

BUILD YOUR HOUSE ON THAT!

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church

Matthew 5.1-12
June 16-17, 2012

Prepared by James Wilson
jim@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x112

I. Connecting With One Another

How would you define the word "blessed"? Who do you consider to be fortunate or blessed?
Before continuing, please pray:

- a. Thanking God for the families and children who have been able to connect with God at our new Saturday evening and Sunday morning worship gatherings, and grow deeper in knowledge of Christian faith through FLIPt and the Foundations Class.
- b. For those leading our worship gatherings and those with Good Shepherd's children in their classrooms – that God would guide their planning, preparation and leadership,
- c. That God would speak to you through his written word and through Jesus the living Word - and you would respond to what you hear.

II. Introduction to this Study

The Sermon on the Mount is arguably the most perplexing, demanding, and profound teaching that we find in all the gospels. In it we hear simple words but soon realize those words convey deep, profound thoughts and foundation-shaking demands. Through the years some have tried to derive a set of ethics, or form principles for living a godly life, or even proclaim a new set of commandments (like the original Ten Commandments) from this sermon. However, these attempts fail to comprehend the deep, radical (in the sense of foundational) call Jesus extends, to surrender oneself completely to God and to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. This sermon invites the reader to evaluate their values, priorities, cultural expectations, and social norms in the light of living a God-dependent and God-honoring life. If we read and study this sermon with a willingness to hear Jesus speak to us the implications of Jesus' words will be challenging, life-changing, and the source of being truly blessed.

III. Study the Text - Read Matthew 5.1-12

- a. The immediate context is Matthew 4.23-25. Notice how Matthew summarizes Jesus' ministry as "preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease..." Then comes an abrupt movement to a more detailed account of his teaching. What pronoun do you see repeated in Matthew 5.1-2? Any thought as to why Matthew cites the specific things Jesus does in these verses? When you see the word "mountainside" what other mountain experience comes to mind? Take a look at Exodus 19.1-6. In what ways is Matthew equating the words of Jesus with the words of God?
- b. "Blessed are..." Turn to Deuteronomy 28.1-14. The Hebrew term translated "blessed" is *baruk* and "blessing" is *baraka*. How is "blessed" defined in this passage? The same idea is expressed in Psalm 1.1. How is "blessed" defined here? Jesus begins to teach about the blessing of God or being in a state of true happiness. As he does, watch for the ways he defines what it is to be truly blessed.
- c. Verse 3. To be poor in spirit is to acknowledge our spiritual poverty, our need for God, and our dependence upon God. How does this contrast with our cultural values of

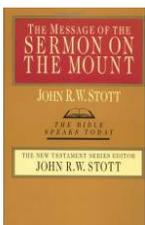
rugged individualism, self-sufficiency, and non-dependence? Why is being poor in spirit an indispensable condition for receiving the Kingdom of Heaven?

Note: Matthew uses the phrase "Kingdom of Heaven" to speak of God's divine rule over all of creation, God's rule in human hearts, God's triumph over all evil, God's plan for reconciling all things in Christ, and a future, everlasting heavenly realm.

- d. Verse 4. Why would those who are poor in spirit feel a need to mourn? Not only is this mourning for one's own sin but also for the sin seen around them. What have you heard in the news lately that has caused you to mourn? How do you think those who mourn will be comforted?
- e. Verse 5. How would a right estimate of ourselves (verses 3 & 4) lead us to be meek - to have a humble and gentle attitude toward others? From our culture's point of view, why is it surprising that the meek will inherit the earth?
- f. Verse 6. Biblical righteousness includes "rightness" in legal, moral, and social matters. What does it mean to hunger and thirst for each of these? What has Jesus said so far that leads to hungering and thirsting for righteousness?
- g. Verse 7. Jesus says the merciful will be shown mercy. Does it surprise you to think that your treatment of others will affect God's treatment of you?
- h. Verse 8. Why do you think the promise of seeing God is reserved for those who are pure in heart? What does it mean to be pure in heart? How is one cleansed from inner, moral impurity (see Psalm 51.1-12)?
- i. Verse 9. How would you define "peacemaker?" How can you be a peacemaker in your home, in Good Shepherd, at work, in your neighborhood, and in society?
- j. Verse 10. Persecution and false accusations stem from many things - fear, hatred, conflicting values, and pride (to name a few). What is the reward for those who are persecuted for being Christ-like people?
- k. Verses 11-12. Why do you think some people would insult, persecute and speak against the kind of people described in the Beatitudes? Against whom are they really reacting?

IV. Reflect and Respond

- a. Are you willing to hear Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount and wholeheartedly respond to it? Are you striving to surrender every dimension of your life to him? Are you willing to build your life on Jesus as this passage invites you to do?
- b. Are you experiencing the true blessing or blessedness that Jesus offers? What values and perspectives need to be re-oriented so that you experience more of the blessing of full dependence upon God?
- c. Do you ever wonder why you and I experience so little persecution? Do you think we would encounter more resistance if we lived more like the Beatitudes describe?



In his book, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount*, John R. W. Stott writes, *"The Sermon on the Mount portrays the repentance, the complete change of mind, and the righteousness which belong to the kingdom... it describes what human life and human community look like when they come under the gracious rule of God. And what do they look like? Different! Jesus emphasized that his true followers, citizens of God's kingdom, were to be entirely different from others."* (page 18)