

Life in God's Kingdom Matthew 5:1-2

INTRODUCTION

- This morning we begin our journey in studying and applying the greatest sermon ever preached – the Sermon on the Mount. Turn with me to Matthew 5, and we'll be focusing on verses 1 and 2 this morning.
- As we approach this passage we need to gain an understanding of **its grand significance**. These three chapters have been called “The **Compendium** of Christ's Doctrine,” “The **Magna Charta** of the Kingdom,” “The **Manifesto** of the King.”¹ It is the greatest summary of kingdom life we have in the Bible.
- Furthermore, it is the longest and most thorough summary of Jesus' teaching ministry. Just before this sermon, we see a beautiful summary of the ministry of Jesus in Matthew 4:23-25 [**read**].
- Jesus' ministry is one of **teaching**, **preaching** and **healing**. Because of His unique power to heal and the overwhelming wisdom and authority of His preaching, He became widely known and was followed by thousands from all over the region (Mt. 7:28-8:1).
- Then we see another summary in **Mt 9:35** - Jesus was going through all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.
- Sandwiched between these two summaries of Jesus' ministry are **two major sections**: **chapters 5–7** are his the Sermon on the Mount – a grand summary of His teaching and preaching ministry; and **chapters 8 and 9** are a collection of stories mainly about his healing ministry. So what we have here is a five chapter unit designed by Matthew to present us **first** with Jesus' teaching concerning the way of the kingdom, and **second** with some typical healings and miracles to demonstrate the power of that kingdom.²
- **My purpose in preaching is to help you understand what life in God's kingdom looks like.**
- **These verses teach us three principles of kingdom life.**
- The **kingdom of God is the main theme** throughout the sermon. Hence the title of this message is **Life In God's Kingdom**.
 - 5:3 – ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’
 - 5:10 – ‘Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.’
 - 5:19-20 – ‘Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others *to do* the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches *them*, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses *that* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.’
 - 6:10 – ‘Your kingdom come’ in the Lord's prayer
 - 6:33 – ‘Seek first His kingdom and His righteousness’

¹ *The Gospel of Matthew : Volume*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 84.

² John Piper, *Sermons from John Piper (1980-1989)* (Minneapolis: Desiring God, 2007).

- 7:21 – ‘Not everyone who says to me “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven...’
- I also have a challenge to each of you as we go through this passage. After last week’s message on abiding in Christ through Scripture memory, I am going to memorize the sermon as I preach it, and I would encourage you to do it with me. Or if you think memorizing the entire thing is too much, then select several of your favorite portions and memorize those as we study them. I hope you will pray for me and I will certainly pray for you as try to be faithful to hide God’s Word in our heart.

[read 5:1-12]

Mt 5:1-2 - 1 When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. 2 He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,

THESE VERSES TEACH US THREE PRINCIPLES OF KINGDOM LIFE.

- I. THE WORLD’S MISCONCEPTION OF THE KINGDOM
- II. THE TRUE MEMBERS OF THE KINGDOM
- III. THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

I. THE WORLD’S MISCONCEPTION OF THE KINGDOM

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain

- First of all, we need to be reminded that Jesus is concerned about the crowds. He is not indifferent when he sees masses of people needed teaching and healing and ministry.
- **Mt. 9:36** - Seeing the people [crowds], He felt **compassion** for them, because they were distressed and dispirited like sheep without a shepherd.
- In **Mt. 14:14** it says that Jesus goes ashore and “He saw a large crowd, and felt **compassion** for them and healed their sick.”
- In **Mt. 15:21**, at the feeding of the four thousand, Jesus said “I feel **compassion** for the people, because they have remained with Me now three days and have nothing to eat”
- Jesus may have come to earth to purchase His bride, which is the elect, but He still loves the world. He looks out at everything that He Himself created and looks on it with compassion, even though most of those people will not believe His message and will not surrender to His Lordship.
- That’s amazing compassion. He came to die for them and deliver them from eternal bondage to sin and eternal punishment in hell, and all they want is to be healed of a temporary disease.
- **APP**: What about you? Do you have that kind of compassion for the lost world? When you look at mass crowds at football games, do you have compassion because the overwhelming majority of people are headed straight to hell? I pray that when we look out on the world, we see it through the eyes of Jesus.
- The text says next that **He went up on the mountain**. Just as **Moses** went up on Mt. Sinai to give God’s people the Ten Commandments, so **Jesus** goes up on a mountain to deliver the law of the new covenant. Just as the Ten Commandments was a summary of how God’s people should live under the old covenant, so is the Sermon on the Mount a summary of how God’s people should live under the new covenant. Moses gave God’s law to Israel; now Jesus gives His kingdom law to His disciples.

- So what did the people who were listening think about the kingdom? What were their expectations for the Messiah among the Jews? Well an answer to that question is certainly diverse because they Jews are a diverse group of people, but let me try to distill it down to a few principles that would be common among most Jews in this period.
- People were looking for a kingdom that was earthly, material, and political.
- **First**, they expected an earthly kingdom. The Jews of this day looked forward to the kingdom of heaven on earth. They wanted a kingdom that discernable and knowable with the five senses. They wanted a kingdom that they could look at and hear and touch and feel on a human level.
- **Second**, they wanted a material kingdom. They wanted a kingdom that came with great material prosperity. After all, that's what it takes to have an earthly kingdom is a great mass of material prosperity – money, property, land, buildings, food and drink, wonderful clothes, nice homes, plenty of space. That's a material kingdom on earth and they expected that Messiah would provide that.
- **Third**, they wanted a political kingdom. They wanted Messiah to overthrow Rome, give back all their land and make Israel the victorious nation among all nations. This was especially true of the **Zealots**. The Zealots were a group of first century Jews who were committed to political overthrow of Rome through calculated assassinations of Roman officials and soldiers. Zealots carried a *makaira* (a small sword like a dagger) under their cloak and would take any chance they could to slit the throat of a Roman soldier and slip away undetected. They were the Green Berets of the Israeli soldiers. And their view of the kingdom as a political entity fueled their hatred for Rome. But Messiah would swing into town and destroy those pagans and reclaim the throne for the nation of Israel.
- That's what the Jewish people were waiting for – an earthly, material, political deliverance coming through Messiah.
- **APP**: Isn't it amazing how similar we are to the Jews of that time? Sure we may look back and scorn them for missing the boat, but how often do we pray and ask God for things that are exactly that same – earthly, material and political? We commit the same errors in our culture today. We want an earthly solution, a **material deliverance**, and a political savior. How much of your focus, your prayer life and your energy spent chasing that kind of kingdom?
- Much of the sermon on the mount is a direct contrast between the teaching of the scribes and Pharisees (the Jewish leadership) and the teaching of Christ. This context is essential for its understanding. For example:
 - In 5:20 He says 'unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.'
 - In 5:21 He says 'You have heard that it was said...But I say to you' (v22) is repeated six times (vv 21/22; 27/28; 31/32; 33/34; 38/39; 43/44) – this is a formula that contrasts the teachings and traditions of Jewish leadership to the superior teaching of Jesus (who taught with great 'authority' 7:29)
 - In 6:1 He says 'beware of practicing your righteousness before men...' which is exactly what the Jewish leadership was known for. Jesus then gives three practical examples of how Pharisees did that (giving to the poor in 6:2-4, praying in 6:5-15, fasting in 6:16-17)
 - In 7:1-5 He says, 'Do not judge so that you will be judged; for in the way you judge, you will be judged, and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you.'

- This is NOT a categorical rebuke of any form of spiritual judgment – it is a rebuke of using a *false standard* in judgment. The Pharisees used a set of over 10,000 oral traditions and rabbinic interpretations of the Law known as the Hallakah (a Hebrew word, unsure about the exact spelling). Instead of requiring only what the Law said, they added their traditions to the biblical requirements. Once again, this is a contrast between Jewish leadership and Jesus’ teaching.
- In 7:15 He says ‘Beware of the false prophets...’ is an illusion to the Jewish leadership and their false teaching.
 - Main Point – Jesus is preaching in a context where the people are most heavily influenced by the false teaching of the scribes and Pharisees, and his teaching is radically different from theirs (again, see 7:28-29).
 - In the midst of the world’s misconception of the kingdom, a misconception that often infects the church, Jesus speaks about an entirely new and different kingdom.

first [the world’s misconception of the kingdom](#), second...

II. THE TRUE MEMBERS OF THE KINGDOM

after He sat down, His disciples came to Him.

- Jesus began to teach **after He sat down**. When a Jewish Rabbi was teaching officially he sat to teach. We still speak of a professor’s *chair*; the Pope still speaks *ex cathedra*, from his seat. Often a Rabbi gave instruction when he was standing or strolling about; but his really official teaching was done when he had taken his seat. So the specific description that Jesus sat down to teach his disciples is the indication that this teaching is both central and official. What Jesus is about to say is important.
- Then the text says **His disciples came to Him**. This is one of the clues to our intended audience.
- The audience Jesus has in mind is in **two concentric circles** – the inner circle of disciples and the outer circle of crowds. The primary audience is the disciples (5:1), and the secondary audience is the crowds (5:1; 7:28-8:1).
- Jesus sees the crowds and because He wants them to hear him, He sits down on the side of a mountain so that more people in those crowds can hear him. But the next phrase gives us a clue about **who He was really targeting** in His sermon. It says that “His disciples came to Him.” They got close to Him. They took the front rows in so they could pay close attention. This sermon was for them. It is for believers. The message of this sermon cannot possibly be understood by a lost world. It is beyond their spiritual grasp because they remain blinded by their sin.
- Jesus said in **Mt 13:10-11**, “And the disciples came and said to Him, ‘Why do You speak to them in parables? Jesus answered them, ‘To you [the disciples] it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted.’”
- The message of the kingdom can be heard by the world and some its principles grasped on an intellectual plane, but the real spiritual force of the sermon on the mount can only be understood by the **followers** of Christ, the **citizens** of the kingdom of God.
- You must understand that message of **this sermon is the official proclamation of the new covenant**. This is a turning point in redemptive history. Jesus Himself fulfills the old covenant and begins the reign of the new covenant with His death and resurrection. **He is**

the promised Messiah and as such He is proclaiming the new kingdom under His authority and grace.

- The Sermon on the Mount is teaching the life patterns of true believers. It is addressed to the sons of the kingdom. It is not a social gospel for the lost world, but represents the standards and behaviors of those who are part of “the kingdom of heaven” as verse 3 and verse 10 clearly states.
- **APP**: This passage also gives us a broader understanding of who worship is intended for. We can pattern our church worship after the example of Christ’s ministry. So who is Jesus intending to reach here? Who is the object of His ministry? There is an **implicit principle** in these verses that should be explicitly affirmed.
- There is a lot of discussion in today’s church about who church is for. Who is worship and preaching designed for? Who is the primary audience? Lost, saved, everyone...who are we gathering for. The answer lies here in verse 1.
 - The **seeker-sensitive movement** is based upon the presupposition that church is for unbelievers. We gather as God’s people in order to bring lost people in and preach salvation to them. That is the thinking behind the seeker-sensitive and much of the emergent church movement. Therefore, church and its services should be designed with the lost in mind.
 - **ILL**: I interviewed with a church for the senior pastor position that believed this right before I was contacted by Berry Road in 2007. It was a church in Collinsville, OK that became enamored with a particular pastor and writer whose central teaching was that church should be designed to reach lost people. Therefore, preaching should always be evangelistic. Music should also be accessible to a lost crowd. Services and ministries were structured to be convenient for a postmodern mindset.
- Scripture teaches that worship is intended for three audiences in a specific order of importance and focus:
 - 1) God
 - God is the first and primary audience of worship. Worship is the giving of glory to God. It is our giving of praise, honor, blessing, authority and power to the triune God. When we worship, God must be paramount in our minds, hearts and affections.
 - Worship is FOR God first.
 - 2) believers
 - Believers are the second audience of worship. Worship is designed and intended to edify the church. It is intended to build the church, encourage the church, teach the church, exhort the church. Spiritual gifts are given to believers and exercised in the assembly for edification of the body.
 - **1 Cor. 12:7** - But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.
 - **1 Cor. 14:12** - So also you, since you are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek to abound for the edification of the church.
 - God intends for you to grow in worship. Worship equips you to do the work of ministry (Eph. 4:11-12). But we must always remember that we are not the primary focus of worship – God is. Worship is for believers second.
 - 3) the world

- The notion that God’s people assemble for the purpose reaching the lost turns worship on its head. It completely reverses everything about the divine intention for worship.
- The church gathered is there to worship and praise God. The church scattered is going out of the assembly (the church) to tell lost people about the God they worship when they gather.
- In fact, 1 Corinthians 14 teaches us that God uses worship that is focused on Himself and other Christians to bring the lost to conviction about their sin.
- **1 Cor. 14:23-25** - 23 Therefore if the whole church assembles together [a worship service] and all speak in tongues, and **ungifted men** or **unbelievers** enter, will they not say that you are mad? 24 But if all prophesy, and an **unbeliever** or an **ungifted** man enters, he is **convicted** by all, he is **called to account** by all; 25 the secrets of his heart are disclosed; and so he will fall on his face and **worship God**, declaring that **God is certainly among you**.
- If an unbeliever walks in and everything we are doing in church is about them, the message they get is this: Church is about ME! That is precisely what a seeker church creates – a ME church mentality. Church is about my needs, my feelings, my life.
- But if unbelievers come to church and there is prophesy (preaching of God’s Word, the worship of God), then the unbeliever gets the message that GOD is paramount in church and believers are here adore Him. Then the unbeliever is convicted and called to account “by all” – meaning the other believers there worshipping God. Then the unbeliever falls on his face and worships God with us – WHY? Because he knows that God is among us!
- You want to see lost people get saved at church? Worship God. Build up other believers. Minister to one another. Jesus said in John 13:35, “By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” The church doesn’t need an evangelism program. The church **IS** the evangelism program.
- Worship is for **God** first, **believers** second, and last of all the **world**.
- That is exactly what Jesus intends in His sermon as well. Jesus wants to honor God the Father first of all, He wants to teach His disciples about the kingdom, and He wants to convict the world of their failing standards of righteousness. That’s His intention. And that should be our intention for every church service.

first the world’s misconception of the kingdom, second, The true members of the kingdom, third...

III. THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

He opened His mouth and began to teach them,

- **He opened His mouth.** In **Ac 8:35**, it says “Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him.” In **Ac 10:34**, it says, “Opening his mouth, Peter said” and then he preached Jesus to the Gentiles for the first time in human history.
- In Greek the phrase has a double significance. First, it is used of a solemn, grave and dignified utterance. It is used, for instance, of the saying of an oracle. It is the preface for something weighty and significant. Second, it is used when someone is really **opening his heart and pouring out his mind**. It is used of intimate teaching with no barriers

between. Again the very use of this phrase indicates that the material in the Sermon on the Mount is no chance piece of teaching. It is the grave solemn utterance of the central things; it is the opening of Jesus' heart and mind to His closest companions and followers.³

- As He opens His mouth, **he began to teach them**. Now if people were looking for a kingdom that was earthly, material, and political, what kind of kingdom does Christ teach? What is this Sermon about at its heart?
- It is about life in God's kingdom, but what kind of life? In fact, the Sermon is a **perfect picture of kingdom life**. If Christians and churches lived the sermon on the mount, we wouldn't need evangelistic programs, because the world would see the kingdom in us. We will preach Jesus with our lives if we live these three chapters. Jesus came to die so that you and I might live this Sermon.
- **ILL**: It is like **a great musical symphony of kingdom life**. Each verse, each exhortation, each application combines to produce a beautiful, harmonious picture of what the Christian life should really be.
- And there is **one principle** of this kingdom that is constant through every description. **One principle** that stands in contrast to every human expectation about the kingdom of God and it is this – **it is a spiritual kingdom**.
- Listen to the words of Jesus in **Jn. 18:36** - ...“My kingdom is **not of this world**. If My kingdom were of this world, then My servants would be fighting so that I would not be handed over to the Jews; but as it is, My kingdom is not of this realm.”
- Its not earthly, its not material, its not political. It is NOT of this world.

CONCLUSION

I. THE WORLD'S MISCONCEPTION OF THE KINGDOM

- **APP**: Do we really understand the kingdom of God? Is our understanding of God's kingdom and church more influenced by Scripture or by something else...personal opinion, tradition,

II. THE TRUE MEMBERS OF THE KINGDOM

- **APP**: Are you a true member of God's kingdom? Are you one of His disciples that comes near to Him when He is teaching and sits at the feet of the King and listens and hears and obeys the gospel?
- In John 6 when the teaching of Jesus got tough, many of those following Him said that those teachings were too difficult and they went away and “were not walking with Him anymore” (John 6:66). Then in verse 67 it says, “Jesus said to the twelve, “You do not want to go away also, do you?” 68 Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life. 69 “We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God.”
- **APP**: Are you more like the crowds or like the twelve? Do you wash out when the teaching of Christ gets difficult? Because if you do, you will never make through the sermon on the mount. You'll quit before we leave the Beatitudes. But the true disciples of Christ will persevere in the most difficult circumstances and even when they don't fully understand all of Christ's teaching. They follow Him wherever He leads.

³ *The Gospel of Matthew : Volume*, ed. William Barclay, lecturer in the University of Glasgow, The Daily study Bible series, Rev. ed. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 2000, c1975), 86.

III. THE SPIRITUAL NATURE OF THE KINGDOM

- **APP:** Are you looking and laboring for the heavenly kingdom of God? Or are you building an earthly, material, political kingdom that will vanish the moment you die?