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Matthew 5:1 - 5:2 Sermon on the Mount Introduction



Gospel of Matthew - Steve Gregg

In this lesson, the speaker delves into the Sermon on the Mount as outlined in Matthew 5-7, noting that it is a collection of Jesus' teachings largely clustered into five major discourses. The focus of the discussion centers around the Beatitudes, which are spiritual rather than material in nature. The speaker emphasizes that those who are poor in spirit, meek, merciful, and peacemakers are blessed and can expect to receive the reward of the Kingdom of God. The audience is urged to take time and not to get trapped in the details of the Beatitudes but to focus on their spiritual nature.

Transcript

In today's study, we're going to be looking at the Sermon on the Mount, which begins in Matthew 5 and continues through Matthew 7. This sermon has a parallel, or at least a partial parallel, in Luke 6, about verse 20 to the end of that chapter. What's interesting about these two sermons is that they resemble each other so much and yet they are not quite the same. Matthew, of course, gives three chapters to this sermon.

Luke gives only half a chapter to it. And yet they begin with essentially the same words in both places and they end the same way. And as you read through Luke chapter 6 after verse 20, you'll find that it follows a general outline similar to that of Matthew chapters 5 through 7. However, Matthew 5 describes the place that Jesus sat as a mountain, and that's why it's called the Sermon on the Mount.

In Luke chapter 6, we read that Jesus came down from a mountain where he had been praying all night and he came down to a plain or a level place. And there he gave the sermon that is recorded in Luke 6. Now, there's been much discussion among Bible scholars as to whether these two sermons are the same sermon or two different sermons given on different occasions. If it is the same sermon, then we would have to say that the level place that Jesus gave it from in Luke chapter 6 was a level place on the hillside, so that Jesus was in fact still on the mount as it says in Matthew.

We would also have to say that Luke either has abbreviated tremendously the sermon or else Matthew has amplified it. Now, I think that this latter suggestion is not unthinkable

and I'd like to call your attention to something Matthew does. In Matthew's Gospel, the teachings of Jesus are largely clustered in five major discourses.

The first of them is this one, the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7. The second major discourse in Matthew is in chapter 10. We could call that the missionary discourse because Jesus gave that on the occasion of sending out the twelve to do missionary work. And then we have another major discourse in Matthew 13.

This is usually called the parables discourse because it consists of simply a long string of parables about the kingdom of God. Then the fourth major discourse in Matthew is chapter 18, which is about forgiveness and it's about relationships. I would usually call that a relationships discourse.

And then the final great discourse in Matthew is Matthew 24 and 25, which we call the all of it discourse. So, we have these five discourses in Matthew that have most of the recorded teaching of Jesus in Matthew in them. Now, there is strong evidence that these five discourses are actually composites of Jesus' teaching rather than actual discourses given all on one occasion.

For example, in Matthew 24 and 25, the fifth of these discourses, which we call the all of it discourse, we find parts of two different discourses from Luke. In Luke chapter 17 and in Luke chapter 21, we have two entirely different discourses and these are put together as one in Matthew 24. Likewise, Matthew chapter 10, the second discourse in Matthew, the missionary discourse, has evidence of being more than one discourse or more than one occasion of Jesus' teaching put together as if it was all at one time.

For example, in Matthew chapter 10, Jesus says at one point, go into none of the ways of the Gentiles, but only go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But later in the same discourse, he says, you will be my witnesses to the Gentiles and before kings and so forth and in all nations. Now, Jesus on one occasion was sending them out on a short discourse just within Israel, but some of the instructions there seem to apply to their later mission as they would go out fulfilling the great commission and may have been given on a different occasion.

In Matthew 5 through 7, which we have as the Sermon on the Mount, it is possible that Matthew has amplified Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount by adding parts that Jesus spoke on other occasions. Now, the suggestion that Matthew has amplified these discourses is not to suggest that Matthew has made anything up or that Jesus didn't really say some of these things, but rather that what Matthew has done is collected the sayings of Jesus in a topical arrangement. That Jesus said many things on many occasions and Matthew, remembering them, wanted to gather them into collections of what Jesus said on a certain subject.

We have books published that you can buy at Christian bookstores that do this kind of

thing. You have a Knave's topical Bible, for example, where you have the Bible verses not arranged in the order that they occur in the Bible, but in topical arrangements. This is not an illegitimate way to arrange material and Matthew seems to have done this somewhat.

And if that is true, then it may be fair to say that Matthew and Luke are giving the same discourse, but simply Matthew has made it longer by introducing material that Jesus spoke on other occasions on the same subjects and has therefore amplified it. Most of the material that Matthew includes in this Sermon on the Mount, which Luke does not include in his version, is nonetheless included in other places in Luke. And therefore Luke acknowledges that Jesus says almost all of these things that Matthew records, but Luke has the setting of Jesus saying them on different occasions different than Matthew.

So these features have led many scholars to believe that Matthew has collected the sayings of Jesus in topical collections in these five discourses. And that the things that Jesus says in Matthews 5, 6, and 7 may or may not have all been said on the same occasion. It is presented to us in one block, as if it was one discourse, and it may have been.

But it is also possible that some of these things were said on other occasions by Jesus and are simply brought to our attention here because of the introduction of the topic by the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew chapter 5 begins with these words, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for 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 sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And blessed are you, when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. Now these eight statements at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount all begin with one word, Blessed.

A comment like this that begins with the word Blessed is usually called a Beatitude. It is a statement of blessedness of a certain category of people. Jesus spoke with many Beatitudes and there are other Beatitudes in the lips of other people and on the pens of other people in the Scripture as well.

But on other occasions, for example, there was an occasion when a woman said to Jesus, Blessed is the womb that bore you and the breasts that gave you suck. That was a Beatitude, Blessed is the womb that bore you. But Jesus said, Nay, more blessed are those who hear the word of God and do it.

Now that's a Beatitude, Blessed are those who hear the word of God and do it. Basically, he's saying that people who hear the word of God and do it are blessed in a particular way. In the book of Revelation there are seven such Beatitudes.

It says, for example, Blessed is he that reads this book and keeps the sayings of this book. That's a Beatitude. Blessed is he that has part in the first resurrection.

On him the second death has no power. That's a Beatitude. And this Sermon on the Mount begins with eight Beatitudes.

Now, these Beatitudes are somewhat distinctive because they go further than simply saying, Blessed are such and such a person. But he also says why they are blessed. For, they, so and so.

In other words, he doesn't just state that they are blessed and leave it mysterious why they would be blessed. But he tells us exactly what it is about them that makes them belong to a blessed class. I should probably say that this word blessed, the Greek word is *makarios*, it means happy.

Or it means fortunate or to be envied. So that the people that Jesus is describing are the people who truly have the most to be happy about. Although sometimes the people he describes do not appear at first glance to be those who we would call the happiest people.

Those who are mourning, for example, do not appear to be happy. Those who are persecuted don't necessarily seem like the happiest, most enviable class of people. And yet these are among those that Jesus said are blessed or happy or enviable.

In Luke's version of the Sermon on the Mount, actually the Beatitudes are quite different. The same in some ways, but different in striking ways. Let me just call your attention to this briefly.

In Luke chapter 6, the Beatitudes begin in verse 20. It says, he lifted up his eyes toward his disciples and said, Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you shall be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and cast out your name as evil for the son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for indeed your reward is great in heaven.

For in like manner their fathers did to the prophets. But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation. Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger.

Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men

speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets. Now, this is how the Sermon begins in Luke.

You can see that it begins with Beatitudes just as the Sermon in Matthew does, but they're different. For one thing, there are fewer of them. There are four Beatitudes in Luke's Sermon, eight in Matthew's.

But the four Beatitudes in Luke are followed by four woes, and each woe corresponds to one of the Beatitudes. For example, the first Beatitude is blessed are you poor, but the first woe is woe to you who are rich. Then you have blessed are you who hunger, but woe to you who are full.

You've got blessed are you who weep, but woe to you who laugh. And blessed are you when men hate you, but woe to you when all men speak well of you. So, the way the Beatitudes are presented in Luke are quite different.

You have half as many of them as you have in Matthew's Gospel, and you have in each case a corresponding woe upon the opposite class of people, and Matthew doesn't contain any of those. Now, what's more, the Beatitudes in Matthew seem to be more spiritual than those in Luke. That doesn't mean better, it just means spiritual in nature.

For example, in Luke it says, blessed are you poor. In Matthew, it's blessed are the poor in spirit. The way Luke reads it, anyone who's poor could be said to be blessed just because they don't have money.

But Matthew has it, blessed are you poor in spirit. Likewise, in Luke, it's blessed are you who hunger. But in Matthew, it's blessed are you who hunger and thirst for righteousness.

So, in Luke, it sounds like he's simply describing people in a certain social class, the poor and hungry. But in Matthew, these people are described in terms of their spiritual condition. Poor in spirit, hungry for righteousness.

Now, certainly, Jesus cannot be thought to have taught that all people who are poor are blessed just because they have no money, or that all people who are hungry are blessed just because they don't have any food. Because, obviously, some people are poor in this life, and they go to hell too. Jesus said in Luke 6.20, blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

Now, he said, blessed are you poor. See, Jesus' disciples had become somewhat poor because they followed him rather than pursuing material gain. And he said that nonetheless.

You may be poor, but you're blessed because yours is the kingdom of God. It is not true that all poor people are blessed, because not all poor people are going to heaven. Not all

have the kingdom of God.

Some poor people are going to be in hell. Likewise, blessed are you who hunger, for you should be filled. He said, you.

He's talking to his disciples. In other words, these men were kingdom of God men, but they were not really blessed in worldly things. They weren't rich.

They weren't full. They weren't always celebrating and laughing. They weren't the most popular people.

Now, those conditions of life are the conditions that most people feel are pitiable. And we normally would think that the person is enviable, who is rich, comfortable, secure, popular. Always is life one continual party or celebration.

We think, boy, that guy's got it made. And at least in the world, that's the kind of person that most people want to become. They consider that man as the happy man.

But Jesus said to his disciples that although they were none of those things, they were the happy ones. They were the enviable ones. In other words, Jesus was teaching his disciples a totally new system of values.

They had come out of the world. They were Jewish men. They had the same views of most of their Jewish contemporaries, which were fairly worldly views.

But Jesus called them out of the world to become part of his kingdom. And he told them on a later occasion that the world would probably hate them because he had called them out of the world. But nonetheless, he called them to start and be leaders eventually in an alternative society that had entirely different values than those of the world.

In another place, in Luke chapter 16, Jesus said, the things that are highly esteemed among men are an abomination to God. So it's quite clear that the values of the kingdom of God and the values of ordinary men are quite the opposite. Things that ordinary men highly esteem and desire are abominable to God.

Most men want to be rich and full and well-spoken of. But Jesus said, woe to those who are like that because they have their consolation now. The disciple who has no concern for those things, or if he has any concern, he nonetheless doesn't have them, he may be considered to be pitiable by the world.

But because that person has the kingdom of God, that person has God and therefore is rich and enviable and blessed. Now, in Matthew's gospel, these Beatitudes are of spiritual things, being poor in spirit, being meek, being those who mourn and merciful, peacemakers. He doesn't talk about their social standing.

He talks about their spiritual character. Now, in each case, he says that a certain class of

people are blessed and he tells why. He said that the poor in spirit are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Those who mourn are blessed because they'll be comforted. The meek are blessed because they'll inherit the earth. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness are blessed because they'll be filled.

The merciful are blessed because they will obtain mercy. The pure at heart are blessed because they will see God. And the peacemakers are blessed because they'll be called the children of God.

And, of course, those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Now, notice each one of these Beatitudes has some reason that Jesus gives why these people are said to be blessed. And each reason is different from all the others except that the first and the last are the same.

The poor in spirit at the beginning are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. At the end, those who are persecuted for righteousness are blessed because theirs is the kingdom of heaven. It's come full circle.

Now, we need to understand that Jesus is not describing eight different classes of people here and each will get his own individual blessings as described. But, rather, he's speaking of his disciples. All eight statements are to apply to them.

The same man, the same Christian is supposed to be poor in spirit and one who mourns and who is meek and who hungers and thirsts for righteousness and is merciful and pure in heart and who is a peacemaker and who is persecuted for righteousness. At the same time, the same Christian has these promises. Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

They shall be comforted. They shall inherit the earth. They shall be filled.

They shall obtain mercy. They shall see God. They shall be called the sons of God.

All of these are various benefits of being in the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God. And so, Jesus is telling his disciples that they are the enviable ones. They will live with Jesus long enough to wonder at times.

They will see their popularity diminish. They will see their goods taken from them. They will see themselves persecuted and driven from town to town.

They might have occasion to wonder, is this really a road we wish we had taken? And he says to them, this is the right road. It's a rough road. It's a narrow road.

But it's the right road. And it's a blessed road. Those who take this road are to be envied.

They are the ones who are fortunate. They are the ones ultimately who are happy. These

are the ones who have the kingdom of God given to them.

Now, I would like to take each of these Beatitudes separately. And that will take a little bit of time. Because they are very full.

For one thing, none of these Beatitudes are new ideas introduced by Jesus. All of them, or at least almost all of them, are stated in almost the same terms in the Old Testament. When Jesus said, Blessed are you, meek, they shall inherit the earth.

That's just a statement directly out of the Psalms. The meek shall inherit the earth. When Jesus said that the pure in heart will see God.

The Psalms also say that those who will ascend to God's holy hill and dwell in his presence are the ones who are of pure hearts and clean hands. Jesus simply restates things that are already stated in the Old Testament. But he brings them into a new focus.

And he brings them up at a time and in a setting where the disciples need to hear them to be encouraged that they have not taken the wrong road. They are the happy ones. There will be occasions to doubt it later.

But they should not doubt it because Jesus affirms that this is the way that God is willing to bless. Now, Christians listening to this in modern America might not see much similarity between ourselves and those that he describes as blessed. And that should bring us up short a little bit.

That should make us wonder whether we have been deprived by our own prosperity and by our own comforts of the blessedness he describes. We don't need to be trapped by it. It is possible to forsake all and follow Jesus Christ as he called his disciples to do.

However, we're going to have to wait until another time to discuss this more fully because unfortunately our time has run out for today's talk. But when we come back, I will be talking about the Beatitudes one by one. And we will look at how they echo Old Testament truth and how they are developed in Jesus' teaching and in the later teachings of the New Testament.

I hope you'll be able to join us.