

Sermon on the Mount #1

Matt 5:1-10



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Today we are starting a 10-week sermon series on Matthew 5, 6, and 7. The Sermon on the Mount might be one sermon or a collection of several sermons but either way, it's the longest collection of profound words that Jesus spoke. Even other religions take truth from these chapters. For example, Gandhi would read these words twice a day.

The one-year **Bible Project** has a lot to say about this; there is also a book called the **Divine Conspiracy** by Dallas Willard. It's difficult and challenging. If you want a Jewish bent, you can see how all these parts of the Sermon on the Mount are linked to the **Psalms**. In fact, Bono (of U2) and Bob Marley both launched their careers on this passage. To preach for 10 weeks on this, it's easy to get lost. Daniel, Mark and I were doing some listening prayers together recently and we thought we heard the lens that God would want us to read this passage through centered on Heb 12:1-3. I'd like to just focus on the Hebrew lens for the next 10 weeks.

Last week, Sue invited us to run the race together in her sermon.

The Lens Part 1: Hebrews 12:1-3

- Therefore, since we are **surrounded** by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us **throw off everything** that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.
- And let us **run** with perseverance the race marked out for us,
- 2 **fixing** our eyes on **Jesus**, the **pioneer and perfecter** of faith. For the joy set before him he **endured** the cross, **scorning its shame**, and **sat down** at the right hand of the throne of God.
- 3 **Consider** him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not **grow weary** and **lose heart**.

Hebrews 11 talks about the faithful people who ran the race before us.

As we read, the first thing to think about is that we are reading this within a larger community and throwing off whatever hinders us.

There is a race we are part of and we are running.

It's hard to run distracted: My son ran on the Cross Country team in elementary school. Once in a race, he passed a girl but had his eyes closed and ended up running into a wall and visiting the doctor's. It's so important to fix our eyes on Jesus while we are running (verse 2). Jesus also ran: as you run, ponder what God is inviting you into. As you throw off what entangles you, you **will** meet opposition, the world, and your own desires. You must consider the One who endured and ran successfully.

The Lens Part 2: Hebrews 12:12, 13

12 Therefore, **strengthen** your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 **"Make level** paths for your feet," **so** that the lame may not **be disabled**, but rather **healed**.

The next section of Hebrews is about **discipline**. I have learned that overusing my own knees without building up my

calves is not a good idea. You cannot run with a weak knee or with limp arms. The invitation here is to strengthen our weak arms and knees to make level paths so we are not disabled but healed.

Look to Jesus and Make Level Paths: How does the sermon on the Mount invite us to do these?



Post 70 AD

Jewish Christians

Assimilate

Hide

The audience on level one were 1st century Jews who were listening to him. But Matthew, who wrote after 70 AD and the temple destruction, constructed his Gospel in a way that is different from the other Gospels: He is talking to someone in his letter.

The listeners to Matthew's Gospel were scattered Christians who were struggling with whether they should hide or assimilate. Jews didn't have to sacrifice or pay homage to Caesar. Post fall of the temple, the Jews partially blamed the Christians for this: the Sermon on the Mount is to a people who are thinking about two choices: should we go back and just be Jews or should we assimilate and become Greeks? Both of these would put Jesus in the basement. Jesus is saying (through Matthew) to be something different from either of these.

Locating Jesus in Israel's Story

Matthew 1:1 This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of **David**, the son of **Abraham**

He emphasizes that Jesus is the king who is eternally on David's throne. Jesus sent his disciples to the end of the earth: Matthew is reiterating not to hide or put Jesus on the shelf.



Egypt — Water — Wilderness — Mountain

Matthew also says Jesus is the **new Israel**. You will see that Matthew stops 7 times to talk about the fulfillment of prophecies. You can see these here.

- **Egypt** — Matthew 2:14–15 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt... And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: *'Out of Egypt I called my son.'* (**Hosea 11:1**)
- **Water** — Matthew 3:13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John.

Egypt — Water — Wilderness — Mountain

Matthew is telling the people who are trying to figure out who they are that Moses went up the mountain **alone** but Jesus goes up the mountain with **everyone**. Jesus is the new Israel and a better Moses who will give you the Law, the **NEW** way of being.

- **Wilderness** — Matthew 4:1–2 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.
- **Mountain** — Matthew 5:1–2 Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.

He said: 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Matthew 5:3-11

The Didache (the early Church)

- There are two ways, one of life and one of death... The way of life is this: First, you shall love God who made you; second, love your neighbor as yourself... Bless those who curse you and pray for your enemies... love those who hate you... If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek as well... If anyone forces you to go one mile, go two miles with that person... Give to everyone who asks you. Didache 1:1-5



A couple of things to recommend: Google the beatitudes and the Psalms and see how well the Psalms explain this passage. You can also listen to the Bible Project.

If you do a cursory reading of the Didache from the early church, you will notice the Sermon on the Mount laced throughout it. It seems Matthew constructs the Sermons in a way people could memorize it and we see that people did that in the early church. If they did this and if Matthew makes it a central part of his Gospel, then surely we need to wrestle with its meaning.

Close your eyes while I read this vv 1-11.

Blessed

- Fortunate
- Flourishing
- The Good Life
- Relief



“Blessed” is a weird word that I don’t often use.

There are other ways to translate it such as “happy” which really don’t work. It could mean fortunate, flourishing, and the good life.

I want to offer another one: “relief.”

If you are in the dark and see shadows, you could feel afraid unless someone shows up next to you at that moment. Or if I find out there really is money in my checking account before I buy something. Jesus is saying “I have come near to those who believe.” Let’s go through how these work together:

THEIR CONDITION		GOD’S PROMISE
Poor in spirit	Need	The Kingdom is theirs
Mourning	Need	They will be comforted
Meek	Need	They will inherit the earth
Hunger & Thirst	Desire	They will be filled
Merciful	Character	They will be shown mercy
Pure in heart	Character	They will see God
Peacemakers	Character	They will be called children of God
Persecuted	Cost	The Kingdom is theirs

Poor in spirit: If you are needing God and he comes near, there is relief.

Mourning means grief over something you did and your sin makes you feel alone. The relief is you are not alone because Jesus has come near.

Meek doesn’t mean weak: it means you don’t take things by power. It rather means a control of power, waiting until something is given to you. If God comes near, you will be given what you need. This is relief!

Hunger and thirst for righteousness: If you have ever fasted you know what it means to be desperate. The only relief is if Jesus comes near: all other ways are futile.

If you show **mercy** and kindness without the existence of God, you will be taken advantage of and abused. But if Jesus is near, you will be shown mercy.

Pure in Heart: Values and choices and hearts turned towards God. But if you do these things alone, there is no relief.

Peacemaker: you get in between people and bring shalom. If you have tried to make peace between two people who don't want peace, you know how hard it is. But what if the ultimate peace-maker comes near?

If you are persecuted, it's pointless to do this for someone who is not able to come near you. It's a relief to be persecuted for something that is REAL, giving it purpose and meaning. Jesus is opening up the Sermon on the Mount, saying "**wherever you fall on the list, I am with you.**" Understand in each other, Jesus is putting you in his lap: he is here for what you need. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus will go after your heart and your motivations and push you: to do this, he needs to have you in his lap, taking a deep breath, and remaining present.

There is a progression from being completely helpless, to making choices, being vulnerable, developing desires and character which then will develop persecution.

BACK TO THE LENS

LOOK TO JESUS



Walk away today with the knowledge that Jesus is present and close to you. Hold onto this!

BACK TO THE LENS

MAKE LEVEL PATHS

Need • Desire • Character • Cost

Without this, you cannot make your paths level which is very difficult. Today, think about where you are in the beatitudes: where is the relief for me today? Was it in the NEED, DESIRE, CHARACTER, or COST? We need to know where we are sitting.



What kind of people are we becoming together?

Matt 5:43 "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 **that you may be children of your Father in heaven.**

I personally cycle through all these every day.

This teaches us to be children. I invite you to be like my son who closed his eyes and ran into the wall: be a kid and accept Jesus's invitation.

Matthew 5:12

•12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, people of faith. Jesus lays out an agenda for people who are prophetic.

