

It is my intention to spend the next several months considering what is commonly referred to as our Savior's Sermon on the Mount—a sermon that covers chapters 5-7 in our English Bibles—a sermon that portrays Christ as the prophet to His church instructing them upon His kingdom, v2—“He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...”—but why spend the next 30-40 weeks considering these chapters...

Let me suggest three reasons—[1] because of its uniqueness—this is the first and longest of our Savior's public sermons—it in many ways sets the tone for the rest of His public ministry, Pink—“Personally, we regard this Sermon as a forecast and an embodiment of the entire oral ministry of Christ, that it summarizes the general tenor of His whole teaching...”

Notice [2] because of its relevance—in a day when basic truth has been all but forgotten, the Sermon on the Mount comes as a wind of cool breeze, William Perkins—“It may justly be called the key of the whole Bible, for here Christ opens the sum of the Old and New Testaments...”—throughout this sermon our Savior will address various subjects that have been largely removed from most pulpits—the characteristics of true religion, the purpose of the church, the spiritual nature of the law, the manner and matter of prayer, the dangers of the love of money, practical remedies against worry, the need for self-examination, and the true manner of receiving Christ—these and many other relevant themes are all addressed within these three chapters...

Notice [3] because of its assortment—by this I mean the sermon itself has something to say to every single one of us—it speaks to those who are not Christians, it speaks to those who are deceived in thinking they are Christian, and then it speaks to Christians in a diversity of ways—within it our Savior rebukes, instructs, and encourages—that is, He has a word for the proud, ignorant, and discouraged—thus I suggest that it promises something for every one of us...

I. An Introduction

II. An Examination III. An Application [considered this afternoon]

I. An Introduction

A. To the book

1. The book of Matthew breaks the long silence which followed the ministry of Malachi, the last of the OT prophets...
2. For four hundred years the Lord had remained silent—no prophets, no miracles, but only darkness—yet now the time was fulfilled and the Christ had come...
3. Thus a common word used throughout the book is “fulfilled”—Christ had come to fulfill all that was foretold...
4. Pink—“The first purpose of Matthew's Gospel is to present Christ as the Fulfiller of the promises made to Israel and the prophecies which related to their Messiah. This is why the word ‘fulfilled’ occurs in Matthew fifteen times, and why there are more quotations from the OT in his Gospel than in the remaining three added together...”
5. This further explains the Jewish flavor of Matthew's Gospel in contrast to the Gentile appeal of Mark and Luke...
6. For example, Matthew uses the phrase “kingdom of heaven” whereas Mark and Luke use “the kingdom of God...”
7. The reason being the Jews were not fond of using the name of God, so they often substituted it with heaven...

B. To the sermon

1. By “sermon” I refer to our Savior's sermon, the Sermon on the Mount, notice v1—“and seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying...”

2. To be specific I want to suggest three things about this sermon—[1] its original audience, v1—“and seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain...His disciples came to Him...”
3. Notice 7:28—“and so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching...”
4. Thus we learn that while the sermon was initially intended for His disciples, the multitude had been listening as well...
5. Notice [2] its Lucian replication—here I refer to the same sermon as recorded by Luke in chapter 6:20 through the end of the chapter...
6. There has been some debate whether or not this is the exact sermon which was simplified or shortened by Luke...
7. I think as we compare the two passages we would find that they are the same sermons only Matthew provides a fuller account...
8. Now having said that, it is also true that Luke adds several phrases that Matthew omits, a point that will prove helpful at several points...
9. Notice [3] its foremost purpose—here I want to briefly address our Savior’s overall purpose or intention in giving this sermon...
10. I think it one sense we can summarize this intention by the often used concept of “the kingdom of heaven...”
11. Notice 4:17—“from that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand...”
12. Thus throughout this sermon He first describes the character of kingdom dwellers, the laws of the kingdom, and then entrance into the kingdom...
13. John MacArthur helpfully outlines the sermon as having three points—[a] the subjects of the kingdom, [b] the righteousness of the kingdom, and [c] entrance to the kingdom...
14. Thus there is a sense in which we could identify our Savior’s foremost purpose as simply describing His kingdom...
15. John Broadus—“In this discourse he sets forth the characteristics of those who are to be subjects of this reign and share the privileges connected with it, and urges upon them various duties...”

C. To the beatitudes

1. Here I refer to verses 3-12 of chapter 5—wherein our Savior provides an eight-fold description of a citizen of His kingdom...
2. Notice a few thoughts concerning these beatitudes—[1] their purpose—our Savior is here describing the character of His people...
3. Martyn Lloyd-Jones—“Read the beatitudes, and there you have a description of what every Christian is meant to be. It is not merely the description of some exceptional Christians. Our Lord does not say here that He is going to paint a picture of what certain outstanding characters are going to be and can be in this world. It is His description of every single Christian...”
4. Notice [2] their unity—by this I mean that these eight beatitudes necessarily stand or fall together—they form a single garment...
5. There are some who look over a list like this and want to pick and choose—perhaps emphasizing one virtue over another...
6. But our Savior begins His first formal sermon by clarifying that every kingdom dweller is poor in spirit, mourn, meek, hunger, merciful, pure, peacemakers, and persecuted...
7. Wherever any of these is missing it necessarily betrays a faulty religion—for true blessedness is described by these 8 character traits...
8. Notice [3] their order—here I simply want to point out that our Savior arranges these 8 beatitudes in a calculated and purposed order...
9. Thomas Watson—“Why does Christ here begin with poverty of spirit? Why is this put in the forefront? I answer, Christ does it to show that poverty of spirit is the very basis and foundation of all the other graces that follow. You may as well expect fruit to grow without a root, as the other graces without this. Till a man be poor in spirit, he cannot mourn...Till a man be poor in spirit, he cannot hunger and thirst

after righteousness. He must first be sensible of want before he can hunger. Therefore Christ begins with poverty of spirit because this ushers in all the rest...”

II. An Examination

A. A pronouncement—“blessed...”

1. Our Savior begins His sermon with a pronouncement of blessing—a blessing He mentions 9 times in these early verses...
2. There are two things essential to this pronouncement—[1] it entails an objective declaration—to be “blessed” is to be the object of God’s blessing...
3. Ps.1:1—“Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly...” Ps.32:1—“blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered...”
4. These are open and objective declarations of God upon a man, which remains true regardless if he’s aware of it or not...
5. Notice [2] it entails an inward realization—it’s for this reason that often times this Greek word is translated “happy...”
6. Ps.144:15—“blessed [happy] is that people whose God is the Lord...”—which necessarily includes the consciousness of this relation...
7. In other words, they are blessed or happy because they belong to the Lord, or because He is their God by way of covenant...
8. The word “blessed” has reference to an inward bliss or happiness based upon God’s outward and objective declaration...
9. Thus blessedness or true happiness entails the consciousness of what’s true of us through and because of Christ...
10. Thus Paul described God in 1Tim.1:11 as—“the blessed God...”—that is, that One who is infinitely and perfectly blessed...
11. God is blessed or happy as He is perfectly conscious of who and what He is—He is the blessed one who knows perfect happiness...
12. Elsewhere in 1Tim.6:15 the apostle describes Christ in similar language—“He who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords...”
13. Because Christ is God He is as blessed as His Father—He is perfectly and fully conscious of who He is and thus knows endless joy...
14. Thus Christians share in this divine blessedness to the degree they are conscious of God’s pronouncement of them...
15. Ps.132:14-15—“this *is* My resting place forever; Here I will dwell, for I have desired it. 15 I will abundantly bless her provision [or with abundant provision]; I will satisfy her poor with bread...”
16. Notice the Lord equates blessing the church with satisfying her poor—the point being—her blessing resulted in satisfaction...
17. To be satisfied with Christ [the bread of life] is true blessedness, and to have everything without Him is to be cursed...
18. Thus I suggest that the concept of “blessedness” entails both an objective and subjective element—it’s to be sensible of God’s pronouncement of you...
19. It is to be aware of all that God says of you—your sins are forgiven, you are an heir of eternal life, and a child of God...

B. A description—“the poor in spirit...”

1. Before I attempt to describe what our Savior meant by “the poor in spirit” let me first clarify what He did not mean...
2. Our Savior in not making a general statement that all poor people are blessed—financial poverty is neither a curse nor blessing...
3. It is true that James says—“has God not chosen the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him (Jas.2:5)...”

4. But if physical or financial poverty were a necessity to be blessed, then such men as Moses, Abraham, and Job were disqualified...
5. But obviously our Savior here specifies—"blessed are the poor in spirit..."—not blessed are the poor in pocket or finances but spirit...
6. Well then the big question here becomes what does this phrase mean—what does poverty of spirit entail...
7. The word translated "poor" refers to a man with no honor or wealth whose reduced to begging for his existence...
8. MacArthur—"The Greek word means to cower and cringe like a beggar...It carries the classic idea of begging out of shame...someone who is reduced to beggary, who crouches, unwilling to lift his eyes, pleading alms and moving about in wretched conditions...It's a beggar, somebody with no wealth, no influence, no position, no honor, no respect, in some cases possessing nothing but the ragged clothes they wear, a real beggar..."
9. Thus I suggest that it essentially involves three things—[1] the acknowledgment that we in ourselves lack any merit...
10. Phil.3:4-9—"If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. 7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith..."
11. Notice that the apostle described himself in two opposing ways [a] as rich in spirit (vv4-6), and [b] as poor in spirit (vv7-9)...
12. Notice [a] as rich in spirit, v6—"concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless..."—in other words he at one time saw himself as righteous in and of himself...
13. Notice [b] as poor in spirit, v8—"yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord...v9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith..."
14. Here we have the making of a poor spirit—by nature he thought he was rich, but by grace he was made poor...
15. He no longer had any native righteousness, but he was turned into a beggar, looking for a foreign or alien righteousness...
16. All his "good deeds" were but rubbish to him—they were useless and nothing—his only hope lied in the free gift of God through Jesus Christ...
17. Thus poverty of spirit consists in the acknowledgment that we lack even a drop or merit or good within ourselves...
18. Notice [2] the acknowledgement that we in ourselves are great debtors—not only do we lack the necessary righteousness but actually possess a positive debt...
19. To use financial terms—our spiritual bank account is not only empty of any funds, but it is actually in the red...
20. Lk.7:41-42—"there was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more..."
21. Here our Savior uses the imagery of debt and creditor to convey the idea of sin and forgiveness—sinners are debtors and sins are debts...
22. Our sins are debts to God, for we owe Him our allegiance and obedience, and anything short of this is refusing Him His due...
23. Thus every sin is a debt, a debt that must be repaid to God in full or else we will be put into an eternal prison...
24. Our problem is twofold—we not only lack the obedience we owe, but we are in the red—thus we not only need a righteousness but someone to pay for our past debts...

25. Notice what our Savior does to her debts, v48—“then He said to her, Your sins are forgiven...”—your debts are paid...
26. Christ has the authority to forgive sins because He would Himself pay them off through His own sacrificial death...
27. God and His righteous law have been satisfied—our creditors have been paid in full—our accounts have been settled...
28. Thus poverty of spirit consists in the consciousness that we not only lack any merit before God, we possess a huge debt toward God...
29. But someone here may object—if our debt has been paid in full by Christ, then why dwell on it or be concerned with it...
30. In response I would remind you, that whatever was natively true of me before conversion remains natively true of after conversions...
31. Did I lack any merit before I was converted then I lack any merit after I’m converted—was a great debtor to God before I became a Christian, then in one sense, I remain a debtor as a Christian—as considered in myself...
32. Let me illustrate—let’s say you got yourself in debt through foolish and unwise spending—let’s say you owed your creditors 10,000 dollars...
33. And your creditors were suing you and you were facing a long prison sentence—and then your father and mother graciously pays your debt with no strings attached...
34. In one sense you are free from your debts and your creditors satisfied—yet in another sense, you will always feel a sense of debt to your parents...
35. In fact I suggest that as you think about your former debt you will feel gratitude and love toward your parents and a sense of humility toward yourself...
36. How unnatural would it be, if having had your debts graciously paid, you acted proud and haughty towards your parents...
37. This can be illustrated by this woman, v47—“therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little...”
38. Thus poverty of spirit entails the consciousness or awareness of the debt we owed to God, and the cost paid by Christ in settling the debt...
39. Though our debt has been paid it was not paid by us, and thus we will always be, indebted to God through Christ for the payment—“Jesus paid it all, all to him I owe...”
40. Notice [3] the acknowledgement that we are in ourselves utterly unworthy—again the word translated “poor” includes—“a sense of little value or worth...”
41. This of course flows out of the first two—when a man sees he has no native merit and possesses a great debt before God he will see himself as nothing...
42. In other words poverty of spirit grows out of the consciousness that salvation is all of grace and not merit—it understands we deserve nothing but hell...
43. Pink—“To be ‘poor in spirit’ is to realize that I have nothing, am nothing, and can do nothing, and have need of all things...it evidences itself by bringing the individual into the dust before God, acknowledging his utter helplessness and deservingness of hell...”
44. Thus we find that the Scriptures link together humility and contrition with poverty of spirit—to be poor in spirit is to be humble and contrite...
45. Isa.66:1-2—“thus says the LORD: Heaven *is* My throne, and earth *is* My footstool. Where *is* the house that you will build Me? And where *is* the place of My rest? 2 For all those *things* My hand has made, And all those *things* exist, Says the LORD. But on this *one* will I look: On *him who is* poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word...”
46. Notice the phrase—“him who is poor and of a contrite spirit...”—a phrase that obviously is akin to our text...
47. The word translated “contrite” literally means “stricken or afflicted”—it refers to a person wounded or suffering inward pain...
48. It here refers to the inward acknowledgment of our own unworthiness—to be pained in spirit over our sins...

49. Albert Barnes describes it as—“A spirit that is broken, crushed, or deeply affected by sin. It stands opposed to a spirit that is proud, haughty, self-confident, and self-righteous.
50. Thus essential to gospel poverty or poverty of spirit is the painful awareness of our utter nothingness before God...
51. That we have nothing whatsoever to commend ourselves to God—that we are by nature empty, guilty, and unworthy sinners—and it is all my fault...
52. Before I come to the reason behind this blessedness [for theirs is the kingdom], let me suggest a few thoughts byway of clarification...
53. Notice [1] poverty of spirit is not spiritual poverty—here I want to make a necessary distinction between these two—to be poor in spirit and to be spiritually poor...
54. To be “poor in spirit” is to have nothing in and of yourself—it is be void of any spiritual merit, value, or worth in and of yourself...
55. But this is not the same thing as being spiritually poor for this is to be lost—to be without any spiritual possessions whatever...
56. Let me put it this way—to be poor in spirit is not apposed to being rich in spiritual things—you see a Christian is at the same time poor in spirit and rich in spiritual things...
57. They are poor in themselves but rich in Christ—while they have nothing natively in and because of themselves they have everything in Christ...
58. And the reason I take the time to bring this up is because these two truths must be balanced—in one sense we are beggars and in another princes and kings...
59. Thus poverty of spirit is the Christian’s view of himself as in himself, while at the same time in Christ he has riches galore...
60. Prov. 13:7—“there is one who makes himself rich, yet has nothing; and one who makes himself poor, yet has great riches...”
61. I have no doubt that this proverb likely refers to physical riches and poverty—yet it teaches an important principle...
62. It describes two kinds of people—[a] there is one who portrays himself rich but is poor, and [b] there is another who portrays himself poor but is rich...
63. The first is descriptive of native man, who although is poor, naked, and blind, thinks himself to be rich, wealth, and has need of nothing...
64. But the second is descriptive of a kingdom dweller—a Christian who, although is rich in Christ, yet confesses himself poor in spirit...
65. John Gill—“These words may be applied spiritually, in a good sense; there are some who are sensible of their spiritual poverty, and own it; they honestly express the sense they have of their own nothingness and unworthiness; they declare they have nothing, and can do nothing; they renounce all their own works in the business of salvation, and ascribe it wholly to the grace of God...”
66. He continues—“...who have, notwithstanding, ‘great riches’, the riches of justifying grace, the riches of Christ's righteousness: the riches of pardoning grace, a large share thereof, much being forgiven them; the riches of sanctifying grace, faith, more precious than that of gold that perisheth, with all other graces; the riches of spiritual knowledge, preferable to gold and silver: they have Christ, and all things along with him; they have God to be their portion, and exceeding great reward; they have a large estate, an incorruptible inheritance, in heaven...for theirs is the kingdom of God...”
67. Notice [2] poverty of spirit is not merely self-pity—some of you may remember a character in Winnie the Poo named Eor...
68. He was a donkey who went around with a downcast and depressed spirit—always feeling sorry for himself...
69. But this is not what is meant by poverty of spirit, for what is often at the heart of self-pity but self-righteousness and pride...
70. Notice [3] poverty of spirit is not a one time thing—here I simply want to point our that the entire Christian life is one of poverty of spirit...
71. It isn’t something that we have to do once and then move on—no the more mature we become the more poor in spirit we become...

72. The more we get to know our own native corruptive the greater our poverty becomes—but oh my friends, the more we know our poverty the more we will esteem true riches...
- C. A reason—“for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”
1. Our Savior here provides the reason behind their blessedness or true happiness—“for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...”
 2. To them belongs the kingdom—they are made partakers of it now in part, and soon in full—they have been given an eternal inheritance...