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Session One

## **Introducing the Sermon on the Mount**

### **A. Introduction**

1. The Sermon on the Mount is a very important message that the Body of Christ needs to take heed of. We need to establish and build our lives and ministry around it.
2. It is vital to study the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5-7) together with Revelation Chapters 2 and 3 because both passages of Scripture give us insight into what Jesus is looking for in His Church.
3. *Matt. 5-7: Sermon on the Mount* is the clearest statement and teaching in the Bible on how to walk as individual believers. It describes
  - a. What the true Kingdom lifestyle is about;
  - b. What are true Kingdom people;
  - c. How we can live out the Kingdom lifestyle;
  - d. What matters to God in our life and ministry.
4. We need to emphasize the Sermon on the Mount because the gospel is about producing the Kingdom people. God is looking for people who walk out the Kingdom lifestyle.
5. The Sermon on the Mount provides the clearest *roadmap* in walking out the Kingdom lifestyle. We have to take this teaching literally and seriously, living out what is being described in the teaching in a precise way. We must not be casual about it but aggressively pursue it.
6. *Rev. 2 & 3: The seven letters to the seven churches* focus on how to establish and build a Church. It gives the clearest and most complete picture of what Jesus is looking for in His Church.
7. In the seven letters, Jesus defines the seven specific areas of spiritual maturity that He wants the Church to cultivate:
  - a. Ephesus: First love for Jesus
  - b. Smyrna: Grace to be fearless and faithful in the midst of persecution
  - c. Pergamos: Resist and confront wrong doctrines
  - d. Thyatira: Resist and confront compromise
  - e. Sardis: Cultivate the I-H-O-P lifestyle
  - f. Philadelphia: Persevere in obedience
  - g. Laodicea: Resist lukewarmness
8. The message in Rev. 2 and 3 is so important that Jesus emphasized its importance by saying seven times, “He who has ear, let him hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.”

**B. What is the Sermon on the Mount**

1. Matthew 5-7 is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount.
  - a. It consists of more than just the Beatitudes. The Beatitudes, Matt. 5:3-10, form the heart of the message of the Sermon on the Mount, around which Matt. 5-7 is centered.
  - b. The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' first public teaching.
  - c. It is called Sermon on the Mount because Jesus taught this sermon on a mountain. This passage is different from Luke 6:20-49.
2. The Sermon on the Mount is probably the greatest teaching of Jesus during His earthly ministry.
  - a. All the teachings of the Epistles are derived from the Sermon on the Mount. The Sermon on the Mount, in turn, is built from the Torah, which is in turn built from the Ten Commandments.
  - b. At the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was basically "re-teaching" the Torah from a New Covenant perspective. (Jer. 31:31 – 34).
  - c. Over the years, the Rabbis and Pharisees had added many more legalistic rituals and regulations to the Torah. Therefore, Jesus was re-teaching the Torah and made clear the real spirit behind the Torah.
  - d. The Torah is more than laws and commandments, or a set of do's and don't's. The Torah is the way of God. The whole Bible, which is built from the Torah, teaches us how we should walk with Him.
  - e. Matt. 5-7 is like a re-enactment of Exodus 19 and 20 where the Ten Commandments were given to Moses at Mount Sinai.
    - i. The first time the Ten Commandments were given by the audible voice of God, the earth quaked under the power of God and the voice of God put holy trembling in the heart of the Israelites. Mount Sinai shook and darkness like a cloud descended, mingled with fire, and unseen angels blew unseen trumpets all around.
    - ii. The second time, Jesus came in great humility and love of God to address them not from a cloud of lightning burning with fire, but in the humble form of a servant. God manifested as man to speak the "heart and spirit" of the Ten Commandments. The Son of God, Jesus spoke audibly and taught about the true Kingdom lifestyle.
  - f. Jesus came not just to teach the Torah. He came to demonstrate how to live it out. (Matt. 5:17)

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3. The Sermon on the Mount is the clearest teaching and the most concise and precise presentation of the True Kingdom lifestyle. It lays out:
    - a. The core values of the Kingdom of God – what is important to God.
    - b. The constitution of the Kingdom of God – how God is going to run His Kingdom.
  4. The Sermon on the Mount is Basic Christianity:
    - a. It is “Christianity 101”;
    - b. It is the starting point for all believers;
    - c. It is not just for “super-Christians” or some “holy men”;
    - d. Every true and real believer should manifest certain degrees or measures of the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle (Matt. 7:21-23);
    - e. Our basic Christian faith is built around and upon the Sermon on the Mount, and the goal of every believer is to cultivate the fruits of the Beatitudes.

**C. The Importance of the Sermon on the Mount**

1. The Sermon on the Mount describes the core reality of the Kingdom of God.
  - a. It defines what it means to be a true believer of God and the Kingdom character that a true believer should possess.
  - b. It teaches us how to live out the true Kingdom lifestyle and how to develop an eternal perspective.
  - c. It prepares us for the coming trials and testings in the End-Times.
2. It is the litmus test of God to measure the spirituality of all believers and our ministry impact on earth.
  - a. True spirituality: The benchmark of true spirituality is measured by the fruits of the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
  - b. Ministry impact: We should measure our ministry impact by how much people seek to walk out the Sermon-on-the-Mount values and not by the size of our ministry or how exciting it is.
  - c. These values should be the focus and emphasis in our discipleship of people and in our ministries. 1 Cor. 3:12 – 15 tells us that everything we build will be brought before God at the judgment seat. God will test our works with fire to reveal what we have built upon: gold (character/heart), silver (godly motives) and precious stones (values), or wood (works of flesh), hay (wrong motives) and straw (non-essentials in life).

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- d. We need to build the foundation of our faith upon what endures, as laid out in the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. We need to cultivate the fruits of the Beatitudes so that all who build on these values will endure the test of fire.
3. The *Foundational Call* in the Sermon on the Mount:
- a. Live / Walk out the Kingdom lifestyle - Walk out the eight beatitudes in Matt. 5:3 – 12 and cultivate / grow the Beatitudes: being poor in the spirit, mourning spiritually, walking in meekness, hungering for righteousness, showing mercy, embracing purity, being a peacemaker, and enduring persecution.
- b. Set our hearts in growing and cultivating these eight fruits of the Kingdom lifestyle in the “garden of our heart”. The Beatitudes are like eight fruits of the Spirit that we should cultivate in our lives. God wants these fruits to fully form in our lives.
- c. Make this our life goal - We may not attain the full measure possible of these eight fruits but we must aggressively pursue them and set our heart to attain as much as possible. For if we pursue it, we are blessed.
4. *The Importance of the Beatitudes*:
- a. The Beatitudes define what pleases God: love, godliness, Kingdom values and spiritual maturity that we grow in our lives. They describe the lifestyle that is the core reality of God’s Kingdom.
- b. It is the clearest vision of what God wants for our life.
- c. The Beatitudes contain eight virtues / fruits that come with blessing and promises. We are blessed when we pursue the virtues (Beatitudes) because it will result in a vibrant spirit. Instead of a dull spirit, we will have a fiery spirit, a sensitive and tender heart towards God, freedom in Christ, and experience the fullness of life.
- d. The Beatitudes are NOT a code of ethics – They are not a list of “do”s and “don’t”s from God. God desires that we grow and cultivate the values of the Beatitudes and become Kingdom people. We do not simply “do” it but we need to find out how to cultivate the eight fruits of the Beatitudes.
- e. Matt. 5 – 7 basically describes the process that allows the eight fruits of the Beatitudes to fully mature. Jesus was not rebuking His people, but was helping them by giving insights that lead their hearts to freedom. He focused on the need to make quality decisions in order to cultivate the fruits of the Beatitudes.
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**D. Four Exhortations in the Sermon of the Mount**

There are *4 primary exhortations* in the Sermon on the Mount. These give us insights into what the Sermon on the Mount is about – its importance and God’s heart for us to pay attention to it. The 4 exhortations are placed intentionally and strategically at specific junctures of the sermon to emphasize various points. All the exhortations are centered on having and pursuing the eight fruits of the Beatitude.

1. *The Invitation to be GREAT in the Kingdom of God* (Matt. 5:19 – 20)
  - a. Jesus wants us to be great in the Kingdom, and invites “whosoever” or everyone to be great in His Kingdom. We cannot repent of the desire for greatness because God designed our spirit with this longing. We only repent for seeking it in wrong ways.
  - b. Without having the paradigm of being on a journey to greatness, the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle is much more difficult to sustain. God invites us to greatness without regard for our outward achievements or the size of our ministry. It is based on the development of our heart – i.e. love, meekness, righteousness, peace, joy.
  - c. We are GREAT in the Kingdom of God if we walk / live out and if we disciple / teach people to live out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
2. The Call for us *to be LIKE GOD* (Matt. 5:48)
  - a. Jesus calls us to pursue a life of obedience that seeks to be perfect and mature in obedience. The pinnacle of the Gospel and our pursuit of God is to be Christ-like (1John 3:2).
  - b. Walking in obedience is relative in this age and absolute in the Age-to-come. In this age, even though we will probably never attain to perfection in the absolute sense, we should still seek to walk in the fullness of the light that we receive from the Spirit.
3. The Call *to be Single-Minded, Focused and Whole-hearted* (Mathew 6:22 – 27)
  - a. The source of light in this case is on where our eyes are focused upon, so where and what we focus on will determine whether or not we are filled with light (“good” light or “bad” light).
  - b. We experience the power and pleasure of godliness, when the lamp of our body which brings light to our inner man, is good or single. When we are focused on living in pursuit of 100-% obedience, the result will be a burning and shining lamp.
  - c. Therefore we are to be single-minded, focused and wholehearted in our pursuit of the Beatitudes.

4. *The Call to BUILD an unshakable foundation* (Matt. 7:24 – 29)
  - a. There will be a time when God is going to shake everything (Heb. 12: 25-27). Just as the wise man builds his house on the “rock” that is able to withstand the storms of life, this passage exhorts us to build our personal life and ministries on the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount, such that we will not be shaken.
  - b. The foundations of our personal walk and ministry will be tested in life. This test is three-fold:
    - i. “Rain” – the pressures and trials of life;
    - ii. “Flood” – the specific End-Time Test (Joel 2:11)
    - iii. “Wind” – the evaluation we receive at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15; 2 Cor.5:10)

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**E. Brief Outline of Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5 - 7)**

Matt.5:3-10	The heart of the Sermon on the Mount: Eight fruits of the Beatitudes.
Matt. 5:12-16	The two-fold result of being true Kingdom people <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The world will hate us (v11-12)</li><li>• We are salt and light and will impact society (v13-16)</li></ul>
Matt. 5:17-20	The invitation to be great in the Kingdom of God.
Matt. 5:21-47	Six hindrances/toxins that will deter us from growing the Beatitudes. We are to say “no” to these hindrances/toxins.
Matt. 5:48	The invitation to be like God – the pursuit of 100% obedience.
Matt. 6:1-8	Five Kingdom activities that will enhance the growth of the Beatitudes. We are to say “yes” and cooperate with God.
Matt. 6:19-21	The exhortation to live with an eternal perspective.
Matt. 6: 22-23	The call to be focused in pursuing the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
Matt. 6:24	The greatest hindrance in pursuing the Sermon-on-the-Mount – money and worrying about money.
Matt. 6:25-34	God’s assurance for us as we pursue the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle.
Matt. 7:1-5	Chapter 7 focuses on the relational challenges and dynamics that we face as we seek to pursue the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle. It teaches us to beware of self-righteousness.
Matt. 7:6	The recognition that not all will be receptive to this message.
Matt. 7:7-12	The key to walking out the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle: Prayer.
Matt. 7:13-14	The pursuit of the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle will not be easy. Exhortation to not choose the easy way.
Matt. 7:15-20	The warning to beware of false teachers and teachings about the Kingdom of God, and to test the fruits.

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Matt. 7:21-23	The true test of a believer – the fruits of the Beatitudes.
Matt. 7:24-29	The call to build our lives on the Sermon on the Mount.