“THE KING’S EXPECTATIONS”

Scripture: Matthew 5:1-16.

Before getting started ask each person to name a person from the past or present (not in the room) that they admire and respect as a godly person.

Well, we have been studying the Gospel of Matthew now for about a month. In the first four chapters Matthew presents Jesus as the Messiah King. Every king has a kingdom and subjects to rule over. It’s no different with the kingdom of heaven. Jesus Christ is the Lord and King. We who have placed our faith in Him and call ourselves “Christians” are His children. Jesus is our King and we are citizens of His kingdom. There certainly is an aspect to the kingdom of the heaven that is yet future, but the kingdom of heaven is also here and now.

The Sermon on the Mount (Chap 5-7) is one of five sermons of Jesus that Matthew records. All five sermons end with “and when Jesus had finished speaking…” The Sermon on the Mount is the first one. Some have called it “the King’s Manifesto.” In it Jesus conveys His expectations of His people. Verse 2 tells us to whom Jesus is talking primarily – to His disciples, though others are around and can hear Him teaching.

[show picture of traditional site for Sermon on the Mount – referred to as the Mount of the Beatitudes, located on NW shore of Sea of Galilee]

Jesus taught like no other rabbi. He was different. Mark 1:27 says, “And they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, “What is this? A new teaching with authority!” After Jesus finishes teaching the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew tells us that “the crowds were astonished at His teaching, for He was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matt 7:28). It wasn’t that Jesus was teaching a different message – He was just teaching the truth. And many people were hungering for the truth.

The Beatitudes, which we will be focusing on in today’s lesson, come at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount. It is clear that Jesus expects His people to be “blessed” or “happy.” Nine times from verses 3 thru 11 Jesus says, “Blessed are…” [the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek and so on]. The word “blessed” is the Greek word *“makarios”* (mak-ar'-ee-os). It is an adjective meaning “happy.” Now this is not the temporal happiness and pleasure that we normally think of. Rather, it speaks to a contented condition of one’s soul. It’s an inward, continual happiness. It carries with it the idea of being fulfilled, an inward peace and contentment that’s not dependent on external circumstances. Clearly Jesus wants His children to be happy. And true happiness starts from the inside out. It starts with a relationship with Him.

One last thing before we get into the text…What Jesus teaches here contradicts the world’s way of thinking and living. This is not the way the world pursues “happiness.” It runs counter cultural. And it reveals the very heart of God.

READ Matthew 5:1-12. As I was preparing this lesson I couldn’t help but think back to a series of lessons I taught about 5 years ago in the O.T. book of Ecclesiastes. There you have King Solomon, a man who had it all – immense wealth, the best food, a harem of women, stables, horses, buildings, servants, vineyards, pond and gardens. Yet when Solomon looked at the sum total of all he had under the sun (all that this world has to offers) it was “vanity.” It was utter futility. At the end of Ecclesiastes Solomon concludes all that matters is to “fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.” Solomon didn’t find any lasting happiness in the things of this world. In the end all that really mattered was having a right relationship with God. And that is what I think Jesus is emphasizing here…being rightly related to God. Apart from that we will not find any lasting happiness. We will be empty.

Let’s go through these beatitudes one at a time. READ Matthew 5:3. “Poor in spirit” is the opposite of pride and self-sufficiency. “Poor” conveys extreme poverty – without anything, utterly destitute. It’s the same word used to describe Lazarus in Luke 16 in Jesus’ parable. So being “poor in spirit” speaks to deep humility; that we desperately need God and we are spiritually bankrupt apart from Him. We need His grace. Isn’t that how we got saved? Under the conviction of the Holy Spirit we recognized that we were lost sinners. We needed a savior. We could not save ourselves. We cried out to Jesus, just like the Apostle Peter who was sinking in the storm, “Lord, save me!” and He did. He saved us. The poor in spirit receive the blessing of salvation, the forgiveness and cleansing of their sins. They receive the kingdom of heaven. They become citizens of Christ’s spiritual kingdom.

READ Matthew 5:4. There are all kinds of reasons to mourn – personal failure, disappointment, the loss of a loved one, physical pain, financial loss, etc. But Jesus is not talking about any of those. Here Jesus speaks of mourning, weeping over one’s sin. This is the godly grief of 2 Corinthians 7:10 which “produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret.” And sin does not end once we get saved. As Christians we have to deal with personal sin regularly. That is why we have the promise of 1 John 1:9 that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Jesus can forgive all of our sins, not just a few or only the minor ones. When faced with the reality of our sin, if we become grieved by it, confess it and repent of it, then He forgives us. He comforts us. Until we, as His children, deal with our sin, Jesus says we cannot truly be happy.

READ Matthew 5:5. That word translated as “meek” is the Greek word *“praus.”* (prah-ooce') It is a difficult word to translate into English and is sometimes translated as “gentle” or “humble.” Meekness is the opposite of being out of control. It is a self-restraint, a self-control that is produced by the power of the Holy Spirit. The best picture for this word “meek” is that of a tamed lion – a strong, wild animal that has been trained to submit its own will and nature. This otherwise ferocious predator yields like a docile domesticated animal to its trainer. So the idea in this verse is of one who lovingly defers or yields to others. This is not an easy thing to do. It is only human nature for us to want to impose our own will and desires – to get our own way. So meekness is certainly not weakness but a gentle yielding of one’s will in deference to others. [the ultimate example of meekness is Jesus submitting Himself to the cross] The meek inheriting the earth comes directly from a quote of Psalm 37:11. This is a promise that will be fulfilled in the millennial kingdom when we rule with Christ, when we become heirs to the kingdom on earth.

READ Matthew 5:6. This is the exact opposite of the self-righteousness exhibited by the Pharisees in Jesus’ day. This is the seeking after God’s righteousness rather than establishing our own. As Paul says in Philippians 3:9: “Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God that depends on faith.” The blessing is that one’s hunger and thirst for righteousness (their inner passion for righteousness) will be satisfied. Jesus teaches here that if we make the pursuit of righteousness – not the pursuit of happiness – our top priority, then we will be completely satisfied. We will have no regrets.

READ Matthew 5:7. One who shows mercy to others will themselves receive mercy. James says the opposite is also true. “For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy” (James 2:13). Mercy is when we do not receive something bad that we deserve. For example, we deserve hell, but God saves us from it. Since God showed us mercy, we are to show mercy to others. Romans 9 says we are to be “vessels of mercy.” Be merciful to others. No, they don’t deserve it, but neither do we.

READ Matthew 5:8. This speaks to holiness. “Purity” is the absence of undesirable elements, specifically sin of any kind. “Heart” refers to the inner person. A great parallel passage is Hebrews 12:14 which tells us, “Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.” In Revelation 22:4 it says that His servants, His followers will see His face. It’s a promise to believers in Jesus Christ. Those who are pure in heart do not have unholy desires as a pattern of life. They are not filled with wrong motives. They do not scheme, plot, lie, manipulate or deceive to achieve their goals or agendas. They are not hypocritical. Like I said earlier, this does not mean we are sinless, but that we deal with our sins. We acknowledge, confess and repent of our sins.

READ Matthew 5:9. One commentary I read said, “They are peacemakers because they themselves are at peace with God. They have entered into the peace of Christ and thus are able ambassadors of God’s message of peace to a troubled world.” In a spiritual sense a peacemaker is one who affects peace between two opposing forces of light and darkness. If I can help a lost person come to know God, have faith in Christ, come over to His side, I am a peacemaker. If I can help a backslidden brother or sister in Christ to quit collaborating with the enemy then I am a peacemaker. The promise is that we are called God’s children. As James 3:18 says, “A harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.”

READ Matthew 5:10-12. Persecution is going to be a by-product of following Christ and living out His righteousness in a fallen world. Jesus is specifically referring to being persecuted because one pursues a life of holiness, for following the standards from God’s Word. You won’t have to seek it out, but don’t be surprised when it comes. Notice in verse 11 how the personal pronoun shifts from the third person “they” to the second person “you.” You disciples of mine, you can expect to be reviled and falsely accused because you stand for Me and My principles. This became all too evident recently in the debate over the legalization of gay marriages. Outspoken Christians were lambasted by the press for being narrow minded and prejudiced. [mention my experience in the military refusing to drink with the guys].

Jesus would tell His disciples later: “And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake” (Matt 10:22). “Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all the nations for My name’s sake” (Matt 24:9). “If the world hates you, know that it has hated Me before it hated you” (John 15:18). Second Timothy 3:12 says, “Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.” One commentary I read said, “I must bear my cross before I can wear my crown.”

READ Matthew 5:13. Jesus teaches us that we are to be “salt” in this world. Salt is used for many things and can be very useful. So too should we be beneficial and make a positive difference to those around us. We should condemn sin, promote godly values and speak out against social injustices. We should strive to make the world a better place to live to the extent that we are able.

Jesus said we are also to be light. He begins with the world, moves to a city and concludes with a room. READ Matthew 5:14-15. We are to be the light of the world. What light do we bring to the world? The Gospel. The light of Jesus Christ. In John 8:12 Jesus refers to Himself as the “Light of the world.” We are the light of the world because God is light (1 John 1:5). Let me give you this analogy…as Christians we are like little moons. What does the moon do? It reflects the sun’s light at night. In the same way we reflect His SON light in a world darkened by sin.

In His illustration of the city on a hill Jesus is saying just like the presence of a city is clearly evident by its lights, so we are to make God’s light evident to those around us. Then Jesus uses the illustration of a light in a room. No one lights a lamp and then covers it to hide the light. That defeats the whole purpose of the lamp. “Show yourself! Show the light God has given you.” Verse 16…”Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

The eyes of the world are looking at those of us who bear the name of “Christian.” What do they see? At the beginning of this lesson you gave testimony of someone who bore His light and had a profound impact on you personally. Maybe someday someone who you impact will offer a similar testimony about you. So, my challenge to us is “Go and shine Jesus to others! Reflect His glory!”