

Kingdom Ministry: Serving from a Bright and Vibrant Heart

I. SERMON ON THE MOUNT: CORE VALUES OF THE KINGDOM

- A. The Sermon on the Mount is the constitution of God's Kingdom. It is the litmus test to measure spiritual development and ministry impact. We measure our impact by how much people walk out the Sermon on the Mount values (not by the size of our congregation or ministry budget). These values are to be the themes that we most emphasize.
- B. The foundational call in the Sermon on the Mount is to live out the 8 beatitudes (Mt. 5:3-12) as we pursue 100-fold obedience (Mt. 5:48; 6:22). The beatitudes are like 8 beautiful flowers in the "garden in our heart" that God wants to fully blossom. They define love, godliness and spiritual maturity that pleases God. They describe the lifestyle that is the core reality of God's Kingdom. These 8 flowers need to be carefully and continually cultivated as we "weed our garden" by ***resisting the 6 negative influences*** (toxins/poisons) related to our natural lusts (Mt. 5:21-48) and as we "water our garden" by ***pursuing the 5 positive nutrients*** (prayer, fasting, giving, serving and blessing enemies, Mt. 6:1-18) that position us to receive the Spirit's impartation of grace.
- C. A wise man builds his life on the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount. There is a 3-fold application of the winds that shake and test our ministry foundations. First, the winds that every ministry experiences periodically throughout a lifetime. Second, the eschatological winds at the end of the age (Heb. 12:26-28). Third, the evaluation at the Judgment Seat of Christ (1 Cor. 3:11-15). Many will fall away at the end of the age (Mt. 24:9-13; 2 Thes. 2:3; 1 Tim. 4:1-2; 2 Tim. 3:1-7; 4:3-5; 2 Pet. 2:1-3; endurance: Mt. 10:22; Heb. 6:4-6; 10:26-31; Rev. 2:26; 3:5, 11).
- ²⁴ ***"Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine (Sermon on the Mount), and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 Everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall." (Mt. 7:24-27)***
- D. I recommend the book on "Prophetic Untimeliness" by Os Guinness who said, "Never have Christians pursued relevance more strenuously; never have Christians been more irrelevant." Guinness' writes of the need for ***"resistance thinking"*** (a term by C. S. Lewis) against the popular trend that seeks to make the gospel fit with the spirit of our age, ending up with that which is not the real gospel. We must emphasize the difficult and repellent themes of the gospel.
- E. The Church's power lies in our calling to be ***"against the world, for the world."*** As Christians, we view reality both in terms of what the world was created to be (*our dignity and destiny*), and in light of the fall (*our depravity*). The Christian faith is ***simultaneously world-affirming and world-denying***. The scandal of the cross is our hope and glory. When the church neglects to maintain this dual stance, it results in cowardice, corruption, and decline. But when the church is faithful to this she is at her best with power to transform culture and is once again relevant.

II. BEATITUDES: BRIEF DEFINITIONS (MT. 5:3-12)

- A. True spiritual reality is defined by eight beatitudes which describe what pleases God and what He wants to duplicate in the nations through ministry. Implied in all of God's commands is the promise of the enabling to walk out the command. Thus, all eight beatitudes are a part of our inheritance. God will bless the pursuit and progressive attainment of these 8 expressions of grace in the heart.
- B. ***Being poor in spirit*** (theirs is the kingdom of heaven, Mt. 5:3) – to acknowledge that we are in great need of help to sustain wholeheartedness. This is to understand, that we are in a serious dilemma in needing a breakthrough in our heart (insight and power) to live in mature godliness.
- C. ***Mourning for breakthrough*** (for they shall be comforted, Mt. 5:4) – to be desperate enough to be “extreme” in pursuit of a progressive breakthrough in our heart (insight/power) and ministry.
- D. ***Walking in meekness*** (shall inherit the earth, Mt. 5:5) – to walk in the fasted lifestyle or to have a servant spirit in the use of my natural strengths (time, money, energy, reputation, authority, etc.). Humility or meekness speaks of using our resources with a servant spirit, as we lay down personal rights in serving without regard for receiving the reward (honor, money) from people.
- E. ***Hungering and thirsting for righteousness*** (for they shall be filled, Mt. 5:6) – sustained faithfulness in seeking God with wholeheartedness through changing circumstances and seasons instead of being burned out by disappointments with God or offense at the way people treat us.
- F. ***Relating to others with mercy*** (for they shall obtain mercy, Mt. 5:7) – having a tender spirit in how we treat others who fail spiritually as well as those who attack, resist or disappoint us. We show them mercy in light of receiving God's mercy in our continual short-comings (Ps. 18:35; 130:3-4).
- G. ***Being pure in heart*** (they shall see God, Mt. 5:8) – breakthrough of purity in our thoughts (bitterness, immorality) and motives (helping people for their benefit without any person gain).
- H. ***Becoming an anointed peacemaker*** (called sons of God, Mt. 5:9) – anointing to bring peace (healing) to that which is out of God's will (i.e., broken relationships, sick bodies, unrighteous legislation, etc).
- I. ***Enduring persecution*** (theirs is the kingdom, Mt. 5:10-12) – bearing the counterattack for plundering Satan's Kingdom because we operate in power and/or stand for righteousness.
- J. ***Note:*** In Mt. 5:3-5, we begin the process of transformation as the first three beatitudes (poverty of spirit, mourning and meekness) relate to “perceiving ourselves” differently. Mt. 5:6 points to “sustained zeal” as we break through in mercy (Mt. 5-7), purity (Mt. 5:8), and anointed service (Mt. 5:9) that requires endurance in persecution (Mt. 5:10-12). The way to awaken a sense of being poor in spirit and desperate mourning for a breakthrough is to set our heart to walk out the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle in a literal and consistent way, especially in determining to be perfect (Mt. 5:48) and to have a good or single eye (Mt. 6:22-23).

III. SALT AND LIGHT: OUR CALL TO MAKE AN IMPACT AND TO BE GREAT (MT. 5:13-20)

- A. Jesus referred to two metaphors of salt (flavor, preservation) and light (direction, life) in Mt. 5:13-16. They emphasize the impact that God's people will have on individuals and society (political, military, economic, educational, family, media, arts, technology, social institutions, etc). This impact is dependent on walking out the beatitudes in a consistent and corporate way.
- B. In Mt. 5:17-18, Jesus said that He did not come to destroy (nullify, minimize) God's moral commandments in the OT law and prophets. He came so that the fullness of what God originally intended in each of His commandments would eventually be fully expressed in the lives of His people. God desires that His commands be obeyed in our inner life as well as in our actions.
- C. Jesus invited "whosoever" or everyone to be great in His Kingdom in Mt. 5:19-20. We cannot repent of the desire for greatness because God designed our spirit with this longing. We repent for seeking it in a wrong way. Without the paradigm of being on a journey to greatness, the Sermon on the Mount lifestyle is much more difficult to sustain. God invites us to greatness without regard to our outward achievements or the size of our ministry impact. It is based on the development of our heart (love, meekness, revelation or righteousness, peace, joy, Rom. 14:17).

IV. OVERCOMING HINDRANCES: RESISTING THE TOXIN OF SIN (MT. 5:21-48)

- A. Jesus did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to make a way to fully express their glory and intent. This righteousness is agreement with the spirituality seen in the Old Testament (5:17-20).
- B. Jesus gave six practical areas in which we must wage war in our hearts against lust (1 Pet. 2:11): **anger** (spirit of murder, Mt. 5:21-26), **adultery** (spirit of immorality, Mt. 5:27-30), **disregarding the sanctity of marriage** (spirit of treachery, Mal. 2:13-17 that manifests disloyalty by disregarding the sanctity of marriage and family, Mt. 5:31-32), **false commitments** (spirit of manipulation that seeks to promote ourselves, Mt. 5:33-37). To use "spin" to present ourselves in a false way about our commitments, whether in the past (deception) or the present (by lack of follow through), **demanding justice** (spirit of pride or bitterness to enforce our personal rights, Mt. 5:38-41) and **retaliation** (spirit of revenge or animosity in relationships, Mt. 5:42-47).
- C. Jesus ends this section with the call to be perfect or mature in our obedience to God.
⁴⁸ *Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)*

V. POSITIONING OUR HEART TO RECEIVE GRACE: THE FASTED LIFESTYLE (MT. 6:1-23)

- A. Jesus describes five "grace-releasing activities" in our devotional life that position our heart to receive strength. Our heart receives more grace as we consistently and secretly **serve and give** (charitable deeds: giving service and/or money (6:1-4, 19-21), **pray** (6:5-13), **bless adversaries** (forgiving, 6:14-15; 5:44) and **fast** (6:16-18).

- B. These five areas are expressions of “voluntary weakness” because we invest our natural strengths (time, money, energy, reputation, etc.) into Kingdom purposes. The normal use of our strengths is to use them to increase our personal comfort, wealth and honor. In other words, by the fasted lifestyle we bring our natural strengths to God as we trust Him to “return” our strength back to us in a way that enriches our personal spheres of responsibility and transforms us with meekness.

⁹ *My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness (voluntary weakness or the fasted life style). Therefore...I boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. (2 Cor. 12:9)*

- C. Our devotional lives are the means of appropriating free grace, not of earning it. We position our “cold heart” before the “bonfire of God’s enabling grace” so as to receive the Spirit’s empowering. In this way, we receive enlarged capacities to walk out the 8 beatitudes.

- D. A good (single) eye speaks of pursuing 100-fold obedience unto a bright heart (Mt. 6:22-23).

²² *The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is good, your body will be full of light. (Mt. 6:22)*

VI. PURSUING OUR DESTINY WITHOUT FEAR OR ANXIETY (MT. 6:24-34)

- A. Jesus addresses *how we pursue* our destiny as related to our finances and possessions. This is vital in sustaining grace to walk out the beatitudes. We are not only to be different in our devotional lives, but also in the way we pursue our destiny (ambitions). Jesus points to one of the most important areas in which we must walk out our destiny; the all important and powerful issue of money and possessions.
- B. God’s provision and resources are necessary. Jesus is calling us to escape the slavery of covetousness that is fueled by the fear of not having enough. We are naturally preoccupied with our pursuit of food, drink, clothing and housing. Fear or anxiety rise up to resist our progress in walking out the beatitudes in practical ways. Our highest ambition must be His Kingdom and not pursuit of personal wealth (6:23-24) which touches a fundamental fear (6:25-34).
- C. Jesus declares the impossibility of loving God and money. We must choose as we also believe God for the release of the covenant blessing of prosperity (Deut. 8; 28) which is God’s provision and resource for us to extend the Kingdom of God. Jesus is calling us to escape the slavery of covetousness that is fueled by the fear of not having enough.
- D. Our highest ambition must be the glory of Jesus and the increase of His Kingdom (1 Tim. 6:7-11), serving Jesus not wealth (6:19-24) and overcoming the fundamental fears and anxieties that we face in walking out our destiny (6:25-34).

⁷ *For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 Having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. 9 But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Tim. 6:7-10)*

VII. WALKING OUT THE BEATITUDES: ENDURING RELATIONAL TENSIONS (MT. 7:1-20)

- A. Seeking to walk out this Kingdom lifestyle will create many complex relational dynamics that are both positive and negative. Many relationships will change as we walk out Kingdom values. New relationships will be established as old ones are changed (sometimes improved and other times damaged). We must not judge (Mt. 7:1-5) as we seek to walk in a Kingdom lifestyle.
- B. Some will reject our pearls (Sermon on the Mount Kingdom values, Mt. 7:6). We must not trust our natural strengths to war against them. We must be careful not to neglect prayer knowing that the spirit of prayer is our best tool (not our only one) (Mt. 7:7-12).
- C. We will face the presence of false prophets and messages (2 Pet. 3:3) that will seek to hinder us from entering the narrow gate and the difficult way (Mt. 7:13-20). There are two ways to approach life (7:13-14). This also leads to conflict. We must discern the presence of the counterfeit messengers and messages (7:15-20) as part of the adversarial element that we encounter.

VIII. MANIFESTING KINGDOM REALITY: STANDING STRONG IN TESTING (MT. 7:21-27)

These 8 flowers will be fully tested. It is not enough to proclaim this reality. The essential issue is whether we walk it out in pressure. Storms will test the reality of our foundation. The storms of personal pressures, the eschatological storm (2 Thes. 2:3-4) or the final judgment (1 Cor. 3:10-15) will show forth the truth of which of the two approaches we have chosen to build our lives and ministries upon (7:24-27).

IX. THE PLEASURE OF WHOLEHEARTEDNESS: A BRIGHT AND VIBRANT HEART

- A. The lamp of the body (that which brings light to our inner man) is found in the eyes of our heart. The body speaks of our whole person (not just our physical body). God promises that those with a good eye will have a bright and vibrant heart that is full of light (Mt. 6:22; Lk. 11:36).
²² The lamp (source of light) of the body is the eye (of the heart; Eph. 1:18). If therefore your eye is good (single, KJV), your whole body will be full of light. 23 But if your eye is bad (lacks single focus), your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness! (Mt. 6:22-23)
- B. A good or single eye refers to having a vision for our heart to realistically pursue the 100-fold obedience that Jesus set forth in the Sermon on the Mount. What is your greatest dream for your life? Is it to have more authority and honor in your ministry and life circumstances or is it to walk in grace that empowers you to live out the 8 beatitudes? It is a good eye because it agrees with God's good ways. A bad eye refers to a life vision that neglects the good values of Mt. 5-7.
- C. Jesus' called us to pursue a lifestyle of obedience that seeks to be perfect or mature in obedience. Walking mature in our obedience is relative in this age and absolute in the age-to-come. In this age, we never attain to perfection in the absolute sense. At the end of Paul's life, he declared that he had still not attained (Phil. 3:12).

- D. In this age, to walk mature with God is to declare war on all that falls short of obedience.
⁴⁸ ***You shall be perfect (mature in obedience) as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Mt. 5:48)***
¹⁰ ***Be even more diligent...for if you do these things you will never stumble... (2 Pet. 1:10)***
² ***If one does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body. (Jas 3:2)***
- E. The pursuit of 100-fold obedience includes making a ***covenant with our eyes*** (Ps. 101:3; Job 31:1), ***bridling our speech*** (Jas 3:2; Eph. 4:29-5:4), ***managing our time*** (for service and prayer with the Word, Eph. 5:15-16) ***and money*** to increase the Kingdom beyond our personal comfort and honor (Mt. 6:19-21) as we engage in ***communing prayer*** with the Holy Spirit (2 Cor. 13:14).
¹⁴ ***Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my strength and my Redeemer. (Ps. 19:14)***
- F. Power in our Christian life is found only in pursuing 100-fold obedience. There are powerful dynamics that occur in our heart when we soberly aim at walking in total obedience. The 98% pursuit of obedience has a limited blessing on it. The last 2% is what positions us to live with a vibrant heart. A small piece of dust in our eye causes us to not be able to function properly. ***The cost of non-discipleship is very high.*** The ***pursuit*** of full obedience is different than ***attaining*** it.
- G. The call to be perfect (Mt. 5:48), is a key to living vibrant. In Mt. 5-7, Jesus gave us insight into how to believe in Him in the way the Scripture says (describes) so that our hearts would ***flow***.
³⁸ ***He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. (Jn. 7:38)***
- H. We see the ***pleasure of wholeheartedness*** (instead of its sacrifice) because it brings brightness to our inner man (v. 36). We lose a vibrant heart by allowing compromise to go unchallenged.
³⁴ ***The lamp (source of light) of the body is the eye (of the heart). Therefore, when your eye is good (single), your whole body also is full of light. But when your eye is bad (lacks single focus), your body also is full of darkness. 35 Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness. 36 If then your whole body is full of light, having no part dark, the whole body will be full of light, as when the bright shining of a lamp gives you light. (Lk. 11:34-36)***
- I. God will act until we break through in bright righteousness in the unsettled issues in our hearts.
¹ ***I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as brightness... (Isa. 62:1)***
³⁵ ***He (John the Baptist) was the burning and shining lamp. (Jn. 5:35)***
- J. Walking in the “spark” of God’s light is essential for fellowship (which is more than socializing). Believers who neglect to do this are spiritually bored and are therefore spiritually boring. Thus, they have a difficult time connecting with others at a heart level because it ***requires*** the spark of the Spirit’s life and activity to connect in a spiritual way (which is what our heart longs for).
⁷ ***If we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another... (1 Jn. 1:7)***