

The Sermon on the Mount – Part 1

Brynmawr Family Church Sermon
Stuart Wheatman, Sunday 20th Feb 2011

Intro-

- What is the most significant teaching, or sermon Jesus gave? Many would identify the Sermon on the Mount as the most important teaching Jesus gave, but why did He give this teaching and what does it mean? Going to be looking at the Sermon on the Mount in a series, starting this week. Will be looking at the context and what it means for us today.

The context of this sermon

- Jesus had done miracles and was attracting a good crowd. People were wondering if He agreed with the Pharisees in their interpretation of the Law of Moses. People were evaluating whether to follow Jesus, or continue to follow the teaching of the Pharisees.
- The place was a mountain in Matthew, but a plain in Luke (Lk 6:17-49). Could have either been the same place, or a different occasion and another place. However, Luke's version read in parallel does help interpretation and adds some points, so is useful for study alongside.
- The point of the sermon was really to smash people's concept of who was really going to Heaven. The assumption was that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were the 'experts', the good guys who would be first in entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus was about to smash these preconceptions. Today people like to think that God will let them into Heaven, as they are not a really 'bad person'. The gospel breaks this mindset and prepares us to truly receive God's salvation, through Jesus alone.

Read Matt 5:1-20

We will look at 4 aspects from this passage we can apply to our lives today, whilst noting their original context:

1. We must learn to evaluate blessings from God's perspective rather than the world's- v3-10

- These are the 8 beatitudes. The word "beatitude" is derived from the Latin "beatus," which means 'blessed' or 'happy'. The greek word used here literally means 'happy'.
- The world has set ideas as to what true happiness is, and many are on a road trying to be happy in this life. However, Jesus encourages us to see things from Heaven's perspective, and things look very different in the light of eternity. In fact many tables will be turned, and the things this world now considers blessed turn out to be the very opposite in many cases. 'Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.' -Ps 84:10- i.e. luxury in the world's eyes is no comparison to being even a small part of God's kingdom. Do we have this attitude, or do we sometimes envy the wicked, thinking they have it easy? Let's take an eternal perspective as did Asaph in Psalm 73 when he began envying the wicked until he saw their final destiny.
- Verse 3 and 10 contain the same refrain 'For theirs is the Kingdom of God'- Jesus is talking specifically about the attitude of those going to Heaven, contrasted with

those not. We could regard each refrain after the 8 beatitudes as saying the same thing- i.e. to 'inherit the earth' is to get to Heaven, to be called 'sons of God' is to be qualified for Heaven etc. Verse 12 says 'great is your reward in Heaven'. Also Luke contrasts those in difficult situations 'now' with how blessed they will 'be' in the future (i.e. In Heaven), contrasted with those having all they need now, who will lack in the future (i.e. In Hell).

- We have to be careful here, as scripture is clear that we are not saved by works, however, what Jesus is doing is pointing out that the Pharisees are not exhibiting the necessary ingredients to humble themselves in order to accept the salvation Jesus is offering. They were not 'poor in spirit' i.e. humble etc. They thought they were righteous enough and didn't need God's help.
- The first 4 beatitudes are directed towards God. They can all be seen as aspects of repentance- getting right with God and strongly desiring God's help. The first thing God does when He saves someone is to upset them, to make them uncomfortable in their sin. The first 2 beatitudes have echoes of Isaiah 61, where the Messiah comforts all who mourn and preaches 'good news' to the poor. The 'mourning' here in verse 4 can also be translated as 'wailing' (for sin). In Pensacola people would wail over their sin when the altar call was given. People would run to the front as Steve Hill cried out 'hurry, hurry'. In times of revival, the Welsh revival included, people are in turmoil over their sin before coming to know God's grace.

[John Wesley asks God to confirm His Word](#)

When John Wesley concluded his message he cried to God to "confirm His Word," to "set to His Seal," and to "bear witness to His Word." And God did. Sinners were stricken immediately, and began to cry for mercy under fearful conviction of sin, and soon after, in a moment they were set at liberty, and filled with unspeakable joy in the knowledge of a present Salvation. In his wonderful journal he sets down what his eyes witnessed, and his ears heard in the following words:

"We understood that many were offended at the cries of those on whom the power of God came; among whom was a physician, who was much afraid there might be fraud or imposture in the case. Today one whom he had known many years was the first who broke out in strong cries and tears. He could hardly believe his own eyes and ears. He went and stood close to her, and observed every symptom, till great drops of sweat ran down her face, and all her bones shook. He then knew not what to think, being clearly convinced it was not fraud, nor yet any natural disorder. But when both her soul and body were healed in a moment, he acknowledged the finger of God." Oswald J. Smith, *The Revival We Need*, pp. 16-17

[Deeply affected and wounded at heart- David Brainerd's Journal](#)

Aug 9. In the afternoon discoursed to them publicly. There were now present about seventy persons, old and young. I opened and applied the parable of the sower, Matt. xiii. Was enabled to discourse with much plainness, and found afterwards that this discourse was very instructive to them. There were many tears among them while I was discoursing publicly, but no considerable cry: yet some were much affected with a few words spoken from Matt. xi. 28. "Come unto me, all ye that labour," &c. with which I concluded my discourse. But while I was discoursing near night to two or three of the awakened persons, a divine influence seemed to attend what was spoken to them in a powerful manner, which caused the persons to cry out in anguish of soul, although I spoke not a word of terror; but, on the contrary, set before them the fullness and all-sufficiency of Christ's merits, and his willingness to save all that came to him; and thereupon pressed them to come without delay. The cry of these was soon heard by others, who, though scattered before, immediately gathered round. I then proceeded in the same strain of gospel-invitation, till they were all melted into tears and cries, except two or three; and seemed in the greatest distress to find and secure an interest in the great Redeemer. --Some who had but little more than a ruffle made in their passions the day before, seemed now to be deeply affected and wounded at heart: and the concern in general appeared near as prevalent as it was the day before. There was indeed a very great mourning among them, and yet every one seemed to mourn apart. For so great was their concern, that almost every one was praying and crying for himself, as if none had been near. Guttumaukalummeh, guttumaukalummeh, i.e. "Have mercy upon me, have mercy upon me;" was the common cry. It was very affecting to see the poor Indians, who the other day were hallooing and yelling in their idolatrous feasts and drunken frolics, now crying to God with such importunity for an interest in his dear Son! David Brainerd's Journal, Part I., From A.D. 1745 June 19th To Nov 4th, At Crossweeksung And Forks Of Delaware

[The power of a holy life – Charles Finney in a factory](#)

The next morning, I went into the factory, to look through it. I observed there was a good deal of agitation among those who were busy at their looms, and their mules, and other implements. On passing through one of the apartments, where a great number of young women were attending to weaving, I observed a couple of them

eyeing me, and speaking very earnestly; and I could see that they were a good deal agitated, although they laughed. I went slowly towards them. They saw me coming, and were evidently much excited. One of them was trying to mend a broken thread, and her hands trembled so that she could not mend it. I approached slowly, looking at the machinery, as I passed; but this girl grew more and more agitated, and could not proceed with her work. When I came within eight or ten feet of her, I looked solemnly at her. She was quite overcome, sunk down, and burst into tears. The impression caught almost like powder, and in a few moments nearly all in the room were in tears. This feeling spread through the factory Mr. W——, the owner was present, and seeing the state of things, he said to the superintendent, "Stop the mill, and let the people attend to religion; for it is more important that our souls should be saved than that this factory run." The gate was shut down, and the factory stopped; but where should we assemble? The superintendent suggested that the mule room was large; and, the mules being run up, we could assemble there. We did so, and a more powerful meeting I scarcely ever attended. It went on with great power. The revival went through the mill with astonishing power, and in the course of a few days nearly all in the mill were hopefully converted. Charles Finney, Autobiography, English version, p154

- The meek inheriting the earth is taken from Psalm 37:11, Jesus skillfully weaves passages from the Torah together in this sermon to show the traits of those who are truly blessed. The word 'earth' in Hebrew can also mean 'land' i.e. the land of Israel. It is those who humbly accept Jesus' authority in their lives who will inherit God's Kingdom. This was something the Pharisees were not prepared to do- they didn't like the look of Jesus. God sometimes comes in ways we do not expect and we need to be humble enough to allow Him to be God.
- I will finish with the last of the attitudes toward God and due to time skip the next 4 relating to man. This attitude is one of 'hunger and thirst for righteousness'. In Is 55:1 'Ho! Everyone who thirsts come to the waters; and you who have no money, come buy and eat'- Jesus is here clearly stating that we are blessed when we realise our need of God's righteousness! This is the gospel! In Matt 6:33 as part of this same sermon Jesus says specifically 'seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness', and a few verses later says 'Ask and it will be given you, seek and you will find; knock and it will be opened to you' (Matt 7:7).
- Have we truly mourned over our sin, and are we relying now solely on Christ as our means of righteousness?

2. Give up trying to get to Heaven by good works- v20

- The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was seen as very great by the people at the time, but Jesus was not fooled. He declared we would not get to Heaven unless we were more righteous than them.
- Pharisees prayed every day 3 times a day. They fasted twice a week.
- The Pharisees had built a 'hedge' around God's law so that they would not break God's commandments. This hedge was the 'oral law'- extra sayings said to have been given by Moses but not written down, but rather passed down orally. Also, together with this were the sayings of the Rabbis handed down through the years, comments on the correct interpretation of the law, together with extra rules. Jesus called their additions the 'traditions of man' which went against the 'commands of God'.
- Read Phil 3:2-9. Paul was a top Pharisee and very zealous for obeying the law, but really he was trusting in his own ability and was on a path to Hell. He considers what he lost, his previous life as a Pharisee, to be dog-muck ('skubalon'- v8) compared to knowing Christ, and having Christ's righteousness instead of his own dung dung righteousness.
- How do you evaluate whether you are saved or not? Is it based on your flawed performance, or on the perfect work of Christ? We can slip into relying on Church attendance, bible study, prayer, outreach as our basis of salvation, or righteousness and wobble if we mess something up. Let's be clear we are saved by Christ alone. "At the centre of all religions is the idea of Karma. You know, what you put out come back to you: an eye for an eye. . . . Along comes this idea called Grace to upend all that. . . . Love interrupts, if you like, the consequences of your actions, which in my case is very good news indeed. . . . I'd be in big trouble if Karma was going to be my judge. I'm holding out for Grace. I'm holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the Cross." --

3. Trust in the One who is our righteousness- v17

- Some Christians think the law is bad, but Jesus didn't.
- It says how wonderful the law is in Psalm 119. This Psalm uses a different Hebrew word for 'law' (10 different Hebrew words) each verse. The verses are grouped in 8 verses beginning with the same Hebrew letter, and then the next 8 verses begin with the next Hebrew letter in the Hebrew alphabet (22 letters in their alphabet), making 176 verses. Each verse extols the beauties of God's law.
- Romans 7:7-12 says the law is holy, just and good, the problem is us- our inability to keep it.
- Jesus says (Matt 5:17) He didn't come to change the law or destroy, but to fulfil it. This has 4 aspects to it:
Firstly, He came to give the correct interpretation to the Law (which He does later in this sermon).
Secondly, He lived under the law and abided by the law completely- the only person to ever do this.
Thirdly, He fulfilled all the prophecies made about Him (over 300) in the Law and Prophets.
Fourthly, He took the punishment of the law against our sins completely, so that we are released from it's jurisdiction and power. The death of Christ signifies for us the end of the law- we do not have to convert over to Judaism and eat Kosher meat, or take ritual baths when unclean etc. However, some aspects of the law still apply, such as 'do not steal'. We have the New Testament letters, and God's Holy Spirit to lead us in a lifestyle pleasing to God. The good news is there is no condemnation now for us! (Rom 8:1).
- Jesus is the righteous fulfillment of the law on our behalf. We are justified- given His perfect lawkeeping record, as a free gift! We are declared righteous! We are more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees, the top dogs in Jesus' day! This is the 'gift of righteousness'. Read Rom 3:20-22. Read Rom 4:4-8.
'It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.' (1 Cor 1:30)
'God made him who had no sin to be sin [a sin offering] for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.' (2 Cor 5:21).
Rom 1:16-17 The gospel reveals to us the righteousness of God with is by faith from first to last.

Searching for an easily understandable way of teaching his children about salvation, Jim decided to call his children to the bottom of the staircase. Standing at the top of the stairs he said, "I'm Jesus in heaven and I want you here with me, but you cannot climb up the stairs or use the handrail." After initial puzzlement his 12-year-old said, "Okay, Dad, I'll play. Come down here." Jim came down. The boy asked him to turn around, climbed on his back, and asked his father to carry him up the stairs. After each of the four children had been carried up the stairs, their father discussed with them the indelible lesson – how salvation comes not from self-effort, but from what Christ does for us.

- Do you feel righteous? It is not about how we feel, but facts about what Christ has done. Let's bring our belief and expectation into line with the facts.
- "Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace." -- Jerry Bridges

4. Live as an example to the world of what God's grace can achieve in a person- v13

- Legalism is not good works, it is trusting in good works to save us, or to make us right with God. We are saved for good works, not by them.
- As Christians we are no longer 'under law'. This means that we are not under the Law of Moses. However that does not mean we are lawless. Antinomianism is lawlessness- we are not to be lawless, but to obey Christ's law of love. We are to submit to the laws of the land. God's grace means we are free to obey God from the heart without fear of punishment, and that we now have the power, through Christ,

of living righteously. Sin's power over us is broken once and for all- we just need to believe it and live it out.

- Eph 2:8-10 make it all clear-saved by grace though the medium of faith, and even that saving faith was not ours, but a gift from God, so we can't brag. However, we have been saved for something- good works, which again God planned beforehand that we should walk in, they are not our own doing.
- Grace leads us to far greater works than law can accomplish. God's grace leads us to be gracious, giving and not begrudging. A follower of Christ is meant to be holy, something different to the rest of the world, like a shining beacon to the world. As we understand God's grace we will become naturally more evangelistic, out of the right motives.

In 1987 an IRA bomb went off in a small town in Northern Ireland, among a group of Protestants who had gathered to honor the war dead on veteran's Day. Eleven people died and 63 were wounded. What made this act of terrorism stand out from so many others was the response of one of the wounded, Gordon Wilson, a devout Methodist. The bomb buried Wilson and his 20-year-old daughter under five feet of concrete and brick. "Daddy, I love you very much," were the last words Marie spoke, grasping her father's hand as they waited for the rescuers. She suffered severe spinal and brain injuries, and died a few hours later in the hospital. A newspaper later proclaimed, "No one remembers what the politicians had to say at that time. No one who heard Gordon Wilson will ever forget what he confessed.... His grace towered over the miserable justifications of the bombers." Speaking from his hospital bed, Wilson said, "I have lost my daughter, but I bear no grudge. Bitter talk is not going to bring Marie Wilson back to life. I shall pray, tonight and every night, that God will forgive them." After his release from the hospital, Gordon Wilson led a crusade for Protestant-Catholic reconciliation. Protestant extremists who had planned to avenge the bombing decided, because of the publicity surrounding Wilson, that such behavior would be politically foolish. Wilson spoke out against violence and constantly repeated the refrain, "Love is the bottom line." The Irish Republic ultimately made Wilson a member of its Senate. When he died in 1995, all of Ireland and Great Britain honored this ordinary Christian citizen for his uncommon spirit of grace and forgiveness.

Max Lucado observes, "Apple trees bear apples, wheat stalks produce wheat, and forgiven people forgive people. Grace is the natural outgrowth of grace."

Summary

- Evaluate blessings from God's perspective rather than the world's.
- Give up trying to get to Heaven by good works.
- Trust in the One who is our righteousness.
- Live as an example to the world of what God's grace can achieve in a person.

Song: All I Once Held Dear / Jesus, We celebrate Your Victory