



MONDAY 29 FEB 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:1-2 & Isaiah 2:1-4

Plug In...

NB: Isaiah spoke of a future mountain where God would teach people His ways.

We are about to listen to one of Jesus' famous sermons, the so-called 'Sermon on the Mount'. It will be full of good commands, and great ideals – yet it will sober us. The standard put forward will prove to be impossible to achieve. However, just because a command is impossible to fully achieve, it nevertheless remains God's good command for us and should not be sidelined. We will see that these commands are not for a person to *achieve* getting God, but will be a way to live that flows from God *getting* us. This truth is born out in the Beatitudes which stage the whole Sermon on the Mount. This week we will explore these Beatitudes as wonderful declarations of the gospel.

Chew It Over...

What is the big point that Matthew has been drumming through the story so far (chaps. 1-4) that surely must frame the Sermon on the Mount?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God again for sending Jesus to save us from our sins (Matt. 1:21). Recognise our indebtedness to Jesus who is the faithful, successful *Son* of God for us. In that relief

and security, ask God to help you listen to the words of this sermon; that as He speaks these words, His power in these words remodels you for the Kingdom.



TUESDAY 01 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:3-5 & Psalm 34

Plug In...

These lines that begin with "Blessed" are known as 'The Beatitudes'. There are nine here. The first 3 describe a situation of lack. To these people, Jesus is not simply stating a fact that they are 'blessed', that they're 'happy'. Rather, in their situation he is performing something. He is conferring a blessing which will result in them inheriting the Kingdom of God.

Psalm 34 & Luke 18:9-14 may be some of the best commentary on what it means to be poor in spirit.

Chew It Over...

Reflect on your circumstances and how they define the real you; how they shape your disposition. Do you identify with being poor in spirit? Consider how Jesus words do a miracle to your status and disposition in those circumstances.

Prayer Suggestion

Thank God for turning around our situation: seeing our inadequacies. Thank you God for Jesus and the concentrated gospel message in the words of "blessed you are".



WEDNESDAY 02 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:6

Plug In...

'Hunger' and 'thirst' is an evocative image. It evokes a famine. There is no righteousness to draw on, no vindication, no justice. The first four Beatitudes string together to describe the objective bad situations people find themselves utterly helpless in. It is indeed a blessing that God comes to us before we get our attitudes, praise-worthy spiritualities, and virtues right – He is the one that does something for us.

Chew It Over...

Consider the Beatitudes so far. Do you feel they are putting forth conditions, even attitudes to have, in order to find yourself receiving the Kingdom of God? Do you agree it is easy to mistakenly turn the Beatitudes into a (inner) works?

Prayer Suggestion

Turn the well-known phrase 'God-helps-those-who-help-themselves' into 'God-helps-those-who-cannot-help-themselves' and construct a prayer from the first four Beatitudes. Remember, this beatitude (v.6) highlights righteousness can be prayed for.



THURSDAY 03 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:7-9

Plug In...

You can almost detect a flow in The Beatitudes. The first about people who need, which God comes and helps (vv.3-6). Then people who take something of God's help towards them to others (vv. 7-9). Even with this shift of focus, the word 'blessed' is still a pronouncement, rather than a call to go strive for a standard in order to get the promise. Nevertheless, the gospel declaration becomes exhortation.

Chew It Over...

Think of a specific situation you confront today or this week where extending them mercy is a necessary consequence of the mercy you've been shown.

Prayer Suggestion

Pray that you will know forgiveness and give forgiveness. In many situations we must ask God for the power to ever be able to forgive someone for the wrong done to us.



FRIDAY 04 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Matthew 5:10-12

Plug In...

The back half of the Beatitudes contains a twist. First, the Hebrew idea of 'peace' (*shalom*) – which Jesus speaks of here – is everything in right relationship: to God, to one another, to the world around us. Now, the very ones who are peacemakers (v.9) find their attempts to make peace is disrupted by peace disturbers – persecutors.

Chew It Over...

Do some probing. How does this tension focus in on what peace is and when it arrives? Given that, are you a peacemaker if you avoid all types of conflict or argument? Think about recent times you've pulled back from sharing the gospel, or gospel truths to "keep the peace". It is a cliché, but it helpfully clarifies (especially when watching Jesus' ministry): are you a *peace-keeper*, or a *peace-maker*?

Prayer Suggestion

Lord Jesus, may we aim for *shalom*-type peace, even if it means a struggle with persecutors in this world. Please help us to model how you did it.



WEEKEND 05-06 MAR 2016

SERIES: GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Read: Psalm 30

Plug In...

Psalm 30 shows us that the ones who mourn and cry out to God will be comforted.

Let's reflect again on "blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matt. 5:2). The weekend is often a couple of days to read the newspaper. No doubt, today's edition will bombard you with stories about the evils done on our streets, our homes, within our worlds overnight. The papers will also glorify the sins of football players, movies stars, and our heroes; giggle at them, even hold them up and convert them to virtues. Magazines and the papers will proclaim that when these types of sin are embraced, then you will be truly living.

Chew It Over...

As you read the papers or magazines, interrogate yourself as to whether or not you mourn for our society? Far deeper and beyond the grief coming with job loss, financial loss, loss of health should be a more wrenching mourning. Are we grief-stricken at the evil that is embraced, the reckless de-godding of God that our community engages in? Do we feel it? Do tears break through (Psalm 119:136)?

Prayer Suggestion

Thank you God for the consolation you promise for us who mourn. May we no longer be numb; may we see the absence of people obeying you and loving you – let our hearts break. Then, from that place, fill us with compassion for others. Use us to point them to the consolation found in Jesus.