



THE COMPASS

RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

Sermon Series: “Matthew’s Messiah.” The Gospel of Matthew.
(Epiphany, 2026)
“The Upside-down Kingdom.” *Matthew 5.1-12.*

Day #1—Monday, February 2nd. Read: Matthew 5.1-2. –Encounter: God’s Word and your life—What do you Hear and/or See?

Matthew chapter 5 begins Jesus’ well-known “*Sermon on the Mount.*” The *Sermon on the Mount* (Matthew chapters 5-7), is a description of life lived within the Kingdom of God (Heaven). The Kingdom of God is the range of God’s effective will—where what God wants done is done. It is the “dome” under which God is King and reigns in the world.

Jesus choosing a “mountain,” really, a hillside, would be both symbolic and practical. Practically, Jesus would likely be sitting above the crowds, enabling Jesus to be seen and heard by the people. Symbolically, in the ancient world, mountains were commonly associated with significant events. Additionally, rebels and revolutionaries would often live in the mountains and consequently, “descend” upon villages and cities. Finally, as Craig Keener notes...

...“mountain” settings in Matthew are usually significant...Many scholars think that Matthew probably recalls Moses’ revelation on Mount Sinai (Ex 19:3)...If so, Jesus’ superior revelation also makes him superior to those who “sit in Moses’ seat” (Mt 23:2); the One greater than Moses, first encountered in 2:13–20, has begun his mission.¹

While the location of this “mountain” is debated, the traditional site is thought to be above Tabghah, near Capernaum. Matthew tells us that Jesus “sat down” to teach. Teaching while sitting was the appropriate posture for a Jewish rabbi. “Thus Jesus takes the role of the scribes, but Matthew also indicates that Jesus is greater than the scribes (Mt 7:29).”²

Matthew describes Jesus’ disciples coming to Him. The Greek word for “disciple” is μαθητής (*mathētēs*), which describes a “student” or “learner.” Matthew’s use of the phrase, “he opened his mouth” “is a Semitic idiom used at the beginning of a public address.”³ Jesus is going to instruct His disciples about the truths, values, and manner of life found in the Kingdom of God. As J. Nolland describes...

The disciples of Jesus are introduced at this point without explicit explanation. A μαθητής is etymologically one who learns, but the learning from Jesus as he taught in the synagogues (4:23) would not of itself justify use of the term. The word generally points to a commitment to some specific kind of learning, normally based on an allegiance to a particular teacher and often involving a full sharing of life by a group of disciples with their teacher...[While]...Matthew does not use ‘disciple’ in a way which definitely takes us beyond the Twelve.... The disciples’ in Matthew are the Twelve because it is they whose sharing of life with Jesus and learning from him at every level provide the foundation on which the discipleship to which Matthew challenges his readers is ultimately based⁴

Consider/Reflect: [Matthew’s description of Jesus’ “disciples”]... Often means the 12 called “apostles” (10:1–2), but can also mean a larger group of adherents...Here, the term includes the four fishermen (cf 4:18–22) plus others from the crowds who responded to Jesus’ call to repent.”⁵

1 C.S. Keener. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (InterVarsity Press, 1993).

2 Ibid.

3 D.A. Hagner. *Word Biblical Commentary*. (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993).

4 J. Nolland. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans, 2005).

5 *The Lutheran Study Bible* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2009).

□ **Day #2—Tuesday, February 3rd. Read: Matthew 5.3. —Examine: The Text and its Context.**

The Sermon on the Mount begins with *the Beatitudes*. We will begin our study of the Beatitudes proper tomorrow. Today, we will focus on the entire content of *The Sermon on the Mount*, as well as what Matthew *reveals* about Jesus in this profound “sermon.” First, there are three *types of material in the Sermon on the Mount*...

- Beatitudes (Declarations of blessings)
- Ethical teachings.
- Contrasts between Jesus’ ethic and legalistic tradition.

Overall, the *Sermon on the Mount* is a call for Israel (God’s people) to repent (See Matthew 4.17). Jesus is not just a moral teacher, He is also a gracious presence. The sermon seeks to instill a moral (lifestyle) vision; to instill principles and qualities through a vivid inspiration of the moral imagination. The sermon addresses ordinary circumstances and sees it through the eyes of eternity. It looks *backward* in the sense that this is the way God *originally intended* His people to live; the sermon addresses life now—how life *can be lived*; and the sermon looks forward to the consummation of history when humanity will live in a world that is truly ruled by God as King!

To know the sermon is to know Jesus the preacher. Jesus is the:

- **Eschatological Prophet.** (See *Isaiah 61.10; Matthew 5.3-12*).
- **The “New Moses”** (See *Exodus 19.3; Matthew 5.1*).
- **The Moral Exemplar.** (See *Matthew 5.38-42*).

The sermon is also a summary of Jesus’ own actions and deeds. For example, Jesus loves His enemies before He asks us to love ours! Implicit in the sermon is obedience to our King, Ruler, and Messiah.

Moreover, the *Sermon on the Mount* is not just more moral demands; it presses religious questions—it describes an alternative to the conventional wisdom of the dominant culture. In order to take the sermon seriously we must take the preacher seriously—Jesus!

Prayer/Meditation/Reflection: What do you need to learn specifically in your relationship with Jesus? Think about this needed growth and think about how you will make it happen! How will you practice this growth? [Pray]: “Father in Heaven, help me to see where I need to grow in my relationship with you. I trust you for my spiritual growth and ask for your Holy Spirit to empower me and give me grace to grow. Amen.”

□ **Day #3—Wednesday, February 4th. Read: Matthew 5.3-4. —Explore: The background to this text(s).**

Jesus now describes the “blessings” of the Kingdom of God and discipleship to Jesus. Commonly called, “The Beatitudes,” these declarations of blessings reflect the *upside down nature of the Kingdom*. The values and hopes in the Kingdom of God are *alternatives* to the dominant, cultural ethos and assumptions.

The word “Beatitude” comes from Latin “*beatitudo*,” which translates the Greek *μακάριος* (*makarios*): (To be) “Happy” “Fortunate” (Blessed). Beatitudes are a literary type, explaining the opposite of “woe.” There are generally two types of blessings described by Jesus: Those that bless circumstances and those that bless relationships. Additionally, human blessing falls into two categories: Blessings because of present circumstances and blessings because of what lies in store—future blessings. Again, the Beatitudes are intended to startle—to describe realities that are *reversals* to the *common expectations* of life in this world. To take the beatitudes seriously calls into question our ordinary values.

For example—“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven...” Poverty (of wealth or spirit), is not something that typically reflects *blessing*. Again, that is Jesus’ point! For those “Kingdom citizens,” their poverty does not exclude them from God’s Kingdom blessings! What is Jesus describing here as “poor in spirit?” Those who are poor in spirit are those who feel *spiritually worthless*, those who believe themselves to be *spiritually empty*. This is very similar to the Biblical virtue of humility. Our helplessness, our spiritual and physical needs, drives us to a dependent relationship with God. And, Jesus’ promise: Those who go to God receive all that God offers...The *Kingdom of Heaven*—God’s will and rule in their lives!

In Matthew, the Kingdom of Heaven is both here and gradually arriving. The Kingdom of Heaven is present and available *now* through Jesus’ ministry (Jesus Himself). And, the Kingdom in its fullness is yet to come, remaining to be *fulfilled in the future*. One day, God will make all things new...God’s will done on earth as it is in heaven!

Jesus assures His blessings in yet another experience of lack and loss... “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted...” This is the eschatological courage of Revelation 21.4. Mourning is the journey of acknowledging loss and lack. According to Craig Blomberg...

[To] “Mourn” ... [is a]...probable allusion to Isa 61:2–3, however, we should again think of both spiritual and social concerns. Mourning includes grief caused by both personal sin and loss and social evil and oppression. God will comfort now in part and fully in the future. That Christian mourning does not outweigh happiness as the more dominant characteristic of the Christian life remains clear from Matt 9:15.⁶

Consider/Reflect: Do you feel happy? Blessed? Why/Why not? What would make you *happy*? What does Jesus say about your happiness?

Day #4--Thursday, February 5th. Read: Matthew 5.5-6.—Explore: The background to this text(s).

Jesus now turns to *meekness*. Here again, we witness the total reversal of what the world/culture says is the blessed/happy way to live—be strong, independent, in control! Jesus says that the *meek* will inherit the earth!

The Greek word translated, *meek*, is πραΰς (*praus*), defined as “gentle,” “pleasant.” Meekness here is similar to being “poor in spirit.” Meekness is active dedication to Christlikeness. As Craig Blomberg describes...

A “meek” person is not the “wallflower” we often think of when we use the word but one who is *humble, gentle, and not aggressive*. Nevertheless, in the ancient Greco-Roman world, such humility was no more valued than in our world today. Inheriting the earth as future compensation suggests that the meekness in view also included a lack of earthly possessions. Most poor people in Israel did not own their own land and were subject to the whims of oppressive landlords (Jas 5:1–6). The future reward echoes Ps 37:11 but generalizes the promise of inheriting the land of Israel to include all of the earth. Christian hope does not look forward to inhabiting a particular country but to ruling with Christ over all the globe and ultimately to enjoying an entirely re-created earth and heavens⁷

The meek, the humble, these are the ones who know they do not have it altogether, yet, God’s love enfolds them—they know God accepts them and loves them with their needs and limitations—there is no need to pretend—to fake it. Consequently, the meek “inherit the earth.” The Greek word, “inherit” is κληρονομέω (*klaronomeo*) and means, “To receive something of considerable value which has not been earned.” In other words, rather than frantically grabbing all you can get, the meek *relax*, believing that God will take care of our needs! The whole world (all that we need) belongs to God. If you are His child, all you need God will provide!

Verse 6 describes the person who earnestly and habitually seeks to do the divine will as it were food. Righteousness, from the Greek, δικαιοσύνη (*dikaiosune*) means, “Justice,” “Equity of character or act.” Biblical righteousness reflects both a proper relationship, as well as the proper actions that flow from that relationship. Those who seek God’s will and ways, His righteousness, will be “satisfied.” The Greek word here, Χορτάζω (*chortazo*), means to “Cause to eat one’s fill,” “Be content.” God will reward those who earnestly and habitually seek to do the divine will as it were food (i.e. filled). This is a life lived in *obedience* to the will of God.

Consider/Reflect: “The meek have a special happiness because they are free of pride and ambition; God will give them the world. Those who hunger and thirst for goodness are happy, because God himself will satisfy their longings.”⁸

Day #5—Friday, February 6th. Read: Matthew 5.7-9.—Explore: The background to this text(s).

Mercy is the outer manifestation of an inner emotion. It is active compassion for those who are least, last, and lost! Mercy embraces both forgiveness and compassion. As D.A. Carson notes...

Mercy embraces both forgiveness for the guilty and compassion for the suffering and needy. No particular object of the demanded mercy is specified, because mercy is to be a function of Jesus’ disciples, not of the particular situation that calls it forth...The reward is not mercy shown by others but by God...This does not mean that our mercy is the causal ground of God’s mercy but its occasional ground...This beatitude, too, is tied to the context. “It is ‘the meek’ who are also ‘the merciful’. For to be meek is to acknowledge to others that *we* are sinners; to be merciful is to have compassion on others, for they are sinners too...”⁹

6 *New American Commentary*. (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992).

7 *Ibid.*

8 A. Knowles. *The Bible Guide* (Augsburg, 2001).

9 F. E. Gaebelein, Ed. *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke* (Zondervan Publishing House, 1984).

Jesus says that the “pure in heart” will *see* God! In Scripture, the “heart” is the center of the human self—the human will, mind, and spirit, the real, true self. To be “pure” reflects an integration/integrity of the self. Not outward show, but an *integrated lifestyle* that reflects an encounter between God and the individual. This is an undivided heart. The Lutheran philosopher, Soren Kierkegaard said that, “Purity of heart is to will one thing.” The “one thing” is to *be the person who God created us to be and do what He calls us to do*. Again, Jesus says that the pure in heart are blessed because they will *see* God! To “see” God is to experience something (i.e., “I hope to see that day”). To live according to the truths and values of the Kingdom of God is to experience God in everyday life!

The “pure in heart” exhibit a single-minded devotion to God that stems from the internal cleansing created by following Jesus. Holiness is a prerequisite for entering God’s presence. The pure in heart pass this test, so they will see God and experience intimate fellowship with him.¹⁰

“*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*” Jesus came to bring peace on earth...peace between God and humanity and peace between human beings. The Greek word here, εἰρηνοποιός (*eireñopoios*) translates the Hebrew “*shalom*,” a total well-being that involves all of life. It is having what one needs to live a full life. “Those who work for *shalom* (wholeness and harmony rather than strife and discord in all aspects of life) and who reconcile others to God and each other will “be called sons of God.”¹¹ Why are peacemakers called the “Children of God”? Children *participate* in what the parents do!

Consider/Reflect: “Jesus would send out His disciples to bring peace to those who were worthy...A disciple who truly appreciates God’s blessings will be a merciful person and will receive mercy... [The]...pure in heart..[are]...Those who do not worship false gods...[They will]...see God. The worshiper in Ps 24 who sought the face of God experienced the coming of the King of glory (vv 7–10). Such disciples look forward to seeing God...”¹²

Day #6-Saturday, February 7th. Read: Matthew 5.10-12.—Embrace: God and His guiding you through His Word.

Jesus concludes the Beatitudes with a truly striking reversal—you will be blessed/joyful when you are persecuted! The blessing? Receiving the Kingdom of God! Notice, Jesus ends where He began—with the ultimate blessing of the Kingdom of God! Literarily, this forms an “inclusio;” An opening and closing statement that defines the context of what comes between. Persecuted for one’s faith in Christ often involves physical and verbal abuse, hostility brought on by being righteous, i.e. faithful obedience to God’s will. These persecuted believers who are certainly also “poor in spirit,” will receive all of the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven!

This final beatitude is also the longest. God’s people will be rejected by the dominant culture. The blessings of the Kingdom of God, reflected in the Beatitudes, gives...peace with God; promised inheritance; and present satisfaction. While God’s Kingdom not yet fulfilled, the church *presses on with the Gospel*.

Jesus later warned the disciples He sent out as peacemakers (v 9)...Jesus spoke the first eight beatitudes using the third person (“they”). In this final beatitude, He addressed His disciples directly using the second person (“you”) for emphasis....The source of joy for a disciple who suffers persecution is the promise of heaven...[a reward]...Though Jesus used this term when referring to heavenly blessings, He taught that the reward would be based on God’s goodness, not the amount of work done...Any reward our heavenly Father gives is an expression of His grace.¹³

Consider/Reflect: “Jesus introduces His Sermon on the Mount with nine beatitudes that detail the future blessedness of His disciples. These promised blessings are God’s gracious gifts to those who repent of their sins and trust Christ for righteousness. Only after Jesus has assured His disciples of God’s goodness to them does He call on them, in the rest of His sermon, to be good and do good. When we recognize our own spiritual poverty, when the Lord leads us to hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness, when He makes us pure in heart so that we seek to worship only the true God, then we are blessed, now and forever. [Pray]: Gracious Savior, keep my eyes ever focused on You and Your blessings, which are mine by grace alone. Amen.”¹⁴

10 *New American Commentary*.

11 *Ibid.*

12 *The Lutheran Study Bible*.

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*