

Thought for Sunday 5th July 2020

Pastor Gordon Hamilton

Communion: Please have a piece of bread or cracker and a drink ready. We will share together later in the service.

A prayer to start: Almighty God, thank you for your love. Thank you for your patience. Thank you for your faithfulness. Thank you for your salvation. Help me to care for the things you are passionate about, use me to reach the most vulnerable in our society. Help me to demonstrate my faith with acts of kindness. Grant me a soft heart, an open hand and a positive word. Save me from a life of seeking you with all the wrong motives. Teach me your ways, O God, that I may live in your promise. In Jesus' name. amen.

Read Matthew 5:1-16

I thought that over the next few weeks of lockdown I would look at The Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapters 5-7, we will see how far we get through it before we can get back into our churches. One of the things that fascinates me is that Matthew 5 begins; *'Now when he (Jesus) saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them.'* So Jesus begins by teaching 'His disciples,' chapter 7 ends with; *'When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching.'* So although Jesus began by teaching his disciples, possibly just the twelve, by the time he got to the end there were crowds, why? Because as the very last verse of chapter 7 says; *'he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law.'* These first 16 verses are specifically aimed at his disciples. Maybe he was looking at the crowds who were round and about when he starts talking about, what we call, the beatitudes. Having spoken verses 3-10 he then says to the disciples; *'Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.'* Jesus spoke into their lives in a way they could understand. If our lives don't show a relevance to others, then we are wasting our time. Yes, we must talk of biblical truths but in such a way that it is relevant to the people we come into contact with. Jesus begins with the beatitudes, saying this should 'be your attitude.' **read verses 3-10** Blessed are the poor in Spirit... blessed are those who mourn... blessed are the meek... blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness... The Amplified version puts it this way; *'Blessed (spiritually prosperous, happy, to be admired) are the poor in spirit (those devoid of spiritual arrogance, those who regard themselves as insignificant), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (both now and forever).'* but **read what Luke says, 6:20-22.** Many people imply Jesus is saying that those who are not so well off or not so well blessed are going to be blessed. Luke says; *'Looking at his disciples, Jesus said...'* Maybe he was looking at those who were around as well, in the crowd, who appeared to have nothing and maybe are searching for something for nothing. In fact in Luke 6:17 it says; *'A large crowd of his disciples were there...'* not just the inner group, not just twelve disciples. What Jesus was doing was turning the tables totally upside down. Blessed surely means that people are going to be happy, as the Good News version of the bible says about these verses, happy are the poor in spirit... happy are those who mourn... etc. of course that is what it is saying, when people who are poor in spirit... mourning... meek etc, when they recognise they are off track, so to speak, when they recognise that God is in control, when they realise it is not about them, it is all about God, then they will know that blessedness, that peace that passes all understanding. When Paul Oakley wrote the hymn; 'Jesus, lover of my soul,' in the chorus what he wrote summed it all up; *'It's all about You, Jesus, and all this is for You, for Your glory and Your fame. It's not about me, as if You should do things my way; You alone*

are God, and I surrender to Your ways.' The problem is too many people think it's all about them, it's all about what they can do for God. So right at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus spells it out to those who want to be, or are called to follow Him, his disciples, it's not about what you can do for God, it's by being humble, by recognising our inadequacies, so that we can receive a blessing from a God who loves us. In fact Jesus shows us the way. Graham Kendrick summed it up in his song; 'Meekness and Majesty.' *'Meekness and Majesty, Manhood and Deity, in perfect harmony, the Man who is God. Lord of eternity dwells in humanity, kneels in humility and washes our feet.'* Jesus shows us the way to live our lives. Paul, in his letter to the **Philippians 2:5-8** read... So Jesus not only spoke and taught what we call the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus lived it out, and it is in the light of that that we are called to live in his footsteps. When we get to verse 11, Jesus is warning them that being a disciple carries a cost, **read Matthew 5:11**... Jesus wasn't just talking about the disciples of his day, 2,000 years ago, persecution has always been there for Christians down the centuries. I am told there were more Christian martyrs in the first ten years of this century; 2000-2010 than in the previous 2,000 years, and it continues. I was looking at something on the television last Sunday, I believe it was, of Christians being beaten with sticks by police in India. We hear about 'Black Lives Matter' and of course they do, but we don't hear in the news about Christian persecution. What did verse 12 say? *'Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.'* Jesus knew he would have to suffer and die as well but it is too early to start talking about that yet. The last 4 verses of our reading tell us we must not be ashamed of Jesus but must witness our love for him in all we do. Again the apostle Paul says it in Romans 1:16; *'I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.'* You are called to witness Jesus in your lives and not to be ashamed to be called Christian. As we come to the end of our reading I want to invite you read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, remembering that as you eat the bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. That maybe easy in the quiet of your own home, or in a church or chapel with other like minded people, remember the words of Paul to the Philippians; *'Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.'* He not only taught the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus lived it as well. Amen.

Meekness and Majesty, Manhood and Deity,
In perfect harmony, the Man who is God.
Lord of eternity dwells in humanity,
Kneels in humility and washes our feet.

*O what a mystery, meekness and majesty.
Bow down and worship for this is your God, this is your God.*

Father's pure radiance, perfect in innocence,
Yet learns obedience to death on a cross.
Suffering to give us life, conquering through sacrifice,
And as they crucify prays: 'Father forgive.'

Wisdom unsearchable, God the invisible,
Love indestructible in frailty appears.
Lord of infinity, stooping so tenderly,
Lifts our humanity to the heights of His throne.

Graham Kendrick