



THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MATTHEW - APRIL 16, 2024

Matthew 5-7: Sermon on the Mount

Quick Notes:

- Most important teaching of Jesus, yet only appears in Matthew and Luke; even then, not the same exact words or same location. This reinforces that each gospel writer had a different focus and writing style.
- Much of the sermon seems like disjointed sayings instead of one consistent "whole" sermon. It could be that the gospel writers were putting together "the best of" and not really recording one sermon. They could have taken writer's license and combined teachings together.
- This starts the first of five blocks of teachings of Jesus as Matthew has recorded them:
 - o 5:1-7:29: The Ethics of the Kingdom (the beatitudes, commandments, etc.)
 - o 10:11-42: The Mission of the Kingdom (commissioning the disciples)
 - o 13:1-52: Metaphors for the Kingdom (parables: "The kingdom of God is like...")
 - o 18:1-35: Living in Kingdom Community (the church: humility, forgiveness, unity, etc.)
 - o 24:1-25:46: The Coming of the Kingdom (signs of the end of the age, the judgment)

Main Themes:

- Intro: "Beatitudes" – who is really "well-off," who has access to the Kingdom of Heaven (poor in spirit, meek, etc.), the least likely people. And how does Jesus identify them as they are out in the world? (salt and light)

- The heart behind the law – 10 Commandments are indeed important, but not as rote actions, rather as actions that flow from a heart that is aligned with God’s Kingdom. When Jesus said he came to “fulfill” the law and prophets (5:17), it means literally “to set in place” – he “fills it full” through obedience and by teaching its deeper meanings.
- Doing things for the “right” reasons – Righteousness in Matthew is not just divine gift or final divine vindication, but it is especially about right conduct. Right conduct as an act of obedience.
- Motivation for righteousness. It is not about looking good to others, but pleasing the Lord. Jesus gives three “mitzvah’s” – prayer, fasting, giving alms to the poor. Jesus exemplifies the kind of prayer that helps us keep focused on God, not on ourselves.
- Treasure and worry. These are related in that if we emphasize earthly treasures, it is conducive to worry.
- The Golden Rule (among others).
- The Narrow Gate. The gate is open to all, but not an easy path to take. Doers of the word build their lives on a firm foundation.

“THE LORD’S PRAYER”

- Look at the prayer in the literary context – in opposition to how the pagans and the hypocrites pray
 - It has to do with the heart, not the rote action
 - It is not a “magic spell”
- Simplicity of language
- Not necessary to pray it word-for-word, but rather to “pray *like* this...”
- Based on the Scriptural principles: verses about God’s character, His kingdom, and His promises to us.

Our Father who is in heaven

- The Old Testament talks about God as Israel’s Father (Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:8-9; Deuteronomy 14:1-2). This father/son language was used to talk about Israel’s special covenant relationship with God as their Redeemer. The Psalms also talk about the Lord showing compassion on His people like a Father (Psalm 103:13). Proverbs talks about God disciplining His people like a Father (Proverbs 3:12).

Addressing God as “Our Father in heaven” shows:

- We have an intimate loving covenant relationship with God as a Father who loves us, protects us, provides for us, and delights in us. But also a Father who disciplines and

corrects us when we need it *because* He loves us. A father's love includes both discipline and mercy, compassion, and grace.

- Saying "our" Father reminds us that we are part of a whole family of God, whether we say this prayer corporately or individually. That all other believers are our brothers and sisters in Christ and we share the same heavenly Father.
- Saying our Father "in heaven" reminds us that God is our heavenly father and that His kingdom is in the spiritual realm. In one sense, His kingdom has come in the hearts of those who serve Him as king and in His Church, which is His kingdom on earth. But His kingdom is still yet to come in all its fullness. In the Age to Come, earth will pass away and everything will be made new. Until then, we are ambassadors of God's kingdom here on earth, shining His light for all the world to see.
- Saying our Father "in heaven" does *not* mean that our God is distant, far away up in heaven. From the very beginning, Scripture tells us that our God is different from the "gods" of this world because He is near to us (Deuteronomy 4:7; Numbers 23:21; Psalm 46:1; et. al.). Jesus tells us that God's kingdom is in our midst and His Holy Spirit even dwells within us (Luke 17:21; John 14:17).

Hallowed be your name

- The word "hallowed" just means "holy." Jesus starts off His prayer with declaring that God is holy, perfect, completely other from us. But He doesn't just state it as a fact. He says, "hallowed be..." as in, may your name be treated as holy in the world.
- When we pray this prayer, we are committing ourselves to honor God's name as holy in both our words and our actions.

Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven

- The verb tense of the Greek word is an ongoing imperative – Jesus is not asking for God's kingdom to come, but commanding God's reign to be on earth as it is in heaven.
- Jesus is inviting God to reign in His heart, in His life, among His disciples, and in His community. He is telling God, "I want You to be my King. I want Your will to be done in my life and in the world, just in the same way it is done in heaven, without question or protest."
- When we pray this prayer, we are telling God to come reign in our lives. We are committing to His Lordship and proclaiming His will over our hearts, our lives, our families, our church communities. We are asking God to do His will in our lives even if we don't necessarily understand it, just as Jesus prayed in the Garden the night of His death.

Give us this day our daily bread

- This is a very simple prayer for provision. It harkens us back to the wilderness, when God gave Israel their daily bread in a very tangible, obvious way – supernaturally raining manna down from heaven anew each day, except on the Sabbath, when they were to rest (Exodus 16-17). Jesus only explicitly mentions daily bread, but that makes it a representative sample of all of our needs – food, water, clothing, shelter, even companionship or peace or comfort, whatever we need for each day.
- When we pray this prayer, we are putting our day in God’s hands, each and every day. Day after day, week after week, month after month, year after year. Throughout a lifetime of this daily habit, we see what it means to walk by the Spirit and abide in Christ each and every day.

Forgive us our debts as we, too, have forgiven our debtors

- This is another imperative, not just a request – claiming God’s promise to forgive us.
- This is not a tit-for-tat transaction with God, but rather Jesus explaining the reality of forgiveness and how it works – if you have been forgiven by God and really get what that means, you will forgive other people.
- “Debt” = failure to pay. Later, Peter asks how many times we should forgive. After Jesus gives the answer of “unlimited times,” he tells the story of a servant of a king who would not forgive someone’s debt. “Failure” has more of a moral tone to it, which is closer to the Aramaic word Jesus would have used.
- When we pray this prayer, we are committing ourselves to forgiving other people the way that God has forgiven us and will continue to forgive us.

Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.

- This is another claim on God’s promises to us. It’s not asking for something extra that God hasn’t already said He would do. James tells us that God cannot be tempted with evil, nor can He tempt someone to do evil (James 1:13-15). God is only good and can only do good. This sentence is simply claiming that part of God’s character. “Don’t let us go there!”
- The second part is also claiming a truth about God. Paul tells us that any time we are tempted by evil, God will provide a way out for us (1 Corinthians 10:13).
- “Evil” in Greek is “the evil,” which could mean evil around us or “the evil *one*.” “Snatch us” from the evil one.
- When we pray this prayer, we aren’t just asking for God to deliver us from evil. We are claiming His promises that He will provide a way out for us when we are tempted. That He will protect us with His armor. That He will equip us to fight temptation by His Spirit dwelling in us. We are confessing that we believe that spiritual warfare is real, and evil is out there, trying to tempt us every day, but that we know that God is stronger and we will overcome!

