

## Living In the Kingdom, Part 1

Matthew 5:3-4; 1 Corinthians 13:6; 2 Corinthians 7:8-10

### **Slide 1**

This morning I'm starting a series titled "*Living in the Kingdom*," which covers what's commonly called the "*Sermon on the Mount*" recorded in Matthew, chapters 5-7.

In this sermon, Jesus, from a position of having the authority to do so, gives us insight into what our lives should be like here on earth after accepting Him as Lord and Savior.

He does this by presenting a series of "blessed are" statements, commonly referred to as The Beatitudes.

In these statements, Jesus discussed issues that dealt with basic values which we, as human beings, should adopt and by which we should live.

He was trying to make the people understand that the values of this world don't lead to blessings.

Instead, He stressed that blessings come through living by the values which the world despises but which God holds dear.

In the Old Testament, especially in the Psalms, the "*blessed are*" statements describe the qualities in a person which brings him or her God's blessings.

The Greek word for blessings, found here in Matthew, is *makarios*, which means "blessed," an inherent state, not a gift from God or man.

Here, in Matthew 5, Jesus is focusing on the present state of people who adopt values and attitudes which permits them to know the inner touch of God in their present lives.

In other words, Jesus was telling them, and us today, us how to live in the kingdom of God right now, here on earth. This was a new and powerful concept to the men and women who listened.

They grew up looking forward to a future when God would act, but in Jesus' message they heard that God was already exercising His kingly authority now, here on earth!

This kingdom emphasis, with an active God, underlies the entire message that Jesus delivered on the mountain.

So today, as we go through these Beatitudes, I want you to understand that only those who place their full confidence in God as a King, and who act on that belief, can ever build up the courage to start living the lifestyle that Jesus laid out for His followers in this sermon.

Only those with a true belief and confidence in God can live in His kingdom here on earth.

Matthew 6:33, *“But seek you first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”*

I'll go deeper into this verse when we get to that section of Scripture, but I wanted to open with this verse since it tells us what we should be doing as children living in God's kingdom.

## **Slide 2**

Even though a multitude of people were present when Jesus delivered this Sermon on the Mount, His “students” were actually His disciples, who were new members to His kingdom.

As I said earlier, in this sermon Jesus was telling them how to live in the kingdom of God while simultaneously living here on earth.

He wanted the disciples, and each one of us, to know that we have dual citizenship and, as such, we must understand how to live in each kingdom.

What's dual citizenship? Dual citizenship refers to the status of an individual who holds the nationality of two different countries at the same time.

Individuals with dual citizenship enjoy the same rights and responsibilities as a citizen of each nation of which they're a citizen.

What we must understand is that spiritually there are two kingdoms, God's and Satan's.

Therefore, from a spiritual, and a natural perspective, everyone has dual "kingdom" citizenship. For Christians, we belong to the kingdom of God, but we also live naturally in this earthly kingdom.

For non-believers, spiritually they belong to Satan, but they too live naturally in this earthly kingdom. These are the only two choices.

As Christians, we left Satan's kingdom when we got saved and spiritually transitioned to God's kingdom. From that moment forward we had to learn how to live in this new kingdom.

Many people transition to this new kingdom but live as if they're still part of the old kingdom. So, once we transition from Satan's kingdom to God's kingdom, we must learn how to live in God's kingdom.

The entirety of the Sermon on the Mount is focused on teaching us how to live in God's kingdom while we're stuck here on earth.

Why's this so important? It's important because this world in which we live is filled with things that are designed to draw us away from God spiritually.

Remember what Jesus told the disciples when He taught them to pray?

Matthew 6:9-10, *“After this manner therefore pray: Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.”*

We’re told to pray that God’s will be done here on earth as it is in heaven, but the Bible says Satan is the god of this world. Think about that! Satan has the most influence on what happens in this world.

So, while we exist in this world and have access to everything within it, Jesus is teaching us how to discern what to access and what not to access in the world by focusing on living in God’s kingdom.

He wants us to remember whose kingdom matters most. He wants us to remember that even though we exist in this world and have access to everything within it, we belong to God and are to act like we do.

### **Slide 3**

So, let’s start by looking at all the Beatitudes, then we’ll focus on verses 3 and 4.

Matthew 5:3-12, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they who do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Blessed are they who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets who were before you.”*

Each of these beatitudes depict the ideal heart condition of a citizen of God's kingdom. No matter your age, job, or family role, if you apply these beatitudes to your life, you'll experience a joyful, fulfilled life!

Matthew 5:3, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."*

It's been disputed whether Christ meant the poor in reference to the material things of this life, or the humble.

You can find arguments for both sides, those who are materialistically poor and those who are humble.

I believe Jesus was referring to those who are humbled by the understanding of the Gospel and what Jesus did for us.

It means to have a humble opinion of ourselves; understanding that we're sinners, having no righteousness of our own; being willing to be saved only by the grace and mercy of God.

It's being willing to be where God places us, bearing what He lays upon us, and going where He bids us.

It's being willing to give our lives for Him; being willing to be in His hands, and to feel that we deserve no favor from Him.

It's the opposite of pride, self-confidence, competence, self-reliance, vanity, and ambition. These values are what the world respects and are opposed to what Jesus said.

The natural world, that in which we live, values pride, self-promotion, self-achievements, and anything that adds value to self and personal independence.

The one who's poor in spirit won't be found walking around filled with self-pride because they understand, by definition, that they're in need of someone – Jesus Christ!

Pride and personal independence fights against obedience and dependence; a need for Christ. Pride and personal independence says, *"I can make it alone; I don't need anyone."*

That's why it's important to understand that Jesus didn't say *"blessed are the spiritually poor,"* but *"blessed are the poor in spirit."* There's a difference.

It's not our financial poverty but a poverty of spirit that entitles us to the blessing.

A *"spiritually poor"* person is someone who's in need of the grace and Spirit of Christ but doesn't realize it or rejects the knowledge of it. This is different from being poor in spirit.

Jesus also didn't say *"blessed are they that make themselves poor by leaving their wealth,"* as some choose to do as part of their service to God.

Jesus is saying, *"blessed are they whom the Gospel makes poor."* It's the Gospel that gives us clarity of mind to understand what Jesus has done for us.

It's the Gospel that helps us to see our true selves in light of God's righteousness. It's the Gospel that leads us to repent and seek forgiveness.

It's the Gospel that gives us insight into our spiritual wants and necessities and directs us to Christ that we may be made rich.

Jesus said, *“blessed is that person who doesn’t approach life with confidence in themselves or reliance on their personal gifts and talents.”*

It’s not the person who’s so self-confidence in themselves that they believe that they can handle everything that life brings to them.

They don’t need anyone because they have everything they need to handle life’s challenges.

However, the person who approaches life without a self-based confidence is open to being reliant upon God.

They know they have needs that they themselves can’t fill. They know they’ll face challenges that they’re not equipped to handle. They know they need God.

For this person Jesus said, *“theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”* The kingdom of heaven in this verse means: *“the reign of God in the heart and life of that person.”*

Listen to what Jesus said. He didn’t say that theirs *“will be”* the kingdom of heaven (future tense). He said theirs *“is”* (present tense) the kingdom of heaven.

It wasn’t that they had to wait until they died and got to heaven; they got to experience this right here on earth.

Remember, Jesus often spoke to the disciples about the kingdom of heaven being present with them because He was with them.

When the Pharisees pressed Jesus about the kingdom of God, Jesus told them it wasn’t what they were thinking.

Luke 17:20-21, *“And when He was demanded by the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, He answered them and said, ‘The kingdom of God comes not with outward observation. Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.’”*

When we approach life with a humble spirit, fully relying on the King, we make ourselves available to His direction, His guidance.

And by doing this, we open our present and futures to Jesus and what He wants to do for and through us!

This mentality brings us to a place of asking the King to reign in our lives. And guess what? When Jesus truly reigns in our lives, we begin to live in His kingdom right here on earth.

When Jesus reigns in our lives, we don’t need the “WWJD” bracelets to remind us to do what Jesus would do, we’ll know because His Spirit dwells within us! That’s kingdom living!

#### **Slide 4**

Matthew 5:4, *“Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.”*

*“They that mourn”* speaks of mourning over sin, the godly sorrow that produces repentance which leads to salvation without regret. A comfort that comes through forgiveness and salvation.

Remember what Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 13:6, when he talked about what love does? 1 Corinthians 13:6, *“Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.”*

When we’re operating in the love of God, we don’t rejoice in sin. We don’t congratulate sin or call sin a blessing.



In the Greek Old Testament this verb “*mourn*” is usually used for mourning for the dead and for the sorrows and sins of others.

There’s something about sorrow that makes a Christian reach out to God to find the comfort that only He can give.

Grieving the death of someone is one example of this Scripture; but there’s a second example which is most important and to which I want to call your attention.

The second example as to how this word “*mourn*” is used focuses on how we should mourn for the sorrows and sins of others.

While I’m saying others, this also applies to our own sins from which we haven’t repented.

Sin separates us from God and the only way to fix that separation is through confession (acknowledging the sin), repentance (turning away from it), and asking for, thus receiving, forgiveness.

When we know someone’s dealing with a loss and are in mourning, we’re compelled to reach out and comfort them. In the Gospels it says, “*Jesus was moved with compassion?*”

Compassion is what compels us to want to comfort the person in mourning. We’ll call, send cards, prepare food, and do whatever we can to help comfort them.

That’s what a good friend, relative, and Christian does when someone is in sorrow. But what about those situations when we know someone is living in sin or choosing sin consistently in their choices?

Because we care, their situation should trouble us enough that we’ll mourn for them, and through that mourning, reach out to God on their behalf.

This type of mourning is focused on others because we care about them and are concerned about their relationship with God.

Remember, a disciple of Jesus is focused on the eternity of those with whom they come into contact because we don't want anyone to be separated from God for all eternity.

Therefore, when we know someone is living in such a state where that's a possibility, it should cause us not only to be concerned, but to reach out to them.

It's important that we talk to the person who's living in sin, especially if they're claiming to be a Christian.

A Christian who's living in sin is living a testimony that contradicts what the Bible says as it relates to their life, and this doesn't please God.

Why should we be pleased with something that displeases God? Remember, what Jesus said in this sermon applies to those who're supposed to be living in the kingdom of God already.

Again, this conflicts with the world in which we live. The world says live and let live; mind your own business and stay out of everyone else's; and leave others well enough alone!

This mentality can't be a part of our living in the kingdom because the very people this would hurt are the same ones God's trying to save.

As a Christian, living in the kingdom of God here on earth, we must care enough about the lives of others to be troubled when their lives are out of control.

Caring is one thing, but to be troubled is something else. We care about our family members and friends. We care about what happens to them and what is going on in their lives.

But there are times when we see things they're doing that aren't in their best interest, and yet we keep our mouth closed. We care, but we're not troubled enough to say something about it.

Then there are the times when someone we care about is doing something that truly disturbs us, and we feel as if we have no choice but to say something to them.

We know it is a risk, but we know we have to say something, even if it means angering them. This is what Jesus hints at when He talks about those who mourn.

Do you mourn those around you whose lives contradict what you see in the Bible? Is your spirit troubled enough where you'll take time to pray for them in the midnight hour?

Or are you mourning in silence – seeing the troubled life of the person and not saying anything to them?

## **Slide 5**

### Conclusion

*2 Corinthians 7:8-10, "For though I made you sorry with a letter, I do not regret, though I did regret: for I perceive that the same epistle has made you sorry, though it were but for a time. Now I rejoice, not that you were made sorry, but that you sorrowed to repentance: for you were made sorry after a godly manner, that you might suffer loss by us in nothing. For godly sorrow works repentance to salvation not to be regretted: but the sorrow of the world works death."*

Paul was mourning for the church at Corinth. They were not living the kingdom life which caused him to reprimand their actions in a previous letter.

In that first letter to them, he found it necessary to rebuke them for their disagreements and other disorders which caused division, yet were tolerated in the church.

That letter was tailored to produce pain (sorrow) in them, as a severe and just reprimand should. But Paul still felt anxious about its effect on them.

First Corinthians was painful for him to write. He was well aware that it would cause deep distress among them to be reprimanded.

However, Paul rejoiced in the pain he had inflicted, because the pain was transitory, while the good was permanent.

He had caused them some suffering in this world, but that pain which led to repentance and salvation was for eternity.

Remember, his letter was written to the whole church even though some in the church were not part of the problem at all.

However, after reading his words and digesting them, they knew he was correct and acted accordingly.

What I want you to see is that Paul mourned for them based on what he was told and having mourned, he took action.

He understood that if he remained silent their scandal would cause irreparable harm, and some would end up in hell for eternity.

He wasn't thinking about the offense his letter would cause, he was thinking of their eternity. This is how we should be thinking about those over whom we're mourning.

Living in God's kingdom here on earth means that we must first seek "*the kingdom of God and His righteousness*" and, through that, search learn how to live in it.

Yet, not every Christian is fully living in the kingdom of God here on earth and that's a shame.