they would inherit much more.

⁷ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. p 109 (emphasis mine)

⁸ Strong's Greek Dictionary

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (151). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic. (Consider also another comparison between Jesus & Moses: Numbers 13:3)

¹¹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. p110.

5:6 Blessed those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied

- "Righteousness" is *dikaiosune*. It is the state of him who is as he ought to be, righteousness, the condition acceptable to God.¹² Or, to paraphrase, "true inner goodness."¹³
 - "Matthew always used the term "righteousness" in the sense of personal fidelity to God and His will (3:15; cf. Ps. 42:2; 63:1; Amos 8:11-14). He never used it of imputed righteousness, justification. Therefore the righteousness that the blessed hunger and thirst for is not salvation. It is personal holiness and, extending this desire more broadly, the desire that holiness may prevail among all people (cf. 6:10).¹⁴
 - Jesus will use this word repeatedly in the discourse contrasting the Kingdom's *dikaiosune* with the world's *dikaiosisune*.
- "filled" is also an extreme word. It means to be filled to abundance.
 - The Kingdom of Heaven is a never-ending feast of righteousness for those who hunger for it. No more searching for formula or experience to hope that you are righteous. Within the Kingdom of Heaven, you *will* be.
 - See Psalm 107:5,9
- "Those who realize their lack in attaining right behavior before God, rather than those who boast of their righteous accomplishments, will receive what they long for. Those who repent in view of the nearness of the kingdom long not only for personal righteousness but also for righteous living to permeate society as a whole (cf. Isa. 51:1-5). Only when God's will is done on earth as it is done in heaven (Matt. 6:10) will social justice be fully achieved."¹⁵

The first four beatitudes talk about man's relationship to God. Happy are those who have received the availability of the Kingdom so that they admit their spiritual poverty, mourn over sin and injustice, entrust themselves and the afflicted to God's hands and who hunger for God's will to be done on earth as it is in heaven.

5:7 Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy

- "Grace is especially associated with men in their sins; mercy is especially associated with men in their misery. In other words, while grace looks down upon sin as a whole, mercy looks especially upon the miserable consequences of sin. So that mercy really means a sense of pity plus a desire to relieve the suffering."¹⁶
- "A meek person acknowledges to others that he/she is sinful, but a merciful person has compassion on others because they are sinful."¹⁷
 - "As if their own needs and their own distresses were not enough, they take upon themselves the distress and humiliation and sin of others."¹⁸
 - The current religious system of the day was without mercy. The religious leaders were eager to punish and to persecute any disobedience and pronounce any misfortune as God's punishment for sin. So also was the current governmental system of the day. Rome showed little mercy to those who opposed her.
- "For they shall receive mercy"
 - God will be merciful with those who are merciful. Not in terms of salvation, but certainly in other ways (cf. Matt 6:12-15; 9:13; 12:7; 18:33-34). God will be merciless with those who show no mercy.
 - Jesus models/expects this from his disciples (Matt 6:2-4; 9:27, 36; 15:22; 17:15; 18:33; 20:30).

¹² Thayer's

¹³ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. p145

¹⁴ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

¹⁵ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (151). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

¹⁶ Jones, Martin Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. p84

¹⁷ Stott, John R. *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*. p 48.

¹⁸ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

5:8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God

- The word for “pure” can have a couple of meanings. 1). It can mean singular. It communicates the idea of no longer being divided, but being single-minded about or towards something. 2). It can also mean cleansed or without defilement.
- “Heart” imagery is always in reference to the totality of a person. All that a person “is” is represented by the heart. Jesus does not say, “Blessed are the pure in mind....pure in conduct or intellect”...but pure in *heart*.
 - “The Pharisees were always ready to reduce the way of life and righteousness to a mere matter of conduct, ethics and behavior.”¹⁹
 - In the kingdom of the world, a person’s “heart” isn’t tangible. It’s relative. We need proof – thus our behavior shows us our heart. Thus, the world emphasizes performance & behavior. The kingdom of heaven is concerned about the source of the behavior – the internal rather than the external (see Psalm 24:3-4).
- “See God”
 - What Jesus means here is widely interpreted. The party line is either: 1). we can look forward to seeing Jesus when He returns to reign in the Kingdom and/or 2). this is a synonym for having a close, personal relationship with God.
 - I would also say that the pure in heart will see God – as opposed to the proud in heart only seeing themselves (or their personal picture of God, who is more like them than like God). So, maybe, Jesus is telling us that these pure in heart are the ones who actually see God...not those who are outwardly righteous and mere “whitewashed tombs.” They can’t see him.

5:9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God

- Peacemakers are those that do not only have peace, but who also actively and intentionally make peace.
 - Consider also the word “peace” and its presence and placement throughout Scripture. (Isaiah 9:6-7, 53:5, Ezek 37:26, Micah 5:4-5, John 14:27; Rom 5:1, Gal 5:22, Eph 2:14, Phil 4:7, Col 3:15, Heb 7:2, etc)
- Does being a peacemaker require non-violence or pacifism?
 - “Jesus’ disciples keep the peace by choosing to endure suffering themselves rather than to inflict it on others. They renounce all self-assertion and quietly suffer in the face of hatred and wrong. In so doing, they overcome evil with good, and establish the peace of God in the midst of a world of war and hate.”²⁰
- How have kingdoms and empires been built over the centuries? Violence. Violence is the only means of kingdom expansion this world has ever known. Wars are fueled by hatred, bigotry, revenge, greed, injustice, etc, etc. But, here, citizens of the kingdom of heaven are peacemakers.
- “sons of God”
 - Like Father, like Son. Our God is a God who brings peace. He has brought it, He brings it to us today, and He will bring it to us at the end of all things. He was not passive in His peacemaking. He actively intervened. That peace also came at great cost to Him and required great patience. To those who model and demonstrate the same peacemaking ability are like their Father and His Son (and bring Him great glory by doing so).

¹⁹ Jones, Martin Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. p93.

²⁰ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. Please note that Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a pastor, theologian and, not surprisingly, a pacifist, who, though the immense difficulty of WWII and the Nazi regime, helped to plot the assassination of Adolf Hitler. He was eventually captured, tortured and put to death in a concentration camp just days before it was liberated by Allied forces. His thoughts on this matter are not to be underestimated.

5:10-12 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven

- Righteousness is *dikaiosune* once again. Salvation is not in view. Rather, it is the persecution that comes from living rightly and justly. It is important to consider 1 Peter 2:18-20 & 4:15 in light of this passage. Those who are persecuted are persecuted because they are living rightly in God's sight – they are not seeking persecution.
- Rejection, not recognition, is the reward for the message of those who herald the Kingdom of heaven. So it was for Jesus – so it shall be for those who live righteously. See also John 15:18-25; Acts 14:22; 2 Tim. 3:12; 1 Pet. 4:13-14.
 - "The chief marks of those who already live under God's rule are humility toward God and mercy toward people. One might expect such humble, merciful people to be valued highly by their fellow humans, but such is not the case. Jesus's disciples should expect not praise but persecution for their righteous behavior. Jesus himself preeminently displayed these righteous characteristics, and he was persecuted to the point of death."²¹
- "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven" concludes the *inclusio* which means that this marks the end of the Beatitudes.
 - Those who are of the kingdom of the world, as we have seen, avoid suffering and pain whenever possible. Even if that means ignoring what they know to be right or wrong. For someone to endure suffering and/or death for something like *dikaiosune* only proves their existing (not earned) citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.

* * *

"The Beatitudes reveal key character traits that God approves in his people. These character traits are gracious gifts indicating God's approval, not requirements for works that merit God's approval. Those who repent receive these character traits in principle but must cultivate them in the process of discipleship."²²

"But if the Sermon on the Mount contains not a new, nor, indeed, any system of morality, and addresses itself to a new condition of things, it follows that the promises attaching, for example, to the so-called 'Beatitudes' must not be regarded as the *reward* of the spiritual state with which they are respectively connected, nor yet as their result. It is not *because* a man is poor in spirit that his is the Kingdom of Heaven, in the sense that the one state will grow into the other, or be its result; still less is the one the reward of the other."²³

The beatitudes are realities that we must remember because the world around us will quickly help us to forget them. When we find ourselves poor in spirit, we don't need to be sad about it. If we find ourselves persecuted for the sake of righteousness, we can remember that is a blessed condition even though it is also a painful one. The realities of the Kingdom of God help us see our circumstances the way God sees them – not the way the world does.

Tough Questions:

1. What parallels can you find between Isaiah 61:1-3 and Matthew 5:1-12?
2. Let's say someone asks you, "How can I be pure in heart?" What will you say to them?
3. It is clear that Jesus is proclaiming the values and character of a kingdom that is not of this world. Which kingdom are you a citizen of?

²¹ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (153). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

²² Ibid, 147.

²³ Edersheim, A. (1896). *Vol. 1: The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (529). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The Sermon on the Mount

Our New Identity within the Kingdom of God :: Matthew 5:13-20

Connection to 5:1-12: The Beatitudes serve as dramatic introduction (and summary) not only to the earthly ministry of Jesus, but also of the availability of the Kingdom of God. With that in mind, Jesus elaborates on the realities of this Kingdom not by laying down commandments (we have yet to see an imperative), but by clarifying and proclaiming the identity of Kingdom citizens.

The Identity of those in the Kingdom

5:13 You are the salt of the earth . . .

- "Salt was important in the ancient East because it flavored food, retarded decay in food, and, in small doses, fertilized land. Jesus implied by this metaphor that His disciples could positively affect the world. They had the opportunity through their lives and witness to bring blessing to others and to retard the natural decay that sin produces in life."¹ Also, by Jesus' day salt was so necessary to life as a preservative for food, it carried the same value as currency and could even be used as a payment.
- Jesus declares the citizens of God's Kingdom to be the salt of the earth. A few observations about this declaration help us understand His meaning:
 - "'Ye are the salt.' Jesus does not say: 'you *must* be the salt.' It is not for the disciples to decide whether they will be the salt of the earth, for they are so whether they like it or not, they have been made salt by the call they have received. . . The call of Christ makes those who respond to it the salt of the earth in their total existence."²
 - Jesus also says that salt is what we are – not a thing to be possessed. Thus, it cannot be found or lost. It cannot be earned or bought. It is an intrinsic quality of a citizen of the Kingdom of God. It is because we are citizens of God's Kingdom that we are salty – not the other way around.
 - As is the case with salt, there is no distinction between those who are kind of salty and those who are super salty. We live righteously in the world not because we want to become salty, but because we already are.
- Salt is also imperishable. Sodium chloride is a stable compound and does not break down. When was the last time you checked the expiration date on a container of salt? It can even be dissolved in liquid and it is still salty. How can it lose its taste?
 - "Everything else can be saved by salt, however bad it has gone – only salt which loses its savour has no hope of recovery. That is the judgment that hangs over the disciple community, whose mission is to save the world, but which, if it ceases to live up to that mission, is itself irretrievably lost."³
 - In other words, if you have salt that is no longer salty, then it cannot be called salt. It's just dirt – or something else. Think of it from a chemistry perspective. If there is no sodium in sodium chloride, then is no longer salt.
- "You are the salt of the earth" means that "you" are the only hope this world, the same world that persecutes you and says all manner of evil against you falsely, has of survival. We must continue to be who we are & keep the availability of the Kingdom of God open to those who were as lost as we once were. It is not the powerful, the rich, or the well-known who are the salt of the earth. It's those who are the poor-in-spirit citizens of the Kingdom of God. If these citizens engage the decaying world, it has hope for survival.

¹ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*

² Ibid

³ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*

5:14-16 You are the light of the world . . .

- Light is a widely used image throughout the Scriptures. It usually represents good, righteousness, and belief. Matthew first uses the image in 4:16 as he quotes Isaiah 9:2 which describes the ministry of the Messiah.⁴
- Being the 'light of the world' is an image typically attributed to Jesus, especially in John's writings (John 1:4-5, 3:19-21, 8:12, 9:5, 1 John 1:5-10). Yet, it is also an image applied to the people of God (Eph. 5:8, Phil. 2:15, Col. 1:12-13).
 - As was true with being the salt of the earth, so it is with being the light of the world. It is not an identity to be achieved, but rather one already bestowed and lived out: "Ye are the light. Once again it is not: 'You are to be the light,' they are already the light because Christ has called them. How impossible, how utterly absurd it would be for the disciples to try and become the light of the world!"⁵
 - "Nor does Jesus say, 'You have the light.' The light is not an instrument which has been put into their hands. You are the light in your whole existence. . . and since you are that light, you can no longer remain hidden, even if you want to."⁶
 - "A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow him."⁷
- There is a direct connection between the image of light and the believer's good works. Either they are one in the same or they complement each other; whatever the case, the character traits described in the beatitudes ought to produce a lifestyle/behavior that identifies people as citizens of the Kingdom of God. Our behavior in this world should be as light in a dark room. It should be unique, it should be illuminating, and it should not be compromised or hidden.

In this kingdom, the life you live is a very public one. Light isn't hidden. Salt is ineffective unless it comes into contact with that which needs flavor or preserving. *Our citizenship in this kingdom will not only transform us – it will transform the world.* It cannot do that if it is lived out in fear or in hesitation. A disciple without good works is just like salt that has lost its taste or as ridiculous as an oil lamp hidden under a basket. Citizens of the Kingdom influence people through their resemblance to the King of the Kingdom – thereby bringing him greater glory.

"Perhaps the dual images of salt and light are intended to portray two aspects of witness that are not easy to balance: engagement and distinctiveness. As salt, Jesus's disciples must engage the world, but as light, they must never allow their engagement to lead to the compromise of kingdom values and their assimilation to the world. Jesus perfectly and harmoniously models both images."⁸

The Foundation for Identity: Righteousness (not good deeds)

The next section, 5:17-48, involves Jesus' correction of common misunderstandings of the Word and will of God that have been propagated by the religious leaders of the day: Scribes, Pharisees, Zealots, and Essenes. These groups were sects of Judaism that were reacting to the negative Hellenistic influence over the past 200 years. They were the pious ones who were hoping to lead the nation back towards righteousness. *Jesus is not coming as another one of these voices.* Nor is he coming to nullify the Law they are trying to teach. He fulfills the law both by living it out and making sure it is understood correctly.

⁴ See also Isaiah 42:6, 49:6, and Daniel 12:3 where Israel's role in the world was to be a "light to the nations".

⁵ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (156). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

5:17-19 Do not think I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets...

- What's the connection to 5:16? Why does He bring this up?
 - The very thing that makes us salt and light is the righteousness that comes from submitting to the Law of God – not from focusing on ourselves & our behavior.
 - But that Law had been misunderstood and misapplied for years. "Jesus prepared them for the incongruity between His teaching and their leaders' interpretations of the law by explaining His relationship to the Old Testament."⁹
- How does Jesus "fulfill" the Law and the Prophets?
 - Jesus doesn't come to inaugurate a kingdom of licentiousness. (Perhaps the Pharisees had already accused him of abolishing the Law?) The Kingdom of heaven still has law and government – the same law and government it has always had. Jesus is the perfect embodiment of it & thus its rightful teacher.
 - "Probably Jesus meant that He came to establish the Old Testament fully, to add His authoritative approval to it. This does not mean He taught that the Mosaic Law remained in force for His disciples. He taught that it did not (Mark 7:19). He wanted His hearers to understand that what He taught them in no way contradicted Old Testament revelation."¹⁰ "His purpose in coming was to enable us to keep the law, not to abrogate it."¹¹
 - His life and his teaching brought the complete realization and ideal of the Law of God. His teaching would clarify what it really meant to obey the Law of God and his life would fulfill all that the Law required (on our behalf). His teaching would not contradict the Law & Prophets – *although it would contradict the teaching of the Scribes and the Pharisees* (which was very much on purpose).
 - "Jesus does not contradict or abrogate the law and the prophets, but neither does he merely reaffirm them. He fulfills them or brings them to their divinely intended goal, because they point to him."¹²
- Jesus' teachings, as we shall see, are not new. Yet, they overthrow the modern-day understanding of the Law because it had been misunderstood. Jesus unfolds the same truths that were in Moses teaching all along even though they had yet to be rightly understood. Those who receive Jesus' teaching about the Law, therefore, will receive it as citizens of his Kingdom should: with obedience. Those who do not receive it will utterly reject his teaching as erect their own teaching as the standard. Thus, the Law never passes away (5:19) since its authority is now embodied in the person of Jesus.

5:20 Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees...

- This is the thesis and hinge of the sermon. Everything before this leads up to it, and everything that follows relates back to it. Everything before is identity related. Everything after is behavior related. Allegiance to Jesus the Messiah is the key to rightly understanding and applying the Law and the Prophets.
- The Scribes and the Pharisees are not being commended in this statement for their almost-righteous righteousness. He is actually making a very critical comment about them. Righteousness is much more than outward conduct and behavior – which is what the Pharisees and Scribes had reduced the Law to. Ironically, the most holy and righteous people in the eyes of the people, were hardly holy and righteous in God's eyes. Their righteousness is no righteousness at all.
 - The language in this verse is saying, "It's not possible for you to have a righteousness that surpasses the Scribes and Pharisees. But even if you did, you

⁹ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Jones, Martyn Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*.

¹² Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (162). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

still *would not* enter the kingdom of heaven.” Why? Because righteousness is not something that can be practiced if there is no source within you. Jesus fulfilled the law rightly and if we align ourselves with him and turn to him in our poverty of spirit – then we can live the lifestyle he describes in the remainder of the sermon.

- Both the Law and the Prophets point to Jesus (the Messiah) as their ultimate fulfillment and completion. The Law taught by the Pharisees and the Scribes does not point to Jesus (the Messiah) as its fulfillment, thus it is insufficient as a source of righteousness.
 - “Law is not the *source* of righteousness, but it is forever the *course* of righteousness...One must aim to be the *kind of person* from whom the deeds of the law naturally flow. This is the most crucial thing to remember if we would understand Jesus’ picture of the kingdom heart giving in the Sermon on the Mount.”¹³
 - The Scribes and Pharisees were the peoples’ conception of ultimate holiness and righteousness. So, when Jesus attacks the ultimate standard, you can understand why they reacted so strongly both for and against Him.
 - Do we need to stop and consider whether or not our picture of holiness and sanctification is accurate?
 - Jesus gives six examples of what it looks like to live as salt of the earth and light of the world the way God would have us live – not the way of the teachers of the Law – in the next section, 5:21-48.

Key idea:

“Every moral system is a road by which, through self-denial, discipline, and effort, men seek to reach the goal. Christ begins with this goal, and places His disciples at once in the position to which all other teachers point as the end. They work up to the goal of becoming the ‘children of the Kingdom;’ He makes men such, freely, and of His grace: and this *is* the Kingdom. What the others labour for, He gives. They begin by demanding, He by bestowing: because He brings good tidings of forgiveness and mercy. Accordingly, in the real sense, there is neither new law nor moral system here, but entrance into a new life: ‘Be ye therefore perfect, as your Father Which is in heaven is perfect.’”¹⁴

Tough Question:

1. How did the Pharisees and Scribes, in a genuine search to honor and follow God, find themselves as the antithesis of what God desires? How can this be avoided?
2. List as many ways that you can think of how the righteousness of the Scribes & Pharisees differs from the righteousness of the Kingdom of Heaven.

¹³ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. p143

¹⁴ Edersheim, A. (1896). *Vol. 1: The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (528–529). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The Sermon on the Mount

True Righteousness – No More Misconceptions :: Matthew 5:21-32

Connection to 5:1-20: Verse 20 is the hinge of the sermon. Leading up to it, Jesus' primary focus seems to be on the identity of the citizen of the Kingdom. After verse twenty, Jesus' emphasis shifts more towards the behavior that *results* from having this identity. The behavior of a citizen of the Kingdom of God will be more righteous than that of the Scribes and Pharisees because they have a different identity (a different source of righteousness). 5:21-48 is focused primarily on the "do-not's" and 6:1-34 is focused primarily on the "do's". In this section, Jesus describes a righteousness that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees. It focuses not on external behavior, but internal character and motivation. These are the good works that will shine like light in the darkness and bring glory to God.

Important points to remember throughout the remainder of chapter 5:

- There is a contrast between "you have heard it said" and "But I tell you." Jesus is contrasting the modern-day understanding of the Law, not the law itself. He comes and entirely changes the definition of righteousness for that day by calling those who were the most righteous into question.¹
- There are two groups of people being discussed in this section.
 - The ancients: The people of ancient Israel & the teachings of Moses.
 - You (all): Jesus' disciples and those who are listening in to the sermon.
 - The way Jesus speaks most certainly demonstrates His authority over and above the teachings of Moses (a fact not lost on his listeners – cf. 7:29).
- Jesus isn't giving us a new list of laws or a 'higher' list of laws that need to be obeyed. Of course, we should do as he commands, but commanding is not his point here. This is where the Pharisees have missed the forest for the trees. His point is the character change for those who are a part of the kingdom of the heavens produces a life that doesn't just obey a list of laws, but lives and breathes the heart of God.
 - "Matthew presents Jesus as coming not to abolish but to accomplish the purpose of the law and the prophets (5:17). Thus one would expect the contrasting teaching of Jesus to transcend the Bible in a manner that does not formally violate its ethical authority. Yet at the same time, Jesus warns his disciples that their righteousness must exceed that of the religious teachers (5:20), and so one would expect his teaching to expose the inadequacies and mistakes of those teachers as he expounds Moses in an ultimate manner."²
- Jesus' correction of the way the Law was being taught begins a list of 6 different topics throughout the remainder of chapter 5: anger/murder, lust/adultery, divorce/marriage, vows, retaliation, and love/hatred. Commentators divide this list up in a number of different ways.

¹ Dr. Martin Lloyd Jones' treatment of this argument is most helpful in his book *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*.

² Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (166). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

You have heard that the ancients were told . . .

1. "You shall not commit murder"

- a. He begins by quoting the sixth commandment from Exodus 20:13.³ While the Pharisees and Scribes had done well to avoid the act of murder, they had not kept their hearts from feeling that way (a reality that Jesus eventually forces to the surface when they plot to kill Him).⁴
- b. "Everyone who is angry with his brother..."
 - i. Anger is one of our most primal and common emotions. With it we justify our maltreatment of anyone from a complete stranger to our closest loved one. Everyone can identify with the feeling of anger even if they haven't committed murder. Anger is simply the emotional response to the obstruction of a person's will. Usually, our response is that of resistance or rebellion.
 - ii. It is perfectly reasonable to compare the unbridled emotions of anger with the horrible act of murder. When we have anger in our hearts that is not dealt with properly, it will take root and grow into anger, contempt, and hatred. All are wicked emotions and conditions of the heart. Our hands simply lack the opportunity to carry out what our heart and our mouth are already doing.
 - "The primary function of anger in life is to alert me to an obstruction to my will, and immediately raise alarm and resistance, before I even have time to think about it."⁵
 - "Anger is always an attack on the brother's life, for it refuses to let him live and aims at his destruction."⁶
 - Every murder begins with the seed of anger. Anger then grows into contempt and then contempt gives rationale for murder.
- c. "Whoever says to his brother, 'You good-for-nothing'... or 'You fool'..."
 - i. Anger causes us to look with contempt on other people. Once contempt takes hold, it moves to strike at the heart of another in order to destroy it – with words or with deeds. And it all begins with anger.
 - ii. "In anger I want to hurt you. In contempt, I don't care whether you are hurt or not. Or at least so I say. You are not worth consideration one way or the other. We can be angry at someone without denying their worth. But contempt makes it easier for us to hurt them or see them further degraded."⁷
 - "There is nothing that can be done with anger that cannot be done better without it. The sense of self-righteousness that comes with our anger simply provokes more anger & self-righteousness on the other side."⁸
- d. You will be guilty...
 - i. While some may say it's impossible for man-made courts to judge the thoughts and attitudes of the heart, Jesus is suggesting that as long as we harbor anger and hatred instead of working to reconcile, we will eventually do

³ The second quotation is likely a combination of different verses, not a direct quotation. See Exod 21:12, Deut 17:8-13.

⁴ This gives us some insight into why Jesus' death was a Roman one. The Pharisees couldn't murder Jesus in cold blood. That wouldn't be obedient to the Law. But somehow making it look like Jesus was the leader of an insurrection against Rome and begging them to kill Jesus was within the bounds of keeping the Law?! Let us not seek a "righteousness" like that of the Scribes & Pharisees!

⁵ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*, p148

⁶ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. p.127

⁷ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. p151

⁸ *ibid*, p151

with our hands what is going on within our hearts. We will be guilty before God *and* before men. Our good works will not be acting as salt or light – all because we didn't handle our anger well.

- e. If the Scribes and Pharisees had an upside-down view on the point behind this, Jesus makes sure our understanding is right-side-up (v. 23-26):
 - i. Anger only seeks more anger, but the rightness of the Kingdom heart seeks reconciliation. We cannot rightly enjoy the forgiveness we have been given by God when we are not enjoying the same reality within our community.
 - "Disciples are thus not only to rein in their own anger but also to take steps to reconcile with others who are angry at them. It is not a question of arguing about who offended whom but of taking responsibility and initiating reconciliation."⁹
 - "If we despise our brother our worship is unreal. He who says he loves God and hates his brother is a liar."¹⁰
 - Why shouldn't I murder? Because I will go to court if I do? What kind of motivation is that? The threat of punishment cannot produce right behavior. Only a right person can behave rightly. Only Jesus can make a person right.

"Through these two illustrations we finally see the kingdom goodness placed side by side with the mere goodness of not killing, which then looks quite empty by contrast. If we made laws of these illustrations and followed them, would that make us right toward our brother or sister? Not at all. We could do these things and yet find many other ways to hate and hurt our neighbor."¹¹

2. "You shall not commit adultery"

- a. After correcting the misconceptions behind the sixth commandment, Jesus moves on to the seventh (Exodus 20:14). The exposition here is just the same as it was with anger. While the Pharisees and Scribes may have successfully avoided the act of adultery, they had not kept their hearts from indulging in lust – another emotion that only lacks an opportunity for action.
- b. "Adultery in the heart" – what does it mean?
 - i. "Sexual desire is not wrong as a natural, uncultivated response, any more than anger is, or pain. When we only *think* of sex with someone we see, or simply find him or her attractive, that is not wrong. Merely to be *tempted* sexually requires that we think of sex with someone we are not married to, and that we desire the other person. But temptation also is not wrong, though it should not be willfully entered. The terminology of 5:28 is quite clear. The Greek preposition *pros* and the dative case are used. The wording refers to looking at a woman *with the purpose* of desiring her. That is, we desire to desire. The desire is embraced, indulged, elaborated, fantasized. Such a condition is one we can and should avoid."¹²
 - ii. Lust is a choice we make, not something we are victimized by.¹³

⁹ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (169). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

¹⁰ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. p128. See also 1 John 4:20; and 2:10-11; 3:14; 4:8

¹¹ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. p158.

¹² Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. p165.

¹³ Men should notice well that Jesus is looking at them in this passage. Women certainly deal with lust too, but the example here is focused on the man as the one responsible for making sure lust does not turn into adultery.

- c. The Pharisaical interpretation of this verse would allow for us to lust after any woman we chose – just so long as I did not engage in intercourse with her. But simply not sinning is not what the purpose of the heart of God is on this matter.
 - i. “In the view of the Pharisees, the law could be satisfied, and thus goodness attained, if you avoided sinning. You are right if you have done nothing wrong.”¹⁴
- d. Right side up looks like this:
 - i. Job 31:5-8
 - ii. The rightness of the Kingdom heart will certainly take steps to avoid sin, steps that require discipline and sacrifice. But we cannot rely on these disciplines to correct our behavior for us.
 - This is all too often the way we approach our struggles with sin (especially the sexual variety). More struggle = more rules = more sin = more rules = more sin = more rules = more sin = etc., etc., etc.
 - iii. We can cut off every appendage (whether we are being literal or figurative) and still find ways to sin. Why? Because my eye and hand are not the sources of my sinful behavior. My heart is. Thus, the person must change from inside out – not outside in.
 - “Since evil arises in the heart, amputation cannot cure it, and so it should go without saying that these two commands are hyperbolic. But the hyperbole shocks the reader with the real point: it is better to deal decisively with lust than be thrown into hell because of it.”¹⁵

3. “...Give her a certificate of divorce...”

- a. The Law of Moses on the matter: (Deut 24:1-4)(Matt 19:3-9)
 - i. “The whole object of the Mosaic legislation in this matter was simply to control divorce. Its object was to reduce to a certain amount of order a situation that had become utterly chaotic.”¹⁶
- b. What the Pharisees and Scribes were saying . . .
 - i. “The Pharisees and scribes were teaching that Moses commanded divorce. They actually taught that, if a man ceased to like his wife, or for any reason found her to be unsatisfactory to him, that, in a sense, was ‘uncleanness’.”¹⁷
 - ii. In that day after divorce, a woman had three options: remarry as ‘damaged goods’, (which would always be the first option, for how could she survive in that culture alone?) live with a relative or friend as a servant-girl, or resort to a life of prostitution. Divorce ruined the life of the woman.
- c. Jesus’ message (right side up) . . . (see also Matthew 19:3-9)
 - i. “Marriage is not a civil contract, or a sacrament; marriage is something in which these two persons become one flesh. There is an indissolubility about it.”¹⁸
 - “Just the fact that a man (or woman) has given the woman (or man) a ‘pink slip’ and ‘done everything legally’ does not mean that he or she has done right or has been a good person with regard to the relationship.”¹⁹

¹⁴ Ibid, p167.

¹⁵ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (171). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

¹⁶ Jones, Martyn Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. p225-225

¹⁷ Jones, Martyn Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. p. 226. Some writings in the Mishnah permitted divorce if a wife spoiled a meal or even if a more beautiful woman was available!

¹⁸ Jones, Martyn Lloyd. P 227.

¹⁹ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. p170

- ii. "The person who is guilty of adultery has broken [this] bond and has become united to another. The link is gone, the one flesh no longer exists, and therefore the divorce is legitimate." This is the only way divorce can actually happen. "If you put away your wife for any other reason you are putting her away without breaking the bond. In this way, you are making her break the bond if she should marry again; and she is therefore committing adultery."²⁰
 - Marriage is the one-flesh-ness of a couple. It cannot simply be annulled by a piece of paper or court proceeding (even if one actually takes place). They are still one flesh.
- d. Is divorce wrong?
 - i. This is not what Jesus is suggesting. The act of divorce is much more complicated than sending someone away with a note. This is what the world has done and is continuing to do, however. God never intended divorce for marriage – but because of the hardness of OUR hearts, Jesus tells us the consequences if we choose to divorce our partner for reasons other than unfaithfulness.
 - In situations where abuse, neglect, or gross perversion is happening within a marriage, this passage is not saying, "You've gotta tough it out because divorce is wrong." My counsel to that couple would be divorce, but also to realize that, on the basis of this passage, remarriage is not an option.

Tough Questions:

- 1.) Is anger a sin? If so, how is it possible to not get angry? If not, how are we able to tell the difference between sinful anger and not sinful anger?
- 2.) Is that all I have to do? Avoid saying "*Raca*" and "*You fool*" and not having sex with anyone other than my wife?

²⁰ Jones, Martyn Lloyd. P229.

The Sermon on the Mount

True Righteousness – No More Misconceptions :: Matthew 5:33-48

Review on 5:21-32: Although we can be well-intentioned, sometimes our idea of what righteous behavior looks like isn't really what God intended. More often than not, we're trying to set up our own qualifications for our own righteousness rather than receiving the righteousness that is offered to us through Jesus Christ.

You have Heard It Said . . . (flipping righteousness upside-down)

5. "...Do not make false vows..."

- a. Jesus departs from the Ten Commandments to bring up the topic of vows/oaths. "The Hebrew Bible contains positive examples of oaths (Gen. 14:22; 21:24; 47:31; Josh. 2:12), and punishment was threatened for false oaths or oaths not carried out (Exod. 20:7; 1 Kings 8:31-32; cf. Wis. 12:21)." ¹
- b. "The very existence of oaths is a proof that there are such things as lies. Oaths are intended as a barrier against untruthfulness. But, where oath claims final truth, there is space in life given to the lie, and it is granted a certain right of life. Therefore the oath must go, since it is a protection for the lie."²
- c. Those in the world will be truthful when it suits them and lie when it suits them. Those in the Kingdom need to live as if lying was never an option. If we always spoke the truth, there would be no need for an oath. (But, just abolishing the oath doesn't guarantee that we will tell the truth.) But if we all of the sudden have to say the truth, and then back it up with an oath, that has something to say about our truthfulness.
 - Oaths can also be used to 'tell the truth' but really present a lie. This is a reality not just in court cases, but in politics, business, and relationships. Now we are lying under the guise of truth – something truly evil.
- d. "We need no more oaths to confirm the truth of our utterances, for we live in the perfect truth of God. There is no truth towards Jesus without truth towards man. Untruthfulness destroys fellowship, but truth cuts false fellowship to pieces and establishes genuine brotherhood. We cannot follow Christ unless we live in revealed truth before God and man."³

6. "...An eye for an eye..."

- a. The fifth example of Kingdom rightness is a reference to teachings on retaliation as found in Exodus 21:24, Leviticus 24:20, and Deuteronomy 19:21.
- b. The Mosaic understanding:
 - The main intent here, as before, was to control retaliation that had gotten out of hand. Just as we experience today, someone would have their goat stolen and then they would go over to the thief's house and kill *all* their goats. If retaliation was going to happen, it could only be in equal measure. This law was set in place to prevent excessive retaliation.
- c. The understanding of the day:
 - "The Jews tended to view the law of retaliation as God's permission to take vengeance. That was never God's intention (cf. Lev. 19:18). He simply wanted to protect them from excessive vengeance and to curb vendettas. As God had permitted divorce because of the hardness of man's heart, so

¹ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (172). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

² Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. p136

³ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. p139.

He permitted a certain amount of retaliation under the Mosaic Law. However, His intention was that His people would avoid divorce and retaliation entirely.”⁴

- Jesus means to correct this teaching. Just because retaliation is an option for us doesn’t mean that we *have* to exercise it. The rightness of the Kingdom heart reflects an understanding of how we enjoy the blessing of God in spite of our offenses against Him. He did not treat us as our sins deserve or retaliate against our rebellion. Why are we so zealous to do so with others who wrong us?
- d. How would Jesus have us respond to personal affronts? Four examples of what non-retaliation could look like in the life of the believer:⁵
 - “Turn the other cheek”
 1. As opposed to taking matters into your own hands. The insult and/or injury should be absorbed and you should be ready to have it happen again. Two views on this matter:
 - a. “This teaching applies to [the Christian] in his personal relationships and not in his relationships as a citizen of his country.”⁶
 - b. “This distinction between person and office is wholly alien to the teaching of Jesus. Am I ever acting only as a private person or only in a official capacity? If I am attacked am I not at once the father of my children, the pastor of my flock, and e.g. a government official?”⁷
 - “Let him have your shirt”
 1. “Under Mosaic Law, a person's outer cloak was something he or she had an almost inalienable right to retain (Exod. 22:26; Deut. 24:13).”⁸
 2. As opposed to hindering the legal process and making it more malicious or difficult. The idea is that if you are sued by someone, you are more focused on their needs than defending your own. The world teaches us to cling to our legal rights, but Jesus seems to be teaching us to let those go as well.
 - “Go with him two”
 1. “The Romans sometimes commandeered civilians to carry the luggage of military personnel, but the civilian did not have to carry the luggage for more than one Roman mile. This imposition exasperated and infuriated many a proud Jew.”⁹
 2. Government officials and laws are, often times, huge inconveniences for us – or so we complain. Here, the idea is doing more for someone than they ask of you as if their problem was just as important to you as it is to them (even if it’s not).
 - “Give to him who asks of you”
 1. See also Luke 6:30. The idea here is that the world is a stingy, winner-take-all, hoarding type place. Followers of Jesus ought to be generous and give to people who have no right to what they are asking for.

⁴ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

⁵ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

⁶ Jones, Martyn Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. p244

⁷ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. p143

⁸ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

⁹ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

- **REMEMBER!** "These are illustrations of what a certain kind of person, the kingdom person, will characteristically do in such situations. They are not laws of 'righteous behavior' for those personally imposed upon or injured. They are not laws for they do not cover the many cases. Additionally, if you read them as laws you will immediately see that we could 'obey' them in the wrong spirit. For example, as is often actually said, 'I'll turn the other cheek, but then I'll knock your head off.'" ¹⁰
- "Not only is the disciple to avoid evil by non retaliatory reaction when oppressed by a more powerful person; the disciple is also to promote good by a generous, benevolent response to those who are less powerful." ¹¹
- e. How does Non-retaliation glorify God more than retaliation?
 - "By willing endurance we cause suffering to pass. Evil becomes a spent force when we put up no resistance. By refusing to pay by the enemy in his own coin the Christian exhibits the sinfulness of disdain and insult. Violence stands condemned by its failure to evoke counter-violence. By his willingly renouncing self-defense, the Christian affirms his absolute adherence to Jesus, and his freedom from the tyranny of his own ego. The exclusiveness of this adherence is the only power which can overcome evil. I am not to condone or justify aggression. Patient endurance of evil does not mean a recognition of its rights." ¹²
 - "Some conscientious believers have taken Jesus' instructions about resisting aggression literally and refuse to defend themselves in any situation either as pacifists or as advocates of non-resistance. However the spirit of the law, which Jesus clarified, did not advocate turning oneself into a doormat. It stressed meeting hatred with positive love rather than hatred. Though Jesus allowed His enemies to lead Him as a lamb to the slaughter, He did not cave in to every hostile attack from the scribes and Pharisees. Likewise, Paul claimed his Roman citizenship rather than suffering prolonged attack by the Jews." ¹³

7. "...love your neighbor and hate your enemy..."

- a. Jesus' final example in chapter 5 is a quotation from Leviticus 19:18.
- b. Nowhere in the Old Testament will you find the phrase "hate your enemy" attached to "love your neighbor." Apparently, though, this is what the Pharisees and scribes were teaching (perhaps on some clever interpretation of who a neighbor "really" was; anyone who wasn't one should, therefore, be hated).
- c. In the kingdom of the world, we love people who love us – who are generally people who make us feel better about ourselves or have done something for us that provokes our love for them. Though that's not bad, it's not the picture of love that Jesus has for us or that we should have for each other.
 - "Our treatment of others must never depend upon what they are, or upon what they do to us." ¹⁴ Our behavior "must be determined not by the ways others treat us, but by the treatment we receive from Jesus." ¹⁵ After all, were we not His enemies? "Perfect, all-inclusive love is the act of the

¹⁰ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. p178

¹¹ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (175). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

¹² Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

¹³ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

¹⁴ Jones, Martyn Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*. p268

¹⁵ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

Father, it is also the act of the sons of God as it was the act of the only-begotten Son."

- d. Bless those that curse you: This has to do with the words that your enemies will speak of you. You know they will speak ill of you – how will you speak of them? How would someone who has encountered the forgiveness known in Jesus Christ respond? How did Jesus respond when he was insulted & cursed?
 - The Apostle Peter understood this clearly when he wrote 1 Peter 2:21-25.
- e. Do good to those that hate you: Your enemies will escalate their words into actions and further tempt you to act as they do. Do not repay them in the same currency. If they pay you in hatred, repay them in a different currency: blessing.
- f. Pray for those persecute you: This embodies all principles taught up to this point. Instead of reacting in terms of self, we are able to respond as God does to sin: with patience and forgiveness.

"People usually read this as telling *them* to not call others fools, not look on a woman to lust, not swear, to go the second mile, and so forth. That is the fallacy of the Pharisee. The Pharisee takes as his aim keeping the law rather than becoming the kind of person whose deeds naturally conform to the law."¹⁶

"Therefore you are to be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect."

- 1. "Perfect" (Gr. *teleios*) often occurs in a relative sense in the New Testament, and translators sometimes render it "mature" (e.g., 1 Cor. 14:20; Eph. 4:13; Heb. 5:14; 6:1). However it also means perfect. In this context it refers to perfect regarding conformity to God's requirements, which Jesus just clarified. He wanted His disciples to press on to perfect righteousness, a goal that no sinful human can attain but toward which all should move (cf. v. 3; 6:12). They should not view righteousness as simply external, as the scribes and Pharisees did, but they should pursue inner moral purity and love. This is only appropriate since their heavenly Father is indeed perfect."¹⁷
- 2. "It is the life described in the beatitudes, the life of the followers of Jesus, the light which lights the world, the city set on the hill, the way of self-renunciation, of utter love, of absolute purity, truthfulness and meekness. It is not strict Puritanism, not some eccentric pattern of Christian living, but simple, unreflecting obedience to the will of Christ. It is the fulfillment of the law, the keeping of the commandments. In Christ crucified and in his people the perfect becomes reality. These men are the perfect, the men in whom the undivided love of the Heavenly Father is perfected."¹⁸
- 3. "The Christian is essentially a unique and special kind of person. He is not only a man who is doing more than others; he does what others cannot do...who is above and goes beyond the natural man at his very best and highest [and worst and lowest]. He is also meant to be positively like God and like Christ. If God is your father you must be special, you cannot help it. If the divine nature has entered into you through the Holy Spirit, you cannot be like anybody else; you must be different."¹⁹

Tough Questions:

- 1). How do you teach people to *be* good?
- 2). Are you "special"?

¹⁶ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy* p184.

¹⁷ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

¹⁸ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

¹⁹ Jones, Martyn Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*.

The Sermon on the Mount

True Spirituality – No More Confusion :: Matthew 6:1-15

A righteousness that surpasses that of the Scribes and Pharisees needs a proper understanding of the Law. While the Scribes and Pharisees were very sincere in their devotion to the Law, they were sincerely wrong about why it had been given in the first place. Jesus' teaching in Chapter 5 aimed to both correct and fulfill all that God intended the *Torah* to be. Jesus asserted His authority as the only rightful interpreter of the *Torah* of God by correcting the teaching of the religious 'authorities' of his day.

Chapter 6 will continue in the same theme of correction and fulfillment, but this time it will not be focused on fallacious teaching, but now the hypocritical application of such teaching. Jesus has asserted His authority as the only rightful interpreter of the Law and now in chapter 6 He will demonstrate His authority as the only rightful example of how the *Torah* should be lived out by those who are the salt and light of the world.

Notice the contrasts between chapters 5 and 6:

Chapter 5

Correcting poor teaching
"Let your light shine..."
Focus on relationships w/others (outward)
Emphasis on identity (blessed, salt, light)

Chapter 6

Correcting poor behavior
Emphasis on doing things in "secret"
Focus on personal behavior/motive (inward)
Emphasis on activity (pray, give, seek)

Three words repeated in every section in the first half of chapter six:

"hypocrites"

- The Greek is *hypokrites* and is the same word that was used to describe actors in Greco-Roman theatre. A hypocrite is "one who pretends to be other than he really is— 'hypocrite, pretender, one who acts hypocritically.'"¹
- "A hypocrite is an actor and religious activity is not for those who love to put on a show for people but for those who sincerely love to serve God."²
- "The love of honor is the deadly bane of true piety. Other vices bring forth evil works, but this brings forth good works in an evil way." –St. Augustine

"secret"

- The Greek word here is *kryptos* and is an idiom that literally means 'in the hidden/darkness.' It's basically a way of talking about something that is done in private and not publically known.³ See Matt. 10:27, Ac. 16:37, Eph. 5:12, & Col. 3:17-24 also. This is an obvious contrast to where you would find a *hypokrites*: on a stage.

"reward"

- Two different Greek words are used for reward in this section: *misthos* & *apodidomi*. Both words mean essentially the same thing: a repayment for something one deserves – whether good or bad. *Misthos* is the direct object used with the reward of the hypocrite (with the exception of 6:1) and *apodidomi* is the verb used to describe the future reward of the one who lives in secret.⁴

¹ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible Societies.

² Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (183). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

³ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: Based on semantic domains* (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition.). New York: United Bible Societies.

⁴ Strong's and Thayer's Greek Dictionaries.

- It is difficult to speak with certainty on the nature of the reward Jesus speaks of here. Some commentators suggest that the reward is having an audience with God. To those who have selfish motives, they will have the audience of men. To those who live the heart of God, he will be attentive to them. Other commentators think that the reward is the happy condition of being an actual citizen of the Kingdom rather than some kind of poser. Happy are the ones who enjoy their citizenship in the Kingdom. Still others suggest that eternal rewards (jewels in our crown, for example) are in view.

“Beware of practicing your righteousness before men . . .” 6:1 & 5:20

- What 5:20 was to chapter 5, 6:1 is to chapter 6. Back in chapter 5 we saw this as the hinge of the sermon, but it was also the unifying statement that preceded the list of teachings Jesus meant to correct. Similarly, here, 6:1 is the unifying statement that precedes the behaviors Jesus means to correct.
 - Remember, our righteousness is to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees and to be perfect as our Heavenly Father is perfect. Simultaneously, for our righteousness to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, it must not be flaunted or performed. Living by the Law is not an effort to prove to other people that we are what we wish we were; it is an overflow of what God has already done in the secret places of our hearts.
- The word ‘righteousness’ is *dikaiosyne* which describes a functional righteousness (i.e. one who always does the right). It is the same word used in 5:20. The functional righteousness of the Pharisees was way off because of their flawed understanding of the Law. Jesus’ right teaching of the Law and, now, right application of it will continue to correct and fulfill God’s purposes for the Torah (5:17).
- How are we supposed to understand, then, Jesus’ teaching that we are the light of the world (whose good works should be seen by all) and this teaching here that our righteousness ought not to be practiced before men? How are we supposed to be salt and light while doing things in secret?
 - “*Theaomai* (to be noticed) is related to the term from which we get theater. It has in mind a spectacle to be gazed at. In other words, Jesus is warning about practicing a form of righteousness whose purpose is to show off before men. Such religion is like a play; it is not real life but acting. It does not demonstrate what is in the minds and hearts of the actors, but is simply a performance designed to make a certain impression on those who are watching.”⁵
 - Those who seek a reward from men seek for what they do not have. Those who already enjoy the reward of being a citizen in the Kingdom of God have no need or desire to flaunt or show-off their righteousness because they are not seeking validation from men. They have already received it from their Heavenly Father and simply do His will. They do not deliberately hide their righteousness nor do they perform it on a stage. Their righteousness is visible to the world, but invisible to themselves.
- “Desire for religious respect or reputation will *immediately* drag us into the rightness of scribes and Pharisees because that desire always focuses entirely upon the visible action, not on the source of action in the heart. When we want human approval and esteem, and do what we do for the sake of it, God courteously stands aside because, by our wish, it does not concern him.”⁶

⁵ MacArthur, John F. *Matthew 1-7* (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary). Moody Press, 1985. p.354

⁶ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

“So, do not be like the hypocrites . . .”

1. In Your Giving (2-4)⁷

- a. “The rabbis considered almsgiving, prayer, and fasting as the three chief acts of Jewish piety.”
- b. “Although trumpets were used in Jewish religious activities, there is no rabbinic text that connects blowing trumpets with giving to the poor. The meaning is metaphorical and hyperbolic; it describes drawing attention to oneself (like the modern expression “blowing your own horn”). It might refer to a trumpet-shaped collection box that resounded when coins were thrown into it.”⁸
- c. Left & Right Hand: “Jesus’ point was that we should not draw attention to ourselves when we give. Hypocrisy does not just involve giving an impression that is incorrect, such as that one gives alms when he really does not. It also involves deceiving oneself even if one deceives no one else. A third kind of hypocrisy involves deceiving oneself and others into thinking that what one does is for a certain purpose when it is really for a different purpose.”
 - i. They were not giving alms. They were buying the praise of men.

2. In Your Praying (5-15)

- a. Prayer can be just as hypocritical as giving alms for the praise of man.
- b. “inner room”: (c.f. Isaiah 26:20 and 2 Kings 4:33). Jesus is not forbidding public prayer in making this statement – because you can certainly be just as hypocritical in secret as you can be in public. Remember, he is not giving laws but illustrating a lifestyle. Jesus’ concern is motive. He wants us “to be in prayer what we are in life and to be in life what we are in prayer.”⁹ We cannot have communion with our Father, who is in secret, if we are not also in secret.
- c. “meaningless repetition”: “Jesus Himself prayed long prayers (Luke 6:12), and He repeated Himself in prayer (26:44). He also advocated persistence in prayer (Luke 18:1). These practices were not the objects of His criticism. He was attacking the idea that the length of a prayer makes it efficacious.”¹⁰ The heart of the person and the relationship they have with God is what makes it powerful. This is something the gentiles cannot understand – so they will do whatever they can dream up to get what they desire from God. It is not so with us . . .
 - i. “We do not need to compel an unwilling God to listen to us with the multitude and urgency of our words.”¹¹
 - ii. “True prayer does not depend either on the individual or the whole body of the faithful, but solely upon the knowledge that our heavenly Father knows our needs. That makes God the sole object of our prayers, and frees us from a false confidence in our own prayerful efforts.”¹²
- d. Instead it should be like this . . .
 - i. “Our Father in heaven”: We pray in groups (our). We pray to God who is our Father. “It was not characteristic of believers to address God as their Father until Jesus taught them to do so.”¹³ We address a Father in a much different way that we would address a magistrate, homeless person, or celebrity. A Father gives good things to his children and doesn’t need to be coerced. He knows all that we need because we are his children –

⁷ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*

⁸ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (183). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁹ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

¹⁰ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*

¹¹ Murray, Andrew. *With Christ in the School of Prayer*.

¹² Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

¹³ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

his possession. He is still in heaven, and we are on earth, so we will let our words be few.¹⁴

- ii. "hallowed be Your name": "He is already holy. We do not need to pray that He will become more holy. What is necessary is that His creatures everywhere recognize and acknowledge His holiness. This petition focuses on God's *reputation*. People need to *hallow* it, to treat it as special."¹⁵
- iii. "Your kingdom come, your will be done": "This does not mean 'come into existence.' The kingdom of God is from everlastingly earlier to everlastingly later. It does not come into existence, nor does it cease. But in human affairs other 'kingdoms' may for a time be in power, and often are. This request asks for those kingdoms to be displaced, wherever they are, or brought under God's rule."¹⁶
- iv. "on earth as it is in heaven": "Disciples long for the realities of heaven to be realized on earth. . . Such requests come from one whose hunger for righteousness on earth will not be satisfied with a snack, as it were, but only with the eschatological banquet associated with the age to come (5:6; cf. 8:11). The Father is the Lord of heaven and earth (11:25), and he has given the resurrected Jesus universal authority in heaven and on earth (28:18). In the meantime, as disciples are engaged in the gradual extension of the kingdom by their words and deeds, their utmost desire is for the ultimate realization of God's reign on earth at the end of the age (13:37-43; 24:14; 28:20)."¹⁷
- v. "Give us daily bread": "The expression reflects first century life in which workers received their pay daily. It also reminds disciples that we only live one day at a time, and each day we are dependent on God to sustain us. Ultimately everything comes from Him. Having to live from hand to mouth one day at a time can be a blessing if it reminds us of our total dependence on God. This is especially true since we live in a world that glorifies self-sufficiency."¹⁸
- vi. "Forgive our debts": "Today many Christians read this as 'give me a break.' In the typically late-twentieth-century manner, this saves the ego and its egotism. 'I am not a *sinner*, I just need a break!' But no, I need more than a break. I need pity because of who I am. If my pride is untouched when I pray for forgiveness, I have not prayed for forgiveness. I don't even understand it. Now that I have come to know the Kingdom Among Us, I too will be merciful to those close to me. It is not just that I do not condemn them."¹⁹ (same for v.14-15)
- vii. "Lead us not into temptation": "Temptation" is the Greek *peirasmos* and means "testing." It refers not so much to solicitation to evil as to trials that test the character. God does not test (*peirasmos*) anyone (James 1:13-14). Why then do we need to pray that He will not lead us into testing? Even though God is not the instrumental cause of our testing He does permit us to experience temptation from the world, the flesh, and the devil (cf. 4:1). Therefore this petition is a request that He minimize the occasions of our testing that may result in our sinning. It articulates

¹⁴ See Eccl. 5:1-5 for a compelling treatment of the use of words in our prayers. The parallels to what Jesus is teaching us about prayer are compelling.

¹⁵ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*

¹⁶ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

¹⁷ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (187). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

¹⁸ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*

¹⁹ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

the repentant disciple's felt weakness to stand up under severe trials in view of our sinfulness."²⁰ "When disciples pray for protection from temptation to sin, they pray for God to break the cycle that so often plagues them (cf. Josh. 7:20–21; James 1:13–15). Temptation leads to sin, and sin leads to the necessity of praying for forgiveness. Prayer for protection from temptation and deliverance from the evil one's strategies breaks the cycle (cf. Matt. 4:1–11)."²¹

viii. "For yours is the Kingdom . . .": "The disciples are renewed in their assurance that the kingdom is God's by their fellowship in Jesus Christ, on whom depends the fulfillment of all their prayers. In him God's name is hallowed, his kingdom comes and his will is done. For his sake the disciples are preserved in body and receive forgiveness of sin, in his strength they are preserved in all times of temptation, in his power they are delivered and brought to eternal life. That is the assurance the disciples have."²²

e. "Prayers are not always . . . 'granted.' This is not because prayer is a weaker kind of causality, but because it is a stronger kind. When it 'works' at all it works unlimited by space and time. That is why God has retained a discretionary power of granting or refusing it. [Were it not for that] condition, prayer would destroy us. It is not unreasonable for a headmaster to say, 'Such and such things you may do according to the fixed rules of this school. But such and such other things are too dangerous to be left to general rules. If you want to do them you must come and make a request and talk over the whole matter with me in my study. And then – we'll see.'"²³

"The goal for disciples of Jesus is to be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect (5:48). The disciple's *character* is to be modeled on the Father's character, and the disciple's *performance* is to be done for the Father's approval. "Disciples must impress God alone" (Keener 1999: 206). This cuts against the grain of popular cultures that value exhibitionism and ostentation. The "If you've got it, flaunt it" principle can perversely infiltrate the modern church as it had the Judaism of Jesus's day. But Jesus would have his disciples do the right thing in the right way."²⁴

Tough Questions:

1. Where did you learn how to pray? Where are you learning how to pray? How much does your prayer life look like the model prayer Jesus teaches here?
2. What do verses 14 & 15 have to do with prayer? Why are they the ending to Jesus' teaching on prayer?
3. How should Matthew 6:1 influence the way we use Facebook, Twitter, blogs, and other forms of social media?

²⁰ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

²¹ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (189). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

²² Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

²³ Lewis, C.S. *God in the Dock*.

²⁴ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (180–181). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

The Sermon on the Mount

True Spirituality – No More Confusion :: Matthew 6:16-24

Review of 6:1-15: Spirituality in Jesus' day had become twisted and perverted into something that could help us earn right relationship with God (or, at the very least, demonstrate to everyone else that we were as righteous as we hoped we were). Some things never change. Today we face the same temptations of turning our spiritual expression of our relationship with God into a means to an end. Jesus spoke specifically as to God's expectations. He continues to speak about other matters of spirituality as he rights our understanding of how to live as citizens of the Kingdom of God, salt of the earth, and light of the world.

So, do not be like the hypocrites . . . (flipping spirituality upside-down)

3. In Your Fasting (16-18)

- a. "Of the three activities treated in 6:1-18, fasting is certainly the least important to many Christians today. Indeed, it is not commanded in any of the NT Epistles. Yet it was an important part of Jewish religious practice in the days of Jesus. Fasting was a prescribed part of various Israelite community activities involving public repentance (Joel 1:14; 2:15), and pious Jews fasted voluntarily during times of religious devotion, especially prayer. It is primarily voluntary fasting that is in view here. Jesus himself fasted (Matt. 4:2; cf. Moses and Elijah, Exod. 34:28; 1 Kings 19:8) and spoke metaphorically of the appropriateness of fasting for his disciples after his death (Matt. 9:14-15). The Pharisees fasted (9:14; cf. Luke 18:12), and Jesus does not criticize them for the practice. In Acts the disciples fasted before selecting church leaders (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23)."¹
- b. In the time of Jesus, there was only one fast that God required of His people – that was on the Day of Atonement (see Lev 16:29-31). People could hold additional fasts for special occasions. The Pharisees began to teach that additional fasts were required for righteousness (see Luke 18:12). And, as with everything else in the spiritual life, people were using fasting as an opportunity to draw attention to themselves (and to make themselves more 'righteous'), by distorting their appearance so that everyone would know they were fasting.
- c. Those who are citizens of the Kingdom recognize a different reason for fasting: their flesh. In actuality, giving, praying and fasting are all disciplines that believers practice to keep their flesh in check. But even though they are not eating natural food, they don't act as if they are hungry – because they have food that natural people don't know anything about (see John 4:32-34 and Matt 4:4). There's no need for a show.
 - i. "The practice of fasting goes together with the teaching about nourishing ourselves on the person of Jesus. It emphasizes the direct availability of God to nourish, sustain, and renew the soul. It is a testimony to the reality of another world from which Jesus and his Father perpetually intermingle their lives with ours (John 14:23)."²
 - ii. It should also be noted that fasting (or any other spiritual discipline for that matter) has no value in and of itself. We practice disciplines like fasting because of our weaknesses and needs – not because we are well-put-together. If we find we are practicing disciplines like fasting because

¹ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (190). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

² Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

we are good at it and we like for others to see how easy it is for us, then we already have our reward.

4. In Your Treasuring (19-24)

- a. "Earthly goods are given to be used, not to be collected. In the wilderness God gave Israel the manna every day, and they had no need to worry about food and drink. Indeed, if they kept any of the manna over until the next day, it went bad. In the same way, the disciple must receive his portion from God every day. If he stores it up as a permanent possession, he spoils not only the gift, but himself as well, for he sets his heart on his accumulated wealth, and makes it a barrier between himself and God. Where our treasure is, there is our trust, our security, our consolation and our God."³
- b. "Store up treasures in heaven": Storing up treasure is not like having a pirate cache of gold hidden away somewhere safe. Storing up treasure is an idiom for where we focus and set our hearts. We are supposed to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength – not the things that He has created.
 - i. "Our heart is inevitably drawn to what we value most, and if kingdom values (cf. 5:3–10) are the priority, we are indeed laying up treasure in heaven. Seeking heavenly treasure, however, does not amount to avoidance of earthly involvement. Treasure in heaven is probably metonymy for treasure with God (cf. Luke 15:18). Disciples of Jesus long for the eventual rule of heaven's values on earth, and in the meantime they work to implement those values "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:9–10)."⁴
- c. "The eye is the lamp of the body . . .": This is not a random passage. It is directly connected to what comes before it. Just as our heart directs where are treasure is (in a more figurative sense) so also will our eyes (in a more literal sense). Our eyes also help to see with "kingdom vision." We are able to see value in things that God values. If we lack this perspective or ability to 'see' then we will have no perspective or direction with regard to the kingdom. Where your treasure is, there your eye will be also.
 - i. This is an important point given all that the Pharisees and hypocrites had been doing in the "sight" of other people – to get their reward from men. Truly their actions revealed not only the state of their heart, but also their blindness to the vision of the kingdom of heaven. Their values were not the same as the values (or treasure?) of the kingdom of heaven.
 - ii. "These earthly treasures are so powerful that they grip the entire personality. They grip a man's heart, his mind and his will; they tend to affect his spirit, his soul and his whole being. Everyone is affected by them; they are a terrible danger."⁵
 - iii. The darkness is great for someone who thinks they can see, but is really living blindly (Pharisees). They spent their time trying to take things that should be "in secret" and making them more visible.
- d. "No one can serve two masters. . .": This concludes what was just mentioned beforehand. No one can serve God and possessions because they both make an exclusive demand upon our lives. Who ever heard of 2 slave owners co-owning

³ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*. Earthly wealth is not a measure of God's favor either. The fact that Jesus speaks these words should be evidence to the fact.

⁴ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (196). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁵ Jones, Martyn Lloyd. *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount*.

one slave? We cannot simultaneously value the things the world values *and* the things that God values.

- i. Mammon: "Mammon" is the transliteration of the emphatic form of the Aramaic word *mamona* meaning wealth or property. The root word in both Hebrew and Aramaic indicates something in which one places confidence. Here Jesus personified it and set it over against God as a competing object of confidence.
- ii. The picture here is of two slave owners who value (treasure?) different things. You cannot please both owners. To serve one is to spite the other.
 1. It is easy to conclude that Jesus is drawing a line between the kingdom of the world versus the kingdom of heaven. The Pharisees were trying to blend the two (intentionally and unintentionally) and Jesus has come to herald to us that 1) such is not the case and 2) we don't have to live in bondage to our wealth, possessions or performance!
 2. "Divided loyalty is impossible—a disciple cannot be the loyal slave of both God (producing heavenly treasure) and wealth (producing earthly treasure). God's kingdom demands exclusive loyalty, as Jesus reminded Satan (4:10, citing Deut. 6:13). One's devotion to it must be single-minded."⁶

"The Kingdom of God carries all back to the grand underlying ideas. What were this or that mode of giving alms, unless the right idea be apprehended, of what constitutes riches, and where they should be sought? This is indicated in verses 19 to 21. Again, as to *prayer*: what matters it if we avoid the externalism of the Pharisees, or even catch the right form as set forth in the 'Lord's Prayer,' unless we realise what underlies prayer? It is to lay our inner man wholly open to the light of God in genuine, earnest simplicity, to be quite shone through by Him. It is, moreover, absolute and undivided self-dedication to God. And in this lies its connection, alike with the spirit that prompts *almsgiving*, and with that which prompts real *fasting*. That which underlies all such fasting is a right view of the relation in which the body with its wants stands to God—the temporal to the spiritual. It is the spirit of prayer which must rule alike alms and fasting, and pervade them: the upward look and self-dedication to God, the seeking first after the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, that man, and self, and life may be baptized in it. Such are the real alms, the real prayers, the real fasts of the Kingdom of God."⁷

Tough Question:

1. If I cannot serve both God and wealth, then what ought to be my perspective on my worldly possessions? (especially if they're all "gonna burn") Should I not have an IRA? Should I give all my money to the poor? In other words, how can we make sure what Jesus says here doesn't become cliché?

⁶ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (198). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁷ Edersheim, A. (1896). *Vol. 1: The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (530–531). Bellingham, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.

The Sermon on the Mount

True Spirituality – No More Confusion :: Matthew 6:25-34

Review of 6:1-24: Another fallacy of the Pharisees was to think that they could have the admiration of men and be righteous in the sight of God. Not only is that an unrighteous way of thinking about spirituality, but it's also impossible. Whatever the case may be, if we are not able to look at the world the way Jesus teaches us in this next section, how great will the darkness be in our lives!

"Earthly possessions dazzle our eyes and delude us into thinking that they can provide security and freedom from anxiety. Yet all the time they are the very source of all anxiety"¹ because we are trying to serve two masters.

"The treasure we have in heaven is also something very much available to us now. Eternity is now ongoing. I am now leading a life that will last forever. Upon my treasure in the heavens I now draw for present needs. What I 'treasure' in heaven is not just the little that I have caused to be there. It is what I love there and what I place my security and happiness in *there*."²

So, do not be like them . . . (flipping spirituality upside-down)

5. In Your Worrying (providing/controlling/living) (25-34)

- a. "Therefore" / "For this reason": The 'therefore' looks back to two truths that Jesus has taken some time to emphasize to us: 1). God knows what we need before we ask him. 2). We cannot look at or pursue worldly goods the same way the world does.
- b. In what follows, Jesus illustrates why citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven should not worry (just as cities should not be hidden and salt should not lose its savor). If you are a citizen of the kingdom, you *cannot* worry because of who you are and who you know God to be. We know our place in the Kingdom. It is God's role to provide, it is our role to represent and obey. We shouldn't try to provide for ourselves because it condemns our belief in the very King of our Kingdom. We cannot serve God and possessions!
- c. "Do not be worried": (*merimnao*) means to be troubled/strangled by your cares – or what you care deeply for.³
 - i. Essentially the source of worry is the need to control and manipulate our circumstances. When we feel like we can no longer be 'in control' of these things, we start to react like we would if we were being strangled – and we'll turn to anything for survival. The only way to be free of anxiety is to find salvation from it in something other than treasure stored up on earth.
 - ii. Furthermore, we just got done learning about how we are supposed to ask God for 'daily bread' – what we need for today. How silly it would be for us to proceed by living as if we didn't believe He would provide what *He knows we need!* (cf. 6:8, 11, 7:9-11)
 - iii. "Anxiety is characteristic of the Gentiles, for they rely on their own strength and work instead of relying on God. They do not know that the Father knows that we have need of all these things, so they try to do for

¹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

² Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

³ Thayer's Greek Dictionary.

themselves what they do not expect from God.”⁴ Some have said that anxiety is practical atheism.

d. Birds :: Food :: Sustenance

- i. Jesus isn’t suggesting that we shouldn’t work at all – or that God will just send food to us out of thin air (though he can & has! See Exodus 16). Birds work all day to get the food they need. But they don’t fall over dead worrying about whether or not they will have food (see 1 Tim 6:8).
- ii. Those in the Kingdom are more valuable than birds – and if they don’t worry, then those who understand the truth of God and His kingdom should worry even less than the birds.

e. Lilies :: Clothing :: Appearance

- i. “To try to be beautiful in terms of physical things never succeeds. And without the inner beauty of soul, beauty is simply garish. Some of the most beautiful people I have ever seen are elderly people whose souls shine so brightly their bodies are hardly visible. For as we live from God and God’s world, a beauty is ours that overwhelms the flowers.”⁵

f. “You of little faith”:

- i. “Here Jesus uses a term that may have been his own invention. It occurs ten times in five verses in the Gospels. It seems to have been a nickname that he invented as a way of gently chiding his apprentices for their lack of confidence in God and in himself.”⁶ Also, note, that he says ‘you of *little* faith’ – not ‘you of *no* faith.’
- ii. What is the ultimate source of anxiety? A lack of faith. Anxiety about the essentials of life demonstrates a serious lack of faith that is more similar to the lifestyle of the Gentiles than those who live in the Kingdom of Heaven. So, do not be like them . . .

g. “Seek first His kingdom . . .”:

- i. “Seeking the kingdom involves pursuing the things about the kingdom for which Jesus taught His disciples to pray, namely, God’s honor, His reign, and His will (vv. 9-10). Seeking God’s righteousness means pursuing righteousness in life in submission to God’s will (cf. 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1). It does not mean seeking justification, in view of Jesus’ use of “righteousness” in the context.”⁷
- ii. Jesus’ message, “Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” comes into view here. This kingdom He proclaims is available to all. To those who become citizens, He bestows ‘all these things.’

h. “All these things will be added to you . . .”

- i. There has been a lot of ‘seeking’ in chapter 6.
 - 1. The gentiles/hypocrites seek after earthly treasure: approval of man, righteousness and mammon. They get what they seek – and that is all they get.
 - 2. The citizens of the kingdom seek after heavenly treasure: doing the will of their King (as it is in heaven), living out their identity as salt and light, and serving the King rather than anything in His Kingdom. They get what they seek – and more.
 - 3. The Pharisees honestly sought righteousness. Why was ‘all’ not added to them? Because they sought a righteousness that was of their own creation – of the kingdom of the world. Jesus warned us

⁴ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

⁵ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

in 6:1 not to practice righteousness to be noticed. (*To do so would be to immediately invalidate our righteousness!!!*) Our quest for righteousness can easily wander away from what God designed righteousness for. He didn't design it for your adornment so you can be noticed and admired. Righteousness (*dikaiosune*) is designed to be bestowed and embodied – not put on display. It will act like salt and shine like light, but that's because the righteousness is having its way with the person – not the other way around.

Paul understood Jesus' teaching in Matthew 6. Do you?

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."⁸

The 'peace' Paul describes is ***NOT*** a barometer for discerning God's will!!! The peace of God is an existing *reality* that calms our hearts when we are faced with anxiety that allows us to make kingdom-minded decisions. When we pray, we are reminded of this reality and we walk into it – and it calms our hearts. What is the peace? The warmth of knowing that all things will be added unto us because our Father knows what we need before we ask Him (Matthew 6). How incomprehensible!! How wonderful!! Such a reality reminds us that our perspective needs to be a kingdom perspective – and that keeps our hearts from being swallowed up by fear and worry. When we transfer our anxiety to the King of our kingdom, we live peacefully in his provision – whatever it may be.

Most people use this passage exclusively in their decision-making and in little else – which is unfortunate. (Ever thought about using this passage in conflict management, for example?) To say, 'God has given me a peace about this decision' is an upside-down (and shallow!) way of applying this passage that utterly disregards all that Jesus teaches us in Matthew 6. It should not be used as a cliché that gives us a 'spiritual' way out of things that ail us. It is a reminder of Jesus' teaching: "Seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you."

Peace is knowing your Father cares and provides for you. Peace is ***not*** the relief that comes from talking yourself into or out of a decision. God's peace gives you a right perspective and steady heart so you can make a good decision.

Tough Questions:

1. If this text is true, then why have some believers died of starvation?
2. Is anxiety/worry a sin?

⁸ Philippians 4:4-7

The Sermon on the Mount

True Spirituality – No More Confusion :: Matthew 7:1-12

Review of Chapter 6: Jesus spoke at great length about what the spiritual life of those who are citizens of the kingdom ought to look like. Here, specifically, he comments on how our relationships with others should look. What kind of relationship do you think you would have with a Scribe or Pharisee? Here Jesus continues to describe the righteousness that surpasses theirs (especially if we have already laid aside anger, lust, false witness, vengeance, practicing our righteousness before men, and trusting in wealth).

So, do not be like them . . . (flipping spirituality upside-down)

6. In Your Treatment of Others

a. "Do not judge":

- i. If we are going to live together with our family and 'neighbors' in the power of the kingdom, then we cannot be constantly heaping condemnation and accusation on their shoulders. Those who understand the reality of their standing in the Kingdom will love others with the same heart as their king. Do you want a Pharisee for a friend?
- ii. "Judgment is the forbidden objectivization [sic] of the other person which destroys single minded-love. I am not forbidden to have my own thoughts about the other person, to realize his shortcomings, but only to the extent that *it offers me an occasion for forgiveness and unconditional love.*"¹
- iii. "Discipleship does not afford us a point of vantage from which to attack others. The love of Christ for the sinner in itself is the condemnation of sin, is his expression of extreme hatred of sin. The disciples of Christ are to love unconditionally. Thus they may effect what their own divided and judiciously and conditionally offered love could never achieve, namely the radical condemnation of sin."²
- iv. Can we judge anyone at all? God's word is clear that we can make judgment about good and evil (1 Cor 5). We are not to condone sin. We also know that we have a responsibility to keep sound doctrine (Matt 7:15, 1 John 4:1). What we cannot judge are the thoughts and motives of the heart and mind. That's only something God can judge. He is the only one who has the right to.³
 1. "What is forbidden is a rigid, censorious judgmentalism that scrutinizes others without even a glance at oneself (7:3; cf. Ps. 18:25-26; Rom. 2:1; 14:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; 5:12; James 4:11-12; 5:9). Such a draconian standard will return to haunt the one who condemns others by it (Matt. 7:2; cf. 5:43-47; 6:14-15; 18:12-20, 32-35; cf. 2 Sam. 12:1-15). Jesus teaches that honest introspection is absolutely necessary for clear discernment and just moral judgments. Christian interpersonal judgments must be constructive, not retributive, since Jesus's disciples will not demand

¹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

² Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

³ Pentecost, J. Dwight. *Design for Living: Lessons on Holiness from the Sermon on the Mount*.

an eye for an eye and will love their enemies (Matt. 5:38–48; 18:15–20; cf. Gal. 6:1).⁴

b. “The speck”:

- i. What does the speck represent? Most people think that the speck represents our own failings in the area in which we are judging someone else. That is an appropriate interpretation – especially given who Jesus has been criticizing. The Pharisees were obsessed with the sins of other peoples and were blinded by their own.
 1. An additional way of understanding this passage: “Condemnation is the board in our eye. We will never know how to truly help the other person until we have grown into the kind of person who does not condemn. ‘Getting the board out’ is not a matter of correcting something that is wrong in our lives so we will be able to condemn our dear ones better.”⁵
 2. “If one does not wish to be judged and punished harshly by God, one will not judge and punish fellow humans harshly. Therefore the behavior of Jesus’s disciples is to be constantly oriented to the prospect of standing before divine judgment at the end.”⁶
- ii. “Judging others makes us blind, whereas love is illuminating. By judging others we blind ourselves to our own evil and to the grace which other are just as entitled to as we are.”⁷

c. “Pearls & Swine”:⁸

- i. What? I thought we weren’t supposed to judge people. How are we supposed to know dogs and pigs without judging them?
- ii. The common interpretation of this passage goes something like this: We have something of value that we *could* give to others, but we shouldn’t because some people aren’t *worthy* of such treasures. They’re pigs and don’t deserve what I have. (Do we really think this is what Jesus was suggesting – especially right after v.1-5?!).
- iii. Consider this alternative. Pigs cannot digest pearls – nor can dogs digest a Bible. The reason these animals will ‘tear you to pieces’ when you step in to feed them another pearl is that *you* at least are edible.
- iv. This is a picture of our efforts to correct and control others by pouring our good things upon them – things they simply cannot ingest and use to nourish themselves. The needy person will finally become angry and attack us. The point is not the waste of the pearl but that the person given the pearl is not helped.
- v. Our ‘pearls’ are often offered with a certain superiority of bearing that keeps us from paying attention to those we are trying to help. We have solutions. That should be enough, shouldn’t it? And very quickly some contempt, impatience, anger, and even condemnation slips into our offer. And how we feel when our ‘pearl’ is left there on the ground to be walked

⁴ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (205). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁵ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

⁶ Turner, D. L. (2008). *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew* (205). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic.

⁷ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

⁸ Dallas Willard’s treatment of these verses is excellent. Every other treatment I investigated left me disappointed and confused as to why Jesus would say these words. Willard’s explanation is not only plausible, but also compelling. Everything from this point on is from his book, *The Divine Conspiracy*, p. 229-235.

on by the unenthusiastic recipient will be a pretty good sign of where our heart was in the first place.

- vi. As long as I am condemning my friends or relatives, or pushing my 'pearls' on them, I am their problem. They have to respond to me, and that usually leads to their 'judging' me right back or 'biting me', as Jesus said they would.

7. In Your Asking of Others and of God

- a. Jesus has not moved on to a new topic! His sermon has not been disjointed up to this point, so we won't assume that is now.
- b. So, how can we be of help to those who are near to us? If we want to influence someone, we won't have a need to manipulate, criticize or belittle. We simply *ask* them to change (and help them in any way they *ask* of us). The same is true in our relationship with God, right? Why would we treat people any differently? "Asking is indeed the great law of the spiritual world through which things are accomplished in cooperation with God and yet in harmony with the freedom and worth of every individual."
- c. When I *ask* someone to do or to give something, I stand *with* that person. We are together. A request by its very nature unites. A demand, by contrast, immediately separates. Asking is a way of getting that requires us to go through the freedom of the person asked that acknowledges that the other person can say yes or no.
- d. This is how relationships ought to look – not just in our asking of others, but also in our asking of God – *our Father* – with whom we also have relationship.
- e. "When the illusion of control disappears, we become men & women of prayer."
– Matt Chandler

Verse 12: "The Law and the Prophets"

- This is the second time we've seen this phrase. The first time was in 5:17 – just before Jesus began to give us correction on the proper exposition of God's law. Much like 'for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven', it is possible that this forms an *inclusio*. Everything in between 5:17 and 7:12 has been focused on the law and the prophets.
- Jesus' teaching does not abolish it – it corrects it. The Pharisees and Scribes were obsessed with it and proclaimed that they were the authorities on the Law. Jesus has set the record straight – turned everything right-side-up for us. Ironically, it has been the teaching of the Scribes and Pharisees that has abolished the law – not Jesus'.
- "It is clear from the foregoing that the disciple has no special privilege or power of his own in all his interaction with others. The mainspring of his life and work is the strength which comes from fellowship with Jesus Christ. Henceforth the disciple will look upon other men as forgiven sinners who owe their lives to the love of God. This is the law and the prophets – for this is none other than the supreme commandment: to love God above all things and our neighbors as ourselves."⁹
- This ends the body of the sermon. Everything after this point is conclusion.

Tough Question:

1. Does Jesus practice what He preaches? See if you can find instances that illustrate the principles of this lesson in the Gospels.
2. How are we supposed to understand Jesus' words when we *don't* get what we ask for?

⁹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

The Sermon on the Mount

"Entrance" :: Matthew 7:13-29

Conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount: Jesus has come to set the record straight. The people had been educated on "what it takes" to be righteous in God's sight. Jesus concludes his sermon by contrasting that 'way' and His 'way'. When Jesus showed up, the religious leaders declared his 'way' to be up-side down. Jesus has the final say on the matter, here.

Entering the Kingdom of Heaven (7:13-27)

Why is the way narrow if the Kingdom is available to all?

"The path of discipleship is narrow, and it is fatally easy to miss one's way and stray from the path, even after years of discipleship. To be called to a life of extraordinary quality, to live up to it, and yet to be unconscious of it is indeed a narrow way. To confess and testify to the truth as it is in Jesus, and at the same time to love the enemies of that truth, his enemies and ours, and to love them with the infinite love of Jesus Christ, is indeed a narrow way. To believe the promise of Jesus that his followers shall possess the earth, and at the same time to face our enemies unarmed and defenseless, preferring to incur injustice rather than to do wrong ourselves, is indeed a narrow way. To see the weakness and wrong in others, and at the same time refrain from judging them; to deliver the gospel message without casting pearls before swine, is indeed a narrow way. The way is unutterably hard, and at every moment we are in danger of straying from it. If we regard this way as one we follow in obedience to an external command, if we are afraid of ourselves all the time, it is indeed an impossible way. But if we behold Jesus Christ going on before step by step, we shall not go astray. For he is himself the way, the narrow way and the strait gate. The way which the Son of God trod on earth, and the way which we too must tread as citizens of two worlds on the razor edge between this world and the kingdom of heaven, could hardly be a broad way."¹

4 Contrasts That Delineate Right-Side-Up from Up-Side Down:

1. The Narrow Gate & the Wide Gate (13-14)

- a. "The AV translation "straight" is a bit misleading. That translation reflected the Latin *strictum* meaning narrow, and it probably contributed to the common idea of "the straight and narrow." However the Greek word *stene* clearly means narrow as contrasted with broad."²
- b. As we read in Bonhoeffer's quote, there is no do-it-yourself approach to acting as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven. You can't make up your own 'way.' The only hope of entering is living the life that Jesus has just finished describing. The only hope of living such a life is to be the type of person who lives that way. The only hope of becoming such a person is through exclusive attachment to the person of Jesus Christ. So, on the one hand, 'entering' has everything to do with our behavior. On the other, it has everything to do with knowing the "gatekeeper"....so to speak. Both are now exclusively available because the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Thus, we may now enter.
- c. Remember, people of this day had been living under a righteousness – a 'way' – that was imposed upon them by their religious leaders. It was not the way that Jesus had in mind. The religious leaders of the day did indeed maintain a narrow gate because they were so meticulous. However, their 'way' was broad

¹ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

² Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

compared to the way of Jesus Christ – mostly because if you could obey the 250 do's and 365 do-not's of Pharisee-ism, you were in.

2. The Good Tree & the Bad Tree (15-20)

- a. "The fruit of the good tree is obedience, which comes from only from the kind of person we have come to be in His fellowship. The wolf in sheep's clothing is the one who tries to *fake* discipleship by outward deeds. But then inward realities overwhelm him or her."³
- b. "Some interpreters of this passage take Jesus' teaching farther than He went with it. They say it is impossible for a genuine believer to do bad works. This cannot be true in view of the hundreds of commands, exhortations, and warnings that Jesus and the apostles gave to believers in the New Testament. It is possible for a believer to do bad works (e.g., 16:23; Tit.2:11-13; 3:8; 1 John 1:9). That they will not is the teaching of sinless perfection. Other interpreters say that some bad works are inevitable for the believer, but bad works will not characterize the life of a true believer. This quickly turns into a question of how many bad works, which the New Testament does not answer. Rather the New Testament writers present some people who have departed from God's will for a long time as believers (e.g., 1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18). The point Jesus was making in verse 18 was simply that false prophets do what is bad, and people who follow God do what is good."⁴
 - i. Dr. Constable's comments are accurate and I agree with them here. I would only add that he seems to interpret the passage in terms of external obedience only. The internal reality must also be considered. False prophets cannot *naturally* bear good fruit. In other words, they have to fake it. A true citizen of the kingdom of heaven doesn't have to try to bear fruit. Their internal state is good. That person is like an apple tree. An apple tree bears apples *naturally* – without having to try. In that sense, the believer will *always* bear apples...so to speak. Even if a false prophet is doing something 'right' for the wrong reason, it is still *bad* fruit (even though it may be a good deed). The *natural* fruit that a false prophet produces is *always* rotten in God's sight (but not always in ours).

3. Those Who Do God's Will & Those Who Try a Substitute (21-23)

- a. Given the first two contrasts, the third one is self-explanatory. If the way is narrow, but some think it broad and if there are wolves in sheep's clothing – then when it comes time for judgment before God – this will be the case.
- b. This is a sobering reminder for us who look up to people simply because of what they say or the magnificent things they do – especially people who have celebrity. It is even easier in our day and age for a false prophet or someone who follows the broad way to do great things on stage and not live the life that Jesus has illustrated in His sermon. And if it's easy for them to be misled – it is just as easy for us.
 - i. Notice the traits that those who enter and those who do not enter share:
 - 1. Orthodoxy of doctrine (both call Him, Lord)
 - 2. Passionate involvement (both say Lord, Lord!)
 - 3. Active service (both prophesy, heal, perform miracles, etc.)
 - ii. "The absence of these traits demonstrates that you are not a Christian. But the presence of them does not mean that you are one either."⁵

³ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

⁴ Constable, Dr. Thomas. *Notes on Matthew*.

⁵ Keller, Tim. This and the above three categories are from his sermon entitled, "Authentic Christianity".

- c. Who will enter? Those who do the will of the Father. What is the will of the Father? Everything that Jesus has just taught us about the Law and the Prophets.
 - i. "The quotation from Psalm 6:8 puts Jesus in the place of the sufferer whom God has vindicated and who now tells those who have done Him evil to depart from His presence."⁶ Their hypocrisy condemns them twice: not only do they have the picture of the Kingdom wrong – they persecuted The One who had it right. That's what happens when you are blind.
 - ii. There is a fine line between those who uses God and one who follows God. The former bases his life on his own obedience and moral conformity to the Law in order to guarantee his standing before God. The latter has relinquished her entire will so that standing is predicated on God's provision of relationship in Jesus Christ. The former is his own foundation. The latter has a foundation other than herself.

4. The House on the Rock & the House on the Sand (24-27)

- a. "The one who hears him and does what he says accordingly builds the house of his or her life to be totally indestructible."⁷
- b. "The only proper response to this word which Jesus brings with him from eternity is simply to do it. Jesus has spoken: he is the word, ours is the obedience. Only in the doing of it does the word of Jesus retain its honor, might and power among us."⁸

Conclusion To Our Study:

"As a disciple of Jesus I am with him, by choice and by grace, learning from him how to live in the kingdom of God: how to live within the range of God's effective will, his life flowing through mine. I am learning to live my life as He would live my life if He were I. I am not necessarily learning to do everything He did, but I am learning how to do everything I do in the manner that He did all that He did.

"As his apprentices, we pass through a course of training, from having faith *in* Christ to having the faith *of* Christ (Gal 2:16-20). As a proclaimer and teacher of the gospel of his kingdom, I do not cease to announce a gospel *about* Jesus. That remains forever foundational. But I also recognize the need and opportunity to announce the gospel *of* Jesus – the gospel of the present availability to every human being of a life in The Kingdom Among Us."⁹

Tough Question:

1. Am I in the Kingdom of Heaven right now? Is it here, or am I there? Can I ever leave?

⁶ Constable, Tom. *Notes on Matthew*.

⁷ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*.

⁸ Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *The Cost of Discipleship*.

⁹ Willard, Dallas. *The Divine Conspiracy*. (selected passages from several pages)