

The Process of Cultivating the Sermon-on-the-Mount Lifestyle

Matthew 5:11 – 7:29

A. Introduction

1. The entire Sermon on the Mount can be divided into 5 sections:
 - a. The Beatitudes (Matt 5:1–10);
 - b. 3-fold result of being the Kingdom people (Matt 5:11–20);
 - c. The Process of cultivating the fruits of the Beatitudes (Matt 5:21 – 6:18);
 - i. Matthew 5:21–48 warns us of 6 negatives that we are to resist.
 - ii. Matthew 6:1–18 exhorts us to live out the 5 Kingdom lifestyles.
 - d. Exhortation, warning and assurance by Jesus in the pursuit of the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle (Matt 6:19–34);
 - e. Wisdom that is required in the pursuit and walking out of the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle (Matt 7:1–29).
2. Matthew 5:21 – 7:29 is the roadmap to becoming the Kingdom people of God.

B. The 3-Fold Result of Being True Kingdom People (Matt 5:11–20)

The 3-fold result of being the true Kingdom people is in the context of possessing the fruit of the Beatitudes. There are 2 positives and one negative, and from 2 different perspectives:

1. There are 2 from the perspective of the world:
 - a. The world will dislike and hate us, and we can expect persecution from the world (Matt 5:11–12). This is a negative.
 - b. We will impact and transform society and nations (Matt 5:13–16). This is a positive.
 - i. Jesus emphasised the impact that God's people will have on individuals and society. He used 2 metaphors to illustrate this:
 - Salt — For flavouring and preservation
 - Light — To give direction and life
 - ii. This impact is dependent upon us walking out the beatitudes in a consistent and corporate way.

2. There is one result from the perspective of God, which is a positive: we will be great in His sight (Matt 5:17–20).
 - a. Jesus is inviting “*whosoever*” or everyone to be great in His Kingdom.
 - b. God invites us to greatness without regard for our outward achievements or the size of our ministries, but based on the development of our hearts.

C. Six Hindrances to Growing the Fruits of the Beatitudes — An Exhortation to Resist the Toxins of Sin (Matt 5:21–48)

1. Jesus came not to destroy the moral law, but to make a way for God’s original intention in the Old Testament — the full expression of God’s righteousness.
2. Jesus commands us to wage war in these 6 practical areas:
 - a. Anger — spirit of murder (Matt 5:21–26).
 - b. Adultery — spirit of immorality (Matt 5:27–30).
 - c. Disregard for the sanctity of marriage — spirit of treachery (Mal 2:13–17) and disloyalty in any relationship (Matt 5:31–32).
 - d. False commitments — spirit of manipulation. This refers to using “spin” to misrepresent our past works and present commitments (most often seen in a lack of follow-through) (Matt 5:33–37).
 - e. Demand for justice — spirit of pride or bitterness that insists upon our personal rights (Matt 5:38–41).
 - f. Passive love (Matt 5:42–47).
3. These are 6 hindrances that will deter us from having the fruit of the Beatitudes, and thus Jesus warns and exhorts us to resist and remove them.
4. Jesus ends this section with a call to be perfect or mature in our obedience to God (Matt 5:48).

D. Five Kingdom Activities to Position our Hearts to Receive Grace to Grow the Fruits of the Beatitudes (Matt 6:1–18)

1. Jesus describes 5 “grace-releasing activities” in our devotional life that position our hearts to receive more strength in the grace of God. Our hearts receive more grace as we:
 - a. Consistently and secretly serve and do charitable deeds: serve and/or sow financially (Matt 6:1–4, 19–21)
 - b. Pray (Matt 6:5–13)
 - c. Bless adversaries and forgive (Matt 6:14–15)
 - d. Fast (Matt 6:16–18)

2. These 5 areas are expressions of “voluntary weakness” because we invest what has been given to us (i.e., time, money, energy, reputation, etc.) for His Kingdom purposes.
 - a. As people, we usually use our gifts to increase personal comfort, wealth and honour.
 - b. However, living the fasted lifestyle means bringing our natural gifts to God as we trust Him to “give back” to us in a way that enriches our personal spheres of responsibility and transforms us with meekness (2 Cor 12:9).
3. Our devotional lives are the means to appropriate free grace and not to earn it.
 - a. We position our “cold hearts” in these 5 ways before the “bonfire of God’s enabling grace” in order to receive the Spirit’s empowering.
 - b. We must not allow these “means of grace” to be reduced to mechanics that we use in a hypocritical show of devotion to seek superiority over others.
4. Spiritual disciplines (i.e., prayer, fasting, meditation on the Word) are ordained by God as necessary to posture our hearts to freely receive more grace.
 - a. Spiritual disciplines do not earn us God’s favour but give us the opportunity to show how much we value our relationship with Him.
 - b. God sees our hunger for Him as part of our love for Him. He honours the extent to which we value the relationship by giving us more according to our hunger.

E. Pursuing our Destiny Without Fear or Anxiety (Matt 6:19–21,24–34)

1. Jesus teaches us how we can pursue our destiny without fear or anxiety by addressing one of the most important areas in life: our finances and material possessions. Obeying Him is vital to sustain the grace needed to walk out the Beatitudes.
2. Faith in God’s provision is a vital dimension of our spiritual life. We are not only to be different in our devotional lives, but also in the way we view and use our money and possessions as we pursue our destiny.
3. Jesus calls us to escape the slavery of covetousness that is fuelled by the fear of not having enough. We are naturally preoccupied with our pursuit of food, drink, clothing and housing. Fear or anxiety rises up in us to resist our progress in walking out the Beatitudes.
4. Jesus gives 3 exhortations regarding money:
 - a. He exhorts all to live with an eternal perspective by using money now in a way that lays up treasures for us in heaven (Matt 6:19–21).
 - b. He declares the impossibility of loving both God and money (Matt 6:24).
 - c. Jesus addresses the fear of being in lack. We must love God while we believe Him for the release of the covenant blessing of prosperity (Matt 6:25–34).
5. In Matthew 6:22–23, Jesus calls us to be single-minded in pursuing the Kingdom lifestyle. God promises that anyone with a good eye will have a vibrant heart that is full

of light. Having a good eye means that our primary life vision is to pursue the 8 Beatitudes.

F. Walking out the Beatitudes (Matt 7:1–20)

1. Seeking to walk out this Kingdom lifestyle will result in many complex dynamics in our relationships that are both positive and negative. Many relationships will change as we walk out Kingdom values. New relationships will be established as old ones change.
2. We must not judge as we seek to walk in a Kingdom lifestyle (Matt 7:1–5).
 - a. We are not to judge the hearts and intentions of people in the areas of spirituality mentioned in Matthew 6:1–33.
 - b. In the case of seeking to help a brother with a non-scandalous issue in his life, Jesus exhorts them not to give advice about truth to those who are unreceptive.
 - c. This is very different from the scriptural responsibility to bring scandalous sin into the light through due process (Matt 18:15–18; 1 Cor 5:1–13; 2 Thess 3:10–15; 1 Tim 5:19–20; Rev 2:2–3, 14–15, 20).
3. Some will reject our pearls (Matt 7:6). The “*pearls*” refer to the Kingdom values laid out in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus states that some in the Church will be unreceptive to these values.
4. We must not trust our natural strengths to war against sin. We must be careful not to neglect prayer, knowing that the spirit of prayer is our best weapon, though not our only tool (Matt 7:7–12).
5. We will face false prophets and messages that will seek to hinder us from entering by the narrow gate and the difficult way (Matt 7:13–20).
 - a. There are 2 ways to approach our faith and life. One will lead us to life and the other to the path of “*destruction*” (Matt 7:13–14).
 - b. We must discern counterfeit messengers and messages as they will be part of adversarial elements that we encounter (Matt 7:15–20).

G. Manifesting the Kingdom Reality in our Lives and the Test of our Faith (Matt 7:21–27)

1. These 8 fruits of the Beatitudes will be fully tested; it is not enough to proclaim them as a reality. The essential issue is whether we can walk them out under pressure.
2. The 8 fruits of the Beatitudes are the true measure of our faith. God will use them as a “benchmark” to judge us at the end of our lives (Matt 7:21–23).
3. “Storms” will test the reality of our foundation. There are 3 kinds of “storms”:
 - a. “*Rain*” — The storms of personal pressures

- b. *"Floods"* — The eschatological storm (2 Thess 2:3–4)
 - c. *"Wind"* — The final judgement (1 Cor 3:10–15)
4. "Storms" will reveal which of the 2 approaches we have chosen to build our lives and ministries upon (Matt 7:24–27).

H. Summarised Description of Matthew 5 – 7

1. In the Sermon-on-the-Mount teaching, Jesus calls us to live out the 8 Beatitudes, which are the core values of the Kingdom of God (5:1–10).
2. Jesus said that by walking in these truths, we can expect persecution (5:11–12), impact society (5:13–16) and be great in the sight of God (5:17–20).
3. To cultivate these core values of the Kingdom, we must resist the 6 temptations (5:21–47) and pursue the 5 Kingdom lifestyles (6:1–18) that position our hearts to freely receive more grace. This is an invitation for us to be like God (5:48).
4. We can do all this with the confidence that He is looking, and He will reward us — internally, externally and eternally (6:1–18). We should live our lives with an eternal perspective (6:19–21) by setting our focus on pursuing these Kingdom values with a single-mindedness (6:22–23) and by recognising the greatest obstacle — the issue of money. Be fully assured that God will provide and meet all our needs when we seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness (6:25–34).
5. We ought to do this without criticism of others who may pursue God with less intensity or who may oppose us (7:1–6), while we seek Jesus to intervene in our relationship with them through prayer (7:7–12). At the same time, we must not take the easy way out in the midst of difficulties and challenges that we will face (7:13–14).
6. Jesus also exhorts us that we must be able to discern false grace messages and false messengers among the Body of Christ (7:15–20). He gives a test for every believer: do we possess a certain degree or measure of the fruit of the Beatitudes in our lives (7:21–23)?
7. Finally, be wise and build our lives on the Sermon-on-the-Mount lifestyle so that we can withstand the "storms" of life and the "eschatological storms" at the End of the Age.