

Matthew 5:1-5

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Preacher: David Moser

[0 : 00] to bring his word to you this morning. Just say, how do we choose what we're preaching?

How do we choose what comes before the congregation as elders? Well, first we preach the scriptures. Paul charged Timothy, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead by his appearing in his kingdom.

Preach the word. And so I don't have anything of my own to give you. I only have this. And it is God's word. And it is better than any word that I can give you. But which page do we turn to each week?

How do we know what to do? What to say? We don't get divine revelation. The elders here. We don't flip open that one today.

No, that's not how we pick it. We pray. We do a lot of praying. Now, the Lord does not give us special revelation, a divine word, but he does indeed stoke passions in our hearts for certain things and certain truths.

[1 : 35] And we ask him for wisdom. What does our congregation need to hear? We ask him for wisdom. Is our diet, so to speak, balanced? Are we preaching the whole counsel of God?

We ask him for wisdom related to the calendar. Easter is coming up. Does that mean we should shift things around? If we have someone coming internationally to preach in a few months.

And does that affect our calendar? And actually it does. And so we really need to be thinking, okay, like, Lord, what would you have us do?

And that comes to bear on this. We are starting today Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. And it was a really hard decision on how do we preach this opening section, these Beatitudes, as they are called, as Jesus says, blessed are these people and blessed are these people.

He says blessed nine times in the first 12 verses. So do we preach nine different sermons? I'll tell you what, it is hard to preach a sermon on one sentence.

[2 : 42] If you've ever tried to talk about one sentence for half an hour, 45 minutes, that's a rough go. Normally here at Shoreline, we preach 5, 10, 15, 20 verses at a time.

So verses 1 through 12, that fits right there. Should it be one sermon? Well, these are pretty heavy and pretty weighty. Maybe it's a little more than that. And so we prayed and we discussed and we looked at how other churches have preached the Beatitudes and how they have found wisdom in holding them all together.

And we've looked at our calendar and we have chosen to preach three sermons. So three sets of three Beatitudes each. And so I started looking at these, these nine Beatitudes in groups of three. And saw that some of them, especially about the ones we'll talk about today in verses 3 through 5, describe a different kind of heart.

Blessed are the poor in spirit. And this is the miracle of God in my heart. The Bible calls new birth. Where he makes me spiritually alive in Christ and gives me new attitudes in my heart.

[4 : 03] And some of the Beatitudes, especially the ones that we plan to look at next week in verses 6 through 8, describe what it looks like to look more and more like Jesus Christ.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. This might be what we call the miracle of God in our hearts, sanctification, where new birth becomes new growth as I begin to grow in Christlikeness.

And some of the Beatitudes, especially the ones that we plan to look at two weeks from now, in verses 9 through 12, describe how growing to look like Jesus turns to living like Jesus in the world. And if you've ever seen our table in the back, I'm just reading Proclaim, Build, Serve in these three groups, these three sections. And so, so long as the Lord wills, that's where we're going today and in these next two weeks.

And that schedule, as we begin looking at the Sermon on the Mount, maybe the most famous sermon that has ever been preached, and it gets its name from verse 1, he went up on the mountain, it leads us to this question.

[5 : 17] What should we do with the Sermon on the Mount? Right? Like, have you ever read it and said like, okay, like, how do I respond to this?

Because some of it is rather tricky. So, let's pray to the Lord that he would add his blessing to the preaching of his word. And let's ask that question, what shall we do with this text?

Father in heaven, in these moments, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, our Lord, our rock and our redeemer.

Pray that in the matchless name of Jesus Christ, our King. Amen. Some people really like the Sermon on the Mount kind of in theory. Oh yeah, that's some good stuff there, but they haven't ever read it.

Sometimes I hear non-Christians say, you know, I just wish you Christians would live out the Sermon on the Mount. Sometimes I hear Christians say, you know, I don't really read the Bible.

[6 : 24] I just try to live it out, the Sermon on the Mount. That's my thing. These chapters 5, 6, and 7 of Matthew. Some people would say that the Sermon on the Mount contains, you know, really the summary of teaching of the Bible.

If you understand this, then you really get the whole picture. Some people say, there's really no way you could actually meet this standard. So don't even bother. It's an ideal, and maybe someday it will be realized.

What do we do with the Sermon on the Mount? How do we respond to it? See, all those different ways of looking at the Sermon on the Mount, and many more like them, really boil down into two camps, two wrong ways to read the Sermon on the Mount.

On the one hand, some look at the Sermon on the Mount and say, here's a list of stuff I need to do so God will be happy with me.

If I do some mercy, I will receive the kingdom. If I do some peacemaking, I will be called one of the sons of God. Friends, these nine beatitudes are not nine ways to be blessed by God.

[7 : 38] The Sermon on the Mount isn't about how to get in good with God. You will not hear me say, do these nine things, and God will be pleased with you. That's bad math on two counts.

First, first, if that's what I think, that I can faithfully and fully follow Jesus' teaching, I've wildly overestimated my ability.

And I probably haven't heard the sermon very well. And second, if I think I can satisfy God with my obedience, I've wildly underestimated what it takes to impress this giant God.

In this sermon, Jesus says, you have heard it said to those of old, you shall not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment. But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment.

Whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, and whoever says you fool will be liable to the hell of fire. He also says, you have heard that it was said, you shall not commit adultery.

[8 : 48] But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. You've heard it said, you shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.

But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. Jesus says, you therefore must be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Friends, if you think that you can attain this standard, I'm sorry, but you cannot. Martin Lloyd-Jones, a very famous preacher of the 20th century, said this, nothing shows me the absolute need of the new birth and of the Holy Spirit and his work within so much as the Sermon on the Mount.

These beatitudes crush me to the ground. They show me my utter helplessness. Were it not for the new birth, I am undone.

It will drive you to see your ultimate need of the gospel and its grace. Because, friends, only Jesus has actually lived the requirements of the Sermon on the Mount, not me.

[10 : 15] Only Jesus has satisfied our Father in heaven with his obedience and his holiness, not me. So my only hope is Jesus putting his arm around me and pulling me to heaven along with him.

My only hope. That's the gospel. The law of God shows me my need of a Savior. And God provides one.

The Savior is the one preaching this Sermon on the Mount. And his sermon shows us just how desperately we need his grace. But if that's all we get from the Sermon on the Mount, we'll fall into the second wrong way to read it.

To hear Jesus' great sermon. See, we could say the Sermon on the Mount shows me my utter inability before the Lord to satisfy him and these beatitudes crush me to the ground.

And that's true and that's good. But Jesus, he did it perfectly. He covers me with his obedience and righteousness so I'm accepted before God the Father. and that is true and that is good.

[11 : 33] But if we say this isn't something I can live out on my own, in fact, it's an impossible standard so I'm off the hook, that's a message from Satan.

The Sermon on the Mount absolutely shows us our need for Jesus. It absolutely outlines the ways that Jesus was perfect on our behalf and acceptable Savior before the Father.

And it does something more. You see, when someone receives Christ as Lord, Jesus says they are born again. That's not just a status, a label.

God changes us. I will put my law within them and I will write it on their hearts. Jeremiah 31. You were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked but God being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our trespasses made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved and raised us up with him. Ephesians 2. I will give them one heart and a new spirit I will put within them.

[12 : 53] I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them and they shall be my people and I will be their God.

Friends, if anyone is in Christ he is a new creation. The old is gone. The new has come. All this is from God who through Christ reconciled us to himself and so when we read the Sermon on the Mount and really hear it and my battery just went out it's pretty floppy.

We'll get through it. That's too high. Sorry. When we read the Sermon on the Mount and really hear it we'll know that it's not nine ways to blessing with God because we know that it crushes us to the dirt with the weight of the holiness that we need but cannot produce.

but it also drives us to Jesus in repentant faith crying out for mercy and salvation and he gives it to us.

Mercy that we don't deserve. Salvation we have not earned and he gives us new birth. When he gives us new life we live differently.

[14 : 28] The very first words blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven show us what Christians the citizens of the kingdom of heaven look like.

When God rescues you from the condemnation of the law he doesn't just throw the law away he writes it on your heart. He gives you the Holy Spirit to empower you to begin truly living it out.

So when we come to the Sermon on the Mount let it drive you to Jesus for a savior. Repent and believe and you will be saved. And let it drive you to Jesus for help to live out the new birth that he freely gave to those who have repented and believed.

So let's dive in to this Sermon on the Mount and read Jesus' pronouncement of blessing on his people. Seeing the crowds he went up on the mountain and when he sat down his disciples came to him and he opened his mouth and taught them saying blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. Now the first thing you might be asking yourself is okay there are nine times that Jesus says blessed.

[15 : 59] Maybe your Bible says happy or fortunate. They're all trying to get at this idea of the blessing that comes to God's people. What does the blessed word mean?

It might mean happy but it doesn't mean I'm having lots of fun kind of happy. It could be fortunate but not in the things are going my way sense.

When Jesus says blessed are the merciful he's promising more than a good day to them. Right? And in fact if we looked throughout the Bible this word blessed is the blessing of the Psalms.

Psalms 1 Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked nor stands in the way of sinners nor sits in the seat of scoffers but his delight is in the law of the Lord.

Psalm 2 Blessed are all who take refuge in him. Psalm 31 Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven.

[17 : 09] whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord counts no iniquity and in whose spirit there is no deceit. Psalm 32 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord the people whom he has chosen as his heritage.

Do you notice anything? There is a Godward direction. The blessing that God pronounces on his people. There is a spiritual component.

It is not just an event. It is a state of being. An irrevocable blessing on your life handed down from heaven.

When the psalmist and when Jesus say blessed they are saying more than this person is happy or this person is having good fortune. They are saying this person is blessed by God.

They stand in right relationship with God. God looks on this person with favor. And so it's incredible that the first blessing Jesus pronounces in verse three is blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

[18 : 24] The poor in spirit what does that mean? You can probably guess it has something to do with being humble. just how humble though. The book of Matthew was originally written in Greek and it has different words for poor to indicate different levels of poverty.

There was the poor man and there was the poor man. And Jesus is talking about the second of them. The great philosopher Plato spoke Greek and he put it this way when distinguishing! Between the poor man and the poor man. The poor man has nothing extra. The poor man the one Jesus is talking about has nothing at all.

The poor man that Jesus is talking about here is a beggar. This is desperation poverty not hand-to-mouth poverty.

And so the poor in spirit know they have nothing at all as Plato said to bring before God. This is the person who hears the Sermon on the Mount really hears it and sees in it a mirror.

[19 : 40] In every way that Jesus demands I live, in every way Jesus demands I think, in every way Jesus demands that my heart looks, I fall short.

It's not enough to simply avoid adultery. Most people can do that if they try. It's not enough to avoid murder. Most people can do that.

Jesus demands that I never even desire with a glance another. Jesus demands I never let selfish anger take hold. Who can do that?

The answer is no one. And that's why Lloyd Jones said that the Beatitudes crushed him to the ground. The weight of the holiness, the Lord demands, overwhelms us, and drives us to our knees in sackcloth and ashes.

That's what it means to be poor in spirit. Nothing in my hands I bring simply to the cross I cling.

[20 : 46] This is not the person who says, look, I'm no saint, which kind of sounds humble, right? But I'm not that bad. That right there, that moment, I'm not that bad.

That's not poor in spirit. Why should God let me into heaven? Well, I'm a decent person. That is not poor in spirit. I've attended church all my life.

That's not poor in spirit. In chapter seven, towards the end of the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus will talk about people who say, Lord, Lord, did we not and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty works in your name.

That's not poor in spirit. That's not the person who thinks, I'm destitute of all righteousness. I have no claim before the throne. That's the person who says, look at all these things I did for you.

It's not the person who says, look, I'm not as bad as that guy, which I've heard. It's not the person who says, look, I'm not as bad as my spouse, which I've heard. It's not the person who says, look, I'm not as bad as Hitler, which I've also heard.

[21 : 57] That's not poor in spirit. That's saying, I've got something before the Lord. I have something to commend myself to his righteousness.

That's not poor in spirit. None of those sentiments look anything like a spiritual beggar. the poor in spirit is also not the person who by their personality is quiet or shy or unconfident or fearful.

Do not allow yourself to think that, oh, you know what, I'm kind of a quiet person, so that makes me this. You can be quiet and full of pride. In fact, quietness is not necessarily, fearfulness is not necessarily what this provides to people anyway, because in fact, the Lord desires that his people become bold and courageous for their faith.

The poor in spirit is the person who says, I look to heaven and see a perfectly holy God. Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty.

And then says, woe is me, for I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.

[23 : 23] The person who is poor in spirit, a beggar, begs, begs for mercy from this good and holy God, and he delights to give us mercy and grace in the cross of Christ.

Christ. So if you've been frantically trying to earn your place before God, or if you've never even really thought about needing to be holy before a holy God, will you see in yourself today that you have nothing to commend yourself to God?

Will you humble yourself, become poor in spirit, a beggar in spirit, and beg for mercy from Christ? And will you praise him?

Because he has provided Jesus' cross to pay for your sins, and his empty tomb to pave a road to heaven.

Because that's exactly what's promised to the poor in spirit. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. One writer put it like this, what more reward could we ask for?

[24 : 40] God declares that he is willing to be our God, to be our king, to be our shepherd. What a privilege! No one who is ushered into his presence on that great day will have to ask himself or herself, was it all worthwhile?

Was it worth the sacrifices and suffering? God's presence will more than convince his people that heaven is worth any cost. Now when Jesus says the kingdom of heaven, he's talking about the right and just and good reign of God among his people.

And there is going to be a final, perfect, and future fulfillment of that on the last day. He will wipe away every tear. Can you imagine that?

He will perfect us finally. I hope that brings you joy. we will behold his glory and see him as he is with unveiled face.

You bear it. But the kingdom of heaven is not just for the future. Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is, present tense, the kingdom of heaven. The kingdom exists right now everywhere that Jesus is enthroned as king.

[26 : 00] In his people, the church. He is our shepherd even this moment. He is our shield and refuge even now. He is our comfort, our hope, our strength, and joy today.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The ones who know they have nothing cast themselves entirely on Christ and receive from him everything.

And then Jesus says, blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Now, if we read this by itself, we could conclude that Jesus is offering comfort to every person who is ever sad.

Unlike the other beatitudes, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, blessed are the pure in heart, Jesus doesn't say something specifically spiritual about mourning.

But in the context of the eight other beatitudes, which are explicitly spiritual, it follows that the promise of the kingdom, the ultimate comfort, to the poor in spirit, we should understand from this context that this comfort is for the people of God.

[27 : 23] And then we don't have to kind of spiritualize this as some people do. You know, some people would say, well, this really only just means, you know, those who sorrow over sin get their sins comforted because they've been pardoned.

I think it extends far beyond that, which is why he doesn't add a spiritual label to it. We receive comfort as we mourn over our sin because God forgives Christians in Christ, but the comfort we receive isn't just for Christian-y kinds of sorrow.

sorrow. Our king promises to wipe away every tear, comfort every sorrow, bind every wound, and heal every sickness our souls have if we are in Christ.

He promises his people comfort from the guilt of our own sin. He promises his people comfort as we look to the world around us and mourn the brokenness that we see everywhere.

Heartbreak, societies and strife, families that are broken, the powerless abused or ignored, races demeaned, classes despised, nations at war.

[28 : 37] If this doesn't prick Our hearts are the beating, right? All the suffering that we see around us causes us to mourn and he promises us that he will comfort us in the midst of that.

He promises his people comfort as we experience loss. He promises his people comfort from every harm and every illness. He promises his people comfort in every abuse and injustice that they suffer.

The Apostle Paul says, I consider, this is Romans 8, I consider that the sufferings of this present time, that is, all the sufferings of our whole lives.

I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

Now, Paul, what he's not doing here is diminishing our sorrows one bit. The sufferings that we and our loved ones go through, he's not saying, you know what, that cancer, it's really not that bad.

[29 : 49] That's not what he's saying. When he says that our suffering is not worth comparing with the glory that's to be revealed in us, he's not saying, man up, deal with it.

He's not saying, it's not that bad. He's not diminishing our sorrows and our sufferings one bit. He's exploding our view of glory.

glory that is in store for us. See, my idea, your idea of heaven is a sad little farce of the true reality. Our concept of the wedding feast of the lamb is the fast food version. Our ideas of the glory of the Lord are pitiful stumblings in the dark.

we do not understand the glory that is in store for those who are in Christ. What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.

[31 : 00] The Bible does not downplay our present suffering. It expands, it enlarges, magnifies, amplifies the infinity of God's blessing to his people.

the poor in spirit. And so they find comfort. And in fact, this makes Christians the most honest mourners in the world, because it gives us permission to really confront our sorrows head-on.

We don't need to smooth over the rough edges. We don't need to distract ourselves from our suffering. We don't need to hide from it or hide our pain from others.

there's glory, friends. There's glory in store. We don't need to ignore the darkness and pretend it's not there. We don't need to pretend it's sunny.

We don't need to make it better ourselves. We don't need to fear dealing with it lest we get sucked into a hopeless pit of despair.

[32 : 04] Because we have a Savior who went through the fire. He was mocked. He was ignored and beaten and betrayed and tortured and slandered and murdered and emerged victorious.

He sits on heaven's throne. He has promised himself to his people. He has secured you, your soul, your victory, your future forever.

And so as we mourn, we can say, even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for you are with me.

Your rod and staff, they comfort me. Blessed are those who mourn. They will be comforted. And then Jesus says, blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Last fall, when we preached through the book of Colossians, when we got to chapter three, I sort of joked that we sort of give ourselves a pass on putting on meekness. Because nobody really knows what that means.

[33 : 17] Someone actually asked me after that sermon, what does meekness mean? And I said, I don't know. No, here's what meekness means. It's kind of an old-timey saying.

When we hear it, what does that even mean? The only time that we really hear it in our lexicon today is someone saying, you know, oh, meek is a church mouse.

And we still don't know what that actually means. How can we grow in something? How can we understand and receive the benefit and the blessing of something if we don't know what it is?

how can we come to understand its blessing? Well, the Greek word underneath this is also translated elsewhere in scriptures as gentleness.

Not in a physical sense, but in a relational sense. Meekness is the opposite of demanding my own way. Meekness is the opposite of mean-spirited speech.

[34 : 14] The opposite of unreasonable demands. It's the opposite of defensiveness. It's the opposite of a calloused heart. Meekness is the opposite of a cold shoulder.

It is the opposite of bragging. But it doesn't mean that a meek person is not bold. It doesn't mean that a meek person is not confident.

And it doesn't mean that a meek person isn't strong. Here is what meekness looks like. In John chapter 18, Jesus was on trial, on his way to die on the cross and absorb the father's just wrath for

my sin and yours.

The high priest then questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. And we need to read that as a hostile questioning, an accusation, an unjust questioning, where Jesus could have gotten defensive.

Jesus answered him, I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple where all the Jews come together.

[35 : 29] I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them. They know what I said. Right here, Jesus is showing us what meekness looks like.

He isn't getting defensive. He's not getting mean. He's gentle, yet he's both. He doesn't shy away from the test or the truth.

And he goes on to show even more meekness. You see, the audience didn't like that gentle yet powerful response. When he had said these things, one of the officers standing by struck Jesus with his hand, saying, is that how you answer the high priests?

And listen to this. Jesus answered him, If what I said is wrong, bear witness about the wrong. But if what I said is right, why do you strike me?

Isn't there something powerful about that? Isn't there something attractive about our Savior in his bold gentleness? Doesn't he, in his meekness, do something to draw our hearts to him and want us to be like him?

[36 : 45] Well, how? How do we get there? Only the poor in spirit can be truly meek. That's why poor in spirit comes first, by the way. Only the poor in spirit can be truly meek.

Why? The gospel is the only power that develops meekness. when we see our sinfulness, our spiritual poverty, and the rescue that he gives us.

One writer put it like this, although they are far more wicked in their hearts than they ever dared imagine, they are also far more deeply loved than they ever dared to hope.

having been forgiven by this God and loved by him in this way, what does it matter what everyone else thinks? And in this beatitude, Jesus is probably quoting and fulfilling Psalm 37 11, which says, but the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.

Meekness really, only happens in the midst of conflict, and he promises us peace. Jesus has made peace between God and us by the blood of his cross.

[38 : 15] He instructs and empowers us to be gentle and meek and bold in this life. He has made peace between brothers and sisters in Christ.

What can we hold against each other if we've been bought at such a price? peace. And he promises us an inheritance! of glory and everlasting peace.

And here's the thing, friends, it gets better from here. Next Lord's Day, we'll look at the next three beatitudes in verses 6 through 8. We'll see how God doesn't just save his people and let them sit, he grows them.

and the growth is incredible. If you're intimidated by this ceremony of how will I ever do this, good, we're going to see that being poor in spirit is not just how we enter the kingdom, it also means that we don't have the strength ourselves to live the Christian life.

We depend on another there as well. Our God who is strong and willing to save is also strong and willing to strengthen us by his spirit to walk with him in obedience and joy.

[39 : 34] And we will see the blessings increase as well. Next week, Jesus is going to say that we will be satisfied, deep down satisfied.

He will say, we will see God. And in two weeks time, the greatest blessing of all, they shall be called sons of God.

Friends, what glory awaits us? Let's pray. Lord, I thank you that all we need to receive all of these blessings is nothing, is empty hands.

Lord, will you make us poor in spirit? Will you show us how we have nothing to commend ourselves before you? But you, in your great love and grace, have made a way through Jesus Christ for our salvation.

Thank you, Father. Will you draw our hearts to you? Will you help us to live and walk by the same faith by which we enter into your kingdom?

[40 : 54] We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.