

Bible Study Notes

How to Really Live: The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5-7

Introduction

Early on in Jesus' ministry he climbed a hillside near Capernaum, crowds of people had gathered having heard or seen his miracles and as his disciples followed him up the hill, as Jesus saw their keenness to hear from him, he began to teach them. It was time to let them in on the secrets of his kingdom, presenting to them a radically different way of living that would lead to abundant, free, joy-filled life.

It is a beautifully crafted sermon, shaping the way to live as people who will inherit the kingdom of God. Jesus is speaking to a people who are waiting for a Jewish king, freeing them from roman occupation and oppression. He speaks to the powerless, the poor and the weak and declares that there is a different kingdom, the kingdom of heaven. This probably wasn't the news people were hoping for, but it is good news that outlasts any ruler and stays good news through centuries.

Jesus calls us to narrow way of following him, but it comes with a promise of blessing and inheritance of the kingdom of heaven.

He calls us this way because he loves us so much – he doesn't just leave us in the dark but draws us to his light.

His kingdom is one he invites us to partake in and one day to even sit alongside Jesus on the throne (Revelation 3.21). God's kingdom is one God wants to share with us...I pray we have ears to hear what the Spirit says.

FOR A DEEPER DIVE: Why not listen to Bible Project Podcast on this sermon, especially on anything tricky!

STUDY 1: **Matthew 5.1-12, Develop Character**

Welcome

Growing up what teacher (formal or informal) influenced you the most and why? We are about to take a dive into some of Jesus' teachings – huge crowds gathered to hear what he would say and still 2000+ years later they have life changing effects.

Worship

What does blessed mean? *Makarios* in Greek is a happy/blessed/provision filled state of existence which this passage says is found in our relationship with God.

Listen to "Bless God" by Brooke Lighterwood. Which part of the song stands out to you today?

Word: Read Matthew 5:1-12.

- What does it mean to be blessed according to our society and values compared to whom Jesus calls blessed? Who is this good news for?
- Do you feel like you currently fit or have fitted into one of the categories of people that are blessed? How does the promise made to them encourage you?
- How is this good news for you?
- What does this passage say about inheriting the kingdom of heaven? Who will inherit the kingdom of heaven? What do you think this means?
- What kind of reality is Jesus describing, how is this contrasting our reality?
- Is Jesus trying to start a revolution? How would people who want a revolution feel, hearing how Jesus wants to bring a kingdom?

- How can I become part of God's kingdom? Which of these blessings can we aspire to?
- Some of the blessings are for people in different circumstances, some highlight characteristics that God values and blesses. Which of these characteristics can we aspire to and grow in?
- How can we show mercy?
- How can we be peacemakers?
- *Biblical righteousness has three aspects: legal, moral and social. What does it mean to hunger and thirst for each of these?*
- *Jesus promises that those who hunger and thirst for righteousness will be filled (v. 6). What can you do to cultivate a healthy, hearty spiritual appetite?*
- Where can you serve people that fit into the circumstantial categories that Jesus says will be blessed?

Witness

- What have you heard in the news recently that makes you mourn? Take time to pray for the people who are faced with grief.
- Who do you know who needs to be comforted. Is there a way you can sensibly, bless them in a practical way?

STUDY 2: **Matthew 5.13-16, Grow in Influence**

"Be careful how you live; you will be the only Bible some people ever read." William J Thoms

Welcome

- What have you learned about God through other people being salt and light to you?

Worship

Play Lauren Daigle 'Salt and Light' and have a quiet moment for everyone in their heads and hearts to thank God for his love.

Word

- Remembering the audience Jesus is speaking to as highlighted in the beatitudes, what impact can they make on the world?
- How can this help us overcome feelings of inadequacy?
- What were the "qualifications" we can aspire to?
- What city and light on a hill could Jesus be referring to in his sermon?
- How can we shine light before others, what instruction is Jesus giving? What can this look like practically?
- Salt is preservation light is spreading news. How can we as church do both?
- What qualities of salt and light is Jesus referring to when talking about salt and light?
 - Leviticus 2:13, Mark 9:50
- Why do you think Jesus is talking about hiding the light? What could lead us to hide our lights?

- What might be the cause for Christians to lose their ability to be the salt of the earth?
- Who are we called to be light to?
- What is the result of being salt and light, if not serving people?
- What does Matthew 25:40 highlight about being salt and light?

Witness

- Look out for salt! Each time you use it or taste it, ask God to give you an opening to be salt in your community. Take time next week to share your experiences.
- Pray for one another for opportunities in workplaces, school, neighbourhoods and other contacts, to find opportunities to be salt and light?

STUDY 3: **Matthew 5.17–26, Handle Anger**

Welcome

Is it wrong to be angry? When was Jesus angry? What type of anger does Jesus say is to be avoided?

Worship

Use lectio365 or say night prayer together from the lectionary app.

Word

- What stood out to you from the passage and from hearing the sermon?
- Which law is Jesus referring to?
- What does it mean to fulfil the law?
- Who will and will not inherit the kingdom of heaven in this passage? Are these the same categories as in Matthew 5:1–12?
- How is the following passage helping us to understand what it means to pursue righteousness? (21–22)
- What is Jesus emphasising by equating getting angry with someone with murder? How does this challenge our view of others and their value? What attitude behind both actions is Jesus calling out?
- Jesus is giving examples of fulfilling the law by case studies. How can the first example of murdering being equated with anger help us understand what Jesus means by the fulfilling the law?
- How does this illustrate the difference between following and fulfilling the law?
- *What do verses 23–26 teach us about broken relationships?*

- How does contempt for others affect our relationship with God?
- *When have you either initiated forgiveness or had someone initiate it with you? What was the outcome?*
- Is what Jesus is asking even possible to do?
- *Jesus states that only those who have this surpassing righteousness will enter the kingdom of heaven (v. 20). How can this be harmonized with his statement about the poor in spirit (those who admit their spiritual bankruptcy) entering the kingdom (5:3)?*

Witness

Our witness means we're to be light in the world. Take some time to reflect on the questions below on your own and ask God to show you if there are any actions you need to take:

Personal reflection: is there anything you need to put right with others, and you are ready to do so? Is there a leader or a mentor you could process this with?

Where do you follow the law instead of aiming to fulfil it and to live to a higher standard? How do you feel like the Holy Spirit enables you to do so?

STUDY 4: **Matthew 5.27–48, Do the right thing!**

Welcome

Describe a time when you did the right thing, and it felt really good!

Worship

Talking about God's standards of righteousness probably makes us aware of when we've failed to live up to them.

Word

Challenging hypocrisy and façade, hidden sins?

- How does Jesus explain what is right and wrong?
- How should we understand Jesus' call to gauge out an eye or cut off your hand?
- How can we make sure we always see people in the light of their God given value and dignity?
- What is the message at the heart of Jesus' explanations of the laws concerning adultery and divorce?
- How can we make sure the desires of our hearts are aligned with God rather than just following rules? Which is easier or more difficult?
- What would a world look like if everyone would uphold these standards?
- How does Hebrews 10:16 help us to understand this passage?
- Are there any of the 10 commandments that Jesus does not explain here? How can we interpret them considering Jesus' teaching here?
- Personal reflection: How has your thought life pleased God or fallen short of Jesus' calling?
- How does reading Matthew 23:16–22 help us understand what Jesus is addressing here in verses 33–37?

- Why should oaths be unnecessary for Christians?
- How do verses 38-43 address conflicts that do not start with us?
- How does this law limit retaliation? How does Jesus lift this to a level of fulfilling and completing the law?
- How is Jesus challenging people to expose injustice in this passage?
- How do verses 44-48 summarise all explanations of the law in this passage?
- What do we learn in this passage about being 'peacemakers'? How can we become peacemakers without becoming a 'doormat'?

Worship

- Talking about God's standards of righteousness probably makes us aware of when we've failed to live up to them. Play some quiet music and invite people to confess their sins quietly. Have some bowls of water, soap & towels around and encourage folk to wash their hands as a sign of asking Jesus to cleanse us and forgive us. At the end you could have some hand cream and invite folk to put it on and as they do ask God to protect them by the Holy Spirit.

Witness

- Are there situations where you are faced with injustice? How could you react in an active "peace-making" way? Pray for anyone experiencing an issue like this in their workplace or community.

STUDY 5: **Matthew 6.1–18, Be Devoted**

Welcome

Share some of the different ways you have tried praying and what you have found helpful.

Worship

Worship together – play Chris Tomlin, Holy Forever.

Word

- How does 6:1 relate to Matthew 5:3, becoming meek and humble?
- Why is it important to give in secret? How does this compete with shining your light?
- What practices is Jesus encouraging the believers to do in this passage?
- *What was wrong with the way hypocrites prayed in Jesus' day (v. 5)? In what ways do hypocrites pray today?*
- How can you implement giving, prayer and fasting (nb fasting from food is not good for anyone with any health mental or physical which would be made worse if they fasted, and instead you may want to consider fasting from TV or anything else that might help you to pray) in your life? Who can you talk to about these things without promoting yourself, to keep you accountable?
- *How do you think the reward the father will give us (v. 6) differs from the reward we receive from others (v. 5)?*
- Why is it so important to be free of care for social standing?
- How does our knowledge of God's love and acceptance free us from other people's acceptance?
- *How can this passage help to purify our motives?*

Witness: Take time to pray for each person in the group.

STUDY 6: **Matthew 6.19–24, Handle Ambition & Worry**

Welcome: Who taught you about money when you were growing up?

Worship: Slowly read Philippians 4.4–7 and take some time to copy the prayer and make it your own – rejoicing, asking and resting in God.

Word:

- Why did Jesus talk so much about money?
- How does money rival God today?
- How do you store up treasures in heaven?
- Looking at verse 24 – do you own your possessions, or do they own you?
- Why do we get overtaken by worry?
- What does Jesus give as the reason not to worry (verses 25–33)?
- How could you use the Lord's Prayer to keep your ambitions in check and to also allay worries about money?

Witness: Talk about how you could try to explain what it means to 'seek first the Kingdom of God'? to someone outside of the church.

Pray for Christ Church W4 – that together we would be a church that points people across West London and beyond to God's Kingdom.

STUDY 7: **Matthew 7.1-12, Do Relationships Well**

Welcome:

Play a game together / do something fun.

Word:

- Verse 1 can be misused. In what ways are Christians expected to judge and to use discernment? What kind of judgement does Jesus condemn?
- Verses 1-5 – how might self-righteousness lead to poor judgement?
- Verse 6 has sometimes confused people or made people question whether we should be involved in evangelism. However, the context here is judging others. What is Jesus saying?
- Why is forgiveness so important – God's forgiveness of us and our forgiveness of others? What are some of the most powerful stories of forgiveness that you've ever heard?
- Verses 7-12 – God encourages us to be persistent and confident in our relationship with Him – what is holding you back from asking, seeking and knocking?
- What has stood out afresh today as you've studied this passage and from what you heard on Sunday?

Worship:

Play some quiet music and invite people to write prayers where they are asking, seeking or knocking and they may want to take them away and keep them in their sock draw to remember to keep on praying for those things over the coming months.

Witness:

Pray together for opportunities to speak to people about Easter.

STUDY 7: **Matthew 7.13–27, Be Wholehearted**

Welcome:

Take time to reflect together and pick one thing that you want to take away from this series and share it with the group.

Worship:

Wholehearted by Rend Collective or Say Night Prayer

Word:

- Jesus is not just talking about entering the kingdom of heaven in terms of becoming a Christian but is talking about entering the fulness of life that the kingdom offers now. What is required of those that enter the Kingdom, look up Matthew 6.3–10; 5.19–20; 7.21; 18.3; 19.14; 19.23; 21.31; 25.34.
- Entering the Kingdom remains an ongoing choice a commitment to making wise decisions as we travel through this life, how can we help one another with this?
- How might false teachers be disguised today?
- Why does Jesus say he never knew them in verse 23?
- What is so significant about the wiseman's behaviour?
- Thinking about storms you have had to face – have any come along where you've been so grateful for firm foundations or are there others that have exposed shaky foundations?
- This sermon contains a lot of rich teaching – as we come down the mountain, what impact do you want this teaching to have in your life and how can you remain teachable?

Witness: Pray for opportunities for us to share Jesus corporately and individually this Easter.