

# The Sermon on the Mount

## An Overview

Scripture: Matthew 5:1 - 7:29

Sermon Series: *Matthew*

Topic: Jesus, Sermon on the Mount

### Introduction

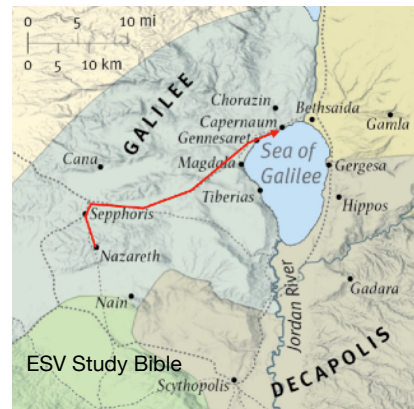
If you are here with us for the first time, then you are joining us as together we are reading through the gospel of Matthew. Today we'll look at an *overview of the Sermon on the Mount*.

Last week we concluded Matthew chapter 4. We are following the life of Jesus. We followed him as he began his public ministry.

He did this by first, *moving from his hometown* of Nazareth, about 18 miles northeast to Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He did this to fulfill a prophecy spoken of by Isaiah (9:1-7). This was the eleventh messianic prophecy thus far fulfilled in Matthew's recording of Jesus' life.

Next, we walked with Jesus along the shoreline of the Sea of Galilee as he called two sets of brothers to be his disciples; Andrew & Peter and James & John. These two sets of brothers were business partners<sup>1</sup> and had known Jesus for about a year. Jesus called them saying, "*Follow me.*" This marked a transition in all of their lives. Jesus was marked a sense of authority<sup>2</sup>, purpose, and power, as well as a new sense of urgency. The kingdom of heaven had come and now was the time to move. These four brothers "*left everything*"<sup>3</sup> to follow Jesus.

Finally, in the last paragraph of chapter four, we followed Jesus into the beginning of the public phase of his ministry. Let's read the final paragraph to remind ourselves where we were and what was happening.



<sup>1</sup> Luke 5:7, 10.

<sup>2</sup> Jesus had been authoritatively anointed by the Holy Spirit at his baptism (Mt. 3:16-17).

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 4:20, 22.

**Matthew 4:23-25 (ESV)** <sup>23</sup> And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. <sup>24</sup> So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them. <sup>25</sup> And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

## Jesus the Itinerate Preacher/Teacher

Jesus was an itinerate preacher and teacher. Jesus began his ministry traveling, preaching, teaching, and healing. He traveled "*throughout all Galilee.*" Jesus went from city to town to village preaching and teaching "*the gospel of the kingdom*" (v.23). He traveled throughout the whole region of Galilee, which geographically encompassed an area of about "seventy by forty miles."<sup>4</sup> According to Josephus there were 204 cities and villages in this area with an estimated population of about three million<sup>5</sup> and the majority of them being Gentile.

It should be noted that Jesus would have preached basically the same message as he traveled from place to place. He would have repeated the same parables, analogies, and illustrations while, like any good speaker, slightly modifying them according to his audience. This is the most likely reason for much of the variance between the different gospel authors as they record his teaching. They were not drawing from a single strand of one lecture series that Jesus gave at one location. He preached the same gospel message at hundreds of different locations throughout his (at least) two years of public ministry. There is no doubt that this accounts for much of the variation in the teaching ministry of Jesus. We need to keep this in mind as we consider apparent differences in the different gospels. Jesus was a preacher and a teacher of "*the gospel of the kingdom of heaven.*"

## Jesus the Healer

Jesus was also a great healer. Yes, he was a great teacher, but at the same time he was also a great healer. He healed all manner of disease, sickness, pain, and demonic oppression. Jesus was not merely an authoritative preacher, but he was also an authoritative healer. He was both. He was a great teacher and a great doctor. He was a great lecturer and a great healer. He taught truth and cast out demons. He engaged the mind and healed the body. This is who Jesus was and who he is. He is today who he was yesterday. He is teacher and healer; doctor and deliverer. The historical Jesus was both. You can't have one without the other. If you want the true Jesus of the Bible, then he is not merely a "good moral teacher." He is the authoritative, demon-denouncing, disease-destroying Jesus just as much as he is a good teacher. Jesus is both teacher/preacher and healer.

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<sup>4</sup> D. A. Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin, vol. 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1984), 120.

<sup>5</sup> Josephus (Life 235 [45]; War III, 41–43 [iii.2]) as quoted in Carson, "Matthew," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary: Matthew, Mark, Luke*, p. 120-21.

## Jesus and the Crowds

Because of his authoritative preaching, teaching, and healing, his fame spread far and wide. *Crowds* of people followed from *Syria* (in the north) "*Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea* (in the south), and from *beyond the Jordan*" (land west of the Jordan river) followed him. This essentially describes all the land that was included in the Promised Land.

Notice that it is the notion of *crowds* that provides the link between the summary statement of the previous paragraph (v.23-25) with the more specific content that follows.

"*Great crowds followed him...*" (v.25) and "*Seeing the crowds...*" (v.5:1). With the crowds in his mind, Matthew now gives us some of the content of Jesus' teaching. What follows is what has come to be known as "the Sermon on the Mount." It is the longest single collection of Jesus' teaching in the Bible. James Boice said that "it is the best-known and most extensively studied discourse in the world."<sup>6</sup>



## Jesus and his Disciples

Notice to whom this sermon is directed.

**Matthew 5:1-2 (ESV)** Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. And he opened his mouth and taught them saying:

The crowds are *not* the primary audience. Jesus is here teaching his *disciples*. Sitting was the typical position of the Jewish rabbi when teaching. "*When he sat down,*" indicates that he was about to teach. The disciples knew this and that's why they "*came to him.*" They knew teaching was about to begin so they drew near to him. Only after Jesus' disciples drew near to him did Jesus then "*open his mouth to teach them.*"

There is a big difference between being one of the "disciples" and being one of "crowd." What Jesus is about to say he is saying *to* his disciples. He knows the crowds are there, but his aim in teaching is to teach his disciples. He certainly wants the crowds to hear what he has to say, but what he has to say is directed toward his disciples. This fact must be kept in mind as we listen to this sermon. This teaching is for the disciples. It is for believers.

This describes our philosophy of worship at this church. When we structure our worship services we structure them primarily for worshipers, for believers and not for unbelievers.

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<sup>6</sup> James Montgomery Boice, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2001), 72

Unbelievers are welcome. Anyone and everyone is welcome to join our services, but we design them primarily to strengthen and for the disciples of Jesus, for believers in Jesus. Crowds are welcome, but the teaching, preaching, and worshiping is designed first for the followers, disciples, and worshipers of Jesus.

The real question is which one are you? One of his disciples? Or one of the crowd?

If you're one of the crowd, then I would ask you what's keeping you from being a disciple of Jesus? What will it take to move you from one of the crowd to one of the disciples?

## The Sermon on the Mount

This sermon extends from chapter five through chapter seven. This week I read this whole section several times. I found it incredibly moving. These words are amazing. Thursday I was reading it again and the thought occurred to me, "You have to read this to the church." I consulted my wife. She thought it was a good idea. Then Friday morning I received a random text message from Chris Bosson, one of the other elders saying, "Hey, have you thought of just reading the whole sermon?" Then one of our dear deacons emailed me a recording of his grandfather reading this passage and said, "Hey, just wanted to share this with you since it blessed me." I saw that as triple confirmation from the Lord that I am to read this whole sermon to you. It will take me 16 minutes. I invite you to follow me in your copy of Scripture.

Pray.

I will now read Matthew 5:1 - 7:28.

## Why Study the Sermon on the Mount?

Over the next few weeks and months we will consider this sermon together. There are many reasons to do so, but I'll list three.

**First**, it reveals the great blessings of being a disciple of Jesus. The first word of this sermon is "blessed." The word means "blessed, happy, or fortunate."<sup>7</sup> In each of these occurrences in the first eleven verses, the word could be translated as happy.<sup>8</sup> Jesus uses the word nine times in the first eleven verses. *Happiness is THE defining characteristic of those who are in the kingdom of heaven.*

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<sup>7</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 301.

<sup>8</sup> Robert Young, *Young's Literal Translation* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 1997), Mt 5:4-6.

This word is not a pronouncement of blessing so much as it is a *revelation* of blessing. The word refers to “an existing state of happiness or good fortune.”<sup>9</sup> In other words, it “affirms a quality of spirituality that is already present.”<sup>10</sup> Jesus is teaching that the favor of God rests upon those who belong to his kingdom.

**Second**, Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples by teaching them to obey all that he taught. These are the final words of this book.

**Matthew 28:18-20 (ESV)** <sup>18</sup> And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <sup>19</sup> Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, <sup>20</sup> teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

This is a good definition of discipleship. Discipleship means starting and staying with Jesus. We start with Jesus in baptism and we stay with Jesus in his teaching. Discipleship begins by starting with Jesus, that is by becoming a disciple, which is marked by baptism, and it continues by staying with Jesus, which is marked by abiding in the teaching of Jesus.

The Sermon on the Mount is what Jesus taught. The Sermon on the Mount is the teaching of Jesus. Jesus commanded his followers to make disciples by teaching them to obey all that he taught. Thus, we are going to obey Jesus and continue the process of discipleship by teaching all that Jesus himself taught. We find what Jesus taught here in this Sermon on the Mount.

**Third**, I can’t imagine a more relevant portion of Scripture for the church than what Jesus here teaches on. The topics that Jesus covers in this sermon are still front burner issues today. For example,

- Are you interested to know what the kingdom of heaven is like?
- Does anyone among us struggle with anger management?
- Does anyone struggles with lust?
- Does anyone struggle with the issues of marriage and divorce?
- Does anyone among us struggle with controlling your tongue?
- Does anyone wonder how God would have us act toward mean people?
- Does anyone wonder how Jesus would have us respond to haters?
- Does anyone wonder what Jesus would have you do with your money?
- Could you use any help understanding prayer?

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<sup>9</sup> Kenneth E. Bailey, *Jesus through Middle Eastern Eyes: Cultural Studies in the Gospels* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2008), 68.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

- What about fasting?
- Does anyone struggle with anxiety?
- Or judging others?
- Or do you know how to spot a false teacher?
- Or do you wonder what Jesus would say about how to build a happy home?

These issues and more are addressed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus possess all authority in heaven and on earth. He authoritatively teaches on all these issues. We need to know what he says if we are to be his disciples. Thus, we will read together this sermon.

Lets together sing to Jesus.