

Jesus spoke on a mountain Sunday 9th March 2014

When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. ² He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying,

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” (Mat.5:1-3)

Beloved in the Lord,

When we read The Bible, it is very easy to skim over certain sentences and miss very important details. Some things at first glance, don't seem very relevant and we pass over them, and in so doing can miss a whole lot of truth. The more I study God's Word, the clearer it becomes to me, that there are no unnecessary words included.

Today I begin a series of sermons, that I have entitled “Jesus spoke on a mountain”. We will delve into the so called “Sermon on the mountain”. We find this sermon in Matthew chapters 5-7. In this sermon Jesus gives us a very concentrated, practical sermon on Christian living.

Before we delve into the actual content of the sermon, I would like to spend a little time dwelling on the place where this sermon was preached, namely on a mountain. You may be wondering what significance, if any there is to the mountain. There is great significance.

All throughout the Bible, we find that mountains play an important role in God's communication with man. Very often God meets people on a mountain in order to convey some truth to them.

It was upon Mount Sinai, that Moses received the Ten Commandments. He also received many other instructions on this mountain. God also showed Moses that later when Israel would enter the promised land, they would have to send representatives of all the tribes of Israel to go and stand either on Mount Garicima or Mount Ebal – six on each. On one mountain the blessings for obedience to God would be proclaimed and on the other the curses for disobedience.

There are of course other significant events that took place on mountains. For example Abraham was to sacrifice Isaac upon Mount Moriah. Jesus was transfigured on a mountain; when He returns He will stand on the mount of Olives.

In his commentary on the New Testament, Matthew Henry compares Mt. Sinai with this mountain where Jesus delivers the sermon.

He writes: “Christ preached this sermon upon a mountain: the law was given upon a mountain; and this was also a solemn promulgation of the Christian law. But observe the difference: when the law was given, the Lord spake in thunder and lightning; now in a still small voice: then the people were ordered to keep at a distance; now they are invited to draw near; a blessed change.”

I quoted these words to illustrate to you the truth that I began with; namely that the details in the Bible are important and significant. It is significant and symbolic that Jesus spoke upon a mountain.

There were of course also practical elements for our God is a practical God. Any Synagogue would have proved far too small for the masses that were following Jesus and who were keen to hear Him speak. Also, by teaching outside of the Synagogues, Jesus was demonstrating that God's message was for all people, anywhere and everywhere. That is important. Churches and Church buildings are important and play a vital role, but God is not limited to speaking only in religious institutions.

The next point I would like to dwell upon is stated in the second verse of our text: ***"Jesus opened His mouth and began to teach."***

Jesus taught in many different ways. All of His life was a lesson. Sometimes He spoke in parables; sometimes plainly.

Martin Luther commented on this verse and said that it is important that we take heed of what Jesus taught. He stressed that many speak, but do not really teach anything. Many preachers and so called teachers do nothing but babble. Many preachers open their mouths but nothing useful comes out. Luther reminded both preachers and their listeners that the message is important. If God's Word is being preached fully then everything is good; but if all that is being taught is human philosophies and wisdom, then we should flee from such teaching.

This is why, over and over again we are told to test the spirits. Test the teaching. Check it against the Word of God.

Jesus taught nothing but the Truth. He taught God's Word. We read that people were amazed at His teaching. They understood that He taught with God's own authority.

We read at the end of the Sermon on the Mount: ***"When Jesus had finished these words, the crowds were amazed at His teaching; ²⁹ for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes."*** (Mt.7:28)

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthians: ***Now when I came to you, brethren, I did not come with superiority of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. ² For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified. ³ I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling, ⁴ and my message and my preaching were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith would not rest on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God."*** (1.Cor.2:1-5)

To these words I say AMEN. Every true servant of God opens their mouth not to spout their own wisdom, but to proclaim God's unchanging Word.

Let us now delve into what Jesus taught in this sermon. The first verses are The Beatitudes or words of Blessing. Jesus makes nine different pronouncements about who are blessed.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵ “Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

In the next few sermons we will look at these Beatitudes a little more in depth. Today let us briefly look at this word “Blessed”.

It is really hard to find a word that adequately translates the original, because this concept of Blessed involves so many things. It encompasses all good things that come from God.

In the Aaronic blessing which we use every Sunday to close the service we get a bit of an insight into the scope of this blessing:

“The Lord bless you, and keep you;

***²⁵ The Lord make His face shine on you,
And be gracious to you;***

***²⁶ The Lord lift up His countenance on you,
And give you peace.’ (Numbers 6:24-26)***

You see to be blessed is to be in God’s safe-keeping; to have His face shining on you – that is His favour; To be a recipient of His Amazing Grace; to Have His peace and so much more. To have God’s friendship and favour; to be in His presence; to be loved by Him with His eternal unchanging love. To be in the light of His mercy and grace and truth.

This blessedness is more than physical well being, it is spiritual well being. It encompasses the whole person: Spirit, Soul and Body.

We read in 1. Thess. 5:23: ***“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

You see blessing encompasses the whole person.

A blessed person is a happy person; a joyful person. Such a person has joy in their heart that the world cannot comprehend. Such a person rejoices in The Lord always. His life is closely knit with Jesus and no matter what the outward circumstances, there is peace and joy deep down.

The blessed person is motivated by, and lives in God’s love.

A blessed person is one who does not live for self, but through whom Christ lives and reigns.

When Jesus abides in your heart, then your life is blessed to the full. Your life reflects Jesus and you are, as we will see in another sermon, salt and light. The Holy Spirit flows in you and through you, glorifying Jesus.

Jesus climbed up the mountain and people came to listen to Him. In the next few weeks as we lead up to Easter, may we come to Him, sit at His feet; absorb His Word and be Blessed.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible.