

Getting the Good Life

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Ass Ass Ass All right, you got a Bible? Matthew chapter 5. Matthew chapter 5. Y'all like
the new podium here?

How many weeks you think it's going to last before I break another one? I'm just kidding. I'm going to go gentle on this. Hey, we're glad you're here. If you got a Bible, you're in Matthew chapter 5. If you've been with us the last several months, we've been going through a series on the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, we've been in this series since January, and tonight it comes to an end. And all God's people said, all right. Many of you have expressed to me how much you have enjoyed going through the Sermon on the Mount, how you don't really want this series to end, but all series will come to an end. There's a lot more Bible to preach, amen. And I'm in that number that's sad to see this come to a close. I have thoroughly enjoyed teaching through the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapter 5, 6, and 7. And you've got all the messages online, so if you've missed anything, you can go back and listen to that. Tonight is really just going to be a review. I'm basically just taking tonight and kind of stepping back and looking at the big ultimate point of the Sermon on the Mount. And so if you've been tracking with us for the last several weeks and months, I'm probably not going to say anything new, and that's okay. But I'm going to affirm what we've already learned here in the Sermon on the

Mount. And some of you have been asking me what's next. We're going to take probably a couple weeks. I'll be around, but we won't really start a new series on the 4th of July next weekend. But we do have a new series we're going to start in a few weeks. And I thought I'd just give you kind of a sample of what that's going to be about.

And I'll be right back.

So So here are the next couple weeks. Yeah, I hope that gets you excited for that. We're going to be doing a series on miracles.

[3 : 50] And we're going to trace through the Gospels the miracles of Jesus, really to do two primary things. One is amaze us at the power that Jesus has to change a life and to totally change history. And at the same time, to realize that there is more going on than just what we see in the natural world.

That there is a supernatural reality that oftentimes we as Christians don't give enough attention to. So we're going to devote kind of the rest of the summer to the idea of miracles.

God's supernatural work in Jesus Christ. And we'll do that as a variety of different stories throughout the Gospels. So that's where we're going next. I hope that gets you excited for that. And we'll start that here in the next couple weeks.

For tonight, let's wrap up the Sermon on the Mount. And I'm going to read again the introduction to the Sermon on the Mount, what we know as the Beatitudes. And so if you're able to stand, please do so.

As we go back to Matthew chapter 5, and we'll start with verse 1 and read down through verse 12. We spent multiple weeks in this section of Scripture.

[5 : 02] It says, Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil.

Let's pray together. Join me in prayer. God, thank you for this opportunity to teach your word tonight.

Thank you for the gift of your grace these last several months to study this section of your Scripture. It has been such a benefit for us. And tonight I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would guide me as I seek to conclude this series and help me teach truth that would be the ultimate truth that the Sermon on the Mount is all about.

So guide us, we pray. In Christ's name we ask it. And God's people said, Amen. Amen. You can be seated. Amen. Amen.

And what Harari does in this book is he traces what he believes is the evolution of humanity over 2.5 million years.

[7 : 22] Now, to be clear, he's not saying human civilization has existed for 2.5 million years. He's saying it took 2.5 million years for humanity as a species to evolve.

His argument is that we as homo sapiens are nothing more than animals that lack significance. But through an evolutionary process, we ended up dominating over all the other species or life forms.

He says that this happened because of three revolutions that we went through as we evolved. One was a cognitive revolution. One was a cognitive revolution.

That is, our minds evolved that gave us superiority over any other species. And he thinks that happened 70,000 years ago. The second revolution was an agricultural revolution.

And the third was the scientific revolution. And he says that because of those revolutions, that that helped us as homo sapiens advance over any other species, partly because we were able to create and connect ideas that don't physically exist or only exist in our imagination.

[8 : 45] Hang with me. Things like God, individual rights, political views, personal values. He would say that these are myths that have enabled human beings to take over the world and has put us on the verge of overcoming natural selection.

Now, when he ends his book, now let me be very, very clear tonight so that you don't walk out with any misconception. I totally reject his worldview.

Amen? Entirely. So don't think I'm advocating for it. I reject it completely. But what is fascinating about this book is after hundreds of pages of tracing all this stuff out and making all of these arguments, he ends the book with a chapter called, They Lived Happily Ever After.

And what he does, in fact, let me just quote him and tell you what he argues in that final chapter. Listen closely. He says, quote, The last 500 years have witnessed a breathtaking series of revolutions.

The earth has been united into a single ecological and historical sphere. The economy has grown exponentially.

[10 : 07] Many people enjoy a kind of wealth that used to be a thing of fairy tales. Science and the Industrial Revolution have given human beings the equivalent of superhuman powers.

The social order has been transformed. But are we happier? Are we happier?

Has the wealth over the last five centuries translated into contentment? Has the cognitive revolution made the world a better place to live?

Was the late Neil Armstrong, whose footprint remains intact on the windless moon, more happy than the nameless hunter-gatherer who lived 30,000 years ago, who has their handprint on the wall of a cave?

That's the question we can't ignore. Now, you may not be a nerd like me, but that's fascinating. In other words, he's tracing out all this, but what he's saying, though it's a worldview that I entirely reject, he's saying, as you look at humanity, at any time in which you look at humanity, there seems to be one obvious thing, a search for happiness.

[11 : 33] Are we truly happy? We've evolved in so many ways, he's arguing, but it doesn't seem as though we've evolved in the area of happiness.

From the prehistoric caveman, to the medieval peasant, to the Pittsburgh steelworker, everybody in any age is trying to be happy.

Faith family, isn't that true of you? Is there anybody here tonight who's not seeking to be happy, to experience a good life?

Is anybody out there tonight? Anybody like, yeah, I want a good life. I want to be happy. Anybody? Okay, thank you. Somebody's awake. Which begs the question, what is the good life?

What is the good life? What is the life of meaning and happiness? And by the way, faith family, when I use that word happiness, I'm not talking about like a surface emotion. I'm talking about a deep, deep feeling of shalom, of blessedness, of flourishing.

[12 : 45] What is it? What is the good life? Is it a life of material things? Is that what gives you the good life? Is it a life of wealth? Is that where the good life is found?

Or is it knowledge? Is having more knowledge the key to having satisfaction in life? Having the perfect family that always gets along?

Is that the good life? What about meditation through yoga? Is that the good life? How about working in a profession that you really enjoy?

What about getting to live a really long life? Is that the good life? Getting the rights that you think that you deserve. Or being healthy?

Or laughing with friends? Or falling in love? What is it? What is the good life? What is it that makes human beings truly happy?

[13 : 44] Because everybody, from the truck driver, the celebrity, the retiree, the banker, the pro athlete, everybody's trying to figure this out. Amen? Augustine says it this way.

Look at this quote. Augustine said, It is the decided opinion of all who use their brains that all men, that is all people, desire to be happy.

But who are happy? And how do they become so? These are the questions about which the weakness of human understanding stirs endless.

And this idea has been the preoccupation for generation and generation. The Stoics, the Epicureans, Aristotle, all the way down to the very founding of this nation, which was built on what?

Life, liberty, and the pursuit of, say it, happiness. Everybody's in search for this good life. A life of flourishing, of true peace, of ultimate shalom.

[14 : 53] And you say, what does that have to do with the Sermon on the Mount? Well, Faith Family, as I close this series tonight, here's what I want to argue this one last time, is that Jesus, throughout the Sermon on the Mount, has been calling you and calling us to the good life.

He's been calling us to a life of true flourishing, to deep satisfaction, to real enjoyment, to biblical shalom.

And while the things that I mentioned a few moments ago and all those examples may give you enjoyment, for a moment, I want to submit to you tonight that it is only in Jesus Christ that you will find the good life forever.

Those things may give you enjoyment for a moment, but only the life that Christ calls you to gives you the good life.

Let me show, first of all here, that Jesus is, in the Sermon on the Mount, inviting you to experience the good life, that He wants you to have a life that flourishes. This theme of flourishing and blessedness and freedom has existed throughout the Sermon.

[16 : 15] You notice here at the beginning, look at how the Sermon starts again in verse 3. Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn.

Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. And blessed are the peacemakers.

And blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. And blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

In other words, right out of the very gate, the very beginning of the Sermon, Jesus is describing the blessed life. In other words, this is the life that experiences the favor of God.

So, faith family, if you were to ask Jesus, what does the good life look like? Where is flourishing found?

[17 : 15] Where is true and deep happiness found? Jesus would say, it's found in a life that looks like this. All of these things that He lists out, He's saying, this is where true flourishing happens.

It's where it's found. And not only does the sermon begin that way, but look kind of midway through chapter 6, verse 25. He says, therefore I tell you, don't be anxious about your life, what you're going to eat or what you're going to drink or about your body or what you'll put on.

Is not life more than food or the body more than clothing? I mean, look at the birds of the air. They neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to the span of His life? In other words, in the middle, you're seeing here a life where you don't worry.

You're not anxious about anything. You're not all tied up in knots. In other words, you start to experience, God, speak to us tonight, you start experience a freedom of knowing that God is your heavenly Father and that He's going to take care of you.

[18 : 29] And you begin to experience a peace and a rest in that reality. And who wouldn't want that kind of life? Okay, show of hands, how many of you want the worried life?

A few of you. How many of you want the worry-free, no-anxiety life? Show of hands. That's what I thought. See, all of you want the good life. You are seeking, whether you know this or not, what Jesus is offering.

So you see it at the beginning of the sermon, you see it in the middle of the sermon, and look at how Jesus ends the sermon, chapter 7, verse 13. This is where He starts the conclusion. And He says, Enter by the narrow gate, for the gate is wide, and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter it are many.

For the gate is narrow, and the way is hard that leads to, say it, life, and those who find it are few.

So Jesus ends the sermon by saying, there's this narrow road that you can go down, and where does this narrow road lead? Where does this path go?

[19 : 34] Answer, it leads to life. It's where life is found. In fact, it's a life that's built on a foundation that even in the storms of life, it doesn't crumble.

So, here's what I'm trying to argue in the first point. I have eight points. So this is the first one. I'm joking, I don't have eight points. Is that if you take a step back, I mean, we've spent six months going through the details of the Sermon on the Mount, and what I'm arguing tonight is if you step back and take kind of the aerial view, to look at the whole picture of the sermon, what is Jesus actually doing?

Here's what I'm arguing. He's inviting you to the good life. He's inviting you to experience the blessed life, the life that flourishes.

And here's the reality, you can have it. You can have the good life and experience true and deep happiness in God.

Now, I know what some of you might say, you would say, it's hard for me to even hear the sermon because you don't know what I'm going through. Well, let me say this. Don't confuse the good life with the easy life.

[20 : 48] Can I get an amen there? Hello, have you paid attention in the Sermon on the Mount? Blessed are those who take it on the chin for Jesus. That doesn't sound like an easy life.

Blessed are those when you are reviled and they say nasty things about you on my account. Right? How many of you are like, I love that verse. I love it when people say awful things about me.

That's the good life. Or think about how towards the end of the sermon, the hard road. It's a difficult road to go down. What we looked at last week, these two homes built on two foundations.

Guess what? The rain fell on both of them. Right? It's not like one built their home on the rock and it never rained. You're like, I want that life.

No, the rain fell on both homes. So don't mistake the good life for the easy life. Amen? But even in the difficulty and even in the hardships and even in the pain and even when they insult you and even when you take it on the chin and even as the storms rage, you can experience and have a life that is deeply flourishing in God.

[22 : 07] Amen? This is what Jesus is offering. And it's not just in the Sermon on the Mount that He says this. John 10.10, I came that you may have life and have it abundantly.

John 14.6, which you know, I am the way, the truth, and the life. And no one comes to the Father except through me. So, what I'm arguing in this first point is again, when you step back and look at the big picture, Jesus is inviting you to experience the good life.

Here's the second point tonight and it's this. But Jesus also invites you to reevaluate the good life. To reevaluate. What I mean is this. This is the catch.

If you want the good life, this life of flourishing, you've got to rethink how life works. You can't assume based on what you've been taught by the world that that's where the good life is found.

Because this good life that Jesus is genuinely inviting you to isn't what you think. It's not like any other thing you've been offered.

[23 : 19] It is radically different than the way our culture would define the good life. Some of you have heard me give this illustration many times, but it fits here well, I think, about how prior to 1947, no aircraft had ever flown faster than the speed of sound.

Some of you remember this, right? 767 miles per hour. They didn't think it was even possible. Yet pilot after pilot would attempt to break the barrier every time they'd push harder and faster.

But as they would get close to the sound barrier, the plane would start to convulse and they'd lose control and crash, often to the death of the pilot. What the issue was is that as the aircraft reached the sound barriers, do you remember what happened?

Somebody shouted out. The controls stopped working correctly. So to pull back on the stick would normally raise the nose of the aircraft. But the problem is when they would pull back on the stick, the nose of the aircraft would dive.

And then they realized, they thought, what would happen if we used the device, if we used the controls in the opposite way? And that's what they did.

[24 : 33] October the 14th, 1947, Chuck Yeager flew his plane past the sound barrier because what happened is he pulled, rather than pulling the stick back to go up, he pulled it back to go down.

And the nose came up, the controls worked perfectly, and that breakthrough happened because they did it in the opposite way than what they were used to.

Now, that's the way you've got to start thinking about life, Faith Family, if you want the good life. If you truly want to flourish. Because what Jesus is doing here in the Sermon on the Mount is he's telling you that the good life is entirely in the opposite direction of what most people think.

Let's review. It's not in the riches of the world. It's in poverty of spirit. It's not in laughing all the time, but those who mourn.

It's not being one of the mighty, but someone who is meek. It's not the person that has their belly full.

[25 : 41] It's the person that starves for righteousness. It's not those that get their justice. It's those who show mercy.

It's not those that have the vast portfolio. They have a heart exclusively for God alone. It's not those who seek their own well-being, but seeks to make peace with all.

It's not those that seek a comfortable life. It's those that embrace the persecution that comes for righteousness. And they don't shrink in suffering.

They shine. Because they don't treasure earthly things. They treasure heavenly things. And it's not going down a smooth, easy road, but a hard, hard road.

Does this sound like the good life as the way the world would describe it? Of course not. But Jesus is saying, the good life is offered to you, but you're going to have to rethink everything you've been taught.

[26 : 45] And everything that you've come to know in the way the world describes the good life. And why is it that this is where the good life is found? Well, think about the second part of each of those beatitudes.

Why poor in spirit? Because it's the poor in spirit that get the kingdom of God. Why those that mourn? It's because it's those that mourn that get comforted. Why the meek? It's because they inherit the earth.

Why the starving? Because they are filled. Why the merciful? Because they get mercy. Why the pure in heart? Because they get God. Why the peacemakers? Because they're called sons of God.

Why the persecuted? Because they have a great reward. Why those that seek heavenly treasures? Because they don't fade away. Why those who trust God as Father? Because they don't have to worry about anything.

Why those going down the hard road? Because that's the road that leads to life. Don't you see? Faith family, I plead with you tonight and those of you watching online, Jesus is inviting you to the good life in this sermon.

[27 : 47] But you must re-evaluate what the good life is. Because it doesn't work in the way of the world. Notice this on the screen.

Jesus offers you true happiness and flourishing and blessedness. But it will require you to rethink what the good life truly looks like.

So number one is as you step back and look at the sermon at a whole, Jesus is offering you the good life from the beginning to the end. And it's radically different than the way you would think.

And then the last point tonight is simply this. Jesus invites you to embrace the good life. To embrace this. To live this. Come down this road. Won't you?

Will you take this and embrace it? Will you take this in and live it? Will you walk down this road? Listen. That very few people are on.

[28 : 49] Won't you come and follow me? Jesus says. And be a part of this kingdom. And what does that look like? According to the Sermon on the Mount, I would give you three summary statements and then we'll wrap up with this.

Three summary statements that after all my studying of the Sermon on the Mount these last six months, this is what I think summarizes the good life. It's offered to us.

It looks different than the world, but what is it? Three things. And here's the first one. Notice it on the screen. The good life is the life of poverty of spirit, not selfish pride.

In other words, faith family, if you want to truly flourish, if you want to experience happiness, are you ready? Because this might sting a little bit. Are you really ready to hear what I'm about to say?

You're going to have to come to the end of yourself. You're going to have to get over yourself. You're going to have to realize you have absolutely nothing whatsoever to bring when it comes to God.

[29 : 57] God, you are a beggar in need of God's life-changing grace. So if there's any selfish pride, if there's any American sufficiency, if there's any, I'll do this myself, I'll figure this out on my own, I'll pull myself up by my bootstraps, you will never experience the good life.

Because the good life begins with a brokenness and a poverty of spirit. And this is polar opposite from what we see in our culture, right?

Our culture celebrates that as where the good life is found. But Jesus says it's poverty of spirit. It's the ones who are broken that do not exalt self, they don't esteem self, they find the good life when realizing they have nothing in their hands to bring but simply to the cross they cling.

Amen? You've got to come to the end of you. And I've got to come to the end of me and realize how poverty-stricken we are.

Brendan Manning writes this, he says, quote, the kingdom belongs to people who aren't trying to look good or impress anybody, even themselves. they're not plotting how they can call attention to themselves, worrying about their actions, how they'll be interpreted, wondering if they'll get gold stars for their behavior.

[31 : 33] Get over yourself. Get rid through repentance of that pride and realize, I am broken, I am a beggar, I am poor of spirit.

Jesus says, that's where the good life is found. That's where flourishing begins. Here's the second thing. It's not just that the good life is the life of spiritual poverty and not selfish pride, but the good life is the life received, not the life achieved.

In other words, the good life is receiving a life outside yourself. Let me show you again the main point of the Sermon on the Mount in verse 17 of chapter 5.

This is where Jesus gets to the heart of what he's saying in verse 17. He says, Do not think I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven.

[32 : 42] But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Do y'all remember that week when we went through this? It was one of the most powerful sermons for me in all of the whole series. Because what Jesus is saying here is he's saying this is how high the bar of righteousness is.

This is how high the standard is in order to get into the kingdom. And he follows this by, do you remember six examples of, well, you've heard it said don't murder but I say you can't even have anger in your heart.

You've heard it said, you know, an eye for an eye. I'm telling you, you've got to turn the other cheek. You've heard it said love neighbor hate enemy. I'm telling you, you've got to love neighbor and love enemy to the point that you realize this, 10,000 trampolines couldn't get me over the bar of righteousness that is required to enter into the kingdom of God.

And therefore the only way to get the righteousness that is required to get in the kingdom is in the one who fulfilled the law and his name is Jesus.

[34 : 04] That's where the good life is found. And I am, I am genuinely and I want to say this the right way.

I am genuinely tired of the religious game. And I have preached against that how many times? I mean, do y'all not hear that like every week that you show up to church?

Like this must be shed. It is not, it is not, it is not about your achievement. It is entirely based on Christ alone and receiving his righteousness by faith.

Faith family, I want you to have the good life but that means giving up your vain effort of thinking that you can achieve the good life and simply receive the good life in Christ alone.

Again, Brenning Manning writes, every denomination and non-denominational persuasion Christians are seeking to win God's favor by plunging into more spiritual activities, multiplying altars and sacrifices, making charitable contributions, lengthening time of formal prayer, and getting involved in more church-related organizations.

[35 : 15] There is a need for careful discernment here. The evidence of earnestness, sincerity, and effort is considerable. The Christian lifestyle is pious, proper, and correct.

But what's missing? He or she has not surrendered to the Christ of grace. The danger of good works. Now, good works are important. Amen? That was a good place for an amen but that's okay.

Some of you are vast asleep. The danger of good works, though good works are important. The danger is of those in spiritual investments and all the rest of it is that we can construct a picture of ourselves in which we situate our self-worth.

Our doing becomes the very undoing of the gospel. And we must, we must, we must, if we're going to experience a life that flourishes and truly experience the good life, not only get to a point of spiritual poverty but with that realize there is nothing in this about my achievement.

It is entirely in Christ alone. Because even if my hands are clean, my heart's not. And so the only hope I have to find the good life is in the life that was lived for me in Jesus.

[36 : 41] Here's the third and final point because I know some of you are ready to go outside in the rain, right, is this. The good life is found in a relationship with God and not religious service to God.

I think all this is based out of the Sermon on the Mount. It's poverty of spirit. It's not about your achievement but receiving the life of Christ. After all, if you think it's about your achievement then you only have to be as perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect.

Good luck with that. Your righteousness only has to surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees. You see, it's about receiving the life of Christ and finally because at the end of the day all of this is about a heart for God.

About a relationship with Him and not offering up your religious service for Him. Jesus time and time again goes after the heart.

Time and time again in the Sermon on the Mount and through the rest of Matthew He calls out the surface level righteousness of the Pharisees. Look in chapter 6 verse 1 where it is abundantly clear.

[37 : 47] Jesus says, Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven.

Be careful that all this is about the external. That all it is is going through the rituals of prayer and fasting and giving and all this religious service to God but you don't actually have a relationship with God because the good life is found in the relationship with God.

Do you remember how Jesus ends the sermon with the four illustrations we looked at this last week? Wolves in sheep clothing. That is the external looks good but the inwardness is off. The trees that produce good fruit for a while but then ultimately produce bad.

False prophets that did so many things in his name but God never knew them. Two houses that looked like everything was fine but one inwardly had a foundation built on the rock and the other one had a foundation built on the sand and you didn't know which was which until the rain came.

The easy road is the road of religion. The hard road as we said is the heart road. where listen you're spending your life cultivating a heart for God.

[39 : 16] A heart for God. And if there's anything I want here at Faith Family it's that. Not our weekly showing up to do religious things but we're cultivating a heart for God.

So here's my summary of kind of the aerial view of the Sermon on the Mount and it's this. Number one there is a good life. There is a good life.

A flourishing life. A blessed life. And you can have it. You really can. But number two it will require you to rethink everything you've been taught.

You're going to have to be willing to go places the world says you would never go there for the good life. You have to use the controls in the opposite direction in order to understand where flourishing is found.

And thirdly it is the life based on spiritual poverty that has put everything on Christ alone. All my hope in Christ alone and it's walking down the road of cultivating a heart for God.

[40 : 28] This is where the good life is found. So Yuval Harari is right. He's right. Not about the evolution of humanity over 2.5 million years.

He's right about the fact that after all this time most human beings still aren't happy. They're still searching for the good life.

But faith family that search doesn't have to continue because the good news of the gospel is that Jesus offers you the good life by offering for you his life.

So come. Come down the hard road of poverty of spirit. Come down the hard road of forsaking your life for his. Come down the hard road of cultivating a heart for God.

It is a hard road but it's the only road that leads to life. And all God's people said amen.

[41 : 37] Pray with me. God thank you for what you've taught us over these last six months in the Sermon on the Mount. Lord we have learned so much about the kingdom of God and how that runs in opposition to the culture of this world.

And Lord I really believe as we study the Sermon on the Mount carefully that from the beginning to the end Jesus that what you're inviting us into is the good life of true happiness of blessedness and shalom that life can be had but we have to think differently it's not found the way the world says it's found it's about coming to the end of our self and putting all our hope in you and cultivating though difficult it may be a heart that loves you far deeper than a religious service that just goes through the motions so I pray through all that we've learned that God here at Fate Family that you would help us experience this good life in Christ Jesus and I pray it in his name

Amen Ass