

Beatitudes - Modesty, Mourning & Meekness

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 03 March 2015

Preacher: Rev. Murdo M Campbell

[0 : 0 0] Matthew 5 Matthew 5 Matthew 5-7

And it's a passage of scripture which we often refer to as the Sermon on the Mount. And as we said last week, the reason why we call this section of scripture the Sermon on the Mount is simply because of the early church father Augustine who wrote his commentary on this well-known passage and he titled his commentary as the Sermon on the Mount.

And it stuck. As we said, this sermon and Matthew's Gospel as a whole, it's all about the King and His Kingdom.

That's the thrust of the message in Matthew's Gospel. The King and His Kingdom. And the King is obviously Jesus Christ and the Kingdom is what Matthew calls the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God.

But unlike the other Gospel writers, Matthew refers to the Kingdom of God time and time again as the Kingdom of Heaven for the simple reason that Matthew was writing to Jews.

[2 : 0 4] And in order to avoid offending Jews by using the title God, which was too holy to mention for a Jew. So Matthew adopted the title the Kingdom of Heaven.

And you'll notice it repeated all the way through the Sermon on the Mount. And as we said last week, the Kingdom of Heaven, it must be seen as God's intervention into the world through Jesus Christ.

And that the incarnation of the Son of God was the arrival of the Kingdom of God. And what Matthew wants us to understand is that the Kingdom of Heaven in this world, it has begun.

And it's begun by the arrival and the reign of Jesus Christ in this world. But the Kingdom which belongs to King Jesus, as we said last week, it will not be finally consummated until Jesus returns as King on the last day, on the Day of Judgment.

And so in the Kingdom of Heaven there's this paradox. There is the now and the not yet. There is what's happening in the present and what is to happen in the future.

[3 : 1 6] But here in the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus addresses what is to happen in the present. He addresses the now. And Jesus has already said in chapter 4 that the only way to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven is by repenting.

Because that was the first statement recorded by Matthew when Jesus began his ministry. Where Jesus said in chapter 4 in verse 17, Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.

And by this statement, Jesus was inviting people to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and become part of the true Israel. Not the Israel of the Old Covenant, but the Israel of the New Covenant.

Jesus was inviting them to become part of God's covenant people. God's Kingdom. Not a territorial Kingdom, but a spiritual Kingdom.

And so what the message of the Kingdom of Heaven is saying and what Jesus is going to tell us in the Sermon on the Mount is that those who have repented, those who have a renewed heart and a renewed mind, the result of that renewal should cause them to have a renewed lifestyle.

[4 : 30] And for the people of Israel who originally heard the message of the Kingdom of Heaven, this was a radical new teaching that was going to change the worldview of everyone who listened and those who followed the teaching of Jesus.

because the subject of the Sermon on the Mount is that all those who are part of the Kingdom of Heaven, that's you and me tonight, we need character.

That's what Jesus is saying. We need character. We need to live distinctly. We need to think about how we live and how we conduct ourselves as those who are under the authority of King Jesus and as those who are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

And the purpose, as we said last week, the purpose of the Sermon on the Mount is to distinguish between those who are part of the Kingdom of Heaven and those who are not. It's to separate the true believer from the false believer.

It's to separate the Christian from the Pharisee. It's to draw a distinction between the world and those who follow Jesus. Because as we said last week, if the Sermon on the Mount was to be given a theme, it would be the theme, Christ-centred living for Christ-centred lives.

[5 : 52] Christ-centred living for Christ-centred lives. And so as we begin our study of this challenging sermon, Jesus begins with what we have often termed as the Beatitudes.

And at the very outset of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uses the Beatitudes to draw our attention to the marks, to what the marks of the Christian character and conduct are.

And as you can see, there are nine Beatitudes, nine marks which are given regarding Christian character and conduct. But I'd like to divide these nine marks into three groups of three.

And I'd like us to consider just the first three this evening which are given to us in verses 3 to 5. And so the first three marks of Christian character and conduct that Jesus sets before us in the Sermon on the Mount are modesty, mourning, and meekness.

Modesty, mourning, and meekness. So if we look first, they have modesty. It says in verse 2, And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[7 : 16] And as we said, Jesus began the Sermon with Beatitudes. He commenced his teaching with the promise of blessing. But as you can see, the promise of blessing is determined by the condition of obedience.

The promise of blessing is determined by the condition of obedience. And so first of all, just briefly, I'd like us to look at what these Beatitudes mean.

What does Jesus mean when he says that we can be blessed? He uses the word nine times in a row. Blessed, blessed, blessed. But what does he mean? What does he mean?

And the interesting thing about this is that, maybe I've mentioned this before when we're looking at the Songs of Ascents. We mentioned that the word bless literally means to kneel.

It means to kneel in the sense of kneeling before a king in submission. Because the image of the word bless seeks to portray, it's the image of a king standing from his throne and one of his servants is before him and the king is graciously giving to his servant what he does not deserve.

[8 : 30] They are receiving from the hand of the king something that they do not deserve. And nevertheless, the king is graciously giving it to them. Graciously giving what they do not deserve.

And when we understand don't this word bless in the context of the kingdom of heaven, it makes sense. Because as we enter into the kingdom of heaven through repentance, we receive many blessings that we don't deserve.

And we receive them from the king of this kingdom, Jesus Christ. We don't deserve any blessings from the king but he graciously gives them to us. But what Jesus wants us to understand in the Sermon on the Mount is that the blessing of the kingdom in the kingdom of heaven is graciously given to us, yes.

But it's also given to us on the condition of obedience to the king. And I say that because the word bless not only means to kneel before a king.

It's also this covenantal word. It's a covenantal term which carries with it many connotations to the theme of covenant in the Bible.

[9 : 44] Even as we mentioned last Lord's Day when we were looking at the covenant of works, we said that a covenant was two-sided because on the one hand there's God's initiative but on the other hand there's also human responsibility.

And as we said that with every contract or every covenant God gave terms and conditions to the contract. And the terms and conditions of the covenant were straightforward because obedience would bring blessing and disobedience would bring cursing.

Obedience brought blessing, disobedience brought cursing. And as we said by being brought into the kingdom of heaven and brought into the new covenant where we became part of the true Israel not the Israel of the old covenant but the Israel of the new covenant we're part of God's covenant people in God's kingdom.

And so what we must see as we look at the Sermon on the Mount is that this sermon sets out for us the terms and conditions of the covenant contract. They are the terms and conditions that the king has imposed upon those who are part of this kingdom.

And that's why when we look at these beatitudes the promise of blessing is determined by the condition of obedience. But we must be clear on this point we're not under the covenant of works as Adam was.

[11 : 14] Adam's condition was perfect obedience and he had the capability to uphold these terms but he failed and because he failed we will also fail.

And thankfully now we are under the covenant of grace which means that keeping and upholding the covenant is not dependent upon our perfect obedience because the covenant of grace is upheld and kept by the perfect obedience of Christ.

However as you are also aware that doesn't give us a license to sin and be disobedient to the Lord. And so as those who have been graciously brought into the new covenant and made citizens of the kingdom of heaven it should cause us to respond in loving devotion to the king.

And in our response of obedience to the terms and conditions the king has promised blessing. The king promises to bless us for our character and our conduct as the citizens of the kingdom of heaven.

But what makes the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount so radical is that when a Jew would have heard these words it would have come as a shock to him. Because the message of Jesus was a total contradiction in the way which a Jew would think.

[12 : 40] Yes they knew the blessing comes by obedience but they thought that it only came by being obedient to the law of Moses which they had to do this and that in order to have to do all these things all these laws to keep God happy.

And if they managed to keep God happy well they'd be blessed and they would have good success. And the Pharisee taught that being obedient to the covenant and obtaining righteousness it was an external thing.

It was a matter of obeying all the rules and regulations and it could be measured by how many times you prayed and how much you gave and how often you fasted. but in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus was saying no no no no no obedience is righteous living and possessing a righteous character.

It's not an external thing rather it comes from within it comes from a renewed heart and those who have a renewed heart and a renewed mind the result of the renewal should cause them to live a renewed lifestyle and what Jesus was saying is this is how true blessing comes.

This is how the blessing of the kingdom of heaven can be experienced in the here and now and Jesus opens his mouth and he says blessed are they who blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[14:10] That's how he begins. He's telling us that from the very outset the defining character of the citizen of the kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are modest those who are humble he says the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor spirit and what Jesus means here doesn't have anything to do with those who are financially poor and it's got nothing to do with those who are poor spirited where someone has little or no self esteem and they have a very poor image of themselves there are other people who are naturally shy and introverted but that's not what it means to be poor in spirit and being poor in spirit is not false humility that says I'm not worth anything I can't do anything which sometimes we are guilty of and sometimes we can have the attitude towards things even to do with our service for the

Lord because there was one commentator I was reading and he said God has made us God is able to empower us to do whatever he calls us to do but denying that we can accomplish God's work is not humility it's the worst kind of pride he says and they are strong words but that's what Jesus is addressing he is addressing the issue of pride he's teaching us that the character of one who belongs to the kingdom of heaven is to be the complete opposite of someone who belongs to the world because the attitude of the world is self praise and self assertion where nowadays instead of being taught to be humble we're taught to be proud of yourself promote yourself put yourselves out there boast of your own achievements and how often do you hear sportsmen and women saying that after they've won in their particular sport they say

I'm so proud of myself I'm so proud of my own achievements and there's nothing wrong with achieving nothing wrong with doing well but the question is who gets the glory who is to be praised it's not man who is to get the glory that's why Jesus says in the kingdom of heaven there's no room for pride and what we will see with each and every one of these beatitudes these blessings is that the teaching of Jesus it's a direct contrast with the teaching of the world they are two opposites and you'll notice that much of the teaching of Jesus even in the Sermon on the Mount it's reiterated by all of the apostles in their writings because both James and Peter they emphasize that true humility is a key feature of Christian women because they both make the statement it's really interesting when you look at it they both make the same statement

God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble and it's interesting that in the context when you read when you read James' account he's he's highlighting the distinction between the world and the Christian because James he says do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God and whoever wishes to be a friend of the world well he's an enemy of God and it's in that context that James says God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble but James goes on to give the Christian church the response that we are to have towards the teaching of Jesus he says submit yourselves to God submit yourself to the king be obedient and humble yourself before king Jesus and so what Jesus means when he says that we'll be blessed by being poor in spirit it's not a reference to the holy spirit or to salvation but it's to come to the realisation that in and of ourselves we are absolutely poor when it comes to our own spiritual well being we are so bankrupt and so broken so poverty stricken and we are so lacking of our own resources that our utter dependence is upon the

Lord it's all upon the Lord and Jesus says to us that the initial characteristic of one who belongs to the kingdom of heaven is that our dependence is solely upon the Lord it's not about us it's not about us getting the glory it's all about the Lord that's what we were singing in Psalm 115 that should and those words they should be our life's song as those who belong to the kingdom of heaven that it's not unto us Lord not to us but do thou glory take unto thy name in for thy truth and for thy mercy's sake so the first mark of Christian character and conduct is modesty we are to be modest we are to be humble but secondly Jesus tells us that we are to possess the characteristic of mourning mourning he says blessed are they that mourn for they shall be comforted the promise of blessing to those who mourn it's quite unexpected it's another radical statement from Jesus because in the eyes of a Jew and even in any culture we generally regard those who mourn as the most unfortunate of people for they have lost someone close to them and those who have lost someone in their family circle we often view them as those who need to be shown sympathy and they need to be helped in their time of distress and comforted in any way possible but the last thing that we would view those who have lost someone is that they are to be envied because they are recipients of God's blessing where they are blessed even in their mourning

[20 : 46] I was not the apostle Paul who said that in 2nd Corinthians chapter 1 when he began his letter he said blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ the father of mercies and God of all comfort who comforts us in all our affliction so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God and you know that has often been the testimony of many of the Lord's people that in the most awful circumstances and in the most difficult providences and in the most trying situations when death breaks into a home and leaves a trail of destruction and brings total devastation upon a family and yet in the midst of all the tears and all the heartache and sorrow and in the midst of mourning the loss of a loved one the Lord's presence has been so real and so reassuring and so comforting to the point and maybe this has been the case for you where you could say that even though it was difficult you were still blessed in your time of mourning the Lord might not yet have turned your mourning into dancing but you could still say that you were blessed in the midst of it and that is the greatest comfort in the midst of sorrow and mourning knowing that the Lord is still there when you need him most and he is still there to bring comfort and the promise that is given that he the promise that is given is that he will bring comfort not only in this life but it's always straining towards the final consummation of the kingdom of heaven in glory when God will wipe away every tear there will be no more death no more mourning or crying or pain these things will pass away at the consummation of the kingdom of heaven but as we said this is an unexpected statement because in the eyes of the Jews someone who was mourning wasn't experiencing the blessing of God that was in the eyes of the Jews if someone died you're not experiencing the blessing of God that was even the explanation that Job's friends gave when Job lost all his family

God isn't blessing you and in a Jewish culture the idea of mourning it involved the entire community it was a week long event in which mourners sat in sackcloth and ashes because a mourner was to be pitied and so when we consider this beatitude we must see that Jesus isn't just talking about suffering a bereavement in the physical sense of losing someone rather Jesus is referring to a more fundamental kind of mourning because we must see that he's not speaking of sorrow over death that can be a present experience instead Jesus is speaking about the sorrow over death that can be present in our heart because the Sermon on the Mount is all about the heart it's about Christ centred living for Christ centred lives and those who have a renewed heart and a renewed mind will have a renewed lifestyle and what Jesus is saying is that mourning is a characteristic of the Christian not only because of loss but mourning over the state of our heart and this again is said in contrast to the world because even when we look at what is evident in our modern pleasure loving generation we see that the world takes a light hearted attitude towards the serious issues of life and instead of grieving and mourning over this destruction of sin and evil and death they seek self gratification and pleasure and for many people in the world they would rather talk about anything else anything else but the devastating effects of sin evil and death they would rather change the subject or try and think positively and think happy thoughts and just try and get on with life but there are others who unfortunately go down the other road the complete extreme and they drown themselves in drugs and alcohol in order to numb their mind from the destruction that sin brings into family homes and lives and instead of grieving over it many run from it they run from the hurt they run from the chaos they run from it because they don't understand it they don't understand sin evil and death but for the

Christian they understand why these things happen it may not be easy to accept but the cause of the chaos in this world is known but what is so sad is that so many people don't know where the answer lies the world doesn't know where to go when things take an unexpected turn they turn to inner strength and to their inner resolve when death comes they don't praise the Lord they praise the dead they don't know how to grieve in the fullest sense and they find pleasure in the things of this world they don't know where blessing is to be found so they look for it and search for it in other things but Jesus is reminding us that blessing can only be found as one who is in the kingdom of heaven true comfort from sin and evil and death can only be found as one who mourns as a citizen of the kingdom of heaven and as those who are in the kingdom of heaven we are to mourn because of the effects of sin and evil and death why did

Jesus weep at the grave of Lazarus it wasn't just because he sympathised with Mary and Martha he wept because of the devastation that sin and death had brought upon all mankind and that's what Jesus is urging us to do he's urging us as members of the kingdom of heaven to mourn over our sin to mourn over the state of our heart he's saying don't treat sin lightly but take it to the Lord in repentance but as the apostle Paul tells us he says godly sorrow works repentance which is but then he says but the sorrow of the world the sorrow of the world which is not sorrow or sin it only works death and the apostle Paul he's an example to us of what it means to mourn over our sin and look into our own heart and mortify the sins of the flesh because when Paul looked into his own heart and his struggle and fight with sin all he could say it left of saying oh wretched man that I am who shall deliver me from this body of death

I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord he said and even when we consider David the man of Psalm 51 that we were singing earlier on it was through repentance and mourning over his sin that David had come to discover that the Lord didn't want his sacrifices he didn't want his burnt offerings instead what was pleasing to God was a broken and a contrite heart and that's the heart we need that's the attitude we need that's the characteristic we must possess as those in the kingdom of heaven because the promise for us is that we will be blessed when we mourn over our sin when we come to God with a broken and a contrite heart seeking forgiveness and in our mourning we will be comforted we will be comforted so we see the first characteristic of the mark of

[29 : 37] Christian character and conduct it's modesty the second mark of Christian character and conduct is mourning and lastly this evening Jesus directed attention to the fact that the third mark of Christian character and conduct is meekness meekness we look at verse 5 it says blessed are the meek for they shall inherit fear the Christian characteristic that Jesus addresses us with here it reinforces what he has already just said in the first two Beatitudes because meekness is just another word for humility or modesty and mourning over sin through repentance is what you could call the outworking of humility because someone who repents humbly acknowledges that they are in the wrong and they have sinned against God and they humbly seek the forgiveness of God and this is the point that

Jesus doesn't want us to miss that all three of the opening beatitudes they all express the same truth in order to affirm and to reaffirm that the follower of Jesus is not to insist on their own rights but to display genuine humility Jesus wants us to get this for he said to us there's no room in the kingdom of heaven for proud boastful assertive overbearing arrogant people there's no room for it he's just being blunt there's no room for it because there's only room for modesty mourning and meekness but when we speak of meekness it's not to be confused with weakness for we can often associate meekness with quietness and someone who's timid and nervous or they're apprehensive and they're hesitant but the biblical definition of meekness it's attributed to two of the greatest men in the bible

Moses is the first one he's described to us in Numbers chapter 12 verse 3 as one who was very meek in fact he's described as the meekest of all men that were upon the face of the earth but Moses he wasn't weak he was meek but he wasn't weak he wasn't someone who was apprehensive and hesitant he may have had a stutter or a speech impediment but he stood up against the Pharaoh of Egypt he led the children of Israel through the Red Sea and on through the wilderness for 40 years Moses was anything but weak he was meek he was meek because he submitted to the commands of God and the other meek person mentioned in the bible is of course Jesus and in his meekness he calls us to come to him because when we come to him we'll find rest in him

Jesus said come unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn of me for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest for your souls for my yoke is easy and my burden is right I am meek and lowly in heart and it's interesting that Jesus uses the metaphor of a yoke and learning take my yoke upon you and you'll learn me and he's describing he's using this metaphor for one who is meek and it's interesting because the word for meekness it gives the idea of a wild horse a wild horse that has been broken it has been trained that's the imagery of the word meekness where the strength and power of a wild horse has been restrained and brought under control to the point where the horse is willing to be yoked with another horse and it shows that the wild horse has been taught to submit to the authority of its own and so when Jesus says that he is meek he's highlighting that his life has been lived in complete submission to his father's will and that's the example which Jesus is now setting for us he's highlighting that and saying to us that those who are in the kingdom of heaven they are to be tamed we are to be brought under control we are to be submissive to the authority of our king we are to be humble we are to be teachable we have to have a teachable spirit not the self-assertive attitude that says

I know what's right and that's it but Jesus is saying that we are to have the willingness and the meekness and the humility to take the yoke of Jesus upon ourselves and learn from him and when you read these opening beatitudes together you see the wisdom of Jesus because here is Jesus at the very outset of the sermon on the mount and his teaching is going to transform the minds and the hearts of those who are listening to him but in this wisdom Jesus first of all addresses the key issues that would hinder us from listening to any more of what Jesus has to say he addresses first of all pride sin and arrogance breaks them all down and Jesus says you need to be modest you need to be humble you need to mourn over your sin you need to be meek you need to be teachable because if we're not teachable then how are we going to listen to anything else that

[35 : 59] Jesus has to say in the sermon on the mount how are we going to submit to the teaching of Jesus in the sermon on the end for we already know that Jesus is going to address a lot of issues to do with Christian character but first things first he wants to make sure that we are humble and that we are teachable because the promise of blessing is to those who are meek for as he says they shall inherit the earth and this reference to inheriting the earth it comes from psalm 37 which we'll sing shortly but what does it mean to inherit the earth why does he say that well the word earth and land they are the same word they are synonyms in Greek and Hebrew therefore I believe it should be translated as those who inherit the land those who inherit the land and when we say it like that it gives more sense to us because inheriting the land was one of the key themes in the

Old Testament the promise of inheriting the land was part of the covenant promise made with Abraham that the children of Israel would inherit the land of Canaan they would go into the land of promise the promised land and those who were obedient would inherit the land of Canaan but those who were disobedient they wouldn't be allowed to go in and possess the land they would die in the wilderness and as you know many of the Israelites they died in the wilderness because of their disobedience even Moses didn't make it into the promised land because of his disobedience and it's in that context that Jesus quotes Psalm 37 because in Psalm 37 the psalmist says that the evildoer shall be cut off but those that wait upon the Lord they shall inherit the earth and the psalmist he goes on to describe those who inherit the earth he says the meek shall inherit the earth and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace and the point that

Jesus is making is not about the promised land but to remind the Jews who were listening and who would have known about the covenant promise of the land it was to remind them that the inheritance of the land was experienced by those who were obedient for those who who waited upon the Lord they inherited the land they didn't take things into their own hands by being self assertive and arrogant and disobedient they waited they waited upon the Lord unfortunately the example that we have of one who acted in an arrogant manner was Moses he struck the rock twice and his disobedience withheld the blessing of inheriting the promised land it's even from the mistake of Moses that Jesus wants us to learn to learn that we are not to take things into our own hands but to humbly wait upon the Lord and in meekness we are to submissively follow the commands of the

Lord and the guidance of the Lord and we're to be taught of the Lord my friend it's a tall order it's a tall order and the funny thing is that Jesus says in verse 20 I say to you that except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven it's a tall order for in these three beatitudes right at the beginning these three promises of blessing were confronted with the first three marks of Christian character and conduct modesty mourning and meekness and these are not easy characteristics to adopt and it doesn't happen overnight but at the outset of this sermon Jesus wants us to grasp these things in order that we'll see the importance of his teaching and the need of

Christ centred living for Christ centred lives and so God willing next week we'll continue to look at this great psalm and the Lord bless these things to us let us pray O Lord our gracious God we thank and praise thee Lord our great teacher and help us Lord to have a teachable spirit to realise that we have much to learn we have many years to learn and help us Lord we pray that thou wouldst be patient with us we realise how much we faint and fail for we thank thee that thou wouldst fail us never that thou wouldst guide us and help us Lord to pray as the psalmist did where he said teach me thy way and in thy truth O Lord then walk alive unite my heart that I thy name may fear continually bless us Lord we pray remember those who need thee tonight those who are not with us that could not be here tonight that thou wouldst remember them and Lord remember our community help us

[41 : 45] Lord to continue to pray for them that they would truly live Christ's sanctified lives and witness to them witness to them the glory of Jesus Christ bless us we pray take us to our homes in safety and do us good for Jesus to I conclude by singing in Psalm 37 Psalm 37 the Scottish Salt out singing from verse 9 down to the verse 11 Psalm 37 from verse 9 For those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall, but those that wait upon the Lord the earth and her it shall.

For yet a little while and then the wicked shall not be. This place thou shalt consider where, but it thou shalt not see. But by inheritance the earth the meek ones shall possess.

They also shall delight themselves and in abundant peace. So sing these verses of Psalm 37. For those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall.

To God's praise. For those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall, But those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall.

For those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall. For those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall. For those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall.

[43 : 42] For those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall. And the wind shall be cut off and fall. For those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall.

For those that evildoers shall be cut off and fall. But it love shall not be But by inheritance near The meek ones shall possess They also shall be like themselves In an abundant peace The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ The love of God the Father And the fellowship of the Holy Spirit Be with you all, now and forevermore

Thank you