

THE BEATITUDES : RAISING OUR SIGHTS:

(Sermon Summary)

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Sunday Morning – 30th October 2022

Reading: Matthew 5:1-12.

This is a new series which we are beginning on the Beatitudes, the statements our Lord made pronouncing particular states to be 'happy' or 'blessed'. The passage in Matthew is paralleled in Luke 6:20-23.

The account we have in Matthew is of one sermon preached on one occasion, the entirety of which we call The Sermon on the Mount. Some of its contents appear in other places in our Lord's teaching.

These Beatitudes are heard at School Assemblies and are appreciated by people who have no faith. It sets out some high ethics and a life worth living. They are vital statements which are profound, challenging, shocking and surprising. The result of hearing the sermon is the reaction reported in Matthew 7:28-29.

1. Who is speaking?

The Lord Jesus is the speaker, assuming the role of a teacher as He sits to instruct the people. He opens His mouth and the words that proceed are gracious words. The Christian faith is all about the communication of truth. Our Lord spoke at times in parables, veiled sayings that were to provoke a reaction, either to generate further interest or, at its extreme, hostile rejection. At other times, such as in John 6 or 8, for example, the teaching that Lord gives is the result of interaction with other people. Here, in the Sermon on the Mount, He is not interacting with people, including those who hated Him, but it is in the form of a monologue. He is setting out before us what it means to live in such a way as to please God.

He who speaks is, of course, the Son of God. He is one who has authority. In other words, He knew what He was talking about and commanded the attention of His listeners. He had perfect understanding of the will of God. He handled the word of God confidently and competently, bringing out depths and breadth that other teachers had

missed. He spoke as one having status and gravity. He spoke without hesitation or uncertainty. What He said was not an act designed to impress but came from the heart. He showed a mastery of His subject and anticipated and dealt with objections with ease. His wisdom was authenticated by the signs and wonders which He performed so that the reactions were as we find them, for example, in Luke 4:36-37; Luke 5:26; and Luke 7:16.

Time and time again He said, 'I say to you' (See Matthew 5:20; 21-22; and 27-28). He was not reliant on the counsel and insights of other teachers. He was Himself the source of His teaching. He would disagree with others but would not do it out of self-interest or to impress (See John 5:19 and 30). He was not there to win arguments but was submitted to the will of His Father (John 8:28; and John 12:48-50).

2. To whom was He speaking?

He was speaking to the multitudes who had gathered. These were mostly ordinary people and not the experts in the law. But in His teaching, He was able to show the people where the experts had failed to teach them properly. The disciples had showed themselves to be in awe of the Pharisees (see Matthew 15:12). Our Lord shocked them and everyone else by what He said in Matthew 5:20. He contrasted His teaching with the teaching and practice of the Pharisees (Matthew 6: 1; 5; and 16). He was teaching the people that they needed to raise their sights above where the Pharisees had got to. They had to read the Commandments better and understand the will of God better. They had to understand how Christ was the fulfillment of the law better.

It was also a wake-up call to people to understand their own hearts better. There was no room for self-congratulation but instead there was a need to inquire deeper into the state of their souls. We are to ask ourselves, 'Am I like what I read here?'. The answer that is to come back to us is, 'No, I am not.' What we hear in this sermon is what is desirable but what is not achievable. We will agree with it in principle but be unable to do it in practice. It is to lead to self-examination and repentance. It holds up before us the good life, a righteous life that God approves of. We are to see that the Lord fulfils that life but that we do not.

So this mountain is not Sinai with the threatenings that it issues (See Hebrews 12:18-21). This is not a covenant of works that we read. The Sermon on the Mount, including the Beatitudes, is full of promises. There are commandments but we are not to despair because the Lord Jesus has fulfilled them for us.

3. The prospect of blessedness.

We are then to raise our sights and our expectations. We are to understand that the Lord is calling us to a holy life. There is a promise to us of spiritual possessions, light, vindication and a future hope. There is blessedness now for the soul, with good things

to reach the very depths of our being. The teaching is to 'thaw out' our minds and our affections. It is to add impetus to our wills. Through this teaching everything seems more relevant and important. Our comforts increase and so our happiness increases too. These blessings are like a warm fire heating up a cold house.

So there is the benefit to us of greater spiritual apprehension and possession. There is to be more happening in the core of our being, and it will lead to greater peace, calm, joy, self-restraint.

What our Lord teaches here is very comprehensive, and is relevant and valuable for all aspects of life.