

I keep The Sermon On The Mount

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Preacher: Harry Robinson

[0 : 0 0] The Mount, and it's chapter 5, 6, and 7 of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. And this is the way I would like you to see it. First, look at the setting.

The setting you will find, I think it's there to turn back to verse 23 of chapter 4 and see what is happening to Jesus' ministry. He went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing every disease and every infirmity among the people.

So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick and afflicted with various diseases, pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics, and he healed them.

And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis and Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan, seeing the crowds.

Now that's where chapter 5 starts. Let me just give you the picture then. He is overwhelmed by a situation in which there is an unlimited number of people with a virtually unlimited number of demands.

[1 : 1 5] They're all crowding in upon him. They're all seeking help from him according to the needs of their own particular lives. And so, seeing the crowds, it says of Jesus, chapter 5, verse 1, he went up on the mountain.

That might thin out the crowds a little bit. When he sat down, his disciples came to him. So be very careful to note that he is talking to his disciples.

You've got it? His disciples came to him on the mountain, and he opened his mouth, and he taught them. That is, he taught his disciples. Go to the end of the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 7.

Then, you find out by the time he had finished this, Matthew says, when Jesus had finished, verse 28 of chapter 7, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority and not as the scribes.

So beginning to teach his disciples, the crowds gathered around. Now, what I want you to hear tonight, I want you to hear as the disciples of Jesus Christ.

[2 : 3 3] And I want you to hear it because, presumably, Christ's concern is that as these people come and come and flock in upon him, overwhelm him, so to speak, humanly speaking, he turns to his disciples and says, all right, here we are in this situation.

What are we going to do? How are we going to cope? And so he tells the disciples who they are. And so I want you to take this little talk that I'm giving tonight as a description of who you are as current disciples of Jesus Christ.

This is who you are. Now, you have an option. You may just be an onlooker. That's what happened here, too.

Jesus was teaching his disciples, and the crowd gathered around and listened. But the teaching was directed to his disciples. And so when he turns to his disciples, he said to them, these blessings, the Beatitudes.

Now, very difficult, this passage, simply because we are so, I mean, I presume that we are very, very familiar with it.

- [3 : 52] It's part of the warp and woo of the whole fabric of our culture and of our society, of our history, of our literature, of our music, of our understanding.
- All of this has been influenced in some measure by these Beatitudes. And so one of the difficulties you're going to have with them tonight, we're all going to have, is because we are so familiar with them that we can't hear them.
- So I just pray that you may be given grace to hear them in a way that perhaps, by God's Holy Spirit, you haven't heard them before. And so they begin, and they describe the conditions of blessedness.
- I would like to say now, would you stand up and tell me what they all are without looking? Would anybody care to do that? No, I won't. But get it so you know it, you see, because it's very helpful when you can review this in your mind.
- These are the people who are blessed. The poor in spirit, the mourning, the meek, the hungry and thirsting after righteousness, the agents of mercy, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, and the persecuted.
- [5 : 05] Those are the conditions of blessedness. That is, God's active blessing is upon those people who recognize in their hearts that condition.
- And if you are a disciple of Jesus Christ, part of your training as a disciple is that you will have learned to recognize those conditions as applying to you.
- That's who you are as a disciple of Christ. You are poor in spirit. You are mourning. You are meek. You are hungry and thirsting after righteousness.
- You are an agent of mercy. You are pure in heart. You're a peacemaker. And you're persecuted on account of righteousness, on Christ's account. That's who you are.
- Now, you may protest and say you are not. But I would suggest to you, even though you say you're not, you still are. And that you need to come to grips with that reality, that that is who, in fact, you are.
- [6 : 15] That is the thing that really identifies you down deep. Less than an hour ago, I confess to you, my whole identity was totally absorbed with the well-being of the Calgary Plains.
- So absorbed was I in watching what was happening. But that was very momentary.
- It's all over now. And it's finished. And I'd begun to regain a certain amount of my identity. And my true identity, my deeper identity, is not caught up by some phenomenal event like that, which sweeps in like a storm and takes possession of you.
- But my true identity is the thing, the solid basis of who Christ says we are as the disciples of Christ. We are poor in spirit, mourning, meek, hungry and thirsting after righteousness.
- Now, you know that there's a whole lot of things that we need to do. I hesitate to ask you to do this. But I guess I better just go over something to try and break open what is meant by these various things.
- [7 : 42] Poverty of spirit is the personal acknowledgement of total spiritual bankruptcy. For tonight, there's lots of other ways you can talk about it.
- But think about it in terms of total bankruptcy. Spiritually. For mourning, that you are not detouring the human tragedy.
- You are confronting the human tragedy. And as you confront that human tragedy, as you see it over and over again in our society, you cannot help but mourn.
- That people have to suffer so much. And that what could be is not for many people. And so you mourn. Meekness is not weakness.
- But it's what one commentator says, a devastating contradiction to the philosophical materialism that is so present in our day.

[8 : 56] What meekness is, I think, perhaps the best way to describe it in the 20th century is, by reason of the constitution of this country, I have my rights.

Meekness is to say, so what? That doesn't solve anything. And it doesn't lead anywhere. It's important that people should have them. But you can't build anything on the fact that you have them.

Alone. Hungering and thirsting after righteousness. Well, I want to emphasize the hungering and thirsting.

Hungering and thirsting are not something you do, but something that happens to you. You hunger because you haven't any food to eat. If you had food, you'd eat it.

You thirst because you haven't anything to drink. If you had something to drink, you'd drink it. What you need for food and what you need for drink is denied you, so you hunger and thirst.

[10 : 14] So you are aware of a righteousness, which is the will of God at work in your life, and you hunger for that, and you thirst for that, and you long for that.

You are addicted to that. Mercy. Mercy is...

The best way I think you can describe it is... You know that one of the phenomena of the 20th century is that people with a condition have been chosen to help others with a condition.

That is, if you're an alcoholic, you can help an alcoholic. You know, if you've suffered from this particular disease or that particular disease, if you've lost a child, if your child has been subject to that crib death syndrome, all those things, they try and get people who have been involved in that to be involved with the other people that are involved in it.

It's a kind of... If you've experienced it, then you can help somebody else who's experiencing it. If you've experienced mercy, then you can help somebody else who needs mercy.

[11 : 36] So you are subject to the same miserable affliction, which requires mercy, so that you can help others in the same condition.

That's what I... I think that's a helpful picture it is to me of what mercy is. Pure in heart. The ultimate incentive to get all the chaos and the confusion out of your heart.

You know, that our hearts are so full of junk and garbage and tatters and remains and unresolved issues. And it's just that our hearts are so loaded with junk that we can't do anything.

And what God wants from us, the condition that he wants us to have, the condition that he gives us is that we have a purity of heart which allows us to see him.

I suppose it's like glasses. You know, you can't see him because your glasses are so dirty. And that purity of heart is what he gives us. Peacemakers.

[12 : 56] This doesn't mean that you're going to sit down at the table of the Council of the Nations. But you're going to recognize that there is a good deal of hostility between people and people.

And you are going to be an agent for making peace between people. Got it? That's what a peacemaker is. You go into a situation and, humanly speaking, we often heighten the alienation that is already there.

What we want is that we should have peacemakers. People who bring a new situation to pass.

And then the final thing is persecution. And persecution is on account of righteousness. A lot of religions and a lot of people think that persecution is an end in itself.

If you're persecuted, you must be right. But the fact of the matter is that you can be persecuted very easily for the wrong thing. And so it's not persecution as a general condition of humanity.

[14 : 07] It's persecution for righteousness. Which Jesus goes on and in the last verse of this section says it's persecution for me, for Christ's sake.

So those are the conditions. Now what I want to tell you about those conditions is this. That each of those conditions is beautifully balanced.

You recognize in yourself, as the disciples of Christ, you recognize in yourselves poverty of spirit. But that recognition means that compensating that is yours is the kingdom of God.

You recognize in yourself mourning. But facing the situation that produces the mourning means that even in that situation, you will be comforted.

You see the balance, how it works out? You look at the situation of meekness. And because you don't claim your rights, you inherit everything.

[15 : 14] You inherit the earth. You don't make a great fuss of claiming your rights. But your inheritance is the earth. That's what it is to be a disciple of Christ.

You are hungering and thirsting after righteousness. And you will be filled. You are an agent of mercy.

And in your misery, you receive mercy. You long for purity of heart. And God reveals himself to your singleness of eye.

You long to be a peacemaker. And you become a son of God. Accomplishing his purpose.

You know, the Romans talks about the world is waiting on tiptoes for the appearance of the sons of God. People that can bring this whole thing together instead of driving it further apart.

[16 : 18] And then it ends as it begins. By saying, inevitably you will be persecuted on my account. That is just standard practice.

That all the disciples of Christ will experience. And that will only confirm for them that the kingdom of God is theirs.

So you get the picture of how it's all balanced? I want to tell you this. Because I really think this is how you should understand yourselves as the disciples of Christ.

This tremendous crowd of people following Christ. A tremendous number of needs. How is Christ going to prepare his disciples to meet the needs of those people?

The way he does it is say, this is who you are. You're not going to say, I am here and I can help you. That's not how you're going to do it.

[17 : 18] You're going to get down where they are. And you can identify with them and more. Are they poor in spirit? You are more so.

Are they mourning? You are more so. Are they meek? Have lost the right to fight? You are more so.

Do they hunger and thirst after the will of God in their lives? You are more so. Are they in very much need of the mercy of God?

So are you. Are they pure in heart? That is, is there some longing in their hearts? Beneath all the chaos and the confusion?

And the thing that pulls us in every direction? Yes, and so are you. The thing you desire above all is to see God. Are they alienated and at cross purposes and long to be brought into place one with another?

[18 : 23] Do they feel persecuted for various causes and reasons?

So are you for righteousness' sake. Do you see the wonder of the balance of this? Do you see the wonder of the balance of this? This is what makes us the disciples of Christ.

This is equipping us, as it were, to be Christ's disciples in our world. There is nobody that we can't sit down beside them and identify fully with them and know that we are utterly dependent upon the God who gives us the kingdom, the God who comforts us, the God who has provided an inheritance for us, the God who fills our hungering and thirsting, the God who shows mercy towards us, the God who reveals himself to us, the God who brings peace through Jesus Christ, the God who gives us the kingdom.

That's what we do. The disciples move out and claim all these things on behalf of others because that's what it is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

So what you find is that the disciples of Christ are marked by a perpetual condition which is described as poverty of spirit, mourning, meekness, etc.

[20 : 02] That perpetual condition which is matched by a perpetual providence from God's side. God meeting that need which we are experiencing.

And you see, I'm sure it's how the kingdom has to come. Because the way our world does it is they take you, give you a diploma, a certificate, a doctorate, an office, a secretary, a secretary, and business hours, and set you up in a great pinnacle and say, now if anybody wants help, come and see me.

We can't deal with all the problems of our world that way. The disciples of Christ can move in and say, are you hurting? So am I.

Very deeply. And I've come to recognize that. And so I can be where you are. And together we can claim the perpetual providence of God because this is the condition of our hearts.

These are our needs. Well, you see, these conditions could not apply to the citizen of the year.

[21 : 31] These are the indivisible conditions of Christ's disciples in the secret place for which the world gives no rewards and which people cannot see.

These are the invisible and secret reality of the heart of Christian disciples.

And what we need to do as Christian disciples is stay in touch with that reality so that we can totally identify with the needs of our world and so that we can know what the promises of God are.

I don't want to persuade you to be poor in spirit because you are, if only you would recognize it. I don't need to tell you to be meek.

Because, well, that's who Christ is. And in Christ, that's who you are. Not one who didn't think it robbery to be equal with God but made himself of no reputation.

[23 : 01] And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself. I don't need to tell you to hunger and thirst after righteousness because that hunger is there and that thirst is there.

And you may try and assuage it in other ways, but you can't. I don't need to explain to you what it means to be merciful because you, in your misery, need a perpetual supply of God's mercy.

God, be merciful to me as sinner is the very basis of your relationship to God. I don't need to tell you to be pure in heart because probably the great battle of your life is to be pure in heart.

I don't need to tell you to be peacemakers because God has made peace with you in Christ and you want in Christ's name to make peace with others.

And I don't need to tell you to go out and see if you could be persecuted for righteousness' sake because all you've got to do is confess the name of Christ in our society and persecution just happens.

[24 : 19] You don't have to work at it. Amen. Our perpetual condition, matched by God's perpetual providence, is what it means to be the disciples of Christ.

And blessed are you when this is happening to you. And bless God that he blesses us in this way.

Amen. I'm going to turn to prayer now.

I'd like you to sit or kneel to pray. And Jeff and I will lead you in prayer. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Let's take a moment to be quiet before the Lord and absorb the words that we've heard and ask God's Spirit to apply them in our hearts.

[25 : 31] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Our Father, how we praise you that your grace is sufficient for all of our needs, that your providence matches every need that we have as disciples of yours.

So we pray that more and more you would make us into your disciples, those who seek to be pure in heart, those who seek to be all those things which you call us to be.

May we really be what we are in you. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. I'm going to pray very slowly at intercession, leaving plenty of time for you in the quiet of your own heart to apply this prayer to people that you know of and situations you're aware of.

Be mindful, O Lord, of thy people bowed before thee and of those who are absent, through age, sickness, or infirmity. Care for the infants, guide the young, support the aged, encourage the faint-hearted, collect the scattered, and bring the wandering to thy fold.

[27 : 25] Travel with the voyagers, defend the widows, shield the orphans, deliver the captives, heal the sick.

Succour all who are in tribulation, necessity, or distress.

Remember for good all those that love us and those that hate us and those that have desired us, unworthy as we are, to pray for them.

And those whom we have forgotten, do thou, O Lord, remember. For thou art the helper of the helpless, the savior of the lost, the refuge of the wanderer, the healer of the sick.

Thou who knowest each man's need and hast heard his prayer, grant unto each according to thy merciful, loving kindness and thy eternal love.

[28 : 51] Lord, in your mercy. Particularly take up the verses that we've heard. Blessed are the peacemakers.

We pray for those who are making for peace in our troubled world. Those in what we would call the Near East, Israel and Lebanon.

Again, we remember before you, Lord, Terry, wait and pray that you would have mercy and bring about his release and the release of the others with him too.

We think of peace in various parts of Africa. And we pray for the peacemakers in Beijing.

We pray, Lord, that you might step into that society that does not own you and so make your mark.

[30 : 17] pray for the Christians in China. Give them your grace and help. We're also called to pray for those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake.

And in particular, we remember those Christians behind the Iron Curtain in Russia and in other parts of the world.

Lord, we pray that you would help them to stand firm in the faith. Pray for those in prison who may know the names of those in prison.

Sustain them, Lord. as we unite in fellowship with them now, give them your special grace.

Help them to know that the kingdom of heaven is theirs. finally, Lord, we pray for ourselves.

[31 : 32] We look at this description of ourselves and we think, oh, I just don't want to be like this. It's not what our world is all about. And Lord, give us grace to be poor in spirit and to recognize that that is our condition and that we are mourning and meek and have a hunger and thirst for righteousness.

We need mercy. We long for purity of heart. That we've received peace and should be peacemakers. And that we will be persecuted for righteousness and we own Christ.

Amen. Lord, thank you that this description of a believer matches you perfectly.

And it's in your footsteps that we follow and in your name that we pray. In Jesus' name, Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, just before we close, I know that Jeff has a notice and he's going to be on his way up here.

But, do you read the front of these cards? Yes? Marvellous. That's great. Because I, because I write them, you know, and it's nice to know that you read them.

[33 : 06] So, I'm delighted. You should all have got a sermon card. Sorry about the misprint on the front. Blessed are the rich, the happy, and the strong. Our series begins or began today with Harry taking our first in the sermon on the mountain.

We wanted to expose modern myths of ways to live and we think it's, we sweated over this, Jeff and I. So, if you don't like the titles, we're very depressed. But anyway, take it up, pin it up somewhere and, you know, maybe in a public place and just let people know that these things are on and around.

Now, you might feel that you really want to get into this sermon and discover what it's about even more. That 20, 25 minutes is not enough for you to really get to the depths of this.

so we're having a Bible study on this passage and it's open to anybody. We're going to be running different levels of groups. Beginners for beginners, intermediates for most of you and advanced for the proud.

Okay? I'll be leading the advanced. No, I won't. But in other words, we'll have some fellowship together. We're going to meet at 7.30 in the Trendle Lounge and there'll be coffee and tea and cookies and that kind of thing.

[34 : 26] And then we'll split up into groups, however many there may be. I have no idea who's going to turn up. And then we'll have a Bible. I'll give an introduction to this. Not that you've already had an introduction so most of you don't need it, but just a little bit of an introduction and some questions.

And then we'll have a Bible study together. And maybe in our groups we'll be able to end the evening by praying if that's appropriate. So there you go. It's a bit of an experiment. No idea who's going to turn up, but I'd like you to.

Join me there. I'm not the only one. Wednesday, 7.30 Trendle Lounge. Now I'd like Jeff to come and give out his notice. Just a very quick notice.

Perhaps some of you have started seeing around town yellow posters that look like this. They're advertising something called the Mayor's Walk for Africa. Some of you perhaps participated in it last year.

It's the second annual walk which Mayor Campbell has pulled together. A number of other mayors from B.C. and actually all across Canada are involved in. It's a walk-a-thon in three weeks' time on June 11th.

[35 : 33] It's going to be lovely weather so don't be put off in the slightest bit. To walk and raise money for 20 some odd organizations working in Africa doing relief and development work, health care projects and other sorts of things like that.

It's a walk that goes around Stanley Park so it'll be a lovely time. And I have some of these sign-up sheets and I really would encourage some of you to think about walking and or think about sponsoring somebody to walk to raise money for all sorts of organizations.

Be interested to know that perhaps half of the organizations involved in this are Christian organizations and a committee organizing this upon which I serve is predominantly Christian and so you won't be alone walking.

It's on a Sunday morning unfortunately for all sorts of reasons I don't need to go into. But seeing as you all come to an evening service anyway, you won't be bothered about walking for Africa in the morning.

So see me for details if you'd like. And Harry didn't hear that notice, did he? The final thing to say is that there is tea and coffee but I'm not sure about the cold drinks although I promised them last week over in the Trendle Lounge and I would urge you to go over there because it's a great oh there is water yes, David Knox informatly and that is cold and that's 75 yards in that direction and I'm going to go over there almost straight away after the service to set a good example so it'd be lovely nothing else will happen over there just a chance to drink and to meet one another over a drink it's kind of nice to be able to chat to people while you're holding a drink you know because you're not sure what to do with your hands so have a drink in your hands well alright ok there you go it's about time we sang the last hymn isn't it after all this well our closing hymn is a favourite of a number here it's 129 in our blue with one voice hymn books it's an old hymn written by

[37 : 29] Joseph David Jones the tune is called Guachmai and the opening line is King of Glory King of Peace I will love thee and that love may never cease I will move thee shall we stand and sing 129 I will move thee and that love may never cease I will move thee in the morning in the peace I will love thee and that love may never cease I will move thee thou hast come to me and that love thou hast come to me and that love anything i mah and that love much earth can be

I will give thee, and what we love, O my God, I will give thee.

O God, we love you, and what we love, O my God, I will give thee.

And how will the Lord be, and what we love, O my God, I will give thee.

O my God, we love you, and what we love, O my God, I will give thee. We give thee, and what we love, O my God, I will give thee.

[39 : 55] Amen. Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to do far more abundantly than all that we can ask or think.

To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen. May the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in the knowledge and love of God.

And of his Son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Thank you.

[41 : 45] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.