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Introduction



Sermon on the Mount - Steve Gregg

In this talk, Steve Gregg discusses the Sermon on the Mount and states that it presents a lofty objective for human attainment. He explains that Jesus went up a mountain to present this discourse, similar to when Moses was on Mount Sinai, and that it was recorded by Matthew as a gathering of Jesus' teachings on various topics. Gregg analyzes each beatitude and applies it to the spiritual condition of individuals, emphasizing that God's values should be adopted to find true happiness. Finally, he clarifies that the Sermon on the Mount is not meant for a particular denomination, but as a prescriptive and blessed category for all who embrace its teachings.

Transcript

We're going to begin today our studies in the Sermon on the Mount. To some people's minds, the Sermon on the Mount is the most important recorded discourse of Jesus, and I would have to probably agree with that. I don't know if I'd want to assign relative importance to various discourses, but the Sermon on the Mount is at least, I think we could say, the most well-known and most admired and most loved discourse, although like so many things Jesus said, people love what he said, they just never really cared to do them.

And the Sermon on the Mount presents a standard that very few people feel capable of living up to, and yet it is the sermon that Jesus gave which I believe is to present the norms of his people, the norms of what it means to be a follower of Jesus, a disciple. And I do believe it's entirely practical and plausible that people should be able to plan to live up to this, although not perfectly initially. I believe it is nonetheless the goal for which we should aim.

If we decide at the very beginning the Sermon on the Mount presents an objective that's too lofty for human attainment, then we will simply read it for interest's sake, like reading some classical literature or something, or for the beauty of it, like reading Shakespeare, but we will not really seriously believe that we should ever conform to it. And yet Jesus said, you are my disciples indeed, if you continue in all things that I have commanded you, if you continue in my word. Jesus said that disciples are made by

teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever he commanded.

And certainly the Sermon on the Mount is one of those places where his commands can be found in a high level of concentration. And when I mention concentration, I would like to suggest that Matthew's version of the Sermon on the Mount, which we will be using principally, is very possibly just what I suggested, a concentration of the teachings of Jesus on the topics that are addressed here. It is believed by most scholars, I think, in fact it seems to be common knowledge among scholars, that Matthew's arrangement of his gospel was deliberate in that he arranged the teachings of Jesus principally into five discourses.

It's been theorized that this might be because Matthew was writing to Jewish people, and that he was trying to present Jesus as sort of the second Moses. Moses had given the law, and yet Moses had also predicted in Deuteronomy 18 that God would send another prophet like Moses to whom the people should listen. Both Stephen and I believe Paul, no Stephen and Peter, Peter in Acts chapter 3 and Stephen in Acts chapter 7 both quote Moses on this, and indicate that Jesus was in fact that prophet that Moses predicted, a second Moses, a prophet like Moses.

And so scholars have for the most part reached the conclusion that Matthew, in presenting a gospel to the Jews, has arranged the teachings of Jesus around five discourses, which would be sort of like the five books of Moses, and that he's presenting Jesus to be a second Moses. The fact that Jesus goes up onto a mountain to present what we read here is even thought perhaps to be mentioned for the fact of making comparison of Jesus to Moses who went up on Mount Sinai. Of course the fact that Matthew says Jesus went up on a mountain may simply be a record of historical information without any significance beyond the fact that that's what happened.

Although Jesus himself may well have chosen a mountain as the location for the sermon for the same purpose as what the scholars suggest, we simply would have to say it is conjecture, there may be some validity in it. It has even been suggested that the eight Beatitudes, which form the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, and the explanatory chapters that follow in Matthew 5, 6, and 7 may well have been arranged in that way so as to resemble Moses giving the Ten Commandments in Exodus chapter 20, and then the remaining three chapters, not the remaining, but the following three chapters of Exodus were devoted to expansion on the Ten Commandments, elaboration and making application of the Ten Commandments. You may remember that the Ten Commandments are found early in Exodus chapter 20, and then chapters 21, 22, and 23 of Exodus on what's sometimes called the Book of the Covenant, and they are merely down-to-earth applications of the various commandments, of the Ten Commandments, in life situations.

And some have thought that the eight Beatitudes at the beginning here would well have

served as a summary of the rest of the sermon that follows, and that perhaps the eight Beatitudes serve in this sermon a little bit like the Law of Moses, the Ten Commandments I should say, served in Exodus, and that the three chapters that follow them are an expansion and elaboration on these Beatitudes. It is in fact demonstrable that much of what follows the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount can be seen as an elaboration on one or another of the Beatitudes. And when we say the Beatitudes, of course, we're talking about those statements that begin with the word blessed are.

A Beatitude is a statement that pronounces a blessedness on a certain person or category of persons, and so we have eight of these at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. But as I was saying, Matthew seems to have arranged the teachings of Jesus around five discourses, and there seems to have been a certain amount of artificiality about this. Now, in saying that, I'm not trying to in any way cast aspersions on their genuineness, but simply to say that when Matthew recorded the teaching of Jesus, rather than having a little bit of this teaching over here, and a little bit over here, and a little over here, where perhaps the teaching actually occurred, he has gathered up the things that Jesus said on a topic, and put them all in one place.

The five discourses in Matthew, let me tell you what they are if you don't already know them. They are, first of all, the Sermon on the Mount, which is found in Matthew 5 through 7. And then the next one is in Matthew 10. In that chapter, it is what we might call the missionary discourse, Jesus sending out the Twelve on a short-term mission.

That's Matthew 10, the second discourse. The third one would be the parable discourse in Matthew 13, where there are collected parables of the Kingdom of God in Matthew 13. And then the fourth discourse would be Matthew 18, which largely has to do with relationship.

And then a very well-known discourse would make up the fifth one, the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25. There is evidence, irrefutable evidence actually, I mean I should say it's a given, that some of these discourses are composites. We know, for example, that Matthew 24, which is called the Olivet Discourse, is a composite of material that is found on two different occasions that Jesus taught, as recorded in Luke.

Part of it was taught in a discourse to the Pharisees, recorded in Luke 17, verse 20 and following. Another part of it was taught in a discourse to the disciples, after Jesus selected and had predicted the fall of Jerusalem, and that's found in Luke 21. But both of those discourses, which are different discourses on different occasions to different audiences in Luke, are combined into one discourse as if they were one in Matthew 24.

And we have evidence from really all of five of the discourses in Matthew that they are composites. For example, the parables discourse in Matthew 13. We can't be sure that it is composite, but it resembles, at least in the way it begins, Mark 4 and Luke 8, which also have collections of Jesus' parables.

And the parables in all three of these places, Matthew, Mark and Luke, all begin by telling of Jesus teaching the parable of the sower, of the seeds. And then the disciples come to him and ask him what it means, and he explains the parable of the sower. Now, we know that these cannot be separate occasions, because it's hardly likely the disciples would ask him the meaning of the same parable twice.

And so we would know there's a parallel between Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8, because all of them begin by telling of this story of Jesus telling the parable of the sower, and then the disciples asking the explanation and receiving the explanation. But Matthew, Mark and Luke also follow that parable with other parables, but they're not all the same ones. In Mark, he follows it up with a parable about a growing seed that grows whether the farmer sleeps or is awake.

And it develops first the blade, then the head, and then the full grain in the head. Now, that parable is not found in any of the other Gospels. And then I believe Mark also, if I'm not mistaken, also tells the parable of the mustard seed.

Now, Luke doesn't include those parables, the same ones. But Matthew has seven or eight parables there on the same occasion. And therefore, it is possible, and it would be very much like what we'd say of Matthew.

Do I say Matthew or do I say Luke? Matthew has several parables. Matthew may have taken parables that Jesus taught on various occasions and put them all together in one place, since both Mark and Luke, in telling the same story, only give one or two or three parables, and Matthew gives more than twice that many. And so, it may be that Matthew 13 is a composite of gathered parables that Jesus taught on the same subject.

Now, the Sermon on the Mount is almost certainly a composite as well. And this is fairly easy to determine. If you would look over at Luke 6, you will find the basic structure of the Sermon on the Mount, occupying half a chapter in Luke.

In Luke 6, beginning at verse 20, it says, Blessed are you when men hate you, and when men 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. Now, although there is a verbal difference between these Beatitudes and the ones in Matthew, the difference is not very great.

And there are some verbal parallels. The point is that it's very similar to the way that Matthew 5 opens the Sermon on the Mount. But if you'll go on through Luke 6 from that point on, you'll find especially verses 27 through 33 and on down, you'll find basically material that's also found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew.

And then when you get down to verse 46, Luke 6, 46, it says, But why do you call me

Lord, Lord, and you do not do the things which I say? Whoever comes to me and hears my sayings and does them, I will show you who he is like. And it gives the illustration of a man building on rock and the illustration of a man building on sand. Now, that's also how the Sermon on the Mount ends in Matthew, in Matthew 7. That's the last illustration in the sermon.

So, in Luke and in Matthew, there are discourses given. They both open with Beatitudes and they both close with this illustration of the man who built his house on the rock and the man who built his house on the sand. And the material in between the opening and the closing of these discourses is parallel to a certain extent, to an extreme extent, in that almost everything in that discourse in Luke is also found in the longer discourse in Matthew.

The principal difference between the discourse in Matthew and that in Luke is Matthew is three chapters long and Luke is one half of one chapter long. Now, there's been much discussion as to whether these are the same discourse or not, whether Luke has abbreviated a longer discourse or whether Matthew has brought in material from other discourses and beefed up, as it were, the discourse that Luke has recorded too, or whether there are separate discourses given on different occasions. Now, it is not impossible that a preacher might give similar sermons to the same audience more than once.

After all, people don't learn the first time they hear something, in many cases, and repetition is a valuable tool of the teacher. And it is possible that Matthew actually records a discourse given on a certain occasion and Luke records a different, very similar discourse given on a different occasion. But my judgment, for whatever it may be worth, is that we have here Luke giving a discourse that provides a framework for Matthew and Matthew imports material that Jesus uttered on other occasions on the same subjects and expands it out to make it like a super-discourse.

It makes it much longer. Now, this is not the only way, possibly, of looking at it, but it agrees well with what we know that Matthew has done in these other discourses. Now, if we would suggest this possibility, we're not in any way impugning the veracity of Matthew's honesty.

Matthew does not have to be understood to be saying that Jesus said all these things on one occasion necessarily. He says that Jesus spoke these things, and he may have done some of them on one occasion and some on another occasion. As a matter of fact, almost everything that is found in this lengthy sermon in Matthew is found somewhere else in Luke.

There are only a very few things in Matthew's version of the sermon that are not also found in various places in Luke's version. Although Luke, of course, has the Sermon on the Mount, as it were, in half of chapter 6, yet many of the things that Matthew includes

that are not found in that discourse in Luke are found in other places in Luke, in Luke chapter 10 or Luke chapter 12 or some other chapter of Luke, under different situations. So that we may possibly conclude that Luke gives the material in its historical setting, where and when Jesus spoke it.

Matthew gathers it into a topical arrangement, topical teachings of Jesus on subjects. If this is the case, then the Sermon on the Mount, as it is in Matthew, was very possibly not all taught at once, but was taught at various times during Jesus' ministry. Now, the decision about this is not extremely important.

There are a few issues at stake. One has to do with the interpretation of the Beatitudes themselves, because there is a difference between the Beatitudes in Matthew and the Beatitudes in Luke. And the difference may be that the two writers are giving different renderings of the same statement that Jesus made.

If so, then the significance of those different renderings needs to be considered. Or the other possibility is that if we have two separate sermons given on different occasions, each gives the statement exactly as Jesus gave it. The principal differences between the Beatitudes in the two different places is that Luke... Well, look at Luke chapter 6 again, if you would.

In Luke chapter 6, there are not eight Beatitudes, but four, is the first observation of difference. Whereas Matthew opens the Sermon with eight Beatitudes, Luke's Gospel opens it with four. Furthermore, Luke follows the four Beatitudes with four woes.

Each woe is the mirror image of the Beatitudes previously. So that his first Beatitude is, "...blessed are you poor." He says, "...woe to you who are rich." He says, "...blessed are you who hunger now." So in verse 25, "...woe to you who are full." He says, "...blessed are you who weep." In verse 21. So in verse 25, "...woe to you who laugh." Weep, laugh, opposite.

Verse 22, "...blessed are you whom men hate you." Verse 26, "...woe to you whom men speak well of you." So what we have in Luke, which is different than Matthew, is four Beatitudes and four woes. And those woes are obviously connected point by point with the Beatitudes he gives. But Matthew's Gospel doesn't give any woes.

Just eight Beatitudes. And of course that means that Matthew has to include four Beatitudes that are not found in Luke. Where did those come from? Did Jesus give all eight of them on one occasion and Luke left them out? Or else it's a different sermon given on a different occasion than that which is in Luke? Or did Jesus not give them all at one time? Is Luke recording it the way Jesus said it, and Matthew, in recording the same sermon, imported a few other Beatitudes that Jesus gave on other occasions? We don't know the answer for sure.

But here's an even more important question. Why is it that the verbal differences exist between Luke's and Matthew's versions of the Beatitudes? In particular, the Beatitudes as they are found in Luke appear to be talking about social concerns. At least many people would say so, because he says, blessed are you poor.

In Matthew it's blessed are the poor in spirit. It makes it a spiritual issue. In Luke, it's blessed are you who are hungry.

You should be filled. It sounds like the poor, the hungry, the proletariat, you know, the disenfranchised, the downtrodden, the underclass, are the people that Jesus is addressing and saying things are going to turn out better for you. But whereas you've got the poor and the hungry, in Luke you've got the poor in spirit, in Matthew, and those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, in Matthew.

What we have is a spiritualized version of the Beatitudes in Matthew. I'm willing to admit either possibility, namely that Jesus gave two different sets of Beatitudes on different occasions. On one occasion he said, blessed are you poor, blessed are you who are hungry, and he meant those who are physically poor and those who are physically hungry.

On another occasion, with entirely other things on his mind, he said, blessed are the poor in spirit, and blessed are those who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness, making entirely different points, not the least bit contradictory to the other, but just separate. He may have, in other words, given all these different Beatitudes exactly as they appear on different occasions. But there is also the possibility, judging from the structure of Luke's version of the Discourse on the Mount of Olives, that it is the same Discourse and the same Beatitudes, but what Matthew may have done is clarified them.

Now, we know that the Gospel writers from time to time did not give Jesus exact words, but paraphrased them for the sake of clarity. It's very obvious, for example, when both Matthew and Mark rendered Jesus' statement in the Olivet Discourse, Jesus said, when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the most holy place, then you who are in Judea flee to the mountains. That's how Matthew renders it, that's how Mark renders it, that's almost certainly the exact words that Jesus used.

However, Luke, in giving the same statement and the same sermon, he paraphrases it. Instead of saying, when you see the abomination of desolation, he says, when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, know that its desolation is near. Same statement, there's no question about it, it's just that Luke is clarifying it, assuming that the expression abomination of desolation might be misunderstood or not understood in any way, shape or form by his reader.

So he interprets it, and we allow that his interpretation was that which the apostles

approved and believed, and therefore is the correct one. Now, the Gospel writers did not give us the exact words of Jesus sometimes. As a matter of fact, Jesus didn't speak in Greek, he spoke in Aramaic, and we have our Gospels in Greek.

That means at the very least, in order for the Gospel writers to give us the words that Jesus says we have, they had to translate from one language into another, which means we don't know the exact words Jesus used. But beyond translating from one language to another, there are occasions at least where they somewhat amplified or paraphrased so that we would understand better what they wanted us to understand. Now, it is possible in light of that, that Jesus said, blessed are you poor, and he meant, blessed are those who are spiritually poor, but Luke, Matthew, was concerned that his readers might not understand it that way, and simply added the words in spirit in order to clarify what Jesus meant.

In which case, Matthew's version would not have the precise wording that Jesus used, but he would be given the exact meaning behind what Jesus was saying. And when Luke has Jesus saying, blessed are you who are hungry, he meant hungry for righteousness. But Matthew, fearing that people might not understand him that way, added the words for righteousness in order to clarify that.

Now, that is at least how some people understand what is going on here. Depending on your own preferences and theories, I imagine, and basis for approaching the whole issue of how the Gospels were written and inspired and so forth, you will probably lean toward one or the other theory, and it really doesn't matter a great deal. I accept, as valid, all the Beatitudes in all the Gospels exactly as they stand.

And I believe that they make perfectly good sense and are orthodox and correct, no matter which theory is taken of them. But it is possible that Matthew has clarified some statements that Jesus made that might have been misunderstood to be talking about a person's social condition, and where he was in fact talking about somebody's spiritual condition, Matthew clarified that by adding a few phrases, which were indeed what Jesus meant in the first place. We may never know until we go to heaven which of these explanations really accounts for the differences.

But it is not extremely important for us to decide, so long as we can look at any of these Beatitudes and say, I can take that exactly as it stands, too. After all, the Beatitudes in Matthew are generic. Blessed are the poor in spirit.

Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the meek. Blessed are those who hunger.

Blessed are the merciful. Blessed are the pure in heart. The peacemakers.

Those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Those, them, they, that's generic. Anyone who fits this description.

Whereas in Luke, the Beatitudes are, blessed are you poor. Blessed are you who are hungry. He's talking about specific individuals.

And who were they? The disciples. Now that's an important thing to know. If you'll look at Luke 6 again, and we're going to spend most of our time looking at Matthew 5, but I want you to notice relevant things in Luke 6 that will be important in our understanding.

It says, as sort of a preface to the Sermon on the Mount, in Luke 6, 17, He came down with them and stood on a level place with the crowd of His disciples. This is after He chose the twelve, on a mountaintop. And a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and from the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon who came to hear Him and be healed of their diseases as well as those who were tormented with unclean spirits and they were healed.

And the whole multitude sought to touch Him, for power went out from Him and healed them all. Then He lifted up His eyes toward the 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 shall hate you, and when they exclude you and revile you and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of Man's sake. Now, He's talking to His disciples as you poor people, you ones, you, you.

He is not saying all people who are poor are therefore blessed. There have been periods of history where the Church has, especially during the monastic movement, has mistakenly thought that poverty was itself virtuous. And that the person who was the most poor was the most virtuous.

After all, Jesus did say, Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. And by the way, James seems to be alluding to that very beatitude when he's rebuking his readers for showing partiality toward the rich and somewhat treating the poor with contempt. James, he rebukes them for that.

It says in verse 5 of James 2, James 2, 5, Listen, my beloved brethren, has God not chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? Now James says that God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and to be heirs of the kingdom. Where would James get that idea? Well, Jesus said, Blessed are you poor, yours is the kingdom. He's chosen the poor to be heirs of the kingdom.

That's exactly what Jesus said in the beatitude in Luke 6, 20. James, no doubt, is referring to that. He says, God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

James adds this one little thing, to be rich in faith. Now it does not mean that the poor,

that all poor people are rich in faith. There are poor atheists.

There are poor Hindus. There are poor Muslims. There are poor agnostics or whatever.

Not all people who are poor are rich in faith. And not all people who are poor are blessed. Many poor people are going to hell.

And Jesus was not saying, Blessed are the poor. He said, Blessed are you poor. Speaking of a particular group of poor people, his disciples.

You see, they were Jews. And Jewish people generally tended to feel that one of the marks that God is blessing a person is that he gives them much prosperity. Many children, much crops, much livestock.

Maybe even many wives in Old Testament times. But God's blessing was seen as marked by prosperity. Therefore, those who were not blessed with prosperity might well think that God didn't think much of them.

That God wasn't doing much for them. And maybe they weren't very pleasing to God. And the disciples were raised in that environment.

They were not wealthy men. And they may well have thought, Well, you know, if God really thought well of me, I'd be a wealthier man than I am. But Jesus said, Blessed are you poor.

As if to say, even though you are poor, it does not mean that you are not blessed. There are some blessed people who are rich. And when Jesus said, Woe to you who are rich.

He is not, again, making all rich people out to be wretched. Because there were some rich, not very many. But there were some rich in the early church.

There were some who owned houses and lands. But they didn't count what they had to be their own. They were possessors.

But they didn't consider the things they possessed were their own. And that is, of course, the Christian attitude. But they were rich nonetheless.

A man who has a lot of money, but does not consider it his own, and all of it is devoted to serving God and serving the needs of people and so forth. That person may be rich in the world's eyes, but he is not wretched. There is no woe to pronounce upon him.

He is poor in the sense that he has surrendered all to God. He may just possess some things in the meantime while he is in the process of making distribution. But Jesus is not making a blanket statement that all rich people or all poor people are either wretched or blessed, respectively.

But these particular poor people who are following him, though poor, are blessed, though hungry, not an enviable state, generally speaking, being hungry. They were blessed even though they were hungry. Even though they were weeping, no doubt because they were downtrodden and undelivered from their enemies and so forth.

And probably even exploited by the landowners and such that they worked for. They were weeping at times, but they were blessed anyway. Even if they were persecuted for following Jesus, and many of them were, by their families, I'm sure, and by the Pharisees and the Sanhedrin, yet they were blessed.

So what he's saying to them, it would appear in Luke 6, is that even though you, my disciples, are in conditions that most people would not consider the least bit blessed, poor, hungry, weeping, persecuted, yet, notwithstanding those evidences to the contrary, you are blessed. God's blessing is on you. And he tells them in substantial terms what the blessing is.

Yours is the kingdom. You have the kingdom of God. You will laugh.

You will be filled. You are in company with those prophets who suffered similar things. Therefore, in Luke's version of the Beatitudes, we have, very possibly, actual references to people who were poor and hungry in the physical sense of that word.

But it is not simply being poor or hungry that makes a person blessed. Being a disciple is what renders a person blessed. The particular poor persons and hungry persons to whom those Beatitudes in Luke 6 were addressed were disciples.

And it was because they were disciples, in spite of the fact that they were poor and needy and afflicted, the fact that they were on God's side and followers of Jesus is what made them worthy of a blessing, which made their social and economic status irrelevant for consideration as blessedness. Now, Matthew, if we turn there, we find there are no curses, but there are eight Beatitudes, and some of them are very, very parallel. In fact, each of the Beatitudes in Luke, all four of them, find a parallel in Matthew.

It's just that there's four additional ones in Matthew. We read in Matthew 5, 1, And seeing the multitudes, he went up on a mountain, and when he was seated, his disciples came to him. Now, by the way, I want to say that some have thought that this makes it clear that this is a different sermon in a different setting than that in Luke.

Because in Luke it says he came down from a mountain to a level place, or the King James says, to a plain. And there he spoke to the disciples. So, some have called this sermon in Matthew the Sermon on the Mount, because it says he sat on a mountain, or went up on a mountain and sat down, in Matthew 5. But in Luke it says he came down to a plain, in the King James Version, and so that sometimes is called the Sermon on the Plain, and it's quite clear that a plain and a mountain are not the same kind of

topography, and therefore they must be different settings, different sermons.

And that's possible, but it's also been observed, and the New King James points this out, that the word plain is actually a level place. And Jesus was on a mountain the night before, in Luke 6, he spent the night on a mountain, and in the morning he called his disciples up on the mountain, chose twelve, and then came down to a level place. That level place may well have still been on the side of a mountain.

He may well have uttered the sermon on the mountainside, on a level spot where he and his disciples could sit next to each other without rolling down a hill. And there are many hills, you know, places that are more or less level. So, the fact that this mentions it was a mountain in Matthew, and it mentions a level place in Luke, does not tell us for sure anything about whether it could have been the same sermon.

But when he opened his mouth and began to teach them, it says in verse 3, he said, Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

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 the sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted, for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. You'll notice that the first beatitude and the last one of these eight resemble the first and the last beatitudes of the four given in Luke.

In fact, the last beatitude is exactly the same in both. There's no difference. Luke's last beatitude and Matthew's last beatitude are identical.

I mean, the wording is only a little bit different, but the thought is identical. Whereas Luke has, Blessed are the poor, Matthew has in verse 3, Blessed are the poor in spirit. Luke has, Blessed are those who weep.

Matthew has it in verse 4, Blessed are those who mourn. And whereas Luke has, Blessed are you who are hungry, verse 6 of Matthew says, Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. In addition to that, Matthew adds four other beatitudes that are not found in Luke in any form.

Verse 5, Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth, which is really just a restatement of a psalm. In fact, very little in what Jesus taught is fully original. He did not pretend it was original.

Jesus didn't come to teach things that no one had access to before. He came to teach

things, everything Jesus taught is found in the Old Testament, almost everything. And very little, I mean, when Jesus summarized his whole teaching elsewhere is, Love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.

And those are verses out of the Old Testament. And so are many of these beatitudes taken right out of the Old Testament, out of the psalms in most cases. He also had here in verse 7, Blessed are the merciful.

That doesn't have a corresponding beatitude in Luke. Also in verses 8 and 9, the pure in heart and the peacemakers are not mentioned in Luke's beatitudes. So here, these are the principal differences in the two lists.

Now, I'd like to say some things about the whole body of the beatitudes before we talk about them individually. I guess we might as well first discuss what is meant by blessing. The Greek word is *mercarius*.

When a sentence begins with the word blessed, it usually has as its next word the word is or are. Blessed is or blessed are. When Jesus was riding into Jerusalem and adorned with the people, he said, Blessed is the name of the Lord.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. That's a beatitude. They were pronouncing a beatitude upon Jesus.

Jesus also pronounced a lot of beatitudes. Not only the ones in this sermon, but many others beside. Once a woman said to Jesus, Blessed is the woman that bore you and the breasts that nursed you.

And Jesus said, More blessed is he who hears the word of God and does it. So that's a beatitude. Blessed is he that does the word of God.

He hears the word of God and does it. In the upper room, Jesus said to his disciples, If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them. That's a beatitude.

There are many beatitudes sprinkled throughout the ministry of Jesus. In the book of Revelation, there are seven different beatitudes. Blessed is he that reads and they that hear and keep the words of this book.

Blessed is he who keeps his robes and so forth. Blessed, blessed, blessed. Anytime you find a sentence that begins like that, it's what we call a beatitude.

And what it is doing, it is pronouncing a certain blessedness or condition upon somebody for some given reason. Now, the word blessed, or *mercarius* in the Greek, is frequently been translated happy. The Phillips translation translates it as how happy are the poor and so forth.

In fact, Billy Graham wrote a book years and years ago called *The Secret of Happiness*, in

which he used the beatitudes as the basis. He pointed out that the word *mercarius* means happy. That is true.

The word *mercarius* does mean happy. But it doesn't just mean happy in the sense that we use that term. Happy, the way we use it, is a subjective thing.

It's something you feel. You feel happy or you don't feel happy. Whereas *mercarius* here speaks not of how people subjectively feel, but of an objective reality.

They stand in a state of blessedness. It's a happy state. Whether they feel happy or not, their state is a happy state.

It's an enviable state. They're in a fortunate condition. They have occasion to rejoice.

They have occasion to be happy. This is what is meant by saying these people are blessed. It doesn't mean that the feeling of happiness resides in their soul, that they're consciously happy.

Some of them are not. Obviously, some of them are mourning. Blessed are you who mourn.

A person at the time of mourning is not experiencing this subjective feeling of happiness. But the objective reality is that they are, in this condition, they are enviable. They are in a truly happy state.

If they would realize it, they would actually feel happier about it. They are in a fortunate condition because God approves of them. It is God who evaluates them as being in a happy condition.

Now, when you look at the things said, of course, the things that Jesus describes as blessed are not the same things that the world thinks are blessed. But the Jews of that time and the disciples before they knew Jesus were pretty much like people of today in thinking that, you know, the person who has a lot of money and not a lot of bills, that person is pretty fortunate. A person who's got no troubles in his family and no persecution from the government, and everyone likes him, seems to always get his way, people defer to him, he's a lucky guy.

He's fortunate. A person whose health is good and never seems to experience pain or suffering or sorrow, that person is fortunate. That's how the world thinks.

And at a certain level, that's a legitimate way to think. But not at the level that Jesus wants us to be thinking. You see, the Sermon on the Mount was given on occasion immediately after Jesus selected the twelve.

If the setting in Luke is what we're judging now. In Luke's gospel, the Sermon is given the morning after Jesus selected the twelve. And he sat down with them to give them

basic instructions as to how their thinking would have to change.

Because the Bible says that we need to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. This suggests that there's something wrong with the way we think by nature. The way we think before we're informed by God of the way we should think is not the same way as we ought to think.

We pick up opinions and values and ideas and theories and preferences. We pick those up in life before we hear from God. And where we pick these up are from our own hearts or from the hearts and minds of other people that we're in contact with.

And it doesn't take very long for your own heart to tell you that you wish you had more financial security. You wish you had a more warm relationship with your parents or with your spouse or with somebody. That you wish you had more respect in the workplace or in society.

There's just something in our human nature that makes us desire these things. And the assumption we have is that if we would obtain them we'd be happier people. We'd be in a happier condition.

And of course the world supports this because everybody in their human nature thinks the same ways. And so everything they say works from the assumptions. These are the values that matter.

Everything you read in the secular world is going to tend to affirm the values that you naturally in your own heart have from childhood. Of selfishness, of the desire for comfort and luxury and so forth. And therefore you're going to grow up kind of... Even if no one ever asks you and you never ask yourself, what are my values? A lot of people have never really even defined what their values are.

Never sat down and said, what do I value? But you live according to a set of values whether you've noticed it or not. And those values until they are reformed are the values of the world. Which are generally just the opposite of those of God.

Jesus made an interesting and really sobering comment in Luke 16, 15. You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

Now that's a general axiom. What is highly esteemed among men is an abomination before God. Now what's that tell you? But that the value systems of man and the value systems of God are just the opposite.

Man thinks something is really great, God thinks it's really horrendous. And the things that God loves, men place small value on. Remember when Jesus was talking about going to the cross.

The first time he told the disciples about that at Caesarea Philippi. Peter took him aside and said, Lord, not so Lord, this can't happen to you. And Jesus said, get behind me Satan, you are an offense to me.

Because you do not savor the things of God, but you savor the things of man. Going to a cross and giving yourself a sacrifice, as a sacrifice of sweet smell and aroma well pleasing to God. That's a thing of value.

To escape such things is what man would value. And Jesus said he was offended by Peter because Peter savored or preferred the things of man. He valued human things, the things that man values.

Not the things that God values. And there's much in the scripture to make it clear that man and God are on a collision course in terms of philosophy, opinion, about things, values of things assigned. And that being so, the Christian who must be transformed by the renewing of his mind, has to discover, first of all, what values God holds that are different than the values I hold.

And then, to adopt God's values and to renounce my own. Until I do that, I will continue to be in the dark. I will be in the dark of my own thinking, of man's thinking.

But when I adopt God's values and his opinions and so forth of things, then I will come out of the darkness into the light and I will see my circumstance in an entirely different way. And when Jesus says, these people are blessed, these people are enviable, these people are truly fortunate, and he gives a category that we would not have thought, I never thought of those people as very fortunate. In fact, when I was in that condition, I kind of always wanted to be in a different condition than that.

That's not what I always thought was enviable. And Jesus, you know, Jesus knew that. Jesus wasn't, you know, he wasn't out of touch with reality, so he, you know, saying things that he thought everyone would already agree with.

Jesus knew that what he was saying was directly counter to the way the disciples were already thinking. And that's just the point. He selected these twelve to be the leaders of his movement.

He sits down and the first words he speaks to them after they've been selected are these words, where he confronts their basic value system, their basic goals. And he says, that's all wrong. This is how it's got to be thought of.

This is the way you need to look at yourself. This is the way you need to look at the situation. This is the way you need to assess the value and esteem certain situations and conditions.

Different than you normally would. If you're going to be my leaders, if you're going to be

my disciples, you've got to think like I think. And therefore, he tells them what they would not already know.

We would not already know, without Jesus telling us, that the poor are more blessed, or the hungry are more blessed, or those who weep are more blessed, or those who are persecuted are more blessed. This would not come to our minds naturally. This would not be what we would have assumed to be correct.

And that's why he had to tell us. He is the revelator. He's the revealer.

He is the one who reveals the mind of God to the world that's in the darkness. And so as we approach the Beatitudes, we need to approach them with the thought, well, how does this jibe with what I always thought? Or what I think even now? And the next question is, how do I need to change my opinion? And what difference will it make in my life if I conform my opinion to that which Jesus describes here? That's the first order of business with the Twelve. Bring them around to seeing it His way on these kinds of matters.

I should point out that when he says, blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the more in those who are meek, and so forth, he's not describing eight different categories of people. There's not this denomination over here who are meek, and this other denomination who are peacemakers, and this other denomination over here that are persecuted for righteousness' sake. Each of these Beatitudes is just laying out one aspect of what a disciple is, or at least is to be.

It's interesting that by making it personal, in Luke 6 where he says, blessed are you poor, blessed are you hungry, and so forth, these Beatitudes are descriptive merely. It describes them. They are poor.

They are hungry. They are persecuted. Blessed are you.

These are descriptive of their condition. But in Matthew, they're more generic terms. Blessed are those in this category, and therefore they serve to be prescriptive.

You should be this way, because those who are this way are blessed. This is the way you ought to be, too, then, if you want to be blessed, if you want to be happy, if you want to be fulfilled, if you want to have the favor of God upon you, and have whatever benefits come with the favor of God upon a man, then you should be one of those who are poor in spirit. Therefore, the Beatitudes in Matthew are somewhat, I guess we'd say, prescriptive.

The disciples are not described in Matthew as being meek. He doesn't say, blessed are you who are meek. He doesn't describe them as merciful.

He doesn't describe them as peacemakers, or as pure in heart. But he says, blessed are those who are. And what he's saying to them, obviously, you people want the blessing of

God.

Those who are pure in heart are blessed of God. Be pure in heart. Those who are peacemakers are blessed of God.

Be peacemakers. Those who are meek are blessed of God. Be meek.

So we have here, not just a description, but as it were, a prescription of what disciples are supposed to be like. And we don't have eight different classes of people who each have their own separate blessings, but we have eight different parts to the prescription of what a Christian life, what a disciple of Jesus is to be. Now, when Jesus tells us that certain people are blessed, and it goes right against the grain of what we would have thought, he doesn't just expect us to trust him on this.

He doesn't just say, listen, people who are tortured are blessed, trust me, and say nothing more. He tells why these people are blessed. He gives a rationale for it.

He's telling them why they should look at themselves. If you're poor in spirit, well, why is that a blessed thing? Well, because yours is the kingdom of heaven if you're in that condition. Well, why are those who mourn blessed? Well, they're blessed because they will be comforted.

What about the meek? What's so blessed about that? Well, they're going to inherit the earth. And so Jesus tells in each case what the benefit is to each category of persons and tells exactly what it is that makes them blessed. They're blessed because of that.

And it is true that to inherit the kingdom and to be comforted and to inherit the earth and to be filled and to obtain mercy and to see God and to be called the sons of God and to have the kingdom of God, these things are definitely better than the things we would have hoped for ourselves if we had simply followed a worldly course of life and hoped to be rich, hoped to be healthy, hoped to marry well, hoped to have happy children, and hoped to die comfortably. I mean, those things that the world hopes for are so tawdry and meager. The very highest, loftiest goals that the world sets for itself is cheap compared to the blessedness that comes to those who are in this condition that Jesus described, to have the kingdom of God, to inherit the earth, to see God.

These aren't even in the same category of the things that men in their most ambitious moments are seeking for themselves in the world. For Jesus to say, listen, you have perhaps none of those things that the world regards to be fortunate or enviable, but you have what the world would never even dream of hoping for, which surpasses what they hope for by light years, and you are infinitely more blessed than they. This is what the Beatitudes are there to teach.

Now, before I go into them individually, and I will be, of course, doing that in this series, and they do take a long time to go through. We have an earlier series where I spent a full

hour and a half on each one. I don't know that we will cover them quite so slowly in this series.

We'll find out. I would point out that it would appear that the Beatitudes are descriptive of attitudes and relationship patterns that would boil down into two things. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, strength, and love your neighbors yourself.

Essentially, the Beatitudes, each of them, is a description of an aspect of loving God or loving your neighbor. There are, in fact, four of each. There are four Beatitudes that have to do with loving God and four that have to do with your relationship with God, your vertical relationship with God, just between you and God, and there are four that have to do with your horizontal relationship with your fellow man.

They're not grouped that way. You don't have four of one kind and then four of the other kind just given that way. But consider.

Poor in spirit. This is an inward spiritual condition. It has to do with your own attitude about your relationship with God, and it has to do with your vertical relationship.

It has nothing directly to do with your horizontal relationship. Of course, your horizontal relationship will be certainly affected by this attitude's presence or absence, but it is principally a vertical consideration. It has to do with your view of yourself in contrast with God and your relationship with God.

Likewise, those who mourn. I'm assuming that mourning here has to do with mourning over sin. There are other forms of mourning, but we'll talk more about that another time when we get to that Beatitude in particular.

Then meekness is... has to do with your relationship toward your fellow man. It has to do with deferring to others and not being self-asserting in relationships. Hungry and thirsting for righteousness is about your relationship with God.

Mercifulness is about your relationship with man, showing mercy to other people. Being pure in heart, likewise, has to do with your relationship with God. Being a peacemaker, again, is your relationship with man.

And also, being persecuted for righteousness sake has to do with your horizontal relationships as well. People, you, they persecute you. So you have, as it turns out, the first two Beatitudes have to do with your relationship with God and the last two have to do with your relationship with man.

And the four in the middle alternate. The third one has to do with your horizontal relations with man. The fourth, with your relationship with God.

The fifth, with your relationship with man. And the sixth, pure in heart, has to do with

your relationship with God again. So they're kinda mixed up there.

You've got two at the beginning that has to do with your relationship with God. Two at the end have to do with the relationship with man. And the four in the middle alternate one... you know, one, then one, then one, then one.

so you have about an equal weightedness on both sides here Jesus describes the blessed person as one whose relationship with God and relationship with man is what God says it ought to be okay apart from that I don't know that I want to make any other introductory comments so we can look at the first beatitude now remembering Luke the first beatitude is blessed are you poor because yours is the kingdom of God James takes this just the way that Luke records it the poor God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which is prepared for those who love him now I'm going to take it both Matthew's way and Luke's way because both of them are found in Scripture I'm going to talk about each of them what about those who are physically poor but disciples now person who's physically poor is not a disciple there's no blessing on that although there is potential blessing possibly on a poor man even more than on a rich man if neither are disciple for the simple reason that Jesus said it's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God in other words if we would consider two parties who are neither of them in the kingdom neither of them believers but one rich and one poor it could be said that the poor man has an advantage in his natural circumstances with reference to things of God the rich man is going to be much more likely to feel secure in the things that he can provide for himself now this is I say in terms of likelihoods there are exceptions but but it is more likely that a man with with more assets then then he has debits with a man who's got much goods laid up for many years can say to his soul soul take my knees eat drink and be married and and that man is going to be less likely to be bothered by thoughts of God you know like all all other things being equal then the poor man who simply doesn't know where the next meal is going to come from and who if he doesn't know God is going to be much more inclined to eventually look to God because he's going to run to the end of his own resources frequently and when a man is at the end of his own resources he's much more likely to turn to God than a man who never runs out of his own resources and in that sense the man who's rich is more has a greater difficulty entering the kingdom of God and even if he does consider the things of God God's requirements upon him in terms of the stewardship of his riches may be so stiff that he may not be willing to pay the price we know of the story of the rich young ruler he was a man fairly godly he'd kept the law from his youth but you said you lack one thing just to sell your goods and give to the poor and come and follow me and the man couldn't do it he went away sorrowful he was not happy he was not blessed he was sorrowful why because he had great possessions had he been a poor man he would be in heaven today it is implied not because poverty makes someone go to heaven but because the man's great possessions prevented him from doing what Jesus said he went away sorrowful

because he had great possessions we were told and if that is so then we might suggest that if he had not had so great possessions he would not have gone away and would not have been sorrowful he was a man devoted to God at a certain level but devoted to his wealth even more and had he had no wealth to be so devoted to we might well speculate that he would have become a disciple and been saved today it was of this man that Jesus said how hard it is for a rich man into the kingdom of heaven so that a rich man first of all is less likely to even be considerate of the things of God he's secure he's happy he's distracted by comfort and security but but even if he does have inklings toward the things of God even if he gives thought to the concerns of his soul of eternity when he hears what it costs to be a disciple to forsake all that he has the rich man is much is going to have much more difficulty all other things being equal than the poor man in making that sacrifice because he has so much more to lose he has so much more adjustment to make and it's adjustment that is just right against the nature of man to want to make to forsake all earthly security and earthly comfort but you find a poor man who's never had earthly security never had earthly comfort for you tell him forsake all that he has now some of them are going to cling to the little they have to a man who's poor is not by dint of being poor virtuous but he is certainly in a condition less likely to be distracted by wealth and more in the position to accept the terms of discipleship now I want to say this by way of balance a poor man might be distracted by his poverty so much he never thinks about God he may be coveting money all the time a rich man is usually covetous but a poor man can be equally covetous in fact a poor man's very lack of things enough to pay his bills and so on might well cause him to be so distracted that he very rarely thinks of God or that he clings more possessively to the few things he has because he's insecure being poor will not guarantee that he will be a man rich in faith but this is the case if a person is a believer in God and poor he is perhaps more blessed in at least one respect and that is that God has chosen the part of this world to be rich in faith now a person who's rich and believes in God's has faith also but when we talk about rich in faith we're talking the word rich functions similar to the way we talk about rich in money some people have some some have more some have more still there's always more the person could have than what they have a rich man what what when is a person a rich man when he has a hundred thousand dollars when he has half a million a million now in our society there's billionaires multiple billionaires that's a lot of money I would think of a man with a million dollars a very rich man but when you look at Bill Gates or something like that and Ross Perot men who have multiplied billions a millionaires like a pauper by comparison obviously rich is a relative term to be rich in faith is also a relative term and a man who loves riches will seek as many as he can get he's never as rich as he wants to be because the thing he values there's always more of it out there that he hasn't acquired yet and there's always someone who's got more than he has unless he happens to be the richest man in the world and even then he probably wants to be richer still but what about rich in faith all Christians have faith God has given to every man a measure of faith it says in Romans chapter 12 but some have more than others to say that a poor man is rich in faith doesn't mean that a rich man can't be rich in faith to at

some level but rich can be richer than rich in some case I mean there's there's degrees of riches and all things being equal I keep saying that because there are factors that are exceptions to each of these axioms these axioms are not are not universal except you know where all other things are equal and they only can see only differences a man is rich or men is poor the man who's poor is going to be richer in faith in all likelihood than the man who's rich the reason being that faith in God means total dependency on God and the poor man of course is thrust a poor man who loves and trust God is thrust in trusting God every day in every way for everything a rich man trust God for maybe a salvation if you say maybe trust him for his health since some of those things are beyond the power of riches to to control but but he doesn't have to trust God for everything every day necessarily I mean he if he knew the truth he would have to but many people are blind to this you see I in my younger years in my teenage years in early 20s I always believed in sort of a poverty ethic which I no longer teach and or believe but for many years I believe that it was more spiritual to be poor I still believe that there are great advantages spiritually to being poor but I don't believe that being poor itself will that to say that a person is poor that doesn't tell you anything about their spirituality and even to say that a person is rich doesn't tell you anything about their spirituality there are some few spiritual rich men and some unspiritual poor people but I held basically because of many of the teachings of Jesus on this subject the way I understood them at the time that it was better to be poor than to be rich and and and I lived deliberately in poverty and I still frankly given the choice I'd still rather live with a degree of simplicity in poverty then then with affluence and opulence although my views have changed in some ways but for years over a decade I lived in poverty what what the world would call poverty I ate I was not in poverty what they call poverty in third world countries but I was in poverty what they call America I lived in a in a VW van for some time I lived usually in houses shared with ten other guys for cheap rent purposes lived largely on rice and beans because that's what I could afford and I never learned cooking anything else anyway and you know I live like that and I never that was not I was never complaining I was not hoping someday to improve my circumstances that is my choice to live that way and I figured I'd live that way all my life happily and I was happy Jesus could have said to me happy are you poor I was poor and I was indeed happy and I and I've never you know I'm a man who has temptations like other people toward many things but I think the one temptation I don't seem to suffer from and I better be careful I'd say that because maybe I'll start being tempted this way just because I said I'm not but looking over my past life I've had all the wretched temptations people generally do but one area that I've just never really been tempted I'd never really wanted to be rich I've just never really cared that much about physical things and what happened is my my second wife was killed in an accident and she was hit by a truck and that and the truck was insured and the insurance company that insured the truck appeared at my door one not the whole company a couple of times in suits and they they offered me a settlement and it was a good amount of money today actually I've seen more money than that at one time in more recent years I never thought I would but at the time it was an amount of money

that I could it was about five times the amount that I usually saw in a year you know did if I had if I decide just to live on that money I could have lived for five years at my custom standard of living on that money so I mean most people don't have that that much extra money and I that I mean I just felt rich I bet that kind of money I just don't usually see never thought I would see that kind never wanted to really and so suddenly I had all this money and I remember thinking well a I've got a poverty ethic I don't believe that being rich is even okay much less desirable and be my boast has always been that God provides for my every need day by day like like he provided manna for the Israelites that's basically how I live day by day most of my life and all of a sudden I've got enough money to live for five years cover all my regular bills and things like that I thought now I don't want this money I first of all I don't want the money I don't want to turn it down either and secondly I don't want if I take the money I don't want it to affect my life of faith of trusting God all the time and I did accept them and I may have told you this story before but I took the money I put it in the bank and I made a determination before God that within one year I would be I would have no more money I was going to use it all and the reason I gave myself a year is because I I wasn't quite sure where I give that much money I don't I was not listening to Christian radio or television and I didn't know of very many charities I knew some poor people friends of mine but I'm as poor as I was and I thought well you know if you have this much money I thought I'll never see this much money again my whole life at one time so this is a stewardship that I'm gonna have to give an account for big time in for eternity so I don't want to just kind of write a check for the whole amount just first person that looks like they might deserve it because I've always heard of people who were scams and so forth so I thought I'll give myself a year and in that year I will dispense with all the money and I did a year later there was no money there and I basically had I bought a few things I needed which were not very expensive things generally and I gave the rest away and and and so I managed to do that but during the year that I had that money I remember saying okay I'm not gonna let the fact that this money is in the bank I'm not gonna let that fact affect my life of faith but it I couldn't help it there was no way not to affect it because when I had no money I didn't know how my phone bill would be paid my rent payment would be made my food would be provided my gasoline and my car insurance I didn't know how these things to be paid month by month but I didn't have this money my car is an old car it it would break down frequently sometimes broke down for months before I had any money or a friend who would come be able to fix it and I'd walk or take the bus or something or hitchhike with friends I mean that was that was my way of life before I had all this money and suddenly with this money I realized that if my car breaks down I can fix it I'll just write a check I mean if it needs new engine if I need a new car I can buy a new car never have to worry about a phone bill or such thing as that you know I had enough money to pay for everything for five years and while I had decided that I was going to you know be rid of it within a year I had not made a decision I wouldn't use any of it on personal needs now maybe I should have made a decision like that it would have helped but I figured if God gave me the money and personal needs arise probably he wants me to use it for

that now not many needs did arise and I didn't end up spending much of it on things for myself as it turned out but but the interesting thing is that the fact that it was potentially available the fact that that was there to fall back on if if need be changed the whole dynamics of my faith in God in a way that a person would never notice unless they've been both totally poor and then totally rich I mean unless you have both circumstances it'd be impossible to fully describe anyone's knowledge satisfaction what I'm talking about because most people in America have never been totally poor most people probably in this room have never lived month by month not knowing where the money would come from now see I've lived 27 years not knowing where the money will come from still but I mean God is I mean that's not the only windfall I've gotten there been at least two or three other major windfalls have come my way in those years have been incredible all of them totally unexpected you know when I got that one insurance settlement for my wife's death I thought that was the only time in the world I'd ever see anything like that and it's amazing how many times that's happened since then but the point I'm making is I discovered something about what Jesus said through the experience of having been really poor purposely and and by choice poor on the one hand and and being rich for a while not necessarily wanting to be but just happened to be and I felt that the dynamic of trusting God for everything is is the edge is taken off of it when there's the knowledge that if necessary I can fall back on this money if necessary there's this other thing in other words whenever you have something you can trust in besides God your trust in God will never be quite as desperate as if you have nothing else to fall back on but God and because of that the poor are the more rich in faith if they are people of faith if we're talking about Christian poor the poor trust in God they have nothing else to trust in the rich may trust in God but they have some other things to trust into and even the areas that they trust in God can in a measure they may not be aware of is dulled by the fact that they know there's this other thing if necessary there's this there's this buffer here against disaster and the poor don't have a buffer against disaster and therefore I have to trust God in many things every day and that's a richness of faith that I personally like very much in fact when my children are grown I plan to not own a house not to not to yeah I want to go back and live the way I did my wife won't mind she when we got she was a millionaire's daughter but when she we got married we lived in a school bus for a year and a half and she'd never complained about that she never been covetous but the the kids we you know we have to house them with feed them protect them stuff and if we even if even if they were content or we could we're content not to the Children's Services wouldn't approve of our children living the way that we like to live so we'll wait till they're grown and they're invulnerable then I figure this is the position God's put us in but I truly I truly would just advertise to you that a life of trusting God for everything is a blessed life I'm not saying that there's no blessing in in other states of life God can bless you if you're comfortable God can bless you if you have money in the bank you can be blessed God might be the one who made you comfortable I mean he he blesses people with material things sometimes but when he does of course then then it's a test of your faith it's a test of your loyalty because money to most people

becomes an idol and it can become an idol to a believer to and and and you can guess or you can tell if money has become an idol to you by consideration of whether you would part with your money gladly as soon as you felt an inkling that God wanted you to dispense with it in some way if the father I mean if you would contemplate I think of all that you have you just say well what would I what my emotional reaction be if I suddenly realized God want me to get rid of everything every bit of it and just trust him if you can honestly say well that'd be no problem at all to me in fact I kind of kind of like him to do that I think that'd be kind of fun I think I'd be great then probably it's your money isn't hurting any you know but if you is that guy if there's kind of some fear that arises there some alarm at that prospect then there's a good possibility that that money is being trusted in areas where God would prefer to be trusted and that that money therefore is standing in the place that God wants to stand in your life and is an idol in some measure the Apostle Paul twice identified covetousness as idolatry in Ephesians 5 and in Colossians 3 5 in Ephesians 5 forget I've got to take your questions I know it's in three I know it's in Colossians 3 5 it is in both books in Colossians 3 5 it says therefore put to death your members which are on the earth fornication and cleanness of passion evil desire and covetousness which is idolatry covetousness is idolatry Jesus said elsewhere beware of covetousness for a man's life does not consist of the things which he possesses and Paul said over in 1st Timothy that those who desire to be rich fall into many hurtful lusts and a snare and so let me let me give you the actual wording because it's very strong I can't quote the exact words but the wording is very strong 1st Timothy chapter 6 and Paul says in verse 6 1st Timothy 6 6 and the verses that follow but godliness with contentment is great gain don't think that you need gain of other sorts if you have godliness and your content for we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out and having food and clothing with these we shall be content but those who desire to be rich and doesn't say those who are rich but those who desire to be rich that's that's where the heart is you see some people are rich and don't couldn't care less whether they're rich they don't mind being poor but they they were born rich or they've been given money or they inherited money or whatever I'm being rich is not what Paul is talking about those who desire to be rich that tells you something about the desires of their heart they fall into temptation and a snare and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition for the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness and pierced themselves through with many sorrows and yet there are rich in the church according to the same chapter verse 17 Paul says command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God who gives us richly all things to enjoy let them do good that they be rich in good works ready to give willing to share storing up for themselves a good foundation from the time to come for the time to come that they may lay hold on eternal life interesting it says those who are rich tell them not to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God trusting in riches is the normal thing to do if you have them it's hard not to I'm in my experience is almost impossible not to if you really have them and it's an option to you to fall back on them then then

you'll never be as desperate as if you don't have them and therefore your in God will be at a different degree I'm not saying that a person who has riches can't have adequate faith in God or even satisfying faith in God or tremendous faith in God they can but those who have nothing but God must trust God all the time for everything and that is rich in faith God's chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith and there's the king that's how Luke's version of the parable runs let's look now over at Matthew's version of the parable blessed of the poor in spirit now this this might be an entirely different category it might I mean certainly a man who's rich in money can be poor in spirit and a person is poor in money can be the opposite of poor in spirit at the same time however depending on what is meant by poor in spirit I think it can be shown that people who are materially rich will have the greater struggles that than the poor have in being poor in spirit as well the two are not identical things but they are not a hundred percent disjointed or disattached from each other either in my opinion poor in spirit what does it mean there are there were two kinds of poor in Israel there were the poor who who they they inherited land from their parents the majority of Israelites inherited you know a homestead from ancestors that was you know the land was divided into tribes and families back in the days of Joshua and the inheritance passed down generation by generation but but most people who own land were still fairly poor they still basically had to work 12 hours a day just to farm the land six days a week just to keep the family fed and maybe to provide some other things you know there were some men who were very wealthy they had other forms of wealth and sometimes more land than others and they and they hired people to work their land and so forth and many times the poor landowners actually had to make their living working on the land of a richer land owner for some tawdry amount not not a great amount but these were one class of poor but there was another kind of poor in Israel and they were the 100% destitute they a they didn't own any land to farm be they couldn't even work for someone else because there was some other thing that kept them poor usually a handicap or age somebody who is too old remember the story that Jesus told and Luke 16 one the the steward who had been a steward of a rich man and he learned that he was going to be fired and he said what shall I do I'm I'm too old to dig ditches and I'd be ashamed to beg therefore he came up with a strategy to keep himself secure now without getting distracted by the particulars that parable his comment was fairly typical Jesus put in that work man's mouth but most Jews would think of it well I'm I don't want to dig ditches that I mean maybe he's even too old to do that but he says I'm ashamed to beg so he wouldn't do that well the really poor people even though they were ashamed they had to beg the blind the lame the elderly who didn't have anyone to take care of them they were reduced to begging they were not your average poor of the land who just had a little bit of land a little bit of homestead and you know worked every day and it got a meager living these people for various reasons were incapable of supporting themselves in any way they had no possessions they had no ability to work as I say they were usually either very elderly or very young or orphans or or or else handicapped in some way disabled and these were the beggars in Israel now the word poor that is used here by Jesus does

not refer to the general poor those who you know were the kind of the lower class people in society the word he uses refers to those who are reduced to begging and as that man in the parable suggested he'd be ashamed to beg that was most most Israelites would back in the 70s hippies used to beg they called it panhandling and and I I was sort of in that culture a little bit I had long hair dressed like a hippie and lived a little bit like a hippie not with the moral compromises but they I was a Christian but I in Southern California there were a lot of Christians who looked and in many ways acted a lot like hippies and I was among them but I never wanted to reduce myself to begging it was not too uncommon at least for hippies to beg from each other sometimes from other people too but one time I remember I was out of gas and I was some friends and I couldn't get home and I was reduced to panhandling and I remember how embarrassing it was even though it was almost I mean you may not be able to may not be able to relate with it but when you're in a situation with a high density of hippie types for someone to approach and say hey you got a spare change it's kind of normal you don't I mean it happens all the time you wouldn't think it'd be that disgusting you know but I remember the first time the only time I ever was reduced to panhandling I really felt ashamed I really felt humiliated I imagine unless you reduce that you wouldn't even know what kind of shame is attached to that I mean most of us have never been that poor but the poor the the beggars they're the ones who have absolutely nothing and I'm afraid we're gonna run out of time in this lecture before I can say what I'm gonna say about it in fact that's a fact I want to talk about what it means to be beggars in spirit because that's what Jesus actually means he's a blesser of the poor in spirit the word he uses for the the totally dusted the beggars and but he's talking about spiritual condition he's not talking about people who are out begging for money money is talking about something that's a spiritual counterpart of that and we'll talk about that and then move along in our study to be attitudes next time