KINGDOM *of* HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Matthew 4:23-5:12

(Sermon from Sunday 23 April 2023, Brett France)

1. Information

a) **Read the passage, perhaps twice using two different versions**
   a) I preached from the ESV, and used the NIV and the Message version to help my prep. Maybe try those versions.

b) **Fill in any info that didn't make it into the sermon.**

- There is additional information in the CG guide from **page 36-42**.

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- It may be helpful for you to get a sense of how I divided up the passage, and the resulting sermon outline.

- I broke up the passage preached into 2 main sections, with sub-sections within these:
  a) **The Spread of Jesus' Fame (4:23-5:2)**
     - Due to Jesus' good works and ministry, his fame has spread through every region.
     a) **A New Law (5:1-2)**
     - Just as Moses ascended the mountain and received the 10 commandments from God which informed the Israelites way of life (Exodus 20), Jesus ascends a mountain to impart a new way of life to His followers.
  b) **The Beatitudes (5:3-12)**
     - Note the present blessings throughout all the beatitudes, but in verse 3, it is a present promise which mirrors verse 10's present promise. The other beauties are future promises
     a) **You and God (5:3-6)**
     - The first 4 blessings relate to our relationship with God. They refer to our characteristics before an almighty and all powerful God.
     b) **You and Others (5:7-10)**
     - The last 4 blessings move from the vertical to the horizontal - because of our vertical connection with God, we are motivated to live out a new reality in His world.
     c) **The Joy of Ministry (5:11-12)**
     - Many commentators suggest that these two verses are simply an expansion on the final beatitude. However, I would suggest that it is more of an expansion on how believers will be treated by living out all eight beatitudes. In stead of an expansion on verse 10, these two verses are rather a summary of what a believers is to expect and the joy we are to have in suffering for a life lived for Christ by following all 8 beatitudes.

- I ended the sermon with a call to action.
  a) **We are to live a life that is devoted to Jesus,**

b) **This devotion leads to a life of action as Jesus uses us to reach, heal and love His world.**

- I see the beatitudes as a set up for the rest of the Sermon on the Mount. We cannot follow all that Jesus is about to preach and teach on without acknowledging a few things:
    - We are poor in spirit and are utterly dependent on Him for what it takes to be a Christ follower,
    - We need to mourn over our sin just as God mourns,
    - We are to be a meek people, knowing that our strength comes from God,
    - Righteousness needs to be on the forefront of our minds,
    - We are motivated to be merciful to all that God has created, just as He showed us mercy,
    - Our pure hearts are what will allow us to step toward people,
    - Just as Jesus brought peace to the world, we are to operate as His agents in bringing peace in all situations,
    - We are to expect persecution for a life lived out in these ways.
- Without us living these out, topics such as divorce, money, lust, anger, loving our enemies and the many other topics to come, will not be possible to even attempt to follow. We need the Spirit of Jesus to allow us to follow His teachings. The beatitudes are preparing our hearts to rely on Christ.

2. **Activation**

- I do think that it would be beneficial to unpack the two **preliminary** points on discipleship. There is a LOT of practical ground to cover in them!

a) Following Jesus is Personal

i. An aspect of the call of the disciples I didn't mention in the sermon is how Jesus chooses his disciples, whereas rabbinic transition at the time had disciples applying to be disciples of a particular rabbi. This distinction has big implications for us. **Reflect on this along with John 15:16**, keeping in mind the fact that Jesus chooses lowly Galilean fishermen, not the spiritual elite in Jerusalem!
ii. I make a point about about Jesus's call to follow 'me', and talk about 'churchianity' as a tendency to mistake the ritual of church going with following Jesus (I hope to nuance it correctly in the sermon, as I am obviously a huge fan of the Church!). **Reflect with your group on how, perhaps (especially for those who have been Christians longer), we sometimes default to church engagement as the primary means of following Jesus**. This 'call' text is a strong antidote/wake-up-call to rote religion!

b) Following Jesus is Comprehensive

i. There is a lot more to come in this category, in the Sermon on the Mount over the next few months. However, in the sermon I do make the one obvious connection in this story where the disciples leave behind their source of financial stability to follow Jesus (in the case of James & John it's a family business!). I make the comment how we make big decisions, like moving house, job & country to increase financial stability, but the disciples do the opposite! Clearly the subject of material possessions will be dealt with extensively by Jesus in the Sermon on the mount, **but I think it's right to reflect on the example of the first disciples especially in this instance**.

2. **Implementation**

- The 'transformation equation' can similarly be described as:
  i. What? (Information)
  ii. So what? (Activation)
  iii. **Now what? (Implementation)**

- What resolutions can your group make together for the coming week?