

Day One – Recap of Matthew 5:1-16

I always find it necessary to point out that the word translated “blessed” here sounds almost identical to “Macarena.” I haven’t been able to put together all the pieces of that theological puzzle, but please know that I continue to try. In the meantime, perhaps you should take a moment and do the “Macarena” in the privacy of your home.

As we begin Jesus’ “Sermon on the Mount.” I think it’s important to get a hold on what is going on here. This just happens to be about the most often quoted (and thus often misquoted) passage in the Bible, so we better do some work to understand it a little better. Space is limited here, but I wanted to say two things.

First, remember that Jesus is giving the “law” in the SM (Sermon on the Mount), and His words are much harder than the words that Moses gave the people on Mt. Sinai in the first giving of the law. There are, however, wide distinctions between the two. One of the most important of these is the fact that Moses gave Israel *rules* follow, whereas Jesus provides a *vision* for His people to follow. Jesus is really doing something closer to Aesop than Moses. He is, to quote Dale Allison, trying to inspire the moral imagination. As a fable or proverb gives a general principle by which one is to understand the world and order his actions, and thus the SM is principles for living in God’s kingdom. Jesus sets the bar so high in order to give us a soaring vision for what our lives should look like, indeed one that we will never be able to achieve. This, in turn, points us to the cross (which also points me to my next point...)

No matter how much politicians or other public figures like to quote the SM like it is a work unto itself, we must keep in mind that *Matthew never intended for the SM to be read independently from the entire book of Matthew*. Without the cross and resurrection, the SM is little more than another damning indictment on humanity from God. The high ideals of the SM are tempered by the realization that Christ will himself fulfill these ideals on behalf of His children. Don’t think about Matthew 5-7 as an end in itself, but instead as one portion of a larger story.

If all these “Blessed are’s” seem a little out of place with your crappy job, Haiti, “all those stupid Democrats,” “all those stupid Republicans,” the persecuted church, etc., then you are reading correctly. Only in the full realization of Christ’s Kingdom will the Beatitudes be completely experienced. In the meantime, they are, again, guiding principles for those who would follow Christ in this present age.

Day Two – Read 5:17-48

5:17–48 Jesus and the Law. This long section is all on one theme, and it is important that its parts should not be interpreted in isolation from each other. The theme is Jesus’ ‘fulfilment’ of the law, which is expressed by general statements (17–20) followed by a series of six examples contrasting Jesus’ teaching with the accepted understanding of the OT law (21–47) and a concluding summary (48).

In vs 17–20 Jesus places *the Law* alongside *the Prophets* as finding fulfilment in him (for this sense of the law as ‘prophesying’ until Jesus came cf. 11:13; and Rom. 10:4; Gal. 3:24). To *fulfil* is to bring about that to which Scripture pointed, and that is what Jesus has now done. But the fulfilment of the law does not mean its abolition;

it remains wholly authoritative and demands the fullest respect of the disciple (18–19). The question remains, however, how its function for the disciple is affected by its fulfilment in Jesus, and v 20 indicates that the meticulous legalism of *the Pharisees and the teachers of the law* is inadequate in the new context of *the kingdom of heaven*. Some higher approach is needed, and that is what vs 21–47 go on to spell out, by showing how Jesus' demand surpasses that of current ethical teaching based on the OT law. It does this not by being more scrupulous in literal observance but by penetrating to the true will of God enshrined in the law.

- D.A. Carson, New Bible Commentary

Day Three – Read 5:17-20

How do you understand verse 17? How does this verse help you with your understanding of Jesus Christ and the Old Testament?

What does the term 'the Law or the Prophets' mean?

What did Jesus words "I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" mean?

Day Four – Read Matthew 5:17-20

As you meditate on verse 18, ask yourself, should we apply these words to our Bible? How?

According to verse 19, who will be called least in the kingdom of heaven? Who will be called great in the kingdom of heaven? Why do you think this is so?

Day Five – Read Matthew 5:17-20

Who were the scribes and Pharisees?

Describe their righteousness.

How does a person's righteousness exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees? Does yours?

According to Jesus, if your righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. How do you explain this in light of the fact that we believe a person is justified by faith alone?

Day Six

If you are looking to go a little bit deeper in your understanding of the text for this week, try one of these resources:

<http://www.biblegateway.com/resources/commentaries/index.php?action=getBookSections&cid=1&source=1>

<http://www.evangelibrary.org.uk/members/com/nt/jcr/mt/mat-Index.html>

Sermons Transcripts:

Ligon Duncan - http://www.fpcjackson.org/resources/sermons/matthew/matthew_vol_1-2/matthew_vol_1-2/index_Matthew_vol_1-2.html

Audio:

John Piper - <http://www.desiringgod.org/ResourceLibrary/Sermons/ByScripture/14/>

S. Lewis Johnson - http://sljinstitute.net/sermons/new%20testament/gospels/matthew/matthew_master.html
