MATTHEW 5

READ MATTHEW 5:1-2

* Chapter 4 flows directly into chapter 5
  + Matthew is about to give us a glimpse into the specifics of Jesus’ preaching.
  + Multitudes of people were following Jesus to hear His words and be blessed by His miracles
  + With the multitudes following Him, He ascended a mountain and began teaching a lesson we would eventually title “The Sermon on the Mount.”
    - The words of this “sermon” cover Matthew 5-7
    - Many of Jesus’ most well known words are found in these chapters.

READ MATTHEW 5:3-12

* The Beatitudes
  + “Beatitudes” is a made up name (perhaps not the best name) that is used to refer to Jesus’ teachings in Matthew 5:3-11.
    - You will notice all the verses begin with the word “blessed.”
    - Jesus addresses certain attitudes and how those who possess them will be fortunate and blessed by the Kingdom of Heaven
  + 1. Blessed are the poor In spirit
    - If someone is physically poor, it means they don’t have the means to buy things they need.
    - If someone is spiritually poor, it means they don’t have the means to obtain the things they need spiritually.
      * This is true for all of us!
      * We cannot buy righteousness for ourselves
      * We cannot afford the redemption price of our own souls.
      * Jesus’ purpose on earth was to pay it for us.
      * Those who recognized their spiritual poverty were about to receive the greatest blessing.
      * The Kingdom of Heaven is exactly for people like that.
  + 2. Blessed are those who mourn
    - I’ve almost always heard the Beatitudes taught as “one-off” statements.
      * We teach the statement one by one without much connection to the others
      * In this study I want to try to make a connection between all of them and show how Jesus is using all of them to describe an ideal member of the Kingdom of Heaven (You are free to disagree with my understanding)
    - Jesus has just talked about those who recognize their spiritual poverty, now he moves on to those who mourn.
      * But what are they morning about?
      * They are mourning about their sin… the thing that spiritually impoverishes them.
      * It is one thing to acknowledge your sins. It is another things to mourn over them.
    - Those who mourn their sins will be comforted
      * This comfort is only available through Jesus’ sacrifice.
      * Those in the Kingdom are the only ones who can be comforted about their past sins.
  + 3. Blessed are the meek
    - Many associate meekness with weakness but this is a mistake
    - Meekness is one’s willingness to submit to authority, regardless of personal strength.
      * Submission is not a valued virtue of our culture.
        + We pride ourselves on self-sufficiency and the “do it yourself” attitude.
        + Those who are physically strong, financially successful, and admired by others bulk at the idea of submission.
      * But our willingness to submit to God’s authority is key to achieving what really matters (eternal life and forgiveness of sins)
        + No human strength will get you there
    - Those who realize their spiritual poverty and mourn over their sins must have an attitude of meekness to submit to the God who can heal them.
  + 4. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness
    - A person who is hungry wants to be filled with food
    - A person who is thirsty wants to be filled with water
    - A person who is craving recognizes their spiritual poverty, mourns their sins, and is willing to submit to God, is a person who wants God to fill him/her with His righteousness.
    - Jesus tells His listeners that a person like this will be satisfied. They eat the bread of life and drink the water of life.
    - Joh 6:35 - Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst.
  + 5. Blessed are the merciful
    - The natural response of a person who has been granted undeserved righteousness through the mercy of Christ is to show mercy to others
    - Mat 6:14 - *For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you*.
    - In contrast, in Matt 18:23-35, Jesus condemns those who are forgiven by God but won’t show mercy to others (parable of the unforgiving servant).
  + 6. Blessed are the pure in heart
    - Purity: not mixed or adulterated with any other substance or material.
    - Those who will one day be with God and “see God” are those who whose hearts are filled with the Spirit and untainted by worldly affections (Eph 5:18).
    - The Bible does not speak well of those who are filled with competing affections.
      * Acts 5:3 – *But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan* ***filled*** *your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit…?”*
      * Acts 5:17-18 *– But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and* ***filled*** *with jealousy they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison*.
      * Rom 1:29 – *They were* ***filled*** *with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are* ***full*** *of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents…*”
      * The Bible also warns of those who are **full** of themselves, full of pride.
    - Sin is failing to live up to God’s standard and trading Him in for lesser joys.
      * A person whose heart is not single in affection is a person who will sin (everybody)
      * James encourages sinners (double-minded) to “purify” their hearts
      * James 4:8 – *Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.*
  + *7.* Blessed are the peacemakers
    - While the Bible certainly instructs Christians to be a peaceable people (see 1 Thess 5:13, 2Pet 3:14, and Rom 12:18) Jesus’ intention here may be more along the lines of 2Cor 5:18.
      * 2Cor 5:18 – *All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;*
      * Reconciliation: restore friendly relations between (peacemaking)
    - Those who, through Jesus, have had their relationship with God reconciled, will tell others of the good news (gospel).
    - Jesus gave all of His followers instruction to spread the gospel (Matt 28:18-20)
    - True children of God are in the business of restoring peace between God and man.
  + 8. Blessed are those who are persecuted
    - How does the world respond to the poor inspirit, mourning, meek, hungry, merciful, pure in heart, peacemaking follower of Jesus? Persecution.
      * This is not the only time Jesus prepared those who sought righteousness for themselves and other to suffer
      * Jesus was going to suffer for His peacemaking and His disciples should expect no different (Matt 10:24-25)
    - The Kingdom of Heaven is for those who will endure persecution to make peace.
  + 9. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
    - On earth, Jesus’ followers were told to expect difficulty and persecution, but one day they would receive a great reward.
      * Remember how, in chapter 4, Jesus resisted the offer of immediate pleasure from Satan because He trusted the word of God?
      * Jesus is now calling us to do the same.
    - We are called to patient endurance for the sake of peacemaking, but we are promised a reward greater than “all the kingdoms of the earth” if we remain faithful to the end.
    - This pattern of enduring persecution to proclaim the message of God had a long standing precedent.
      * Jesus points the attention of His listeners to all the messengers of God who had come in the past.
      * His challenge was to be like them.

READ MATTHEW 5:13-16

* We put salt on our food because it has a very distinct taste that many of us like (especially me).
* Salt is meant to influence our taste buds
  + In this passage, Jesus is telling His followers they need to influence the world.
  + They need to have an effect on the world in their peacemaking and in their purity of heart.
* But what if all the salt in my salt shaker lost its taste?
* It would be nothing more than little grains of tasteless nothingness.
  + In the same way, a person who claims to be a follower of Christ, but isn’t affecting the world in any meaningful way, isn’t fulfilling their responsibility.
  + They aren’t good for anything, just like tasteless salt
* Similarly, a candle is meant to illuminate the dark
* A candle whose light is hidden under a basket is pointless
  + We must not hide or suppress our influence for Christ
  + We must shine the light of the gospel proudly so others can see their way to our Father.

READ MATTHEW 5:17-20

* As we discussed earlier in the book, the Pharisees and Sadducees were highly critical of Jesus.
  + Their criticism, in part, was due to the fact that they though Jesus had come in complete disrespect to the Law of Moses.
    - They believed they were the expert keepers of the Law
    - They trusted in their self-righteousness for their salvation.
* Here, Jesus reveals that the Pharisees are wrong about Him.
  + Jesus had the utmost respect for the Law
  + He had come to fulfill the Law
    - He was the promised king
    - He was the promised Savior
    - He was the promised shepherd of Israel
    - He was the suffering servant
    - He was the perfect sin sacrifice
    - The list goes on…
  + The details of Jesus life and ministry were in complete harmony with the predications of the Old Testament.
    - He confirmed that not one “iota” or “dot” in the Old Law would be ignored
      * An iota is the smallest letter in the Greek alphabet
      * A dot is a small accent mark in the Hebrew alphabet
    - Jesus is saying that even the tiny details of the Law wouldn’t be ignored
  + The Old Law needed to be fulfilled with something better, which is why it spoke of a better future for the Jews.
  + Jesus was offering the Jews what the Law of Moses never could, but many of them were choosing to go down with their ship.
* The Law was not a bad thing, in fact, it was a guide to the perfect holiness of God.
  + In leading people to God’s holiness it revealed our sinfulness and inability to be like God in His perfection
  + But the Law also pointed to the solution (Jesus)
  + If the Law was obeyed, understood, and allowed to guide a person, it would lead them straight to Jesus.
  + This is why Jesus instructs these people to follow the commandments of the Old Testament Law
* But Jesus makes it clear that they need to do a better job at understanding and keeping the Law than the Jewish scribes and Pharisees, because their so-called Law keeping was leading them in the wrong direction.
* They claimed to understand Moses’ Law but had missed it entirely.

READ MATTHEW 5:21-26

* Looking at a common Jew and telling him/her they needed to be better at keeping the Law than the Pharisees was probably shocking enough, but Jesus pushes His listeners even further by calling them to a higher ethic.
* Much of the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount involves Jesus pushing His followers beyond simple external law keeping and asking them to evaluate the motives of their hearts that fuel their external action.
* In verse 21, Jesus cites a commandment in the Old Testament Law
  + “You shall not murder”
  + This was one of the 10 commandments and every Jew would have been familiar with it.
* Jesus then goes on to condemn, not only murder, but the attitudes and actions that lead a person to murder another.
  + Anger
  + Insult
  + Calling someone a fool unjustly
    - Someone who is guilty of these things, even though they are not murder, will be guilty before God because they’ve allowed their hearts to be filled with the same corruption that fills a murderer’s heart.
    - Jesus says that God is not pleased with the worship of a person in whose heart these temperaments exist.
    - The book of 1 John will discuss the inconsistency of someone who says he loves God and hates his brother in more depth.
    - Instead of worshipping God in such a state, the person who has hatred in their heart needs to go to their brother and reconcile and then return to worship.
    - Verses 25-26 say this reconciliation ought to be done as quickly so its consequences don’t become permanent and inescapable. Jesus may be referring to physical or spiritual consequences here.
      * Delaying reconciliation can allow feelings of bitterness and hatred to grow worse and trap us
      * Delaying reconciliation may make it impossible to make peace with our brother due to geographic difference or death.
      * We may delay reconciliation so long that we find ourselves in front of our Judge having to answer for hatred that is still present in our hearts.
      * Paul gives us a similar thought in Ephesians 4:26-27
      * Eph 4:26-27 – *Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.*

READ MATTHEW 5:27-30

* The principle found in verses 27 and 28 is easy enough to understand but difficult to apply.
  + While the Old Testament Law stated a man should not commit adultery (cheat on his wife)
  + Jesus said, a man should not even look at a woman who isn’t his wife with lustful intent, else he commits unfaithfulness with her in his heart.
  + Lust: a very strong sexual desire
* Not only is adultery to be condemned but the heart that leads us into adultery is condemned
  + A man cheats on his wife because he first gives his heart and attention to another woman.
  + A woman cheats on her husband because she gives her devotion away to a person before she ever gets in bed with him.
* God wants a man’s heart… He isn’t just interested in the externals.
* APPLICATION: Modern day marketing and advertising fails miserably here.
* The next 2 verses, 29 and 30, Jesus warns His listeners of holding on to things which cause them to sin.
  + To drive home the point, He uses two things we all believe we can’t live without as His examples, eyes and hands.
  + If you can’t stop sinning with your eyes, pull them out of your head and throw them away.
  + If you can’t stop sinning with your hands, cut them off and toss them.
    - Although this is obviously hyperbole, Jesus is driving home the point.
    - If something threatens your relationship to God, get rid of it, no matter how important you think it is to your life.
    - It is better to go to heaven with some deficiency in your physical life than to go to hell because you wouldn’t give up your vice.
  + APPLICATION:
    - If a woman at work won’t stop making advances to you and you feel yourself losing your resolve, quit your job
    - If you can’t stop driving places you shouldn’t, sell your car
    - If you can’t stop sleeping with your boyfriend, get rid of your boyfriend.
    - If you can’t stop wasting the time God has given you playing hours and hours of video games on your computer, sell your computer
    - If doesn’t matter how much value those things bring to your life in other areas, if they threaten your soul, they need to go.

READ MATTHEW 5:31-32

* These verses are hotly debated among Christians
  + The reason for the debate is not so much due to the difficulty of interpretation but difficulty in application
  + The topic of marriage is emotionally charged, the topic of divorce even more so, and Jesus’ instruction on these issues flows contrary to the grain of societal norms.
* Once again, Jesus introduces His teaching by reminding the people of the popular Old Testament interpretation.
  + The Jews taught that a man could divorce his wife for a plethora of reasons so long as he presented her with a “writing of divorcement.”
  + In Matt 19:8, Jesus tells His disciples Moses only allowed them to divorce their wives because they had hard hearts
    - Matt 19:8 – *He said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so*.
    - When God created the marriage relationship, He did not intend it to be easily dissolvable.
* Jesus rejects the tradition of the Jews to reintroduce the intention of God.
  + Jesus says, every man who divorces his wife “*makes her commit adultery*.”
    - The way Jesus words this phrase is challenging (at least to me)
    - How can a person make another person sin?
      * I think this statement must be understood in its cultural context.
      * Why are there so many encouragements for Christians to care for widows and orphans in the Bible? In part, because women did not have the ability to provide for themselves (in most cases)
        + There was no feminist movement
        + No equal pay for equal work
        + We read about several widows in the Bible who were destitute after their husbands died.
      * If a man divorced his wife and put her out of his house, she would have little choice but to search out a new husband to provide for her.
      * He was encouraging her and in some ways compelling her to marry someone else.
      * He has put her in a corner
  + Simply put, a man is at fault when he divorces his wife.
    - Only one exception is given… “sexual immorality”
    - In modern vernacular – A man should not divorce his wife unless she cheats on him.
  + The implication is, unless a couple is divorced because of sexual immorality, they are still bound to one another. They do not have a right to dissolve the marriage bond.
  + This explains why a man who comes along later and marries a divorced woman is guilty of adultery (verse 31).
* Jesus’ command is actually really simple. But, as we said earlier, it is the application that is the difficult part.
* We will not discuss the details of the New Testament’s teaching on divorce any further at this point.
  + Note, there are other verses in the New Testament that discuss this topic.
  + We will delve deeper when we arrive at those verses.
  + This teaching is a good example of why the Bible needs to be read comprehensively.
  + It is not unusual for the Bible to give its readers part of the details in one text and then the rest of the details in another passage.
    - This is not unique to the Bible
    - Many great writers don’t write out every detail of every point every time they refer to it.
  + It is important to remember we may be missing important details about a New Testament teaching until we’ve read the entire New Testament.

READ MATTHEW 5:33-36

* Gone are the days when a man’s word was sufficient as a binding contract
* We live in a world where people swear all the time.
  + “I swear to God”
  + “I swear on my life”
  + “I swear on all that is holy”
* We think swearing on things that are greater than ourselves will buttress and give security to our words.
* But the irony about swearing in such a way is that we don’t have any control over the things we are swearing on.
* You can’t give something you don’t own as collateral.
* We can’t offer them as security for our word if we don’t have any authority over them.
  + Jesus lists several things that the Jews commonly swore on over which they had no control and authority.
    - Heaven
    - Earth
    - Jerusalem
  + He then brings it down to a more personal level. Not only do these individuals not have authority over these great things, they don’t even have control over some of the smallest things in their lives.
  + They don’t even control when the hairs of their own head go grey.
  + If human beings lack control over some of the smallest events in life, they have no business swearing by anything.
* Jesus tells His listeners that rather than making empty oaths, they should speak with a simple “yes” or “no.”
* APPLICATION:
  + “…the frequent requiring and using of oaths, is a reflection upon Christians, who should be of such acknowledged fidelity, as that their sober words should be as sacred as their solemn oaths” (Henry).
  + In a world like ours, where a man’s word is essentially meaningless, imagine if, as an exception to the rule, a Christian’s word was as sacred in the eyes of men as a solemn oath.
  + Imagine what a testament to Christ it would be if the simple “yes” or “no” of a Christian was as good as gold.
  + We all probably have room for improvement in this area.

READ MATTHEW 5:38-42

* In this well known passage of Scripture, Jesus teaches about retaliation.
  + No longer would the principle “eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” be the standard for godly living.
  + Jesus instructs us to “turn the other cheek”
    - We are to accept persecution as part of our calling (5:10)
    - Rather than retaliate, we need to show our abuser undeserved love.
      * If we are struck… we turn the other cheek
      * If we are sued unjustly… we give more than what is asked
      * If we are forced into service… we willingly do more than what is expected
    - Jesus’ life and death put all three of these principles on perfect display
  + Jesus further instructs to:
    - Give to one who begs
    - Do not refuse those who need to lend something from you
    - APPLICATION:
      * Many Christians spend more time talking about why these verses don’t apply to situations in their lives than putting these verses into practice
      * There is no question that applying these principles in your life will cause you to get ripped off sometimes.
      * But maybe, rather than focusing on being ripped off, we should focus on all of the potential opportunities this type of generosity could generate.

READ MATTHEW 5:43-48

* Keep the context in mind… Our enemies might be those Jesus just talked about in verses 38-42
* There are few things that come as naturally to a person than to love the people who love them and dislike the people who dislike them. Jesus points this out in verse 43.
  + But Jesus doesn’t want us to pursue man’s nature
  + He wants us to take on God’s nature (to be sons of God)
* Rather than hating our enemies, Jesus tells us to treat them well.
  + “Love your enemies”
  + “Pray for those who persecute you”
  + Why?
  + “So that you may be sons of your Father who is in Heaven”
    - If we want to be a “son of God” we should look to the example of the Son of God
    - Jesus loved and even died for people who hated Him
    - Jesus prayed on the cross for the people who nailed Him to it.
    - If we want to follow Christ, we not only must endure suffering and persecution like Him, we must also extend His love to our persecutors.
* God gives gifts and blessings to all men even though some mock Him.
  + We have all done God wrong and yet He persists in goodness towards us.
  + We dare not show less kindness to our fellow man
* It is easy to show kindness to people who are kind to us:
  + But the plan of redemption isn’t based on that!
  + The Bible story isn’t based on that!
  + The gospel isn’t based on that!
* If that was the principle under which God operated there would be no Jesus
* The story of our redemption is the story of a God who is kind to us even though we are not always kind to Him!
* In verse 48, we are called to be perfect (complete) like our heavenly Father
  + A complete man is obedient to God in outward action to others (verses 38-42)
  + A complete man is obedient to God in the heart (verses 43-47)
* It is not enough to treat your enemies well by going the second mile and turning the cheek if your heart is still rotten on the inside.

See video “How To Be Perfect” on 2BeLikeChrist’s YouTube Channel for more detail on this text.

<https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Matthew_5:3>

Matthew Henry Commentary