

## Summer on the Mount: The Blessed Life Redefined, Matthew 5:1-16, 7/6/19

**#GOAT**, Probably one of the more popular terms and Twitter hashtags you will see these days...no not the ugly cousin of the sheep, but the **Greatest of All Time**. Michael Jordan is the GOAT of Basketball, Tom Brady is the GOAT of Quarterbacks, Beatles GOAT of rock bands. This summer we are going to be studying the GOAT of sermons: **the Sermon on the Mount** from Matthew 5-7. This sermon has shaped the ethical foundations of some of the largest and most transformative non-profits such as Compassion International, International Justice Mission and the Salvation Army. It has formed the basis of AA and many other successful recovery support groups. It has been quoted by popes, presidents and kings. Some of the world's greatest influencers like Mother Theresa, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, MLK Jr., Leo Tolstoy and Gandhi have looked to this sermon to shape the very course of their lives, their writings, their philosophy and civil rights movements

### What makes the Sermon on the Mount the GOAT? Five Reasons that will give us an introduction to this series.

**1) Jesus is the Preacher.** He is the ultimate GOAT. Jesus speaks directly as the voice of God to redefine life according to the kingdom of God. The sermon ends with this, **Matthew 7:28-29**  
<sup>28</sup> *When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching,*<sup>29</sup> *because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.*  
 The translation "amazed" does not come close to the Greek. We are amazed at pizza and sales on furniture...Shell-shocked, stunned comes closer. There were spell-bound by the AUTHORITY of his teaching. Jesus will speak to us throughout this series with the same spell-binding authority.

### **2) It is timeless, relevant and revolutionary**

What astounds me is just how accessible and modern this ancient sermon is today. It was relevant and revolutionary in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Roman and Jewish culture of Jesus' day and it is just as counter-cultural, relevant and desperately needed in our day today. Jesus is going to speak to how we find happiness, dealing with conflict, marriage and relationships, money, he will speak powerfully about control and worry and judgement...just to name a few.

### **3) It is the True Measuring Rod for the Church**

Jesus lays out the blueprint for the future church, what does it look like to live under the reign of Jesus Christ as the head of the church and life according to his kingdom in their society? The early church took the Sermon on the Mount Seriously and in doing so they turned the world upside down. And how needed in a day when churches have a propensity to measure ourselves by budgets and butts in seats and buildings...these are good and needed, but the **true measure** is are we living according to the kingdom blueprint of justice, love and righteousness presented in the sermon on the Mount?

### **4) It will simultaneously bring comfort and make us uncomfortable.**

C.S. Lewis- "As to 'caring for' the Sermon on the Mount, if 'caring for' here means 'liking' or enjoying, I suppose no one 'cares for' it. Who can like being knocked flat on his face by a sledge-

hammer? I can hardly imagine a more deadly spiritual condition than that of the man who can read that passage with tranquil pleasure.”

As you study this sermon, your heart and mind on one hand will say, “Yes, this ought to be how the world should work and how people treat each other,” You will get a glimpse of how beautiful and harmonious things could be...and then it will immediately be followed by a discomforting feeling, a dissonance in your heart that says, “Oh, but not me...this is for other people...Oh how far I am from this.”

#### 5) It is a Radical Call to Action.

Jesus’ sermon is not a class in ethical or philosophical theory...again which is why the original hearers were compelled and repelled by the authority in which he taught. Jesus ends his sermon on the mount by saying in Matthew 7:24 *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock...[And those who don’t are like the foolish man who builds his house on the sand.]*

The sermon drives home the haunting question of Jesus- *“Will you follow me?”* Will I reign as king of your hearts? And we will spend our summer on the mount with Jesus, and hear his radical call to action. Today we will begin with a brief overview of 5:1-16, which is an introduction to the whole sermon from chapter 5 through 7.

Jesus begins his Sermon with a series of 8 introductory mottos, commonly called the Beatitudes, about the blessed life in the kingdom. These 8 beatitudes form the essential qualities of life in the kingdom that permeate the whole sermon: Those who: are poor in spirit, mourn, are meek, hunger and thirst for righteousness, are merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, suffer for Christ. So we are not going to study each one individually today because they will come up throughout the series.

Each of these 8 Qualities of life in the kingdom start with “blessed.” The word here is *“makarios” which simply means happy.* We just celebrated July 4<sup>th</sup>, 1776 and the signing of the Declaration of Independence as a Nation. “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” Jesus agrees...in fact the Bible is where that comes from...*But what is happiness?* Three things it is NOT *happiness as NOT a Feeling*- Today we think of Happy as eating your favorite ice cream or going on a date. We just spent a week on vacation relaxing at the beach...happy. But this kind of happiness of course we know is temporary...I came back to an overwhelming number of emails yesterday and an extra 10 lbs...not feeling quite as happy.

*It is NOT Fulfillment of the American Dream.* getting married and having 2.5 kids and a white picket fence, wealth and material possessions, advancement in technology, physical health, a successful career and retiring comfortably.

Ironically, as wealthy and resourced, and as advanced of technology as we are, according to studies, we have never been so miserable, over-medicated and unhappy...But many have found the classic definition of the American dream happiness unattainable or undesirable...What if I don't get married, what if we can't afford the house, I lose my job and have to work past retirement age?

It is NOT in "Finding Yourself". Self-actualization, personal fulfillment...Summarized in the motto- "You do you." I attended a lecture by an influential Harvard and Penn Psychologist recently and the title of the lecture was, "Potholes in the Road to Happiness." Secrets to happiness- Avoid needy people and stay in your lane, don't enter into their drama and life problems...she called this bio-matching. Compare yourself down to other people- say well, I'm better looking and smarter and more successful than these people. Be your own inner coach when you feel unhappy or discouraged. Don't let anyone define you and do what makes you happy, not what others expect. You be your own definition.

I stood up and asked a question, "I would like to challenge the way you define happiness. It seems that if everyone chased this version of happiness, that it would lead to a very selfish, subjectively happy existence. It seems only a select few, lucky people might be able to achieve this, inevitably at the expense of others' misery. I've seen this play out in marriages, because one spouse is unhappy they leave at the expense and misery of the family. Or what about the immigrant who has to work several jobs and hard labor just so their children can have food and access to education. That doesn't sound very happy, self-actualizing or personally fulfilling...It would seem to me that only the privileged can access your definition of happiness." Interesting comment...

So it's not a "feeling", it's not "fulfilling the American Dream", it's not "Finding Yourself" what is true happiness according to the beatitudes? Happiness is "The enduring favor of God experienced when Jesus Reigns in Your Heart" When Jesus is reigning as king of your heart, you will have increasing qualities of humility as described as those who are poor in spirit, mourn and are meek. When Jesus is reigning as king of your heart, you will increasingly seek justice, righteousness and peacemaking in our world. When Jesus is reigning in your heart, you will stand out as salt and light in the world, but also stand out is different...as marginalized, even persecuted. But we will also experience true happiness. The favor of God, his blessing that endures through this life into the next forever in His kingdom.

Illustration: Thunderhoof. Are you like Thunderhoof? Trying to pursue happiness on your own terms? Reigning as your own king on the throne of your heart? Or have you come to the place where you say, "King Jesus, you take the reins...and you reign as king."

Illustration: Girl from class and happiness.

Question: What version of Happiness are you truly pursuing? Fleeting? Fulfillment of The American Dream? Finding yourself? Or the Favor of God because Jesus Reigns in your Heart?

Some of us hesitate, because we don't know if we can really trust Jesus. But do you know what makes Jesus the GOAT and worthy of our trust as king? When you put these 8 qualities together, they form a mosaic of the qualities of Jesus Christ himself. Ultimately he was persecuted to the point of death, a death where he died in our place.

**Philippians 2:6-11**

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*

*Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*