

The Sermon on the Mount Part 4

Matthew 5:9-12

Thesis: We are a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Text: Matthew 5 – 7

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most famous passages in the Bible. People refer to it and quote from this teaching of Jesus all the time.

These words of Jesus are revolutionary, radical, and relational (righteousness). I wonder if the words of Jesus have lost their cutting edge in our lives because of familiarity.

God is showing me wonderful things from his Word. And, the Lord is using The Sermon on the Mount to transform me.

So, I am asking the Lord to encourage you by his Holy Spirit and to speak to us as we spend time on Matthew 5 – 7 over the next months.

Ponder these words as we begin to look at The Sermon on the Mount.

“We are so familiar with them that the words can glide piously off our tongues without disturbing us. Yet each of these beatitudes is... revolutionary... they can, when properly understood, utterly overthrow secularism and radically transform insipid Christianity” (DA Carson as quoted by Sam Storms: *Biblical Studies: The Sermon on the Mount*. Edmond, OK: Sam Storms, 2016.)

Living out the beatitudes (and the entire Sermon on the Mount) can never be divorced from a right relationship to Jesus himself. Unlike other preachers and their sermons, the latter of which you may like and the former of which you don't (or vice versa), here you cannot embrace one without embracing the other. (Sam Storms. *Biblical Studies: The Sermon on the Mount*. Edmond, OK. 2016.)

[The Beatitudes] are explanations and illustrations, drawn from the immediate setting, of the present availability of the kingdom through personal relationship to Jesus. (Sam Storms. *Biblical Studies: The Sermon on the Mount*. Edmond, OK. 2016.)

In a message last November, we got through an overview of The Sermon on the Mount. Then, we looked at Matthew 5:3-5: The Poor in Spirit, The Grieved, and The Unimportant.

In a message on 11'24'24, we looked at Matthew 5:6-8: The Hungry, The Merciful, and The Pure in Heart.

Today, we want to consider Matthew 6:9-12: The Peacemakers, The Persecuted, and the Misunderstood.

Here is a perspective that Joshua Rushing shared with me this week from his study in The Sermon on the Mount. It is from NT Wright (Joshua Rushing, conversation, 11'21'24).

In Deuteronomy, the people came through the wilderness and arrived at the border of the promised land, and God gave them a solemn covenant. He listed the blessings and the curses that would come upon them if they were obedient or disobedient (chapter 28). **Now Matthew has shown us Jesus, coming out of Egypt (2:15), through the water and the wilderness (chapters 3 and 4), and into the land of promise (4:12–25). Here, now, is his new covenant.**

So when do these promises come true? There is a great temptation for Christians to answer: in **heaven**, after death. At first sight, verses 3, 10 and 11 seem to say this: **'the kingdom of heaven'** belongs to the poor in **spirit** and the persecuted, and there's a great reward 'in heaven' for those who suffer persecution for Jesus' sake. This, though, is a misunderstanding of the meaning of 'heaven'. **Heaven is God's space, where full reality exists, close by our ordinary ('earthly') reality and interlocking with it.** One day heaven and earth will be joined together for ever, and the true state of affairs, at present out of sight, will be unveiled. After all, verse 5 says that the meek will inherit the earth, and that can hardly happen in a disembodied heaven after death.

No: the clue comes in the next chapter, in the prayer Jesus taught his followers. We are to pray that God's kingdom will come, and God's will be done, 'on earth as it is in heaven'. **The life of heaven—the life of the realm where God is already king—is to become the life of the world, transforming the present 'earth' into the place of beauty and delight that God always intended.** And those who follow Jesus are to begin to live by this rule here and now. That's the point of the Sermon on the Mount, and these 'beatitudes' in particular. They are a summons to live in the present in the way that will make sense in God's promised future; because that future has arrived in the present in Jesus of Nazareth. It may seem upside down, but we are called to believe, with great daring, that it is in fact the

right way up. Try it and see. (Wright, NT. *Matthew for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-15*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2004.)

When Joshua shared with me, I felt stunned and amazed. God is the Master Strategist and has woven his Word together with wisdom and revelation about himself, his ways, and our response to him that will continue to stun us for eternity.

Here is another important perspective to keep in mind:

As we look at The Sermon on the Mount, I will share with you what I am learning and processing, some of which is new to me. **But please understand: The Lord can speak to you through his Word without all this teaching I am doing and without all the research we are processing. What we are doing together is to help us enter into the context of this Word, and to let the Lord speak to us in our current context.** The Lord can do that through the Holy Spirit whenever you open God's word and read it devotionally or study it thoroughly. Getting into God's Word and listening for The Voice is one of the most important spiritual practices the Lord has given us for growing in our relationships with God and others. **I pray that our time in the Sermon on the Mount will stir in you a greater love for God, for God's word, and for the leadership of Jesus in your life.**

Consider While Reading:

The first hearers of these words were mostly low-status, powerless Israelites on the fringes of mainstream society ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7). They were the impoverished, the infirmed, the unimportant, the oppressed, and the ignored.

Overview:

"The introduction (5:3-16) announces the surprising and counterintuitive identity of those who are a part of God's Kingdom. Then comes the main body of teachings (5:17-7:12), where Jesus explains further what he means when he calls his followers to be 'righteous.' Finally, Jesus concludes the sermon (7:13-27) by calling people to make a choice about how they're going to respond" ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

The Sermon on the Mount is carefully designed and organized.

1. **There are 3 main parts to The Sermon on the Mount.**
 - a. The middle part is divided into 3 parts.

- b. Each of the parts of the middle part is divided into 3 parts.
 - c. Right at the center of the center of The Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's Prayer.
- 2. **The Bible tells us what it means for God's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven.**
 - a. The kingdom of God coming to earth is the one of the main themes of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.
- 3. **From the beginning, humans rebelled and started to build their own kingdom by their own wisdom.**
- 4. **So, God chose one family, Israel, to join him in his mission.**
 - a. And, God offered them his wisdom.
 - b. That wisdom was called the Torah—the teaching.
 - c. Beginning on with Moses on Mt. Sinai, God entered into a covenant with Isreal.
 - d. **The goal was for Israel, one nation, to be transformed by God's wisdom, so that they could represent God's Kingdom before all the nations and to lead the nations back to God.**
- 5. **In Jesus' day, the kingdom of God was nowhere to be seen.**
 - a. Instead, Israel was under the rule of the Roman Empire and Roman oppressors.
- 6. **So, why wasn't God's Kingdom coming?**
 - a. Some religious leaders-- the **Pharisees**-- believed Israel was not being faithful enough to the Torah.
 - b. Other religious leaders—the **Sadducees**—said it would be best if Israel found a way to cooperate with Rome. They were the power brokers in Jesus' day.
 - c. Some people ran to the hills to become freedom fighters against Rome. They were known as the **Zealots**.
 - d. Others **withdrew to the desert**, waiting for God to use them to start the new Israel.
- 7. **But walk around the country of Israel, like Jesus did in his day, and here is what you would find.**
 - a. You would find mostly normal people.
 - b. They were trying to figure out how to live their lives as best they can.
 - c. Most people were living in poverty and were carving out a subsistence living.
 - d. There were lots of poor and sick people.
 - e. They were oppressed by high taxes.
 - f. Rome had taken their land away from them.
 - g. Most people were struggling to pay the heavy taxes imposed on them by their Roman occupiers.
 - h. In essence, the people of Jesus' day were powerless and hopeless.

8. **Jesus went to these people** healing the sick, setting free the demonized, mending broken hearts, and bringing salvation.
 - a. Jesus came with good news.
 - b. And, Jesus told these people that the kingdom of God was arriving.
 - c. People came from all over to hear his teaching and to get healing, deliverance, and encouragement.
9. **One day, Jesus went up to a tall hill or small mountain and said, "The arrival of kingdom of God is starting here and now with you."**
 - a. The kingdom of God was starting with the powerless, the weak, and the nobodies.
 - b. **Where can you go to see God's presence and blessing?**
 - i. You see God's presence and blessing among the poor in spirit, the crushed, and the defeated.
 - ii. The kingdom of God was not coming first among the wealthy and the powerful.
 - iii. The kingdom of God was coming to the people standing right before Jesus.

The structure of The Sermon on the Mount:

There are **3 main sections** to The Sermon on the Mount.

1. **Main Section 1: Matthew 5:3 – 16. This is the introduction. Jesus tells us about the kingdom identity of his followers. Jesus gives 9 sayings about who is experiencing the good life of God's kingdom.**
 - a. **Matthew 5:3 – 12. The Good Life.**
 - i. **The Poor in Spirit (3).**
 - ii. **The Grieved (4).**
 - iii. **The Unimportant (5).**
 - iv. **The Hungry (6).**
 - v. **The Merciful (7).**
 - vi. **The Pure in Heart (8).**
 - vii. **The Peacemakers (9).**
 - viii. **The Persecuted (10).**
 - ix. **The Misunderstood (11-12).**
 - b. **Matthew 5:13. Salt of the Earth.**
 - i. "In the Hebrew Scriptures, salt is a symbol of God's long-lasting covenant relationship with Israel. So Jesus is claiming that he and his followers are carrying Israel's covenant relationship to its fulfillment" ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).
 - ii. Salt is an important preservative.

- iii. Salt is a seasoning. We are to bring out the God-flavors in this world (MSG).
 - iv. A little salt goes a long way. Christians are supposed to influence rather than be influenced by the ways of this world.
 - c. Matthew 5:14 – 16. The Light of the World and a city on a hill.
 - i. According to Isaiah, one day the inhabitants of Jerusalem will reflect God's light, peace, and blessing out to all the world.
 - ii. Jerusalem is the image of the city on a hill that shines for all the world to see. We are a part of that family, heritage, and kingdom.
 - iii. Light shines in the darkness and overcomes darkness. Christians have influence way beyond themselves.
 - iv. We are to bring out the God-colors in this world (MSG).
 - v. When Jesus calls his followers "the light of the world" and "a city on a hill," he is referencing images from the prophet Isaiah. The shining city on the hill portrays God's wisdom and heavenly presence emanating from Jerusalem and filling the whole Earth. By using these images, Jesus is applying Isaiah's prophecies to himself and his followers ([The Bible Project](#)).
- 2. **Main Section 2:** Matthew 5:17 – 7:12. This is the main body of teaching. In this section, Jesus tells us what he means **for his followers to be righteous**. Righteousness is living in right relationship with God and others. It is a character trait that creates justice and peace in the world.
 - a. **Section 1 of the Middle Section:** Matthew 5:17 – 48. In this section, Jesus tells us how this righteousness relates to the **Torah**.
 - i. Matthew 5:17 – 20. Jesus fulfills the Torah.
 - 1. Jesus' teaching on righteousness brings the Torah to its completion.
 - ii. Matthew 5:21 – 32. Jesus gives six case studies on how the righteousness of Jesus fulfills the Torah
 - 1. Anger, lust, divorce, telling the truth, revenge, and enemy love.
 - iii. Matthew 5:33 – 48. Summary: be complete or whole. The purpose of the Torah is teaching people God's wisdom so that they can become mature, whole people who spread God's blessing to the world.
 - 1. Being complete or whole links back to what Jesus says: living by Jesus' teachings will fulfill the Torah and Prophets.
 - b. **Section 2 of the Middle Section:** Matthew 6:1 – 18. In this section, Jesus tells us how this righteousness relates to **religious practices**.

- i. Matthew 6:1. Living in right relationship with God and other results in a reward.
 - 1. But be careful: If you are doing your righteousness to get public praise, you will miss out on the real reward God has in store.
 - ii. Matthew 6:2 – 18. Three examples of how religious devotion can go astray.
 - 1. Generosity to the poor.
 - 2. Prayer.
 - 3. Fasting.
 - iii. Matthew 6:19 – 21. True wealth: the real reward.
 - 1. The real reward links back to Matthew 6:1. The reward is knowing and being loved by God.
- c. **Section 3 of the Middle Section.** Matthew 6:19 – 7:12. In this section, Jesus tells us how **this righteousness is expressed in right relationships with God and with neighbor**. Doing righteousness affects our relationship with God and neighbor.
 - i. Matthew 6:19 – 34. God and money.
 - 1. Our stuff tends to claim our allegiance and causes us to worry.
 - 2. Our relationship to our stuff can be one of the biggest obstacles to healthy relationships with God and others.
 - 3. Store up treasure in heaven.
 - 4. **Parable 1: Two eyes.** You can have a healthy, generous eye, or an evil, stingy eye.
 - 5. **Parable 2: Two masters you can serve—God or money.**
 - 6. Teaching on worry. We are invited to trust the generous God of creation who cares about us.
 - ii. Matthew 7:1 – 11. God and neighbor.
 - 1. Teaching on not judging others.
 - 2. Parable 1: Speck and log.
 - 3. Parable 2: Holy pearls—using discernment when we try to help and correct others.
 - 4. Ask God for the wisdom you need: ask, seek, and knock.
 - iii. Matthew 7:12. The Golden Rule.
- 3. **Main Section 3:** Matthew 7:13 – 27. In his conclusion, **Jesus calls people to make a choice as to how they are going to respond**.
 - a. The choice for how we will live our lives.
 - i. Matthew 7:13 – 14. Two paths with two different gates. One leads to life; the other leads to ruin.

- ii. Matthew 7:15 – 23. Two trees. Discerning between two kinds of leaders who claim to represent God. One tree is good; one is not.
 - iii. Matthew 7:24 – 27. Two types of houses you can build. You can ignore Jesus and build your house by your own wisdom. Or, you can listen to Jesus and build your house on the rock.
4. **Finally, every one of these parts has 3 parts.**
- a. There is a lot of design in the structure of The Sermon on the Mount.
5. **Review of The Sermon on the Mount:**
- a. **Kingdom Identity:** the sermon begins with a surprise announcement about how the good life of the kingdom of God has come to the least likely people.
 - b. **A Greater Righteousness:** in the main body, Jesus teaches how to do right by God and others.
 - c. **The Choice:** the conclusion calls for a decision. In light of what Jesus has said, what choice will you make?

Here is what Jesus is saying through The Sermon on the Mount.

- 1. God's Kingdom comes to Earth through Jesus.
- 2. In God's Kingdom, love, justice, and peace prevail.
- 3. This Kingdom is arriving first to ordinary people—the poor, the powerless, and the outsider ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

Today, we continue our study of the Sermon on the Mount.

- 1. I want to encourage you to read The Sermon on the Mount as a whole several times.
- 2. We will take bite sized chunks of Matthew 5 – 7 over the next months. At times, we will also have messages on other topics.
- 3. Finally, I want to point you to a great resource: [The Bible Project playlist on The Sermon on the Mount](#). It is available online or as an app.

Let's read the first main section of The Sermon on the Mount, which is often referred to as the Beatitudes.

Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, 2 and he began to teach them, saying: (Matthew 5:1-2 NIV).

[The Bible Project](#) Translation

3 How good is life for the poor in spirit, because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.

4 How good is life for those who grieve, because they will be comforted.

5 How good is life for the unimportant, because they will inherit the land.

6 How good is life for those who hunger and thirst for right- relationships, because they will be satisfied.

7 How good is life for those who show mercy, because they will be shown mercy.

8 How good is life for the pure in heart, because they will see God.

9 How good is life for the peacemakers, because they will be called children of God.

10 How good is life for those who have been persecuted on account of doing what is right, because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.

11 How good is life for you when they insult you and persecute and speak any evil lies against you on account of me.

12 Celebrate and shout for joy. Because your reward is great in the skies, because this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

13 You are the salt of the land.

But if the salt becomes unsalty, with what can it be made salty again?

It is useful for nothing, except to be thrown out and stepped on by humans.

14 You are the light of the world.

A city that is set up on a mountain is not able to be hidden.

15 And they don't light a candle and place it under a basket. Rather, upon a candle stand, and it will shine on everyone in the house.

16 In the same way, let your light shine before people so that they can see your good works and they can give honor to your Father who is in the skies.

Prayer:

1. Lord, I pray that you speak to us, encounter us, and grant to us your Spirit of wisdom and revelation that we might know you better.
2. Bless our time in your word together corporately.
3. Bless our time in your word individually as a part of our spiritual practices.
4. Help us to hear your voice, God, by the power of your Holy Spirit.
5. Help us to fall more and more in love with you, and help us to join Jesus on his mission together with others in our spheres of influence.
6. May we be a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

Expounding on Matthew 5:3 – 16

[The Bible Project](#) Translation

Note about “blessed” and the Beatitudes of Jesus: The people are living the good life (Hebrew *ashre'*) because they are receiving the blessing (Hebrew *baruk*). These sayings are reversals. The logic of these nine sayings depends on the claim of Jesus that he is bringing the kingdom of God to earth as it is in heaven. The kingdom of God brings a total reversal of our value system ([Jesus Reframes the Good Life, The Bible Project](#)).

3 How good is life for the poor in spirit, because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.

1. *For the poor in spirit:*
 - a. Those who lack internal energy, strength, or power.
 - b. Those who lack external power; powerless.
 - c. *Poor in spirit* can also mean recognizing that I have no good thing in me apart from God. I am nothing without God. I have no ground to stand on except the grace and mercy of God. I confess that I need God.
 - d. *Poor in spirit* acknowledges a lack of self-sufficiency.
2. *The poor in spirit are living the good life because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.*
 - a. The kingdom of God belongs to *the poor in spirit*.
3. **Consider:** Humility is an important starting point for the kingdom of God.
 - a. We admit that we have a need (confession; lining up with God's wisdom).
 - b. We turn to God through Jesus (repentance; lining up with God's will).
 - c. We put our faith in Jesus rather than in our works, our power, or our righteousness (believing; lining up with God's provision).

- d. We follow Jesus and obey the Lord (following and obeying with the help of the Holy Spirit; lining up with God's purposes, mission, and commissioning).

4 How good is life for those who grieve, because they will be comforted.

1. *For those who grieve* (mourn).
 - a. Those who are poor and powerless suffer loss (grieve, mourn):
 - i. Loss of dreams.
 - ii. Loss of stature.
 - iii. Loss of resources that are confiscated.
 - iv. Loss of justice.
 - v. Etc.
2. *Those who grieve are living the good life because they will be comforted.*
 - a. God is the God of all comfort (1 Corinthians 1:3).
 - b. God is near to the broken hearted (Psalm 34:18).
 - c. God will never deny a broken heart. God will never deny a contrite spirit (Psalm 51:17).
 - d. Jesus is a man who is acquainted with sorrows. He understands our grief and loss (Isaiah 53:3).
 - e. We mourn and grieve with hope, because God is with us, will never abandon us, and will make all things right.
 - i. *Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope (1 Thessalonians 4:13).*
 - f. God is the glory and the lifter of my head.
 - i. *But you are a shield around me, O LORD; you bestow glory on me and lift up my head (Psalm 3:3).*
3. **Consider:** We are created and hard wired for deep connection to God and to one another.
 - a. Our brains are meant to run on the fuel of the joy of the Lord, not on anger or fear.
 - b. We can experience the supra emotion of joy in the midst of grief and other big emotions.
 - c. We need God to help us process grief.
 - d. And, we need others as we deal with grief, because their presence, care, and love help us to feel joy in the midst of loss.
 - e. If you are going through grief, I encourage you to reach out to God and to others.
 - f. And, if you know of someone who is experiencing grief, follow through on those promptings to "be with" them.

5 How good is life for the unimportant, because they will inherit the land.

1. *For the unimportant (meek).*
 - a. The people in front of Jesus were poor (powerless) (vs. 3).
 - b. The people in front of Jesus had lost so much because of occupiers, lack of medical resources, high taxes, and oppression (vs. 4).
 - c. The people in front of Jesus were unimportant as the world measures importance, influence, and authority (vs. 5).
 - d. **If you have no power, if you are grieving, mourning, and crying in the dust, your unimportance and lack of standing confront you every day.**
2. *Those who are unimportant are living the good is life because they will inherit the land.*
 - a. God can restore in a finite amount of time what is lost over a lifetime (Joel 2:23-27).
 - b. One day God will vindicate and elevate his people by giving them their inheritance in him and in the land.
 - c. **This is a great reversal. Those who are unimportant and have nothing have an inheritance in God and in the land.**
3. **Consider:** We are to care for the poor, the marginalized, and those in need (Matthew 25:31-46).
 - a. We get to be a voice for those who have no voice.
 - b. We get to work for the common good.
 - c. We get to partner with Jesus to restore individuals, social systems, communities, and nations to God's design.

6 How good is life for those who hunger and thirst for right-relationships, because they will be satisfied.

1. *For those who hunger and thirst for right-relationships (righteousness).*
 - a. Righteousness is about right relationship with God and others (Matthew 22:37-40).
 - b. Righteousness in the Bible is a character trait that pursues justice and peace for everyone.
 - c. We were created for dependence upon God and interdependence with one another.
 - d. We long to know and to be known.
2. *Those who hunger and thirst for right relationships are living the good life, for they will be satisfied or filled.*
 - a. Because right relationship with God and others is the longing, desire, and will of God.
 - b. Because God desires that people experience right relationship with him and others. God is in the restoration business. God wants us to experience wholeness in our relationships.

- c. Because God wants us to experience unity and oneness like the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
 - d. Because God has wired us to know and to be known.
3. **Consider:**
- a. We desire (hunger and thirst) for right relationships because it is a need that hasn't been met yet.
 - b. **So, the good life includes being dissatisfied with the disorder in our world and the broken relationships between people.**
 - c. It is a holy discontent and a longing to see relationships to be made whole and holy.
 - d. When people treat people the way that Jesus taught, it leads to healthy relationships where things are made right.
 - e. And, remember what you have learned in the past about the word "righteousness." **God sets the standard on what is right or righteous.**
 - i. **In both the OT and NT, righteousness is the state commanded by God and standing the test of His judgment** (2 Cor. 3:9; 6:14; Eph. 4:24). It is conformity to all that He commands or appoints. **Since God Himself is the standard of the believers, the righteousness of God means the righteousness which belongs to God or to oneself from God, or God-like righteousness (Matt. 6:33; James 1:20).** Thus righteousness, in general, is God's uprightness or standard... to which man is expected to conform. (Zodhiates, Spiros. *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: New Testament*. Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2000.)
 - ii. **A Greater Righteousness:** Main Section 2 of Matthew 5:17 – 7:12. This is the main body of teaching of The Sermon on the Mount. **In this section, Jesus tells us what he means for his followers to be righteous.** Righteousness is living in right relationship with God and others. It is a character trait that creates justice and peace in the world. Jesus gives us an understanding of what is right that fulfills the Torah and Prophets.

7 How good is life for those who show mercy, because they will be shown mercy.

- 1. *For those who show mercy.*
 - a. We know we are broken and in need of mercy. We need forgiveness and a fresh start.
 - b. So, we give mercy away to others. We forgive others. We don't hold the shortcomings and sins against others.
 - c. Relationships are a mess, and mercy helps to heal broken relationships.
 - d. We don't want to live by vengeance, by getting even, or by making people pay; rather, we want to live by giving and receiving mercy.

- e. **We want to break the cycle of judgment and unforgiveness.**
- 2. *Those who show mercy are living the good life, because they will receive mercy.*
 - a. We don't want to be treated as our sins deserve.
 - b. We can never repay the debt of love we owe.
 - c. **Because we need mercy, we choose to give mercy and to be merciful, patient, and kind.**
 - d. We have been forgiven much. We have been shown much mercy. So, we forgive much and show much mercy to others.
 - e. **Mercy is a step beyond being right and fair. Mercy is generosity. Mercy is extravagant kindness that goes beyond what is required.**
 - f. The degree to which we receive mercy is connected to how much mercy we give and show to others.
- 3. **Consider:** **One of the most disobeyed verses in Scripture is Matthew 7:1.**
 - a. How you treat others is how God will treat you.
 - b. Since we all need lots of mercy, let's give lots of mercy and refuse to condemn or judge others.
 - c. And, consider the revelation God gave Paul in 1 Corinthians 4:2-5.
 - i. *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God (1 Corinthians 4:2-5).*
 - ii. God knows that in this broken world, I can do everything right and it can turn out wrong.
 - iii. The good news is that God judges rightly. The Lord knows our motives and his rewards include our intentions and motives, not just our outcomes.

8 How good is life for the pure in heart, because they will see God.

- 1. *For the pure in heart.*
 - a. Psalm 24:4-6 says that only the pure in heart will ascend the hill of the Lord and stand in his holy presence.
 - b. In the Bible, living from a pure heart means leaving from pure motives.
 - i. You can be nice to people, but still have contempt for them.
 - ii. You can be devoted to God, but do it for public praise.
 - c. **Being pure of heart means having your desires and your actions aligned with God's desires and actions.**

- d. This is a high bar—right relationships, showing mercy, being pure in heart—but for Jesus, this is what humans were made for. We were made to desire what is good, beautiful, and just. Above all, we were made to desire God, who alone can satisfy our deepest longings ([The Bible Project](#)).
2. *Those who are pure in heart are living the good life, because they will see God.*
3. **Consider:** *God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).*
 - a. We are made pure through Jesus; our purity and righteousness are imparted to us by God because of what Jesus has done for us.
 - b. We are made pure by the purifying, transforming work of the Holy Spirit in our lives as God conforms us to the image of his glorious Son.
 - c. God imparts his purity of heart and righteousness to us through Jesus; that is how God sees us as the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 5:17; 1 Corinthians 1:30; Philippians 3:9).
 - d. *“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. 2 Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare” (Isaiah 55:1-2).*
 - e. See also the invitation and promise Jesus gives the church in Laodicea in Revelation 3:14-22).
 - i. *Revelation 3:18 I counsel you to buy from me (the invitation)....*
 - ii. *Revelation 3:19 ... So be earnest and repent (the currency).*
 - iii. *Revelation 3:20 Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice (listen) and opens the door (respond), I will come in and eat with him, and he with me (communion, intimacy, fellowship).*

9 How good is life for the peacemakers, because they will be called children of God.

1. *For the peacemakers.*
 - a. When God’s kingdom comes in its fulness one day, it will bring peace to all people. **So, anyone who is entering God’s kingdom now is to work as a peacemaker.**
 - b. **To be a peacemaker is to enter into conflicts and to work creatively to open up a just and generous path forward for people.**
 - c. The work of a pacemaker can be rewarding, but it can be dangerous (see Matthew 5:10, the persecuted).
 - d. [The Hard Path of Peacemaking](#): Choosing to live in alignment with Jesus’ teachings will lead to joy on Earth and a great reward in God’s Kingdom in the age to come. But there is also a cost. As we actively make peace where there is conflict, we will encounter painful resistance from many

sides. But Jesus encourages us to celebrate when we experience mistreatment as a result of peacemaking because we are doing what is right.

- e. "Jesus is saying, 'Listen, the way the world is right now—when God's Kingdom comes on Earth as it is in Heaven—it will result in you getting caught in the crossfire of a lot of angry people, and you're going to get hurt.' **And that doesn't mean that you're doing the wrong thing. In fact, you should expect it. The good life belongs to those who are doing the Jesus thing, doing the Jesus ethic of doing what is right by God and others"** ([The Bible Project](#)).
 - f. Jesus created peace (wholeness, wellbeing, human flourishing) through generous, self-sacrificial love.
 - g. This love isn't just for our friends; the love of God is also for our enemies. And, we will get misunderstood.
2. *Those who are peacemakers are living the good life because they will be called children of God.*
3. **Consider:** **There is a difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking.**
- a. Peacekeeping tries to keep a lid on problems, conflicts, difficulties, and misunderstandings.
 - b. Peacemaking tries to get things out into the light so that we might be healed and restored to one another.
 - c. Peacemaking is hard work.
 - d. Peacemaking is messy work.
 - e. We work towards shalom (wholeness, wellbeing, flourishing, safety, justice, where everyone has enough, etc.).
 - f. It is hard to be a peacemaker if you approach people and situations as black/white and right/wrong.
 - g. We need to learn to see both/and, win – win. Life is complex.
 - h. Be wary of simple answers to complex situations.
4. **More thoughts on peacemaking from [Faithwalking Foundations](#)** (Ken Shuman, Module 6, Session 4, Missional Practices, pps. 9-10).
- a. Those who work for peace are people who accurately reflect the heart and character of God. Being a peacemaker means that we work to restore shalom. We work to restore wholeness, completeness, unity, harmony, and soundness. We work to bring things back into integrity with God's intended design. Being a peacemaker is loving my neighbor well.
 - b. I think there are **three possible ways of being in life: peacekeeper, troublemaker, peacemaker.**
 - c. 1) **We can choose to be a peacekeeper.**
 - i. Peacekeepers are appeasers. Peacekeepers want everyone to just get along. Peacekeepers prefer to keep quiet about

anything controversial and to keep everyone happy. They don't want to ruffle any feathers, and they resist stirring anything up. Peacekeepers don't talk about what they really feel and think. Peacekeepers protect themselves by not risking. Peacekeepers are afraid, and they let their fear control their lives.

- ii. We may think that being a peacekeeper sounds like the way a follower of Jesus should behave, but it really is not. Peacekeeping is an indication that we are less emotionally mature. Peacekeeping prevents us from making progress. Peacekeeping keeps us stuck. Peacekeeping is not the way of Jesus.
 - iii. Unfortunately, for much of my life I chose to be a peacekeeper. Because of my woundedness, I allowed fear to keep me silent. It felt like the safe thing to do. As I've grown in my emotional maturity and increased my self-differentiation, I've grown in this area of my life, however. I'm learning to say what I think, and I'm learning to take a stand based on my internal guiding principles. I can say, "This is what I think, this is what I believe, and this is what I will do," while at the same time allowing others to do the same. I don't force my opinion on others, but I'm also not afraid to share my thoughts.
- d. 2) **We can choose to be a troublemaker.**
- i. Troublemakers demand that things be done their way. Troublemakers think they are right and everyone else is wrong. Troublemakers don't care if people are hurt or what kind of damage they leave behind. Troublemakers protect themselves and their way by attacking others. Troublemakers demand conformity. Troublemakers are domineering.
 - ii. Troublemakers are controlling people. Troublemakers don't respect the boundaries of others, and they can't set boundaries for themselves. They can't hear "no." Troublemakers refuse to value the freedom of every individual to choose for himself or herself. Troublemakers/ controllers withhold love, affection, or communication in order to make the other person change. They always blame someone or something. They use anger, shame, and guilt messages to get their way.
 - iii. Being a troublemaker – a controlling person – is also an indication of a lower level of emotional maturity. We move away from this kind of behavior as we become more self-differentiated and emotionally mature. Our growth is crucial to our effectiveness as missional people.
- e. 3) **We can choose to be a peacemaker.**

- i. Peacemakers work to create the conditions for peace. Peacemakers don't protect themselves but are courageous risk-takers. Peacemakers take a stand against non-peace and work to restore wholeness.
- ii. a. **Peacemakers speak the truth in love.** They "say what is so" for them. They speak out against injustice and oppression. (Ephesians 4:15)
- iii. b. **Peacemakers forgive and offer grace to others.** Peacemakers don't hold grudges or have deep-seated resentments. (Ephesians 4:31-32)
- iv. c. **Peacemakers initiate reconciliation.** Peacemakers don't wait for someone else or something else. Reconciliation is a guiding principle for a peacemaker. (Matthew 5:23-24 and 2 Corinthians 5:18-21)
- v. d. **Peacemakers don't retaliate or seek revenge.** A peacemaker manages his or her anxiety and remains calm. Peacemakers refuse to react with conflict.
- vi. e. **Peacemakers take action against injustice and oppression.** Sometimes in order to be a peacemaker, a person may appear to be a troublemaker. I believe that this is what Jesus did when he cleared the temple as reported in Matthew 21:12. I don't believe that Jesus was reacting out of his anxiety but that he was acting as a peacemaker out of his guiding principles. To many he looked like a troublemaker, but he was really restoring wholeness to a place of brokenness. Peacemakers make "good trouble," as John Lewis said.
- vii. **Another example of peacemaking is the "Freedom Riders" during the Civil Rights Movement.** A group of activists boarded buses and went to the South to protest segregation. Many people considered the activists to be troublemakers. However, they were not only peaceful in their approach, but they were acting as peacemakers. They were establishing wholeness in a place of brokenness in society. Rather than staying home and keeping their mouths shut — as peacekeepers do — they worked for peace. They risked abuse and violence for the sake of the common good.

10 How good is life for those who have been persecuted on account of doing what is right, because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.

- 1. *For those have been persecuted on account of doing what is right.*
 - a. When you move into places of conflict and seek reconciliation, it will involve pushing back against the status quo.

- b. Pushing back against the way things are will result in resistance and getting fired at from all sides.
- 2. *Those who are persecuted for doing right are living the good life because they are called children of God.*
- 3. **Consider:** Getting into the middle of things means you take hits from all directions.
 - a. We assume that when we do what is right, we will get praised, honored, and recognized.
 - b. However, that is not always the case.
 - c. Standing up for what is right and righteous changes situations, relationships, and even economic conditions. Sometimes, change is wanted. At other times, change causes fear and uncertainty. Change can be threatening to people, situations, or institutions.

11 How good is life for you when they insult you and persecute and speak any evil lies against you on account of me. 12 Celebrate and shout for joy. Because your reward is great in the skies, because this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.

- 1. *For when they insult you and persecute you and speak any evil lies against you because of your life with Jesus.*
 - a. Jesus tells us to be prepared to be misunderstood. You might be mocked, treated unfairly, labeled, lied about, or criticized.
 - b. But Jesus says being misunderstood for peacemaking is worth it and is even worth celebrating.
 - c. Look back at the long line of Israel's prophets. You can celebrate because you are standing in a long line of people who stood up for righteousness, justice, and mercy.
 - d. Being misunderstood, insulted, persecuted, and lied about is the cost and reward of bearing witness to God's kingdom.
- 2. *Those who are insulted and persecuted and who are lied about are living the good life, because they are in the company of the prophets who were persecuted in times past.*
- 3. **Consider:** God has the final say over your life.
 - a. The Lord sees the thoughts and intentions of everyone.
 - b. You can intend to do right and it turns out wrong or it doesn't turn out the way you intended.
 - c. Praise God that he sees, knows, and makes righteous judgment, rewarding those with right intentions and motives (1 Corinthians 4:2-5).

13 You are the salt of the land. But if the salt becomes unsalty, with what can it be made salty again? It is useful for nothing, except to be thrown out and stepped on by humans.

1. Salt is an important preservative. "In the ancient world, salt had an important function to preserve food and make it last a really long time. This is why, in the Hebrew Bible, salt is associated with God's long-lasting covenant promises to Israel" ([The Bible Project](#)). (Leviticus 2:13; Number 18:19; 2 Chronicles 13:5.)
 - a. God chose Israel to be his partners in covenant relationship. God would bless his people so that they could be a blessing and spread life to the world around them.
 - b. Just as salt preserves food, the role of God's partners is to preserve the life of creation by preserving the life of the covenant.
 - c. This partnership is a choice.
 - d. According to Israel's prophets, Israel violated the covenant with God. In other words, they became "unsalty." So, God allowed enemy nations to trample on Israel, to conquer and exile them from their land, and to stomp all over them.
2. But now, Jesus is announcing something bold and new to his followers
 - a. "In the Hebrew Scriptures, salt is a symbol of God's long-lasting covenant relationship with Israel. So, Jesus is claiming that he and his followers are carrying Israel's covenant relationship to its fulfillment" (The Bible Project, Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).
 - b. Through relationship with Jesus, his followers can experience God's covenant blessings and recover Israel's calling to preserve the life of the world.
3. As a preservative, salt kept people alive for long periods of time because salt preserved their food. So, salt makes things last a really long time. Therefore, salt is a symbol of God's long, enduring covenant with Israel.
 - a. *"Whatever is set aside from the holy offerings the Israelites present to the LORD I give to you and your sons and daughters as your regular share. It is an everlasting covenant of salt before the LORD for both you and your offspring" (Numbers 18:19).*
 - i. All of Israel's gifts were to be salted as a sign of the everlasting covenant of salt, emphasizing the long-lasting nature of the covenant and of salt.
 - ii. Salt is connected to a long-lasting relationship.
4. Salt was also a means of washing things or purifying them in the Hebrew Bible.
5. Salt is a seasoning. We are to bring out the God-flavors in this world (MSG).
6. A little salt goes a long way. Christians have influence way beyond themselves.
7. So, Jesus says to his followers, "Y'all are the salt" of bringing my kingdom and blessings to all the earth and all relationships.

14 You are the light of the world. A city that is set up on a mountain is not able to be hidden.

1. Light goes along with salt in its symbol of covenant. Light is used all through the OT and especially in the book of Isaiah to refer to God's covenantal light and revelation going forth in the world ([The Bible Project](#)).
2. "Jesus is taking this image from the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, who said that one day, God's heavenly reign will touch down on Earth in Jerusalem, high on a hill. And this city will reflect God's light out into the nations, who will learn the ways of God and live in peace. It's a heavenly city, and its light will be like the dawn of new creation" ([The Bible Project](#)).
 - a. So, Jesus takes this ancient promise about Jerusalem and applies it to himself and his followers.
 - b. God is beginning his new city, his new creation, right here and right now.
 - c. In this city, the whole world gets to experience the goodness of God.

15 And they don't light a candle and place it under a basket. Rather, upon a candle stand, and it will shine on everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before people so that they can see your good works and they can give honor to your Father who is in the skies.

1. In different places, Jesus and his followers describe good works as acts of service for people in need and as generosity to the poor.
2. This statement leads back to the nine announcements where Jesus describes the kingdom identity and the character of those who are most at home in the kingdom of God.
3. As the followers of Jesus live into their identity in Christ and join Jesus on his mission in the earth, they bring more and more of the light of God's kingdom from heaven down to earth.
4. "What Isaiah begins to anticipate is that if God's purpose for Israel is ever going to happen, that calling, to walk in the light of Yahweh, to be a source of peace among the nations, is going to fall on the shoulders of one Israelite who is just called 'the servant'" ([The Servant as the Light in Isaiah, The Bible Project](#)).
5. **The Light and the City:**
 - a. When Jesus calls his followers "the light of the world" and "a city on a hill," he is referencing images from the prophet Isaiah. The shining city on the hill portrays God's wisdom and heavenly presence emanating from Jerusalem and filling the whole Earth. By using these images, Jesus is applying Isaiah's prophecies to himself and his followers ([The Bible Project](#)).
 - b. According to Isaiah, one day the inhabitants of Jerusalem will reflect God's light, peace, and blessing out to all the world.
 - c. Jerusalem is the image of the city on a hill that shines for all the world to see. We are a part of that family, heritage, and kingdom.

6. Light shines in the darkness and overcomes darkness. Christians have influence way beyond themselves.
7. We are to bring out the God-colors in this world (MSG).

Conclusion:

Our identity: We are a people who follow Jesus, who listen to the voice of God, and who get in action around what the Lord is saying through the power of his Holy Spirit.

For reflection:

1. What is God saying to you?
2. What is getting stirred up in you?
3. Where do you sense resistance?
4. What questions do you have?
5. What are you feeling or thinking?
6. What is at least one takeaway for you today?

Ministry Time:

Sermon on the Mount Bible Project and other research 8'22'24

[The Bible Project](#)

NIV	ESV	The Bible Project
3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.	3 How good is life for the poor in spirit, because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.
4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.	4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.	4 How good is life for those who grieve, because they will be comforted.
5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.	5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.	5 How good is life for the unimportant, because they will inherit the land.
6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.	6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.	6 How good is life for those who hunger and thirst for right-relationships, because they will be satisfied.
7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.	7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.	7 How good is life for those who show mercy, because they will be shown mercy.
8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.	8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.	8 How good is life for the pure in heart, because they will see God.
9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God.	9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.	9 How good is life for the peacemakers, because they will be called children of God.

<p>10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</p>	<p>10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.</p>	<p>10 How good is life for those who have been persecuted on account of doing what is right, because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.</p>
<p>11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.</p>	<p>11 "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.</p>	<p>11 How good is life for you when they insult you and persecute and speak any evil lies against you on account of me.</p>
<p>12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.</p>	<p>12 Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.</p>	<p>12 Celebrate and shout for joy. Because your reward is great in the skies, because this is how they persecuted the prophets before you.</p>
<p>13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men.</p>	<p>13 "You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet.</p>	<p>13 You are the salt of the land.</p> <p>But if the salt becomes unsalty, with what can it be made salty again?</p> <p>It is useful for nothing, except to be thrown out and stepped on by humans.</p>
<p>14 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before</p>	<p>14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may</p>	<p>14 You are the light of the world.</p> <p>A city that is set up on a mountain is not able to be hidden.</p> <p>15 And they don't light a candle and place it under a basket. Rather, upon a</p>

men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.	see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.	candle stand, and it will shine on everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before people so that they can see your good works and they can give honor to your Father who is in the skies.
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[The Bible Project: Matthew 5:14-16](#)

“Jesus is taking this image from the Hebrew prophet Isaiah, who said that one day, God’s heavenly reign will touch down on Earth in Jerusalem, high on a hill. And this city will reflect God’s light out into the nations, who will learn the ways of God and live in peace. It’s a heavenly city, and its light will be like the dawn of new creation.”

Highlight

“What Isaiah begins to anticipate is that if God’s purpose for Israel is ever going to happen, that calling, to walk in the light of Yahweh, to be a source of peace among the nations, is going to fall on the shoulders of one Israelite who is just called ‘the servant.’”

Salt

“In the Hebrew Scriptures, salt is a symbol of God’s long-lasting covenant relationship with Israel. So Jesus is claiming that he and his followers are carrying Israel’s covenant relationship to its fulfillment” ([The Bible Project](#), Weekly Playlist, January 1-7).

The Light and the City

When Jesus calls his followers “the light of the world” and “a city on a hill,” he is referencing images from the prophet Isaiah. The shining city on the hill portrays God’s wisdom and heavenly presence emanating from Jerusalem and filling the whole Earth. By using these images, Jesus is applying Isaiah’s prophecies to himself and his followers.

[Read - What Is the Sermon on the Mount?](#)

The Sermon on the Mount is Jesus' most well-known teaching and one of history's most famous speeches ever. Jesus delivered this sermon 2,000 years ago, and the implications of these words are still shockingly relevant and meaningful.

Emphasizing humility, forgiveness, and generous care for our neighbors, Jesus encourages people to choose God's way of love, which will eventually renew all of creation. He calls this restored world God's Kingdom. This is a realm in which Heaven and Earth are inseparably combined, a place where life flourishes that's free from injustice, suffering, and death.

We're not sure if Jesus delivered the Sermon on the Mount as one big speech or if Matthew collected Jesus' key teachings over time and organized them into a sermon-style scene (recorded in Matthew 5-7). Either way, this sermon contains some of the most rigorous ethical demands in the Bible. It has wild ideas like "blessed are the peacemakers" and "love your enemies" and "pray for people who persecute you."

These ideas might pass for utopian ideals, but they're nonsense (and weak) in our modern empires, where leadership usually means strength and power more than vulnerability and love.

Why Teach from a Mountain?

In the Gospel of Matthew's Sermon on the Mount story, Jesus is intentionally portrayed on a large hill (or mountain, Matt. 5:1), speaking to a group of hurting Jewish farmers and day laborers who have been oppressed by Rome (and other powerful nations) for too long. They're sick of being bullied, mocked, and taxed into poverty by those in power. And like their Hebrew ancestors, who had long ago been slaves under brutal Egyptian tyranny, they are in need of a rescuer.

Enter Jesus of Nazareth—the humble teacher everyone whispers about. Family and friends are saying good things, but the power guys are getting irritated about everything he says.

By the time of the Sermon on the Mount scene, many already considered Jesus a great prophet like Moses. Matthew says that crowds gather, and Jesus ascends a "mountain." This mountain teaching with oppressed people sounds familiar—think about Moses giving instructions at Mount Sinai to the Hebrew people recently freed from enslavement. With all these symbols working together, many in the crowd are wondering if Jesus will be some kind of rescuer: "Is this Jesus a new kind of Moses?"

Matthew compares Jesus to Moses but takes care to show he's not the same as Moses, nor is his instruction a simple repeat of Moses' law. In Matthew 5:17, Jesus says he is not abolishing what Moses gave; he's "filling it full." Jesus' teaching deepens and expands that first instruction (Hebrew: torah) from Moses.

To better answer the question "What is the Sermon on the Mount?", we need to dig deeper into the three key distinctives we've briefly mentioned. We need to look at:

- How Matthew portrays Jesus as a new Moses
- How Jesus' teaching "fills full" the Hebrew Bible's law
- What Jesus means when he talks about God's Kingdom

Jesus as the New Moses

Throughout the biblical story, God instructs people in many ways, but two teachers—Moses and Jesus—become primary human instructors. Moses was the only one who experienced God face-to-face (Exod. 33:11), and Jesus is God himself in the flesh. In Matthew's Sermon on the Mount, through Jesus, God shows up like a new Moses, arriving to rescue not only all of Israel but all of humanity.

As such, Matthew casts Jesus not only as a new Moses but also as a greater Moses. Somehow, in a speech where Jesus never tells people to respect him or to bow down, the crowds still recognize strong authority in Jesus' words. His teaching seems to have the ring of truth, and it fits with the Hebrew Bible's instruction they already know, yet it leaves them utterly astonished (Matt. 7:28).

Jesus is disrupting the common expectations of their world. Moses' teaching also disrupted the common expectations of the Egyptian empire and its Hebrew slaves. Moses taught an enslaved people to become free, not by turning to violence but by turning their attention to God and following his lead—trusting his instruction—which becomes a core theme in the Exodus narrative. That had to sound crazy to enslaved people. Just follow God and trust him to deal with their enemies? But they did, and God set them free as promised.

Like most of us throughout history, the crowds listening to Jesus assume that evil gets eradicated from our world with strong military power and the wealth it takes to build armies. But Jesus goes nowhere near that or an idea that depends on force, coercion, or violence. He promises with his life that the power of God's love, along with those who choose to embrace it, will eventually outlast and overwhelm all evil everywhere.

Don't fight evil with the power of evil, Jesus says. Instead, join God in creating goodness throughout the land. If Jesus' followers listen to his words, they will start seeing their enemies as neighbors and miracles of God who are worthy of love. All evil and every oppressor will ultimately be defeated, Jesus teaches, not with swords but with God's creative, renewing love.

Moses' law had always been pointing in this exact same direction. It always intended to form its followers into loving people who honor God by blessing every family on Earth (see Genesis 12:1-3). Jesus is now making good on that intent by finishing—or filling full—the work that Moses' instruction started.

How Jesus' Teaching "Fills Full" the Torah

In Matthew 5:17-43, Jesus opens six repeated statements with these words: "You have heard it said, and I say to you" The first part, "you have heard it said," refers to the original Torah. Some thought Jesus opposed that first instruction, but Jesus emphatically says the opposite. He doesn't think the old law is flawed or obsolete. It was limited in its scope, and he's providing fuller explanation and illustration.

Though the first law did intend to form the human heart, its instructions could be followed in vain—interpreted and followed in a way that had no meaningful effect on the follower. For instance, Jesus agrees with Moses' prohibition against murder, but his teaching suggests that avoiding murder is only a surface-level goal. One can be considerate or non-violent while still harboring contempt and hate for others. But hateful hearts won't function in the Kingdom of God, even if they are well-behaved. So Jesus refocuses his listeners to consider their actual hearts and to honestly pay attention to whom and what they truly love.

Real human life and goodness, as Jesus describes it, is not about a simple rejection of murder; it's about actively loving every person around you, regardless of their status as friend or enemy. Jesus teaches impartial love for all neighbors (not some neighbors). Jesus' life fulfills the law, and Jesus' teaching fulfills the law—he fills Moses' Torah full.

What's This "Kingdom" Jesus Talks About?

Think about an average neighborhood or village. Imagine if, one by one, its citizens started making decisions to bless one another with resources rather than hoard and fight over them. Imagine what it would be like if society at large considered vulnerability and kindness to be the highest forms of power and glory. It's a world where mutual love between citizens has made it impossible for evil to continue.

Total peace. Total safety. Total provision. Everyone experiencing the good life.

“The good life belongs to [or ‘blessed are’] those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,” Jesus says in the introduction of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:6). That word “righteousness” comes from the Greek *dikaiosune*, which is about right relating with others. To be a righteous person, according to Jesus and the New Testament, we must learn how to relate rightly with all people. In other words, we learn how to love our neighbors.

Jesus says that the good life belongs to people who hunger and thirst for right relationships “because they will be filled [or ‘satisfied’].” They will, according to God’s promise, eventually live in a world where Heaven and Earth are united, where everyone else wants right relationships too—this is God’s Kingdom. Surely many in Jesus’ crowds wanted to be there now.

Notice how Jesus does not promise to take these oppressed Galileans from their bad situation straight to a better world by simply destroying their Roman oppressors. He’s teaching them that a free world doesn’t come about through harming or exterminating enemies. It comes about freely, through something more powerful.

He’s helping them experience freedom within God’s Kingdom right now by choosing to turn their attention to him and his way of love. This is why Jesus invites the people to “seek first the Kingdom” (Matt. 6:33)—to let his Sermon on the Mount instructions guide them through their wilderness, into the promised Kingdom way—and to want that more than anything.

Loving that way of life, he says, leads to a world where every need is met, every tear is wiped away, and every bit of life’s goodness gets experienced by all people.

Don’t allow worries about securing your basic needs govern the decisions you make, Jesus teaches. Instead, more than anything else, pursue God’s Kingdom way of life and right relating with all others. When we do that, we’ll find that life’s biggest needs are no longer an issue (Matt. 6:31-33). When everyone lives like that, fear and violence don’t make sense anymore because the world is altogether good. That good world is the Kingdom Jesus speaks of in his Sermon on the Mount.

How God’s World Will Be Transformed

Moses joined God in this life-renewing work back in Egypt. And Matthew portrays Jesus as a new Moses to signal that Jesus is doing the same thing. He is continuing the rescuing work God started long ago. But he’s introducing an unexpected trajectory through his Sermon on the Mount, opening humanity’s eyes to the deeper meaning of Moses’ Torah.

As it is, Jesus' teaching implies that the world won't be fixed through the elimination of human enemies or through merely escaping our world for a better utopia in the clouds. God's world—on Earth as it is in Heaven—will be transformed by changed human hearts. Jesus' frustrated Galilean crowds were probably as unhappy to hear this as we likely are. They want God's power to destroy their enemies, not God's power to bless and heal and love them. In fact, Matthew says at the end that Jesus' crowds were utterly shocked, astounded, and amazed.

Despite hearing the most intense ethical teaching they had ever heard, far greater than any legal experts or religious elites, the people still somehow knew that Jesus spoke truth. And isn't it true for each of us that, deep down, we prefer kindness and love more than hate or contempt?

"When Jesus finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed by his teaching," Matthew writes to conclude, "because Jesus taught them like one who had authority, not like their experts in the law" (Matt. 7:28, NET).

[Read - What Does It Mean to Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness?](#)

Of life's most basic needs, food, oxygen, and water rank high. We might add shelter to round out the "essentials" category, but Jesus would add one more—right relating with others. When he tells people to "hunger and thirst for righteousness," we may assume that he's talking about a personal desire for holiness. But righteousness, according to Jesus and the rest of the Bible, is about right relating in the ways of love. And in Matthew 5:6, Jesus suggests that loving others is a basic human need like eating food or drinking water.

In the opening lines of his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, "How good is life for those who hunger and thirst for right relationships (righteousness), because they will be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6, BibleProject Translation).

Our English term "righteousness" comes from the Hebrew word *tzedakah* and the Greek word *dikaiousune*. Both terms carry weighty ideas like justice, generosity, and honesty, which all describe ways of right relating with others and with God.

Even if we understand what righteousness means, Matthew 5:6 still raises a key question: What does it mean to hunger and thirst for righteousness in the context of Jesus' teachings?

Radical as it sounds, Jesus' teaching is not new. In fact, this upside-down way of relating, which lifts others up rather than oppressing them in the name of personal gain, is woven throughout the whole story of the Bible, from beginning to end.

Righteousness in the Hebrew Bible

The world God created is shaped around intrinsic right relating (see Genesis 1). Male and female human beings walk with God, and he creates them as partners who bear God's image and care for the rest of creation. It's here that we get the first picture of righteousness—humanity's good relationship with God, each other, and the land they live on.

When Adam and Eve choose to ignore God's instruction and eat from the tree of knowing good and evil, it's a choice to stop relating well with God. Immediately, a seismic shift occurs in the way that they relate to each other and everything around them. Listen to Adam's response after God asks, "Did you eat from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" Adam says, "The woman whom you gave me, she gave me some fruit from the tree and I ate it" (Gen. 3:11-12, NET).

When God turns to Eve, she similarly deflects blame toward the serpent. Suddenly, man and woman become preoccupied with self-preservation in a way that requires the subjugation of one another and the world around them. Previously, the humans walked in right relationship with each other and their Creator; now, they hide from him and respond dishonestly to his questions. Even worse, they begin to die because right relating is essential to ongoing life.

Humanity's inherent desire for right relationships has since been replaced with fear and an appetite for personal protection and gain. We're taught to compete for resources and defend what we have, keeping others and enemies away at any cost.

But God didn't want to leave things this way, so he periodically gives instruction to people, like the law given to Israel through Moses. This law was intended to address humanity's destructive craving—a deadly kind of hungering and thirsting. The daily practice of Moses' law created rhythms of right relating with God and others that undermine self-centered ways of life. When people and whole communities follow these instructions, those routinely harmed or ignored by the power-hungry—the poor and powerless, widows and orphans—can find new life through the care shown to them by their neighbors.

Despite these instructions from God, humanity continues to pursue self-supremacy with the determination of a famished wolf searching for prey. In response, God persistently calls his people back to a way of right relating that will finally satiate their deepest longing.

“Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy, and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost. Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy?” (Isa 55:1-2a, NIV)

Righteousness, Hunger, and Thirst in the Sermon on the Mount

Given how integral this idea of right relationship is to the Bible's story, it's not surprising that the theme takes center stage in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:20, 6:1, 6:33, 7:12). When Jesus sits down on the mountainside, surrounded by crowds of people, Jesus details a revolutionary way of life that's rooted in ancient wisdom from the Hebrew Bible. With his words, Jesus sets a table and invites those listening to experience a nourishing way of life that satisfies our longing for good relationships with all people. This is the kind of relating that defines Jesus' Kingdom way of life.

“How good is life for the poor in spirit,” Jesus says, “because theirs is the kingdom of the skies.” “How good is life,” he promises, “for the peacemakers” (Matt. 5:3, 9, BPT).

Jesus' tender words have transformative power, inviting us to abandon our hunger for self-sufficiency and power. Like loving parents gently lifting their child's gaze to meet their own, Jesus invites us to be transformed by a desire for right relationship with himself and one another. Be like me, he says. Allow your perspective of the world to be turned upside-down, and yearn for a new way of living and relating.

This kind of righteousness is about more than a personal moral code. According to Jesus, it is possible to become consumed with following rules without craving right relationships (Matt. 5:20). Jesus also confronts a group of Bible scholars who expertly adhere to the law while simultaneously oppressing the vulnerable (Matt. 23:1-36)! They're acting with evil while thinking they're the most righteous people in town.

Jesus says that real righteousness points back to the first garden and describes the ethic of God's Kingdom. This way of life is inspired not by an appetite for personal gain but by a hunger for love that compels a person to be fair and just toward others, to seek peace with all, and to generously give without restraint (see Matt. 5:38-42). Jesus lives like this without fail, and he invites everyone to join him in hungering for righteousness in our own lives and in our world.

This is what Jesus means when he says, "Rather, first of all seek for his kingdom and doing-what-is-right by him, and all these things will be added to you" (Matt. 6:33, BPT).

Before presenting his listeners with this challenging promise, Jesus reassures them that God cares about their physical needs. "So then, don't worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear for clothing?'" He says, "For the nations, they constantly seek for all these things, and your Father in the skies knows that you need all that" (Matt. 6:31-32, BPT).

The message is at once simple and revolutionary. Jesus invites us to trust God with the substance of our daily existence, while simultaneously becoming consumed with a hunger for the right relationships of his Kingdom.

You Will Be Satisfied

When we trust that right relating with God and others is no less essential for life than food or water, Jesus teaches, our lives will be turned upside-down. We start living like we're already in God's Kingdom (and start experiencing a taste of its goodness). Throughout his time on Earth, Jesus was lifting the downtrodden and challenging those who sought power at the cost of the helpless. As an ultimate expression of this righteous way, Jesus willingly gives up his life. His death is at once a demonstration of

humanity's cruel hunger for power and God's boundless mercy, justice, and determined pursuit of right relationships.

Jesus calls us to push aside our craving for personal gain and become like him. He promises that our hunger for this way of life will not leave us wanting: "How good is life for those who hunger and thirst for right relationships, because they will be satisfied" (Matt. 5:6, BPT). Did you catch it? He's saying that if we become hungry for right relating with others, we will eventually be satisfied. All of restored humanity will live in a flourishing world where no human being does harm or relates poorly to another.

That's the home everyone was built for. If we hunger for that, we will be satisfied. Through his way of life and teaching, Jesus is slowly but surely changing our hearts, teaching us to love one another like he does and leading us to an incorruptible home where right relating—righteousness—will be our daily fare.