

Date : 28 July 2024
Theme : The Sermon on the Mount
Topic : Purity, Peacemakers, Persecuted
Key verse : *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Matthew 5:8-12*

Introduction

The Sermon on the Mount was taught by our Lord to His disciples and to the crowd who had travelled from far and near. At the outset this is an authoritative ethic for the people of God. At the end of the Sermon, we are told...*the crowds were astounded at His teaching... Matthew 7:28.*

Thus, the Sermon on the Mount is not just for disciples, but wisdom for the crowds today.

Jesus discourse is about attaining true righteousness.

- Core attitudes for true happiness
In the Beatitudes, our Lord Jesus, as Creator of mankind, identifies core elements that make happiness. Jesus' goal is that with these attitudes, we will be able to function as salt and light and bring glory to our heavenly Father.
- We are to reflect true righteousness. The Lord warns that unless our righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the Pharisees, no one can see God.
 - The first 4 beatitudes emphasize the attitudes within, inwards.
 - poor in spirit
 - mourn over our sins
 - meek when provoked
 - thirst for righteousness
 - The next 4 beatitudes emphasize our attitudes outwards, people and God.
 - merciful is shown mercy
 - pure in heart will see God
 - peacemakers are called sons of God
 - persecuted for Jesus' sake...*persecute you...against you because of Me... (on My account)*
Matthew 5:11

True righteousness is not done for our sake, it is done for Jesus' sake, done for His honour. It is this allegiance to Jesus that will be tested by persecution.

Today, we shall address the 3 beatitudes:

- Purity of the heart
- Peacemakers
- Persecuted for Christ

We shall consider

- What these entail?
- Why do they matter?
- What blessings will come out of them?

1. What does it entail to be pure in heart (= holiness, sanctification, cleansed)

- To be Pure in heart necessitates faithfulness to God's ways; examples are:
 - **Joseph** showed unwavering faithfulness and purity alone in a foreign land. Joseph was attractive physically with a sharp mind. His master's wife plotted day and night to seduce him...*How can I sin against God?...* was his response toward God.
 - **Daniel's** pure heart to God as a young man led him to request not to eat the King's diet. Later, he was persecuted by evil men who conspired to trick the king to impose on Daniel the penalty of being fed to the lions.

What are we up against to keep our hearts pure?

My Application

a) **Joseph** had to swim **against the tide** of popular opinion to maintain his purity

We too go to work daily in a society in which immorality is common – premarital sex, adultery, homosexuality, pornography.

- **Joseph** was tempted regularly and persistently. Potiphar's wife did not leave him alone after he refused her advances...*she spoke to Joseph day after day... Genesis 39:10*

Sustained temptations can wear a person down to give in if he was half hearted.

Why did Joseph refuse to sin even if no one knew, since nobody was around? No one was home that day except Joseph and Potiphar's wife – an ideal time to commit fornication.

No one except God.

...one day that he (Joseph) went into the house to do his work,...none of his men of the household was there inside... Genesis 39:11

b) **It entails meekness (= submission under authority)**

Daniel demonstrated submission to human authority. He respected the authority of the king but refused to compromise when it came to obeying God's commands. He would not sin against God.

c) **It means guarding our hearts**

How do we keep our hearts pure?

i) Know what God's Word commands

King David asked...*How can a young man keep his way pure?*

His reply?...*By paying heed according to God's Word.*

David did one thing...*Your Word have I hid in my heart... Psalm 119:9, 11*

- Ignorance makes us vulnerable. When our mind has no foundational truths, we are swayed.

ii) Flee youthful lusts. Do not stay on to fight. *2 Timothy 2:22*

- Confess sin *1 John 1:9*

- Be cleansed by His Word

- Associate with the pure in heart *Titus 1:15*

- Pray...*Create in me a clean heart... Psalm 51:10*

- Acquire wisdom from above *James 3:17...pure and peaceable.*

d) **Why does it matter?**

i) God's command...*Be holy as He is holy...Without holiness no man can see God Hebrews 12:14*

ii) The Holy Spirit only indwells pure hearts

iii) The pure in heart sees God's provision and power to lead others out of famine to feasting.

- Experience fulness of joy in this life.

- Bless others

Joseph blessed the nations by providing grain during a severe famine – first for Egypt then all the earth *Genesis 41:56,57.*

2. Blessed are the Peacemakers: called children of God

My Application

a) What does it entail?

Abigail: an example of a peacemaker who had to...

i) Initiate acts of appeasement.

David's men had protected Nabal's shepherds. However, when approached for reciprocal help, Nabal insulted David's men.

So, David plotted revenge together with 400 men to fight Nabal. Abigail, Nabal's wife, who heard what Nabal, her husband, had foolishly done, knew that trouble was brewing. She gathered large amounts of fruits, sheep, and bread, and hurried to David. She expressed gratitude and asked for forgiveness. Thus, bloodshed was averted.

ii) Repair breaches between quarrelling parties.

Christians are to be peacemakers and ambassadors to bring the message of reconciliation. We are called...*the repairers of the breach...* *Isaiah 58:12*, just like our Lord Jesus who was Mediator between God and men.

b) Why does it matter?

The Blessing ...*They shall be called (= designated term) the children of God...*

i) Reflect the Father's glory (honourable, behave like their Father)

ii) Loved by the Father.

iii) Children have many privileges.

Possession of the Kingdom and access to the Father's resources, love, care and presence.

...*It is your Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom...* *Luke 12:32*

iv) They are heirs and joint heirs with Christ *Romans 8:17*

v) Ranked above angels.

c) How to be a peacemaker?

i) Avoid gossip

o set a watch over your lips

o not a tale bearer ...*you shall not go about spreading slander...* *Leviticus 19:16*

o refuse to be Satan's mouth piece.

ii) Put away pride and competition

Contrast Mordecai's responsibility for Esther and the Jewish people with Haman's plot to exterminate them *Esther 3:9*.

iii) Guard against being gullible

Do not swallow every claim made by the media without weighing its truth.

The simple believe every word. *Proverbs 14:15*

Spur one another with love and good works.

3. Blessed are the Persecuted: theirs is the Kingdom of heaven.

My Application

a) What does it mean?

Stephen in *Acts 6* was stoned to death by the Sanhedrin (law makers themselves) because he was faithful to preach the gospel.

- Loyalty to Jesus and the gospel message can be costly.

Paul in *3 Timothy 3:12* warns...*Yes...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

- A clash of values is inevitable

People cannot understand why we refuse to cheat and lie when others are doing it freely. We are adamant about being faithful to our vows and covenant relationship.

We will not betray a brother in Christ.

b) Why does it matter?

- Jesus wants us to build His church by saving the lost. But Satan is against it. Violence against preachers of the gospel is designed to intimidate and stop them. This explains why men are pressing into the kingdom violently.

However, our Lord Jesus had declared...*the gates of hades shall not overcome it...Matthew 16:18.*

- Grace will be given when we face persecution *Philippians 1:29*
- My sacrifices made for Christ cannot be compared to the rewards.

- Peter asked the Lord... *We have left all and followed you...*

What he meant was – What do we get out of it?

The Lord's answer? ...*No one who has left house... lands for My sake, will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes...etc) and in the age to come, eternal life... Mark 10:29, 30*

The sacrifices we make for Christ, particularly for the persecuted, will be compensated a hundred-fold. Such compensations will last for eternity. Here, the Lord emphasizes that the reward for the persecuted will be great...*Blessed are you when men...persecute you...rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great... Matthews 5:11, 12.*

This includes wealth given to the Lord through offerings.

Financial sacrifices made for the sake of the gospel yield great dividends.

- Jesus promises high honour to those who endure persecution for His sake. Great rewards await them. Stephen was honoured by the Lord Jesus standing up to give him a rich welcome.

c) How do we practise it?

Adopt the attitude that my obedience to Jesus will cost me something. King David would not offer to God something that would cost him nothing. Do not seek the praises of man which do not last, instead, seek the praises of God which are priceless and eternal. END