

The King's People

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[0 : 01] Matthew chapter 5, a great help to me and to you, if you have it open in front of you. The King's people, who they are and what they're like.

The Sermon on the Mount is a name that is very well known, if you ask the man in the street. The content of it will be, I suppose, vaguely familiar to him.

But I would suggest the meaning of it will be almost totally misconstrued. People say things like this, well if we all tried to live by the Sermon on the Mount, things would be so much better and God would be very pleased with us, wouldn't he?

Or perhaps worse, I do live by the Sermon on the Mount, that's my motto. Don't judge anyone else and God won't judge you. You've heard people say that sort of thing, haven't you? And what it shows is that the Sermon on the Mount is something that's very popular, mainly among those who really have no idea what it's about at all.

If they did, they wouldn't say those things and it would be a very different story. In fact, it would be impossible to speak like that if you really understand what it's about. So it's important that we pay very close attention to the teaching of the Sermon, but it's also very important that we notice carefully the context of this teaching in Matthew's Gospel.

[1 : 30] It's the first of the five teaching blocks that appear in Matthew's Gospel. It's clearly marked out beginning at chapter 5, verse 1, where Jesus begins to teach, and it finishes at chapter 7, verse 28.

And Jesus finished these sayings. The crowd were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority and not as their scribes. It's clearly one great teaching session given by Jesus, probably all day as people listen to him.

It's obviously been edited and summarized by Matthew for the reader. All oral presentations, all sermons or any other talking needs to be edited for the reader.

Probably some people think most sermons ought to be edited before they're spoken as well. That may be the case. But anyway, Matthew has edited it for us, the reader.

And he's also prepared the way for this teaching by what's gone before. That's very important. Remember, at the beginning of chapter 3, it all begins after Jesus' birth with John the Baptist preaching. Repent, for the kingdom is coming.

[2 : 42] Judgment is upon you. The kingdom is imminent. Repent. And then with Jesus' baptism and his temptation, he says, Look, he's everything that you should be, but you're not.

That's why judgment's coming. Very serious message. Then remember, he says, Look again. He's everything that you can never be, but he is that for you, in your place.

He stands in your place under the burden of sin. And he stands in your place to fulfill all righteousness. And that's why he then says, Listen.

Listen to him. He's the one who speaks with authority. That was our last message in chapter 4. Listen to him, to Jesus, proclaiming what his kingdom is all about and who it's for.

And so in chapter 4, verse 17, from that time, Jesus began to preach, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Verse 23 that we read there, he went everywhere teaching and preaching, explaining what his kingdom is all about.

[3 : 49] What it means. In other words, he's telling people what the repentance he's commanding actually looks like. He's telling people what the righteousness of God's kingdom really is.

In his teaching. And everything that Matthew records all through the gospel of Jesus' teaching is his own authoritative explanation. Of how his kingdom comes about.

How he ushes it in by his work, by his death and resurrection on the cross. And what its meaning is. What its implications are. For the people who follow him and for the whole world.

So, here's the first of these great teaching sessions of Jesus. All about his kingdom. And it's all about the life of righteousness. It's all about, if you like, righteous repentance.

Or repentant righteousness. That's what the kingdom life is all about. It's a manifesto of life for Jesus' kingdom people. It's a portrait, if you like, of who the king's people are.

[4 : 49] What their lives are like. In other words, it's both a description of true Christian discipleship. And at the same time, it's a call to that discipleship.

It's a call to Christ's revolutionary kingdom. And it proves to be, as John Stott famously called it, a Christian counter-culture.

Now, there's a vast number of books on the Sermon on the Mount. Some of them excellent. Some of them superb. One of the best is a very small one by Sinclair Ferguson.

And there's inexhaustible riches in the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. And we could spend years on it. I've got a book on my shelf that runs to nearly a thousand pages of Martin Lloyd-Jones' sermons. There's over sixty just on these few chapters of Scripture.

Well, we'd be here for a very long time if we were going to take that amount of detail. Incidentally, that book we used to have when I was a student. I remember my first student flat. We had it as our bathroom book.

[5 : 49] And we would use it to read every time we were indisposed. But I only got about a quarter of the way through it, even though we had a very high-fiber diet. And it just shows you the wealth of teaching.

So I recommend that to you if you've got plenty of time. But we're trying to follow Matthew's message. We're trying to get through his big picture of his Gospel and see where he's going. And so we're going to try and keep to the main tune.

And therefore we're going to spend a shorter time than perhaps we might like on this. And today we're going to look at the first part, the Beatitudes. The first twelve verses of chapter five.

So we're going to look at it under three headings. First of which is this. The source of all true Christian discipleship.

There's things here in verses one and two. And in the context that we need to take seriously. The beginning of all true Christian discipleship, Matthew tells us, is the sovereign call of Jesus himself.

[6 : 49] The call to a life of exclusive loyalty to him as king. And that loyalty manifests itself in submission to his sovereign commands.

That's what Matthew's telling us here. Matthew's making a staggering claim. He's saying that Jesus alone has the power to call people into God's kingdom.

In chapter four, verse eighteen, we read, he went and just called people away from the nets. Immediately they followed. Jesus alone has got the power to call people into his kingdom. And Jesus alone has the authority to command those in his kingdom about the way of living in the kingdom.

In other words, Matthew's saying that this man has the power and authority that belongs only to God. He's telling us that this man is the power and authority of God.

He is God. And this unique power and authority is alluded to in the first two verses of chapter five. When we read that Jesus went up on the mountain and sat down.

[8 : 02] In the commentaries you'll read in this discussion of the geography, of where this might happen to be. But let me just say, Matthew's not at all interested in geography. He's interested in theology. That's what we're supposed to notice.

Matthew's whole message is that the story of Jesus is both the continuation and the climax of the whole Old Testament story. And all the history of the Old Testament people of God, all of the history of that in the past, pointed to Jesus, prophesied about Jesus, and foreshadowed the story of Jesus.

Do you remember, we've already seen very particularly in Matthew's Gospel, the many allusions to the Exodus, to God's redemption of his people out of Egypt and into freedom.

And then Moses was the deliverer. And after God had called his people up out of Egypt, where did they go? They went to the mountain. And God revealed himself to Moses and taught the people his law, how to live as God's redeemed people, how they were to be in the promised land.

And now Matthew's saying to us at the beginning of his Gospel, look, here's one far greater than Moses. Here's one bringing about a far greater redemption than just out of Egypt.

[9 : 18] Jesus is the great deliverer that all of these things pointed to. And now he, from his own lips, not with a mediator like Moses, from his own lips, is issuing the final word, the authoritative word, once and for all, about what it means to be the king's people.

This is the climax of what God's been doing all along. That's what he's telling us. God's always been concerned, from the very beginning, that he would have a holy people. So when Moses spoke the message from God to the people, in the law, in, for example, Leviticus 18, he put it this way, I'm the Lord your God.

You shall not do as they do in the land of Egypt. You shall not do as they do in the land of Canaan. You shall not walk in their ways and follow their statutes and their laws, but you shall walk in my ways and follow my statutes.

You're not to be like the pagans. You're to be holy. Because I'm holy. All the way through the history of Israel, the prophets kept bringing people back to that same message as they drifted away to idolatry and to paganism.

Not like that, but like this. Not serving those gods, but serving the one true God. And now, this is continuing.

[10 : 39] It's continuous with that same history. Jesus proclaims exactly the same message. In chapter 6, verse 7, he says, not as the pagan Gentiles, but as I tell you in your prayers.

This is my way. But it's also a much greater message because it's the climax. He doesn't just say, be holy, for I am holy. Chapter 5, verse 48.

It's be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect. So notice, Jesus' revolutionary kingdom, his counter-cultural kingdom, is set over against the world's way of irreligion, the world's way of paganism, but not only that.

Jesus also, in the Sermon on the Mount, is setting his way over against the way of religion, the way of the Pharisees. Chapter 6, verse 4.

Not like them either. Not like the hypocrites. The Pharisees. That's the word for the Pharisees all the way through Matthew's Gospel. The hypocrites. Not like those who purvey a heavy yoke of religion.

[11 : 47] No. Jesus is saying, and Matthew is telling us, Jesus came along to kick religion and religious perversion right out of the way. And put himself where he should be.

Right at the heart of the way men and women should relate to God, their Heavenly Father. And all the way through the Sermon on the Mount, you see, we see that Jesus is putting his way of doing the law, his way of living in obedience to God, and contrasting it with the way of religion, with the Pharisees' way.

And it's a total contrast. It's a contrast between the saving grace of God, on the one hand, and the deadening works of man on the other. And it's very, very important for us to grasp that.

If we don't grasp that about the Sermon on the Mount, we'll totally misunderstand it. Jesus doesn't say to the sinners, to the pagans, what you need to do is become a bit more religious.

He doesn't say to the religious zealots, the Pharisees, oh, you need to loosen up a bit, take a leaf out of the pagans' book. No, he says to both of them, you're both wrong.

[12 : 56] What you both need to do is come to me, and receive what only I can give, and obey me, and obey what I tell you, just because it's me, the King of love, who's asking you to do it.

You see, the key issue in righteousness is not in right living, in rightly relating to God. The key issue is not just what you do, but it's why you do it.

And it's who you're doing it for. The pagan, the person who rejects religion altogether, does what he likes, to gratify himself, to gain satisfaction in life.

But on the other hand, the religious person, the Pharisee, does what he thinks God wants, but he's still doing it to benefit himself, because he's doing it to curry favour, to gain reward, to try and impress.

But the disciple, you see, the disciple of Jesus, does what Jesus wants, just to please the Lord Jesus. Because he's found grace and mercy in the person of Jesus Christ, the Saviour, love makes his obedience sweet, as the hymn said.

[14 : 14] We've got to grasp that, otherwise we'll totally misunderstand the whole of the Sermon on the Mount. That's the significance, you see, of where it says Jesus sat down. It wasn't just that he was going to be in for a long session and he thought he'd get comfortable.

No, it's much more significant than that. Matthew chapter 23, verses 1 to 3, Jesus talks about the Pharisees, just before he begins to curse them. He says this of them, he says, the Pharisees and the scribes sit in Moses' seat.

So do what they say, but don't do what they do, because they're hypocrites, they don't practice what they preach. They lay heavy burdens on people's shoulders, they cover you in religion.

But Jesus, you see, is so different. Remember in chapter 11, verse 28, come to me. All you who labour and are heavily weighed down, and I'll give you rest.

Take my yoke upon you, and it won't be a yoke that grinds you into the ground. No. My yoke is easy, it's kind, my burden's light. Take my yoke and learn of me, because I do preach the truth, but I do the truth.

[15 : 30] See, there's nothing wrong with Moses, that's what he's saying. There's nothing wrong or burdensome about God's commands, as long as it's all about love for Jesus. As long as he's at the centre.

That's what the whole Old Testament's all about. Remember, Paul says, the whole Old Testament's there, to lead us to Christ. He's at the centre of it. But, religion, when religion is plonked on Moses' seat, and displaces the Lord Jesus Christ, displaces the grace of God, well, that's when you're left just with a yoke of absolutely unbearable burden.

The commands of God become killing. Leads only to despair, on the one hand, if you're honest, because you can't possibly do it. Or, on the other, if you're dishonest, it leads to pride and hypocrisy, because you think you're succeeding.

That's what happens when religion pushes Jesus out of the centre. But Jesus, when Jesus sits down, when Jesus sits on Moses' seat, he's not sitting there as a kind of new Moses, or a repeat Moses, or anything else.

He's sitting there as the true prophet, the one that Moses foreshadowed, the one that Moses only pointed to, the one that the whole Old Testament was always looking forward to. He sits there as the final word, the authentic word, from God to man.

[16 : 59] And when Jesus sits there and commands, it's totally different. It's a total contrast. His commands are not burdensome.

His command, you see, is the gospel of the kingdom, at last come to be. We might put it this way. Moses was only ever keeping the seat warm for Jesus.

And as soon as Jesus came on the scene, Moses was going to move right aside and say, this is your seat. The understudy's been keeping it warm, but now that you're here, take your place.

You see, Jesus' message is not freedom from the yoke of religion into lawlessness, nor is he trying to bridle lawlessness and paganism by a stifling yoke of religion.

No, rather, taking the yoke of Jesus is hearing His words and doing what He does. That's how you find rest for your souls, he says.

[18 : 08] That's what it means to be blessed by the grace of God. Taking the yoke of Jesus. So here, Matthew has for us Jesus as the ultimate teacher.

The Lord, one who has got far greater authority even than Moses. And He's calling His people. Notice in verse 1 it says He called His disciples to Him. He's calling His people, His disciples, those who He's already called into His kingdom to take that yoke, to learn from Him, to learn what it means to be the King's people.

It's something that's for all Christians, for all disciples. It's not some advanced teaching just for the few. This is for all the King's people. Notice, also His teaching is to His disciples, the disciples who came to Him, those who are already in His kingdom.

But notice it's in the presence of the crowds. And it's also for them, you see, even though they're not yet His followers. Not because, not because He's saying to the crowds, these are the requirements for you, if you do well enough in these, you'll earn a place alongside my disciples.

No, not that. Rather, He's describing in the presence of the crowds the life of those who are already the King's people. He's describing those who are penitent, who have sought grace and forgiveness, who have found it in Jesus.

[19 : 35] And yet, you see, the paradox of the message of grace is that it not only comforts the penitent, it convicts the proud, it convicts the impenitent.

Grace not only responds to repentance, it provokes repentance. as people hear what Christ's kingdom people really are meant to be.

Moses' gospel, you see, promised grace and mercy to God's people and it made demands on them to humble the proud, to drive them to God for mercy.

How much more then in Jesus' great climax, his final word in the gospel of the kingdom, how much more is the grace and how much more humbling the demands.

John Newton, you see, understood that perfectly, didn't he, when he wrote his hymn, Amazing Grace. What did he say? It was grace that taught my heart to fear and grace my fears relieve.

[20 : 43] The gospel both relieves our fears and also puts fear into us, humbles us. And Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, the new covenant way, in that there's far greater grace and, if you like, there's far greater law, greater demands, greater commands than there ever were under Moses.

His gospel both brings us face down in the dust as we realise what it means to be perfect. But also it fills us with the blessedness of heaven above in a way that far transcends anything that Moses could promise.

Why? Because with the coming of Jesus the final and ultimate revelation of the shape of God's saving covenant grace is made fully clear at last.

You see, the shape of God's covenant is a life that comes through death. Matthew's gospel is very clear the kingdom of God comes only through the death of the king.

And the way into kingdom and the way ever after within the kingdom is the way of life through death. And the Beatitudes that follow here in chapter 5 describe that death life, the way of repentance and faith, which is both the beginning of Christian discipleship and the never ending going on in Christian discipleship.

[22 : 12] So he's doing two things here. He's teaching his disciples the shape of Christian discipleship and he's appealing to those outside to come in and be disciples.

Important that we notice that because in Jesus' teaching there's no division between evangelism and teaching, between evangelism and building up the saints. That's because the gospel of the cross shapes our entry into Christ's kingdom and the gospel of the cross shapes all ongoing growth and development in the kingdom.

The gospel exposes the proud and the gospel also exalts the humble. That brings us then to our second heading into these Beatitudes in chapter 5 verses 3 to 10.

And it's the shape of all true Christian discipleship. I'll summarize it like this. All true Christian discipleship is cross shaped. It's a life shaped by the death of all that's in this world, both religion and irreligion.

That's what real repentance is, death to this world. And it's shaped by the life that comes only from Christ alone by grace. That's what real faith is.

[23 : 36] Real discipleship is cross shaped. faith, but repentance and faith from beginning to end. Jesus calls his disciples in chapter 4 and that's crucial.

We need to notice that he's already called them to be followers and to be fishers notice. Faith and service go together. There's no second stage there. Come, follow me and I'll make you fishers of men. And the whole purpose you see of chapter 5 verses 1 to 12 is to show us what the king's people are to be like and how they become the people who are fishers of men.

How they become, as he says in verse 13, lights of the world, salt of the earth. And that life, he says, comes only through death. Jesus sums it up later on in his gospel in Matthew 10 verse 38 or 16 verse 24.

What does discipleship mean, he says? Taking up your cross and following me. Losing your life in order to find it. Denying yourself and taking up the cross of Jesus.

That's the shape of the life of Christian discipleship. Death to everything in this world. To its wisdom, to its thinking, to its religion, to its way of success.

[24 : 57] Death to all of that and submission instead to the grace that's found only in Jesus Christ. Death to the approval of man, whether that's in the world or society or whether it's our own estimation of ourselves.

Death to that and abandonment to the approval of God, to his esteem alone, to what he calls blessed.

So you see, the life shaped by the cross of Jesus is the life shaped by the grace of God. And the Sermon on the Mount has many demands for the king's people climaxing in that word in chapter 5 verse 48.

Be perfect. Many demands. But it begins here in the Beatitudes with sheer grace. It begins with God pronouncing the blessing, the divine approval, the gift of his love on his people.

This word blessed in most of our Bibles is sometimes translated happy, but it's much more than that. It's not about how we feel, it's not a subjective sense. It's about the objective commendation of God.

[26 : 10] When God says blessed, blessed, so who are the king's people then? Who are these privileged ones who God says blessed? Who are these ones that God says you will experience my gift of salvation?

Well, let's look at them in turn, one by one. A good question to be asking as we go along would be just to say to yourself, describing me. Those who know they deserve nothing and yet have given everything, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of him.

They've recognized and faced up to the fact that they are in fact spiritually bankrupt. bankrupt. In the Old Testament, that word poor referred to these people, people who are humbled, who are destitute, who are utterly dependent on God for his intervention, for salvation.

And they knew it, they understood it. And what a bill that is to swallow, isn't it? Bankruptcy these days, we read in the papers, is becoming a very easy way out of debt.

Apparently it's a great way to get out of repaying your student loans. So maybe it's been devalued. But for the proud achiever, for the self-made man, what a bitter bill it is.

[27 : 31] Remember Robert Maxwell? Remember the stories we hear often in the news about businessmen in Japan who become bankrupt and the sheer shame of it is so intolerable they go and jump off buildings and kill themselves.

But the first step to God's blessing, says Matthew, says Jesus, the first step to his gift of salvation is to acknowledge and recognize spiritual bankruptcy, poverty of spirit.

It's to be brought into the dust by God. It's to acknowledge that we have nothing to offer, nothing at all, that we're helpless, that we're bankrupt. Martin Luther said, God made the world out of nothing and it's only when we are brought to an end of ourselves, that he can begin to make anything out of us.

And yet, Jesus says, these, these now, present tense, possess the blessing, the divine approval, God's gift of salvation, they possess the kingdom.

He's quoting prophetic words from Isaiah chapter 66 verse 2, this is the one upon whom I will look, the one who is humble and contrite in heart. What a wonderful comfort that must have been for Jesus' hearers, gathering around and knowing that they were nothing.

[28 : 59] Were they bankrupt? Were they in the dust? Nothing to offer God in knowing it? Jesus says, well, my kingdom's for you.

It's also a challenge too, isn't it? Because the first beatitude is essential to all the other ones that follow. Unless you come to terms with your bankruptcy, unless you come to terms with your spiritual poverty, you'll get nowhere.

Spiritual pride and wealth can't enter the kingdom. That's what Jesus is saying. It's a very low doorway into Jesus' kingdom. The only way in is to be on your knees, crawling.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Second, the king's people are people who weep real tears, but find great joy.

Verse 4, Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Again, there's a strong sense of prophetic fulfillment of Isaiah 61. The Messiah would be the one who brings comfort to those who mourn.

[30 : 06] He'd be the one who brings the oil of joy for gladness, a garment of praise, instead of despair. What's he speaking about? Well, not so much bereavement, but mourning over sin.

The prophets were writing to people who were in exile, who were mourning and weeping by the rivers of Babylon because of the sin that had brought them there. The people of God who were godly at the time of Jesus' birth, Simeon, Anna, those waiting in the temple, we're told they were waiting for the consolation of Israel, the comfort.

Carson says, this is the emotional counterpart of poverty of spirit. When we begin to grasp the reality of our poverty, our helplessness, our bankruptcy before God, we begin to grieve and sorrow and repent.

Jesus is saying the king's people take their sin seriously, they hate it and they weep over it. They also take seriously the sin and its fruit in the world and they weep over that, they weep over the lives that are wrecked because of people's abandonment of God.

They weep over the glory of God that's being destroyed in the lives of men and women. Just as Jesus wept over the effects of sin, he wept at the grave of his friend Lazarus because of the evil of death.

[31 : 34] Wept over the city of Jerusalem because it rejected him. Is that describing you? When did you last have tears in your eyes about anything maybe, let alone for your own sins, for the sin in the world?

Perhaps you have. And that's the paradox. Jesus says this weeping will be comforted. It's the promise of chapter 1 verse 21 because Jesus came to save from sin and those who weep, the king's people who know that sorrow for sin will be comforted.

And yet they will go on weeping with a hatred for their own sin too. thirdly the king's people are those who have renounced self-assertion and replaced it with humble submission to God.

And yet they will inherit abundantly verse 5 blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth. You've heard of the graffiti on the wall somewhere that says this the meek shall inherit the earth if that's alright with everybody.

But that's not what Jesus is talking about that's not meekness. Rather he's talking about humility and gentleness to others that comes from a true view of ourselves.

[32 : 58] The meek man is one who is sober and humble about himself but he's also transparent and honest about that in front of others. He's come to terms with other people having the same low view of himself as he or she has come to have.

In other words the meek person has utterly buried all pretentiousness. So hard that isn't it? We can perhaps be honest about ourselves before God and the privacy of our own bedroom in prayer but we still so much crave the praise of others don't we?

The meek person has died to all of that. They don't need to wear any masks. Don't waste any time defending themselves or their reputation or asserting themselves over others. Rather they hope and they trust than they wait on the Lord.

Yet Jesus promises that this is true strength. These are the ones who will inherit the earth. He's quoting from Psalm 37 that those who hope in the Lord who are meek who wait for him shall inherit the land.

The world says you see the meek people get trampled on. The assertive people are the ones who inherit. God says no. As one writer has put it self-renunciation is the way of world dominion.

- [34 : 27] Fourth the king's people are those who have an insatiable desire and yet they find the deepest satisfaction. Verse 6 blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled.

If the meek are materially content and at peace for themselves and the world they're not spiritually content. They're not thirsting for approval or for peace or for position but they're thirsting for righteousness.

They've got an appetite, an insatiable appetite for right relationship with God. They've got a hunger and thirst for God himself. and their quest as Jesus will be certainly fulfilled.

They shall be filled and they'll go on being filled. One day they'll be filled with total satisfaction when Jesus comes and he brings the home of righteousness itself, the new heavens and the new earth.

But even then it'll be a never ending satisfaction. But even now the king's people know something of that satisfied dissatisfaction or is it dissatisfied satisfaction?

- [35 : 41] An ongoing hunger and thirst that is being filled and shall be filled. Notice the sequence of these first four Beatitudes. The one who admits his poverty, who weeps over sin, who is in a spirit of submission, longs above all to be right with God.

But Jesus is saying this is the way into his kingdom. It's the only way and it's the only way on in his kingdom. These are the king's people. They've got hearts like this. But it's not just the inward.

It's not just the invisible. There's a visible side of all of this too. And the next four Beatitudes speak of what it means. What's visible? What's the evidence in life of what's true within?

That grace being worked out the way. Fifth, the king's people have known mercy and they show mercy. Verse 7, blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.

He's not saying that mercy is a reward for good behaviour. Rather he's saying mercy is a badge of membership in God's kingdom. It's the evidence of a work of grace within us.

- [36 : 51] Mercy means compassion for the needy. It means compassion for the pain and the misery and the distress that are a result of sin in the world.

It follows right on from the fourth Beatitude about righteousness because there's nothing hard or moralistic about Jesus' righteousness. You see the other side of it, its fruit is mercy.

If the fourth Beatitude is about the Godward attitude, the fifth is about the manward, outworking of that. it's no accident that right at the heart of the Beatitudes we have these two things, the righteousness and the mercy.

The one is an appetite for God, loving God with all your heart and your soul and your mind and your strength. The other is about loving your neighbour as yourself. And Jesus says these are the law and the prophets.

On these two commandments all the law and the prophets hang. Remember when Jesus was explaining to the Pharisee the meaning of the great commandment.

- [38 : 01] He told them the story of the Good Samaritan. Then asked them at the end which one was a true neighbour. The answer, the one who showed mercy. Faith that loves is true faith.

Righteousness that shows mercy is true Jesus' righteousness. righteousness. That's the antithesis isn't it?

Of the moralistic righteousness of the religious person. Blessed are the merciful. Does that describe you? Six. They're cleansed by God and they shall see him.

Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God. The heart you see is the centre of the being. That's where sin has assaulted us. That's where Jesus says all manner of vile and evil comes out from.

Who can approach God says the psalmist? Only the one who is pure in heart. His hands are clean. They will be the ones who at the last experience the joy and the release from sin and face God.

[39 : 09] But even now Jesus is saying they're preparing for that. They're pure in their relationships with others. There's no deceit. They're transparent before men. What you see is what you get with the pure in heart.

It's the very opposite you see of the hypocrite isn't it? Corresponds really to meekness. If meekness is a humble honesty and sincerity before God so pure in heart is a total openness and honesty and transparent sincerity before other people.

And from that you see flows the seventh beatitude. The king's people know their heavenly father's peace and they share it. Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called the sons of God.

Where does conflict and trouble in the world come from? It comes because of intrigue, because of deceit, because of guile. Isn't that right? It's openness, it's sincerity that's the basis of all true reconciliation, all peacemaking.

And the king's people are peacemakers. They'll be called the sons of God because they're like him in character. To be the son of someone means to be like. That horrible expression, son of a bitch, what it really means is saying you're like a dog.

[40 : 26] Barnabas in the New Testament was called Barnabas, son of encouragement, because he was a great encourager. And God is the great peacemaker. He's the one who makes peace between man and God and therefore between men and women.

And so we're his people. God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ and he's given us, Paul says, the ministry of reconciliation, of peacemaking. It's a great joy but it's great cost too, isn't it?

Disciples of Jesus are peacemakers. They bring the gospel of reconciliation to the world. We're also to be peacemakers in all things, not troublemakers. We're to be those who strive to make peace.

We're to be those who are reluctant rebels. It corresponds really to the second beatitude. The Lord's people weep and mourn over sin. So as peacemakers we seek to put right the consequences of sin, the broken relationships, the discord.

Eighth, they're beloved in heaven but hated on earth. Blessed are those persecuted for righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom. Paradox, isn't it, that peacemakers bring conflict and persecution.

[41 : 41] It's a nasty jolt, isn't it? There's no room for naivety here because we might think to ourselves, well if only we all lived like this it would be heaven. Jesus says, no, it'll mean war. It'll mean conflict because although the kingdom has come in Christ, although it is yours if you're poor in spirit, nevertheless there's still a knot yet about the kingdom.

Did you notice that verses 3 and 10 are in the present tense? Theirs is the kingdom. kingdom, but in between it's all the future tense? Because these blessings there will only be fulfilled totally in the future when Christ's kingdom comes forever.

Meantime, yes, we do know a measure of these blessings and blessedness. But meantime, Jesus is quite clear and open. People who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be persecuted for righteousness' sake.

What did he say in John 15, 18? If the world hates you, it hated me first. If it persecuted me, it will persecute you. So there's a wonderful symmetry you see in these Beatitudes, isn't there?

The eighth one takes us right back to the first. With the definitive theirs is the kingdom. Now, what Jesus is saying is the eighth is evidence of the first.

[43 : 05] if you're truly poor in spirit, if you've known true emptiness spiritually, if you've been humbled in the dust by God, then you are blessed.

Even though you find yourself now being humiliated in the dust by men. And so important, you see, is Jesus' message about this, that that last Beatitude is expanded all on its own in verses 11 and 12.

He turns from the third person that all of these have been into the second person. He turns right round to face his disciples and says, Blessed are you, you who are followers now.

You've got to grasp this. Blessed are you when you're persecuted. And he tells them in rounding up his sermon about the scars of true discipleship.

His message is clear that the king's people, all the disciples of Jesus, all of them everywhere in all time will bear the marks of the cross of Jesus.

[44 : 09] No disciple is greater than his master. If they hated and persecuted me, they'll hate and persecute you. And you have to know that, he's saying. That's why he turns to them and says, You.

And friends, you have to know that in St. George's Tron this morning. Jesus is telling that to you. Discipleship, if it is real, is cross-shaped.

You can't have the blessedness, the gift of God's salvation, the grace of God without the implications of that grace. There will be scars, there must be scars, because the world hates Jesus Christ.

The world can't stand his gospel of grace because it's so destructive of the world's central values. The world says, Blessed are the achievers.

Blessed are the self-fulfilled. Blessed are the assertive and powerful who win things for themselves. Blessed are those who satisfy themselves. Blessed are the manipulators.

[45 : 12] Blessed are the clever and wheeler dealers. Blessed are the expedient who avoid trouble. The gospel of grace in Jesus is a great humbler.

That's why the world won't accept this message. That's why they'll hate you. But you need to know, verse 11, that when you are insulted, reviled, when you are persecuted, when you are slandered for Jesus' sake, you are blessed even now.

Scars are the evidence of being a beloved disciple of Jesus, not of being a failed disciple. Notice, it is when you are reviled on Jesus' account, not on your own account, because of him, because of false accusations, not true ones.

Nevertheless, John Stott says this, being despised and rejected, slandered and persecuted is as much a normal mark of Christian discipleship as being pure in heart or merciful.

people. Scars are just as much a mark of grace as poverty of spirit. And both of them are essential for the kingdom. That's what Jesus is saying.

[46 : 27] So he thinks scars are a cause for rejoicing. They confirm your place in the story of God's people right from the beginning. They confirm your place with his people of the past, for thus they persecuted the prophets before you.

They confirm your place in his glorious future. Great is your reward in heaven. In a sense, the last beatitude and its expansion here is a real test of all of them.

About whether you've grasped the truth about Jesus' kingdom or not. If really your thinking and your values and your life is all focused on this world now, on material things, on happiness, on prosperity, on fulfilment, that's where your mind and your heart is.

All of this is just madness. Madness! You can't rejoice in persecution. That's just masochism. That's lunacy. That's where your mind and your heart is.

You see, you've got Jesus all wrong. It would be very, very unlikely you can stomach the rest of the Beatitudes either. You might have thought the Sermon on the Mount was a good thing before, but not now.

[47 : 45] Because you see, being humbled by the grace of God in Jesus Christ cost you everything. But maybe you have grasped Jesus' teaching.

Maybe for you this morning it's like one of those listening at the back of the crowd as we've been talking about Jesus' disciples. Maybe you do want him and his righteousness.

Maybe you're even willing to suffer for him because you've begun to have such a thirst, such a hunger for him. But you've listened as we've talked through these Beatitudes.

You've said, that just isn't me. I am proud. I'm not meek. I haven't mourned of my sin.

I'm not pure. Maybe you do just conclude, I'm not like that. I'm not worthy of his kingdom. But you see, that's where we began, isn't it?

[48 : 48] It's the only place you can begin. If that's how you feel, you're just where you need to be, to be filled.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, who mourn for their sins. For theirs is the kingdom, nobody else's.

Let's pray. Let's pray.