

"The True People of God: I"

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Today I'm going to be preaching from the Gospel of Matthew, Matthew chapter 5, which is the Sermon on the Mount. The title of the message today is "The True People of God." Now as I said this, in Matthew chapter 5, is our Lord's first recorded sermon called the Sermon on the Mount. It's a very popular sermon amongst religionists and especially amongst those who claim to believe the Bible. It's been called the greatest sermon ever written, but I believe a lot of people misunderstand the sermon on the Mount. For example, some say well this sermon is a roadmap for Christian living and although there are many things in the sermon on the Mount by which true Christians should and do live, there's no doubt about that, that's not the mainstay of this sermon.

First of all, I want you to understand to whom the Lord is preaching this sermon. He's preaching this sermon to Israelites under the old covenant law who had who had been led astray by their spiritual leaders. They had spiritual leaders back then and in the Lord's day they were mainly the Pharisees and the Sadducees and the Pharisees he mentions by name here in Matthew 5:20. In fact, he brings a strong indictment against the Pharisees and he says in Matthew 5:20, *"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."* He's speaking about entering into the kingdom of heaven and he begins in the Sermon on the Mount with what is commonly called the beatitudes and these beatitudes are pronouncements and descriptions of blessing, those who are blessed of God. They each begin with "Blessed are..." What is it to be blessed? Well, many of

the modern translations of the Bible used the word happy. They'll say happy are the poor in spirit, happy are they that mourn and I believe that's sort of misleading. Now don't get me wrong, there is a happiness and a joy in the grace of God for the people of God but when you say happy someone might get the impression well that means that if you're unhappy then you're not blessed.

I think about that Job quite often because I've been studying the book of Job. Job was a blessed man and it begins in his story with the fact that he has much possessions, he has much land, animals, cattle, a big family and he's blessed of God materially. But the most important thing about Job is that he's blessed of God spiritually, that is he's a sinner saved by the grace of God in the Lord Jesus Christ whom Job looked forward to as the promised Redeemer, the prophesied Redeemer. Then all of a sudden Job loses

everything. He has he lost his possessions, he lost his family and eventually he lost his health and he was very unhappy. Read the book of Job and some people say, well now Job's not blessed. Well he wasn't blessed with material blessings, he wasn't blessed with a big family, wasn't blessed with health, but he was still blessed. A blessed member of the kingdom of God, the kingdom of heaven, even though he was unhappy in his state here on this earth. So I want you to understand that this blessedness that he speaks of is a spiritual blessedness. It's not a material blessedness. Now listen, I'm all for material blessings, don't get me wrong. I love the blessings of material wealth. I'm not a wealthy man, but I have what I need and I don't want that taken away and I'm blessed above that which I deserve. I love the blessing of physical health. I love all that but you see, whether I'm poor or rich, whether I'm healthy or sick, if I know Christ and if I am in him and

found in him, if I'm washed in his blood at and clothed in his righteousness, I am always blessed of God.

That's why he says in Matthew 5:1-3 *"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he set, his disciples came unto him: And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."* He is describing the character and the attitude of the true people of God here. Why is that important to this audience that he's speaking to? Well as I said he's preaching this message to Israelites who were under the old covenant law of Moses, but who had been taught wrongly and actually led astray by their spiritual leaders as to the meaning and purpose of that covenant. Let me give you an idea of what I'm talking about here. Now he says "Blessed are..Blessed are..Blessed are..." The Jews, under the old covenant, who had been led astray

by their spiritual leaders, they imagined and boasted of and claimed the blessings of God and the blessings of salvation, the blessings of spiritual life which they didn't have, based on three things.

1. Number one was their physical connection with Abraham. They said we be Abraham's seed. We can't be lost. We can't be in God's disfavor. We're Abraham's seed. And the Bible teaches that that was a wrong ground of salvation. Men and women are not righteous and justified and forgiven and saved and have spiritual life based upon their physical pedigree and heritage. John the Baptist told them that back in Matthew chapter 3 when the Pharisees and Sadducees came out to see his baptism and he told them to repent and he said don't think in yourself to say we're Abraham's children. That won't do you any good. Physical connection with Abraham will do you no good.

2. The second thing the Jews boasted

of was their physical circumcision. That was a command of God given to Abraham for the Jewish males, the children, on the eighth day and it was a physical sign of their connection with Abraham. And they say, we are the circumcision and that became synonymous with the Jews, with the Israelites, but that wouldn't do you any good. In Galatians 6:14-15, Paul said, *"...God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature"* (a new creation in Christ).

3. And then the third thing they boasted of was their law keeping. They said, we have Moses, we follow Moses, we keep the law of Moses. Well, they didn't. They perverted that law. They had confused that law. They added on to that law. They missed the point of that law. That law was given to expose their

sin. That's why Christ starts in Matthew 5:21a, 22 showing them the extent of the law. He said, "*Ye have heard it said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill;... 22 "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment:"* (thou shalt not be angry without a cause). Matthew 5:27-28 "*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*" (It's a sin to lust after a woman) Thou shalt not lust, that's adultery: lust in the heart. The law reaches the heart. So the law was given to show them their guilt and their need of salvation by grace. So their idea of being blessed was totally, totally wrong.

Now Christ sets it straight here and here's what he says, look at Matthew 5:3: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs*

is the kingdom of heaven." Now what is it to be poor in spirit? It is to really know, as we are taught by God through the power of the Holy Spirit, of our true sinfulness and depravity and spiritual poverty. That's what he's talking about. He's talking about conviction of sin. That's the true people of God, they're convicted over their sin. They know that it is impossible for salvation to be gained or maintained based on their best efforts to keep the law. They're spiritually bankrupt. That's what it's saying. The Bible teaches that every man and woman born of Adam is spiritually poor. The Bible says in Romans 3:23, "***For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.***" When it comes to righteousness, when it comes to holiness, we all fall short. We're spiritually poor. We don't have enough and never can have enough. Romans 3:10 says, "***...There is none righteous, no, not one.***" There is none good, no not one. The Bible says that the law was given to expose our sin

and Romans 3:20, that "...by deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in <God's> sight." Why? Because we're spiritually poor, but the problem is man by nature does not know and accept and realize his spiritual poverty. How do you know that? Well, any time a sinner, a human being born of Adam, approaches God based on any thing but the sovereign grace and mercy of God in Christ, the blood of Christ, the righteousness of Christ alone, that sinner is making a statement and it's a statement that he believes he has enough. He believes he measures up. He doesn't realize his spiritual poverty.

Think about Cain back in Genesis chapter 4, Cain and Abel. Here's Cain, he worked hard on his land and he brought the best of his crops, his hard labor to God for salvation. God had already revealed that the only way of salvation was through the righteousness of another, a substitute and he pictured

that and he typified that. He prophesied of it in Genesis 3:15 through the "seed of woman", that's Christ. That's the first prophecy of Christ recorded. And then he typified that in when he slew an animal and he shed that animals blood because the wages of sin is death and he gave to Adam and Eve coats of skin representing the merits of the righteousness, the obedience, and death of Christ charged (accounted) to his people. And so here comes Cain with his best works. You see, Cain is spiritually poor, spiritually bankrupt just like everybody else but he doesn't believe it, he doesn't know it, he's not poor in spirit in his heart, in his mind, in his affections, in his will. He's not been convicted by the Holy Spirit but now look at Abel. Abel comes as a sinner seeking mercy. Abel realizes that he has nothing to recommend him unto God. He realizes that he falls short, that if God were to give him what he has earned and what he deserves it would be eternal

damnation and you know what Abel brought as a sacrifice? The blood of the Lamb which typifies Christ.

You see, Matthew 5:3: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" They possess the kingdom and the kingdom possesses them. They're true citizens of the kingdom of heaven They're the people of God. They've been convicted in their hearts, in their spirit by the Holy Spirit you see. He's given them a new heart and a new spirit put within them and he showed them their spiritual bankruptcy. I have no righteousness to offer God. I have nothing to go to God with. The only thing I can do, it's like that old publican over in Luke 18, is cast myself at the mercy of God. Luke 18:13, "*...God be merciful to me a sinner.*" I have nothing to recommend me to God. I must have Christ. That's one who's poor in spirit. Now these people, under the old covenant, as i said they thought that

because they were children of Abraham, because they were circumcised, because they kept the law of Moses that they were the people of God. Christ says, Oh no, "*blessed are the poor in spirit,*" those who know their poverty, who know their bankruptcy, who know their depravity and know their sin, who know the fact that they deserve hell if God were to mark iniquities. Oh Lord, if thou shouldst mark iniquities who would stand? None of us. We've all sinned and come short. We all deserve the wages of sin is death. What are we to do? Is there any hope? He says theirs is the kingdom of God because if God, the Holy Spirit, brings a sinner to be poor in spirit, he doesn't leave him in his spiritual poverty. He doesn't leave that sinner in his bankruptcy. He drives that sinner to the wealth of God's grace in Christ. Ephesians 3:1 says, "*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord (and Savior) Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places*"

***in Christ."* Back under that old covenant they had the ceremonial law as well as the 10 Commandments and the ceremonial law included the tabernacle, the priesthood, the sacrifices, the altar. Those things were all types of Christ and salvation by the grace and mercy of God in Christ. Those things were given to show the Israelites their sinfulness and that their only hope of salvation, their only hope of spiritual wealth, eternal life, forgiveness, righteousness was to be found in Christ who is to come. And then when the Holy Spirit comes and gives a sinner a new heart and puts within him a new spirit he brings that sinner to see that blessed are the poor in spirit. They're blessed of God. Now here on earth they may be poor in material goods and they may be rich. Abraham was a rich man. Lazarus was a poor man but they were both blessed and poor in spirit.**

In Matthew 5:4 he goes on. He says,

"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." What is this mourning speaking of? Well, this mourning is speaking of godly sorrow over sin. It's an extension of being poor in spirit. It has to do with being convicted of sin. It means that we are truly sorry for the sin that we commit against God to the point that we see and know and run to Christ and rest in him and follow him. It's not just saying I'm sorry. It's not even just crying tears, even though that may be included, but it's a mourning over the fact that I don't measure up in myself and at every moment of my life I must have Christ. I tell the folks at our church all the time I said, I have been preaching the Gospel for 30 years and right now I'm just as much in need. I see it even more, really, of my need of God's grace and mercy in Christ as I ever did. You see, I hope and pray that I've grown in grace and knowledge of Christ but even my growth in grace will not save me or recommend

me unto God. I hope that I make improvements on my character and conduct, I do. I hope that I'm a better man today than I was 10, 15, 20 years ago, but if I do it's by the grace of God that I've grown that way and that still does not recommend me to God. That still does not make up my righteousness. I still fall short of God's standard of holiness and righteousness. David said over in Psalm 17:15, "*As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.*" I want to be like Christ. Paul expressed it in Romans 7:14 - 25 when he talked about the struggle within of the flesh and the spirit. The things that I want to do...What is that? I want to be like Christ. I love God but I don't love him enough and my love cannot save me. It's His love that saves me, but I want to love like Christ. I want to love perfectly. I want to obey perfectly and I won't do that until I go to be with him and I'm perfectly conformed to the image

of Christ. That's the mourning that he's talking about: "...*blessed are they that mourn.*" Godly sorrow over sin. There is a worldly sorrow and there's a godly sorrow. You see, the world can mourn over sin but it's a legal sorrow but these, who are the people of God, they mourn with a godly sorrow. What's the difference? Well in 2 Corinthians 7, Paul showed the difference and the difference is this: the sorrow of the world leads unto death, but the sorrow of the people of God brings to repentance unto life. It brings to a change of heart, a change of mind, a change of behavior. But what's the difference now? How do you know the difference? Well, the sorrow of the world is that which motivates and inspires a sinner in seeking to establish a righteousness of his own rather than resting in Christ for all salvation. Godly sorrow, this mourning here of the blessed ones, the people of God, the true people of God, this mourning always leads a sinner to rest in Christ, to run the

him to go to him for all salvation, for all relief, to go to his word and bask in his word. You see that's life. Christ is life. Sinners trying to work their way into God's favor is death. Matthew 5:4

"Blessed are they who mourn: for they shall be comforted." Now where is their comfort? Well, their comfort is in Christ. He's the comforter. The Holy Spirit is called the comforter too. How does he comfort? he brings the sinner to rest in Christ. You see, what ever conviction you're under, or whatever conviction I'm under, if it doesn't bring me to lay hold of Christ and rest solely upon him in his glorious person... Who is Christ? He's God in human flesh. I can rest in him. 1 Timothy 3:16 *"...great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh..."* and if it doesn't bring you to lay hold of him and rest wholly in his finished work, his blood for the forgiveness of all my sins. Not my tears, my tears cannot wash away my sin. My reformations cannot wash away my sins.

My promises to do better, my good intentions cannot wash away my sins. There is only one thing that can wash away my sins and that's the blood of the Lamb of God. if it doesn't lead me to lay hold of and rest solely in Christ righteousness imputed, charged, accounted to me then, you see, it's a sorrow of death. It's not Holy Spirit conviction. You see, my comfort is Jesus Christ and him crucified and risen again.

In Matthew 5:5 he says, "*Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.*" What is it to be meek? Well, most people would say that's humility and it is, but it's humility that brings submission. Under the old covenant these Israelites had not submitted to God. They had not submitted to God's way of salvation. They had not submitted to God's way of worship. They had not submitted to God's way of commandment. They went their own

way, they had been led astray. But the true people of God are those who submit in humility to God. First of all, in his way of salvation. In Romans 10:1 Paul writes, *"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved."* So he's saying they're not saved. He says in Romans 10:2-3 *"For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."* They would not submit. Now, how do you know they wouldn't submit, Paul? Because they're going about to establish their own righteousness. You see that's not God's way. That's not God's way of salvation and that's not the Gospel command of salvation. The Gospel command is not get busy and try to work out your own righteousness before God. The Gospel command is here: Romans 10:4, *"For*

Christ is the end," (the fulfillment) "of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth." Now, when a sinner submits to God's way of salvation, when that sinner is brought to submit by the power of the Holy Spirit to God's way of salvation by his grace through the Lord Jesus Christ, righteousness in Christ, not by my works. That's when meekness is evidenced. That's the true people of God, Matthew 5:5 ***"Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."*** And that's talking about the new heavens and the new earth. You see Peter wrote in 2 Peter 3:13 that in the new heavens and the new earth, there is only going to be righteousness dwelling there. ***(Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.)*** And what is that? That's the true people of God who have been made the righteousness of God in Christ.