

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. ² Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

³ “Blessed *are* the poor in spirit,

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ Blessed *are* those who mourn,

For they shall be comforted.

⁵ Blessed *are* the meek,

For they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed *are* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

For they shall be filled.

⁷ Blessed *are* the merciful,

For they shall obtain mercy.

⁸ Blessed *are* the pure in heart,

For they shall see God.

⁹ Blessed *are* the peacemakers,

For they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ Blessed *are* those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake,

For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Introduction

We are now starting a new series at our communion services each month.

Each month before communion I will teach from Matthew’s Gospel.

We won’t be covering the whole gospel from start to finish. We will concentrate on the 5 teaching blocks of Matthew.

Before we start this series it would be good to have a little bit of background into the writer of Matthew’s gospel, and the purpose behind writing his gospel.

1. **Matthew was a Tax Collector** – Israel was ruled by the Roman empire at this time. The Roman high ranking officials went to an auction and bought the right to collect taxes in the countries ruled by Rome. These people were called “Publicans”.
A set amount of money was paid to Rome which was fixed for 5 years.
The rest of the money collected was regarded as profit.
The ‘Publicans’ sub-contracted the work of collecting the taxes to citizens of that country. Matthew was one of these sub-contracted workers.
Matthew was given a set amount that he must collect each year. The rest of the money that Matthew made was regarded as his wages.
Although the Jewish people regarded Matthew as a traitor and somebody who was demanding too much tax, he was just trying to make a living. It was actually the system that was wrong.
Matthew was regarded as the lowest rank in Jewish society. This ranking was also equal to the prostitutes.
Matthew was an educated man who could read and write clearly.
2. **Matthew had a New Life and a New name** – Originally Matthew’s name was “Levi” which is recorded in Mark 2: v. 14. However, Jesus changed his name to Matthew which means “Gift of God”.
The gift which Matthew brought was his writing skills and his humility.
This is the reason why there is no internal evidence for Matthew writing this gospel.
Matthew wrote material that was relevant to the local Church and had a gift of teaching.
Matthew was also a “Messianic Jew” who was committed to world evangelism.
Matthew wrote his gospel to believing Jews who were open to receiving teaching about God’s Kingdom.
Matthew’s primary objective was to teach the teachers.

Very few people could read in those days and Matthew wanted to pass on the message to help the Church leaders.

The early Church was shaped upon Jewish culture and this is still evident today.

If you ask any Jewish person today in Israel to read Matthew's gospel, they will tell you it is full of Jewish culture.

There is material in Matthew's Gospel that is unique to that gospel.

We have the genealogy of Jesus Christ back to Abraham in chapter 1: v. 1-17.

Information about Joseph in chapter 1: v. 18-25. Information about the disciples mission to the lost sheep of the children of Israel in chapter 10 and several parables in chapter 20-22 and chapter 25.

Matthew had 3 audiences in view when writing his gospel.

These were the disciples, the crowd, and the teachers of the Law.

(Scribes and Pharisees)

3. **Outline of our studies in Matthew** - Our studies in Matthew will focus upon the 5 teaching blocks.

Where are these teaching blocks and how do we identify them?

Jesus identified Himself as a great teacher and Matthew puts down marker posts in his gospel to identify these teaching sessions.

Please look at **Matthew Chapter 7: v. 28.**

²⁸ And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching,

This verse signals the end of a major teaching session.

If you turn to **Matthew chapter 5: v. 1-2** you can notice where this teaching session began.

And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. ² Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:

All of the other teaching blocks are identified in the same way.

So the 5 teaching blocks that we will be covering over the next year will consist of the following.

1. The Sermon on the Mount - Matthew Chapter 5-7.
2. The Commissioning of the 12 disciples – Matthew Chapter 10.
3. The Parables of the Kingdom - Matthew Chapter 13.
4. The life of the Kingdom community – Matthew Chapter 18.
5. The Teaching concerning the second coming of Jesus – Matthew Chapter 24-25.

We now move to the first teaching block in Matthew and start with what is often called "**The sermon on the mount**".

Jesus withdrew from the crowds to teach the disciples.

He was not teaching them in secret. Others were able to hear if they wanted to.

Content of the Teaching

In the teaching message given by Jesus, he addressed our character in v. 3-12 and after that Jesus focused upon 6 other issues in the remaining verses up to Chapter 7: v.27.

Purposes of this teaching Block

Why did Matthew write it?

He wrote it to show the standards required for those people who were to be the disciples of Jesus.

These standards would only be attainable if you had experienced the "New Birth".

This is the "Divine Life" that only God can give.

If you do not have the "Divine Life" in you, then the divine life can never be manifested out of you.

We are talking here about the fruits of a "**Supernatural Life**".

Christian Author Michael Green said this, "**You can't have the fruit of righteousness without the root of a relationship with the righteous one.**"

You could say that this teaching message by Jesus was designed to filter out those people who were not true followers of Jesus.

The teaching is also designed to ignite the fire of our hearts, placed there by God's Holy Spirit. As believers in Jesus, we need to burn bright in an age of spiritual darkness.

We now come to the first challenge concerning our Christian character.

1. **"Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."**

(Matthew 5: v. 3)

We are told in this verse that God's blessing will be upon us and His kingdom is promised to us if we are "Poor" in spirit.

Q. What is the meaning of this word "poor"?

It comes from a verb that means to shrink, to cower or cringe.

In classical Greek the word was used for a beggar who crouched in a corner begging.

With one hand the beggar held out for money, and with the other hand he covered his face because of his shame of begging.

This same word is used in Luke Chapter 16: v. 20 to describe Lazarus.

However, in this context Jesus is not talking about physical poverty. He is talking about **spiritual poverty**. To be poor in spirit is to recognise your spiritual poverty, apart from God.

Apart from Jesus Christ, every person in this world is spiritually destitute.

It doesn't matter how good an education we have had, or how much wealth, knowledge or social status we might have, we have nothing to offer God, we are spiritually beggars.

Isaiah 64: v. 6 says... "all of our righteousness are like filthy rags."

We have an example from Luke Chapter 18: v. 9-14 of what it is like to be "poor in spirit".

Luke 18: v. 9-14 in N.K.J.

⁹ Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men— extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.' ¹³ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his eyes* to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' ¹⁴ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather* than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The Pharisee was proud in spirit, but the tax collector was poor in spirit.

When God called Moses to lead His people out of slavery in Egypt, he said that he was not worthy or even capable of such a task.

God was able to use him because of his humility. (Exodus 3: v. 11)

Paul, that great apostle, said in Romans 7: v. 18 **"Nothing good dwells in me..."**

So it is clear that spiritual poverty is essential if we are to enter God's Kingdom.

Q. **Why does Jesus put humility first before all of his other teaching?**

The reason Jesus does this, is because it is the basic requirement of becoming a Christian.

Admitting our spiritual poverty and being humble is the first step in becoming a Christian.

Proud people don't become Christians.

First they need to be humbled.

John MacArthur said, **"we might as well expect fruit to grow without a tree as to expect the other graces of the Christian life to grow without humility."**

The late Colin Peckham, principal of the Faith Mission Bible College, where I attended, used to say this:

"The biggest problem in the Church is un-crucified flesh."

Q. **What did he mean by that?**

Galatians 2: v. 20.

²⁰ I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the *life* which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

When Paul wrote to the Galatian Church he was concerned that the believers died daily to the old life and lived daily in their new life in Jesus Christ.

So Colin Peckham's comments about the biggest problem in the Church was due to the fact that so many Christians try to carry on living their Christian life, **without dying to their old life and living a new life, with the help of the Holy Spirit.**

This new life in the Holy Spirit is not possible, unless we die to the old life, and let the new life control us. Transferring from the old life to the new life is never easy, but it is the only way to bear fruit for God's glory.

It is God's fruit through us. It is **His life worked out through us.**

Acknowledging that you can't live the Christian life, without the Holy Spirit controlling your life, is the **first step to living a victorious Christian life.**

The reward for being poor in spirit is a blessing from God and to be given entrance into God's Kingdom.

Those who come to God with broken hearts, do not leave with broken hearts.

God wants us to recognise our poverty so that He can make us rich through His Holy Spirit.

Will you come to God for a blessing today?

James Chapter 4: v. 10.

¹⁰ Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.

Prayer for Communion.