

## Series Introduction #1

Matthew 5: 1-2

Tonight I would like to lay the groundwork for a series of messages that I hope to preach on *The Sermon on the Mount*. I think that we would all agree that Jesus was the greatest preacher to ever open the pages of God's Word and expound upon a passage. In chapters 5-7 of Matthew we have the longest recorded message that Jesus preached. It is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. Surely if the greatest of all preachers felt impressed to preach this message, it would be beneficial for us to take the time to consider the words that He preached and seek to apply that message to our lives.

When someone mentions the Sermon on the Mount, most people immediately think of the Beatitudes, and that is certainly an important part of the message that Jesus preached. That was the introduction of the message, but if that is all we take away from this powerful message, we have missed much truth and benefit for our lives.

So, as we begin to establish a foundation for this series of messages, I want to take a few moments this evening to introduce this passage and seek to prepare our hearts for the great truth and direction that is to follow. The first thing that we need to consider is:

**I. The Context of the Message** – It is vitally important, regardless of the passage of Scripture we choose to study, that we establish the proper context of the passage. Many have wandered into doctrinal error because they approached a passage out of context. It also helps to understand the passage when we have an idea of the setting and circumstances surrounding that passage. Now, I really don't have a particular verse for this first point, but we do have biblical information that will set the stage for the context of Jesus' message. First we need to consider the context of this message:

**A. Biblically** – As we begin tonight it would be beneficial to understand the biblical context. Jesus has just begun His public ministry. John the Baptist, the last of the Old Testament prophets, has been preaching and preparing the way for Jesus to come on the scene. The Messiah had come, but all were not ready or prepared for His coming.

- We need to understand that the Jews had just come through the "400 silent years." There has been no Word from God since [Mal.4:6 – And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse](#). The Old Testament focused on the law and man's need of salvation. The law revealed the sin in all our lives and our inability to achieve God's righteous standard. The New Testament opens with the coming of Messiah, the means of salvation for all. The Old

Testament looked toward Mount Sinai, while the New Testament looked toward Mount Calvary. God's plan of redemption that was revealed in the Old Testament through types and pictures was to be fulfilled in the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross.

- The Old Testament ends with a warning of judgment, while the New Testament opens with grace and a promise of blessedness to those who put their faith and trust in Christ.

**B. Socially** – We also need to take a moment to consider the social context of this message. As Jesus was born in Bethlehem the Romans had conquered Israel and all of the Jews were under the authority of the Roman Empire. Most of them utterly detested the Romans and desperately desired to be freed from their rule. Many times in the gospels we find the people wanting to make Jesus their king. They did not view Him as the Messiah; Savior of the world, most viewed Him as the one who would bring about their deliverance from Rome.

- That line of thought greatly hindered the Jews and it continues to hinder many today. When Jesus is not considered in His proper context, men fail to see Him as they should. He was not just a great man, who had great wisdom and compassion; He was the Son of God who came to redeem us from our sin. As we move through these verses, we must keep our perspective of Jesus in its proper context. If Jesus is ever viewed as less than the holy, sinless, perfect, all powerful God-Man who came as the sacrifice for our sin, we have looked at Him in an improper context.

**C. Spiritually** – We also need to take a moment to consider the spiritual context of this message. At this time in Jewish history there were four primary groups, and a smaller group that dwelt in and around Jerusalem. Their social, political, and biblical views were all different.

**1. Pharisees** (Traditionalists) – These were the most powerful and numerous of the Jews. They held a strict adherence to the Law of Moses and sought to separate themselves from the Hellenistic influence of the Romans. These made up the majority of the Sanhedrin.

**2. Sadducees** (Modernists) – Although not as numerous as the Pharisees, these held much influence due to their financial prosperity. They embraced the Hellenistic lifestyle and were liberal in their doctrine. They denied any life after death and a literal resurrection.

**3. Escenes** (Separatists) – Held to a strict life of separation from the rest of society. They typically dwelt in remote locations, removed from the influence of others.

**4. Zealots** (Activists) – These were political reformers who sought to overthrow the Romans and reestablish the kingdom of Israel. They looked down upon anyone who was not willing to bear arms against the Roman authorities.

**5. Herodians** – These were the smallest of the Jews in number. They sought to cooperate at any cost and were supportive of Herod's reign.

## **I. The Context of the Message**

**II. The Compassion of the Message** (1a) – [And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:](#) Here we have a simple statement of fact that reveals much even in its simplicity. As Jesus began His public ministry, He immediately recognized the need of humanity.

- Now, I am fully aware that He was God and Jesus did not realize things that He did not know. Nothing ever occurred to Jesus; He was fully aware of why He came and what He was to do. However, I find it comforting to know that Jesus was aware of our need and He was moved by the situation that mankind was in. As He surveyed the crowd that day, He saw those who needed salvation. He saw people lost and undone before God. He saw them in their desperation. Jesus saw the people and was moved by their need.

- Aren't you glad that Jesus saw their need and was moved with compassion for them? Aren't you glad that He saw our need and was willing to offer Himself as the satisfying atonement for our sin? I rejoice that we serve One who has compassion. I am thankful that He is well aware of our needs and desires to help us in our desperate situations. [Mat.9:36 – But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.](#) [Mat.14:14 – And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.](#) What a loving, compassionate Savior we serve!

**III. The Communication of the Message** (1b-1d) – This verse provides valuable insight to the setting and communication of the message to follow. First we see:

**A. The Atmosphere** (1b) – [He went up into a mountain.](#) Those aren't just "filler" words for enjoyable reading; they are there for a purpose and reveal the atmosphere in which Jesus spoke. In the final verse of [Chp.4](#) we find that [great multitudes followed Him from Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and even beyond Jordan.](#) This was no small gathering and this

was not an insignificant circumstance. Jesus was aware of the multitudes that followed Him, hungry for truth, and He knew the importance of this occasion.

- I think it is important to note that Jesus wanted to ensure that His message was heard and received. I don't believe that He went to the mountain to simply enjoy the view or impress the crowd; He had a purpose in going there. Everything that our Lord does is significant and it has purpose! He went there to remove the people from any distractions. He wanted them to be able to focus clearly on the words He would speak. He knew that if the people followed Him into the mountain, they would likely be more attentive to the message.
- What truth is revealed for us in this simple statement! We cannot overemphasize the need for a proper atmosphere when considering the Word of God. We need to leave the cares, the worries, and the distractions of life behind as we come to sit at the Master's feet and learn of Him. We ought to leave the world at the door and focus upon the Word.

**B. The Authority** (1c) – [and when he was set, his disciples came unto him](#). We find that Jesus delivered this message while sitting. He found a place to sit and the disciples gathered around.

- You might think this reveals a minor detail, but in all reality it is quite significant. In that culture, had Jesus spoken while walking or standing, His words would have been perceived as being informal or unofficial, but when He sat and spoke, His words were received with authority. The Son of God, the living Word was about to expound upon the written Word and He was received with authority.
- I would like to address something while we are here. Jesus was certainly one who engaged the culture around Him. He went to where the sinful and needy were. He was often found among the publicans and sinners. But, for us to assume that Jesus had taken a "casual" approach to ministry is unbiblical.
- Our culture views speaking while sitting to be casual and less authoritative, but this was not the case for our Lord. There was nothing casual or insignificant about this meeting. There is nothing wrong in engaging our culture with the gospel; in fact we are commanded to do so, but we should never seek to be perceived as casual or unconcerned with the message or its outcome. When we open the Word of God and strive to expound upon it, we need to do so with full assurance and confidence in the authority of the Word. It is not a casual message we share, so why should we seek to be casual as we present it?

**C. The Audience** (1d) – [his disciples came unto him](#). We have already discovered that a great multitude of people had followed Jesus that day. There were many others gathered around, but He focused this message toward the disciples. This was a message delivered to those who

followed the Lord in faith. Many may have heard these words that came seeking a miracle or a glimpse of the Preacher that everyone was talking about, but this message was given to the disciples. It is what we refer to as a fellowship passage, given to the believer. Apart from knowing the Lord as the disciples did, these words would have little impact or meaning.

- Many today may look to a passage of Scripture for comfort in difficult times, but one must know the Lord in the free pardon of sin to really benefit from the Word. This passage was given for the benefit and exhortation of the church. The world may read, and even quote Scripture, but it is of little benefit unless they know the Author!

### **I. The Context of the Message**

### **II. The Compassion of the Message** (1a)

### **III. The Communication of the Message** (1b-1d)

### **IV. The Content of the Message** (2) – *And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying...*

The message that we will spend the next several weeks considering came from the lips of our blessed Lord. All of the Bible was given by inspiration of God and are His Words, but we have the record of a message that Jesus preached for multitudes to hear. It is a message that needs to be heard and considered in our day as well. Many are seeking direction for their lives in these most difficult days. Our world seeks a source of peace and contentment. Humanity longs for assurance of the life to come. All of that is found with a personal relationship with the Lord.

- Jesus preached this message over 2,000 years ago, but it is preserved for our benefit. I pray that we will allow His Word to speak to us in the coming weeks as we study this powerful message that our Lord delivered.

I trust that all is well with you today. If there is a need in your life, Jesus is the solution. May we as His people seek to be more like Him each day we live. May we conform more and more to the very image of Christ the Lord.

If you are here without Christ, He stands ready to save today. If He has spoken to your heart, revealing your need, why not come to Him and receive the salvation that only He can give?