

CHAPTER 5: THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT (W5)

Why did the Lord ascend the mount to deliver his teaching?

- That he might give the heavenly commandments to his disciples, leaving the earthly and seeking the sublime (Chromatius);
- that he might bring the people with him to a higher life (Jerome);
- that the highest teaching of the Father and the Son might be made known (Augustine)

The Sermon on the Mount is the moral law of the new kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of the Messiah.

St. Augustine said, “The law was given that men might seek grace; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled.”

The hard demand of the letter is here in the closest possible connexion with the promise of the Spirit. New Law, new covenant, enabled by the Spirit of God to fulfill the commandments of the Kingdom.

Jesus, the True Moses, is speaking the Kingdom Law into the ear of the Church (calls his disciples) but intentionally overheard by the world (the crowds gather).

The Beatitudes describe the character of Christ, the Character which is to permeate and define the people of God.

Here we have a description of a certain character, not a demand for specific acts.

Christ requires us not to do such and such things, **but to BE such and such people.**

And the character which we find here described is beyond all question nothing else than our Lord’s own character put into words, the human character of our Lord corresponding always in flawless perfection with the teaching which He gave.

Jesus is describing the content of the blessed life: a life that must be measured on the scale of eternity with seeing God as the ultimate goal of this life.

The end of each beatitude tells us what our Lord meant by blessedness:

1. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven;
2. they shall be comforted;
3. they shall inherit the earth;
4. they shall be satisfied;
5. they shall obtain mercy;
6. they shall see God;
7. they shall be called sons of God.

2-7 simply expands the first, amplifying the idea of membership in the Kingdom of heaven.

Membership in the kingdom is a life of perfect relationship with man and nature, based on perfect fellowship with God. That is true blessedness, and the blessed life is open to all.

Then, in the last beatitude, He answers the question how is such a character likely to find itself in this world; and answers that question in terms very like those employed by a Jewish writer, possibly not very long before our Lord's time, the writer of the Book of Wisdom, who describes the attitude of the world towards the righteous thus:

5 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

The Beatitudes

2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: **God has spoken through the prophets now he speaks directly...**

THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST AS OPPOSED TO THE CHARACTER OF THE WORLD

3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. The world says “Get all you can, and keep it.” Christ says Blessed are those who in heart and will have nothing- detachment.

It is the utterance of Job:¹ “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” This is pure, perfect detachment.

Job took and used aright what God gave him, adoring the sovereignty of God. The sovereign took away what He had given; Job gave it up freely.

Being DETACHED— that is poverty of spirit; at the least, “having food and covering, let us be therewith content.”

(2 Cor 6:10) St. Paul’s comment on this first beatitude lies in his description of the apostles “As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” The wilfulness with which we cling to supposed “necessaries of life,” “things we cannot do without.”

“Those are truly blessed who, having spurned the riches of the world, become rich in God” (Chromatius, 400, Bishop of Aquileia)

(Phil 2:1...) Christ became poor AND Humility is exalted.

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. The world says “Get as much pleasure as you can out of life; suck it in wherever you can; get as much pleasure and avoid as much pain as you can possibly do.” In startling opposition to this maxim of the world our Lord puts His maxim “Blessed are they that mourn.”

There are two chief kinds of mourning into which it is the duty of every true servant of our Lord to enter—the mourning for sin and the mourning for pain.

We must mourn for our sin, for we are sinners.

Godly sorrow is a profound and heartfelt regret on account of those things in which we have gone against the will of God: and “blessed are they that mourn.”

But the light of the Gospel leads us to sober repentance. We move to change our future from mourning our past; “mourning tarries for an evening but joy comes in the morning.” χαρμολύπη (char-mo-lee-pee) = Joy-filled Sorrow, John Climacus

Then there is the pain of sorrows, the sorrows of Gethsemane, and the burden of others’ sorrows. We have our ‘Gethsemane moments’ but we ought to have room to shoulder the burdens of others (like Christ).

“Bear ye one another’s burdens.” (Gal 6:2) Of our Lord it was said “Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases” Mt 8:17; Isa 53:4—not on the cross simply, but as He moved about in Galilee and Judaea, and the sad, the sorrowful and the sick came to Him.

And in proportion to the fullness with which we enter into penitence for sin and into sympathy for the sufferings of others, we shall get the comfort (or encouragement) of God. Sins that remain unrevealed cannot be healed.

5 “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. The world says “Stand up for your rights; make the most of yourself; don’t let any man put upon you.” And so we are always standing on our dignity, always thinking ourselves insulted or imposed upon. “Blessed are the meek,” our Lord says. The meek—that is manifestly, those who are ready to be put upon as far as they themselves are concerned.

6 “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

This is a matter of desire; what we hunger for. To hunger and thirst for righteousness is to desire the righteousness that God, His Messiah will establish, “taking up the cause of his people and making things right by keeping his covenantal promises” (Isa 11:4; Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Matt. 12:20)

(1 Cor 1:30) To hunger and thirst for righteousness is to hunger for Christ who is our righteousness: Those who hunger for the things of this world are never satisfied; the soul being starved by all that is temporal, passing.

Hungering after Christ satisfies the soul, “hunger and thirst” (Ps 107:4-9) Manna from heaven and Water from a rock: (John 6:30) “I am the bread of heaven” (John 4:13) “I give you living water.”

7 “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

Mercy is not merely emotion which leads to no effective action for the removal of the misery which we deplore.

For the disciple of Christ pity is a motive to vigorous action that passes from emotion into practical and redemptive action.

Compassion which DOES NOTHING is in the New Testament regarded as a form of pernicious hypocrisy (James 2:15–16; 1 John 3:16–18).

And the merciful shall obtain mercy. Here we get a great law of the divine dealing. God deals with us as we deal with our fellow-men:

- Ps. 18:24–26
- Matt. 18:23 “The Unforgiving Servant”
- Mt. 25:40 “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive”
- Js 2:13-14

8 “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

Sin clouds the eye of the soul. We overcome uncleanness by contending for virtue and holiness, for Christ-likeness, for purity of heart.

(Psalm 51) A clean heart is coupled with a “right spirit”—that is, A WILL set straight towards God with simplicity of purpose.

(Psalm 24:4) “Clean hands and pure hearts”= Action proceeding from a pure heart:

- (Psalm 15) Truthful speech, Keeping One's Word, Dealing Honestly With One's Neighbor
- (Psalm 26) Integrity and Fidelity to God's moral standard
- (Micah 6:8) Doing Good

Seeing God (1 Cor 13:12; 1 Jn 3:2; Rev. 22:4)

9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

Called Sons as we pursue that very agenda for which The SON came into the world: The Prince of Peace. YET NOT at the expense of TRUTH (Matt. 10:34)

Christians are to be makers of Christ's peace.

(2 Cor 5:16) Ministers of Reconciliation: reconciling people, churches, nations to Christ and one another. (Rom 9:1, the burden of this ministry).

10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Christ-Like Righteousness: that detachment, that readiness to enter into the heritage of human pain, that self-suppressing meekness and humility towards our fellow men, that strong passion for righteousness, that effective compassion, that singleness of heart, that striving for peace- has a powerful and beautiful attraction... BUT, where it is not welcomed, it stings by its very beauty, it hardens by its very holiness.

It is in full view of this consequence of being righteous that our Lord speaks this last beatitude: and He gives it pointed and particular application to His disciples (v.11)

11 “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

When RIGHTEOUSNESS stood before men’s eyes in the person of our Lord, they would not have it. They set upon Him and slew Him:

- Mt 10:22 You will be hated by everyone because of My name, but the one who perseveres to the end will be saved (the Reward of Heaven).

Salt and Light

13 “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.

14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. **15** Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. **16** In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Christ Came to Fulfill the Law

St. Matthew 5:17 to the end—is simply a statement of the relation in which this new righteousness, this righteousness of the new kingdom, stands to the old righteousness of the Mosaic Law. Our Lord explains that the new law stands in a double relation to the old. First, it is in direct continuity with what had gone before (vv. 17–19); and, secondly (vv. 20–48), it supersedes it, as the complete supersedes the incomplete

17 “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. **18** 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. **19** Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the