

Dr. Bill Mounce, Sermon on the Mount, Lecture 1, Introduction and Beatitudes

© 2024 Bill Mounce and Ted Hildebrandt

This is Dr. Bill Mounce in his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. This is session number one, Introduction and Beatitudes. What is good to be here? I recognize some of your faces.

Some are new to me, so it'll be good to get to know you over the week. Unless Frank has an objection, my name's Bill. My mother called me Bill.

I kind of like Bill. I think Jesus had something to say about using honorific titles, and I tend to believe Jesus when he says things. So my name is Bill, but it's good to see you all.

One of my favorite sermon series I preached was the Sermon on the Mount. It took me two and a half years to get through it, and I think I researched it as hard as I researched almost any book I've ever written, and it was fun. Well, fun is not the right word.

I mean, the Sermon on the Mount is just annoying. If you're going to believe it, right? It's just annoying, and so it was an annoying two-and-a-half-year sermon, but it was helpful. But it's kind of fun to be able to turn around now and to take that research and that work and do it more in a lecture format, so I'm glad to be able to do that.

We're here for four days, and the way it's basically going to break down is that I spend way more time on the first 14 or so verses than I do anything else. The Beatitudes are key to everything, and so a lot of the introductory issues, the lot of how you're going to approach the sermon as a whole, is established in the Beatitudes, so we will stay in the Beatitudes salt and light, my guess is, all day today. But don't worry, we're not going to go that slowly the rest of the week.

Tomorrow, we will look at the rest of chapter 5. The next day, we will look at chapter 6, most of it, and the last day, probably the end of chapter 6 and chapter 7. All right, so that's the kind of pace we're going to keep. I prefer not to monologue, so feel free. We have questions. The mic in the middle of the room should pick up your question, but I'll probably repeat it as well.

But feel free to ask questions and dialogue. Most of what I have to say is in the textbooks or in the sermon series, and so the reason you come to a class is to be able to interact, right? So, if you just want the data, there are cheaper ways to get the data, so feel free to interact, okay? I guess that's it. Okay, let's start with introductory issues.

Sermon on the Mount. Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known collection of Jesus' teachings. The language from the sermon has permeated the English language, hasn't it? I was just in China, I think it was last week; my internal clock is just shot to pieces right now, and I was teaching the Sermon on the Mount.

But over in China, you teach on character issues, and it was in I think some of these phrases have made it even into Mandarin. These are very, very well-known phrases. We talk about being the salt of the earth, or we talk about turning the other cheek or going the extra mile, or the golden rule.

I mean, this is just a pervasive language in our language anyway. And I think a lot of people probably use these terms, and they have no idea where they're coming from. No idea at all.

So, it is a very, very famous group of teachings, and I love how Stott starts his book. I think Christian Counterculture is, Stott's book is just absolutely a magnificent treatise on the Sermon on the Mount. Excuse me.

He says the Sermon on the Mount is probably the best-known part of the teaching of Jesus, though arguably, it is the least understood and certainly is the least obeyed. And I just think that's a great one-sentence summary of the Sermon on the Mount. Because we look at phrases like, turn the other cheek, and we go, what does that mean? I've only got two cheeks, so I can pop the guy after the third. I mean, what does it actually mean if your right hand causes you to sit and cut it off? Dan Wallace, in his grammar, tells the story of a seminary student who couldn't stop lusting, and he literally took a screwdriver and gouged his eye out.

Origen castrated himself. I mean, what do these words really mean? You look at a verse like in 721. I mean, I could probably point to just about any passage.

Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who's in heaven. Many are going to say on that day, hey, we prophesied. Hey, it was not in the Bible.

We're going to prophesy in your name. We're going to drive out demons. We did miracles.

Jesus says I have no idea who you are. Go to hell. And you look at that, and you go, really? How can you do those things and not be a Christian? How can you do those things and not be a super Christian? So, we all know the language, right? I'm not telling you anything you don't know.

The language, it's so strong that I think what often happens is that people in our churches, and perhaps we ourselves, say, well, it can't possibly mean what it seems to be saying, so I'm going to ignore it altogether. And I think that's what starts getting at it. I think the church as a whole has just ignored this Sermon on the Mount because most of it is just simply so hard to understand.

Be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect, 548. Well, that's, boy, that's a depressing thing. Remember when I was a kid, the kind of the ongoing joke, although I don't know how much of a joke it was, it was when the missionaries would come around and, you know, talk about their calling and encourage us to follow them, you know, would say, God is this grumpy old man up there who's terribly afraid that someone somewhere is having a good time, so he's going to make me go to some foreign country where I'll be miserable.

I'm not going to be a missionary. I mean, we joked about it, but I think there was a sense that, yeah, that's kind of what God's like. And then when you read a verse like, be perfect, you know, we can see a dad standing over us with a bat, you know, beating us into submission kind of stuff.

My dad did not beat me with a bat. So anyway, I think these kinds of stereotypes and concerns for the Sermon are accurate. I mean, are fair because it does raise questions.

And so, what I want to do is to start by addressing some of the larger issues, more of the how do we approach the Sermon. And these are the really important things. In fact, I think one of the sermons I asked you to listen to addressed this topic of is how are we going to handle the language as a whole.

Number one, the Sermon on the Mount, is addressed to disciples. It's addressed to believers. It's addressed to Christians.

Some people have called it Jesus's manifesto. It's about how to live within the kingdom of God. Now, we know that some of the crowd around the circumference of this discussion probably weren't committed followers.

They weren't what we would call Christians. They may have been listening. But certainly, the focus of the Sermon is on Christians.

And so, for example, in 7:7, you know, ask, and it will be given to you. Seek, and you will find. Knock, and the door will be opened to you.

That's not a promise to non-Christians, right? That's only a promise to children of God who live in a covenantal relationship with Him. So, the Sermon on the Mount is

for believers. I mean, even for disciples of Jesus, this is a lofty ethic that seems really hard.

It's absolutely impossible for a non-Christian. There's no way that a non-Christian can even approach the Sermon on the Mount. I mean, an unregenerate person without the Holy Spirit could never obey 6:33.

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you. I mean, that's just not possible, right? Oh, by the way, I'm working out of the NIV. So, I don't know, just so you're aware, and I'm using the 2011, the new one, all right? So, translations are a little different.

I was the New Testament chair of the ESV for 10 years. I like the ESV, so I have no bones to pick with it. But I'm on the NIV, so I'm trying to, in my thinking, in my... The ESV is so stuck in my head because I was raised on the RSV, which is the base of the ESV, that I've had to simply put my ESV aside and just read the NIV because I need to get the NIV idiom in my head.

I've been on the committee for four years, and I still find myself arguing, thinking I'm arguing for the NIV, and I'm really arguing for the ESV. So, it's all still confused in my head, but I'm reading out of the NIV, okay? And not the 84, but the new one. Anyway, while these things, the Sermon on the Mount, are difficult for us, they are impossible, I would say, for a non-Christian.

This is why Gandhi was wrong. Gandhi is famous for saying that the Sermon on the Mount is the world's finest collection of ethical teachings. No, it's not.

For the world, it's just, it's horrific. It's just horrific because it's completely unattainable, and it's completely countercultural, and it doesn't, for a non-Christian, doesn't work in the real world. So, I don't know what Gandhi was thinking, but he was completely wrong on that.

So, the Sermon on the Mount, first and foremost, is addressed to the disciples. It's how we enter the kingdom. It's how we live in the kingdom, okay? Second of all, I believe that the Sermon on the Mount is addressed to all disciples of all times.

One of the things that's happened in the history of the interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount is that because it's so hard, people have relegated it to a certain group. It's certainly not for all Christians of all time, but I just think you can't do that with the Sermon on the Mount. It was intended for all Christians for all time.

For example, Aquinas. When were Aquinas' dates? I would make up a date, but I'm on video so that somebody would check it. Aquinas is the end of the first millennium, isn't he? I think, anyway, Aquinas argued that he separated lay and clergy.

And I just think this distinction between lay and clergy is about the worst thing that's happened in the history of the church. I mean, I really, really think Aquinas was wrong. But what he said is that there's no way that common folk can follow or obey the Sermon on the Mount.

So, it must just be for the priests. It must just be for the pastors and preachers. It must just be for the clergy.

And then the regular folk, the lay people, the laity, it doesn't apply to them because they can't do it. It was interesting when I was in China, this division of lay clergy. And by the way, I absolutely detest the word lay, but I can't find another word in English.

There are, we're all ministers. We're all full-time Christians. We're all full-time disciples.

We all have the same set of rules and guidelines and the same power. I mean, it's one big ball of wax, and we're all in it together, regardless of where our gifts put us in the working of the church. And I cannot find a word for lay.

So, if you guys know of one, let me know. All right? The regular folk implies that pastors aren't regular. You know, maybe we aren't.

I don't know. Anyway. 1225 to 12.

Okay. Okay. So, 13th century.

I was only off by 400 years. Okay. Thank you.

Aquinas's dates. Anyway, when I was in China, this division is just, it is pervasive in the Chinese church that they don't even like to call themselves elders. They're, the phrase just left me, co-workers.

Because in the Chinese psyche, they see all the things that an elder has to do or a pastor has to do, and they can't do it. But they try really hard, and it's a culture that is just driven to do and not to be. And so, but they have this distinction of these co-workers, even though they're not up to biblical standards, they're the woo people.

And then there's the rest of us lay people. When they were there, a man came to me and was talking about some marriage issues. And he said, would you pray for me? And I didn't know.

And I thought it was just in the circumstance; it was kind of an odd request. And I was, oh, that's right. I'm perceived as an authority that makes me more spiritual than he is.

And therefore, God listens to my prayers. They have more efficacy than his prayers because of this lay clergy distinction that's just so strong in the Chinese church. This is what Aquinas was getting at.

I would guess, I mean, I lived, I'm a kind of a, I don't know what you'd call me. I was in high school, I moved to Kentucky, and I found out that Yankee is always a two-word phrase, even by my friends. I'll let you fill in the blank.

And so, my exposure to Southern culture is Kentucky culture. So, I know we're not, this isn't Kentucky. But, you know, I saw it in the churches really clearly there in a way I'd never seen it before.

I'm sure it's true everywhere, but there are the pastor and the elder and the deacons and the choir members, and they're of one spiritual material. And then there are all the folks who come in 10 minutes late, and that's okay, right? I mean, when I was pastoring, I wanted to leave the back two rows open for visitors because visitors always come late, right? I mean, they plan on coming late. And we had a couple of families that simply insisted on being backrow Christians.

I'd never seen anyone insist on being a back-row Christian. Well, it's really not, you know, you're up there, and we're back here. And we did the fancy ropes over the chairs.

They just picked it up and sat down in the back row and put the rope back down. I explained to them why I didn't want them sitting in the back row. They didn't care.

They were backrow Christians. They were very comfortable with that. So I finally just told the deacons to pick up the last two back rows of chairs and, two minutes into the church, put them back down.

It was the only way to keep them out of the back row. But I mean, they, I guess they were very comfortable with this distinction of, well, we're not Bill, and we're not the worship guy. And, you know, that's one kind of disciple, and we're another.

And I just, that's just so wrong. But it permeates our church, doesn't it? And it comes from Aquinas, who probably was around before him, but he's the one who formulated it. By the way, this is one of the possible position paper topics that I suggested for you in the syllabus.

We'll talk about the syllabus sometime. But the point I'm trying to make is that there are not two groups of Christians in the Sermon on the Mount and in the church. The sermon is for everyone.

It's not just for you to go. Okay? Not for you all. The sermon does distinguish between two groups of people.

That's true. There are those who go through the narrow gate and walk a difficult path. There are the few who find life.

That's one group. And then there are those who go through the wide gate, travel the easy road, and go to their destruction. So, there are two groups of people in the sermon.

One goes to heaven, and the other goes to hell. Right? There are those who hear and do the sermon. These are the wise who build their house on the rock.

There are those who hear but do not do. These are the fools that build their houses on the sand. So there certainly are two groups.

But in the sermon, one group goes to heaven, and one group goes to hell. One group lives in a relationship with Jesus, and the other one doesn't live in a relationship. So yes, there are two groups.

But this is what the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers is about, right? I mean, this is one of the great Reformation doctrines, that we don't have to go through someone to get to God. We don't have to confess to a priest in order to have our confessions heard by God. Now, I'm belaboring this point, but I think the attitude is endemic in our churches.

If some of you were at the commencement, you heard me speak on this with the gate and the path, that there are people who think that it's okay to go through the gate but not travel the path. Forget the fact that life is at the end of the path, not on the other side of the gate. So those are the people that get their get-out-of-hell-free card.

They think they can live anywhere they want; it doesn't matter, and I've actually heard it preached. Look, as long as you sign the rule book of this church, you can live anywhere you want; it doesn't matter, you're going to go to heaven. That church actually burned down.

It was very interesting. It was a church in Bowling Green where the pastor made a really big point of preaching that, and a few years later, the building burned down. Coincidence? I don't know.

But anyway, all this to say, we are all priests. It's a level playing field. We have different gifts that put us in different roles of the church, but the sermons for all of us, all of us in this room, for all of those that we lead and shepherd and preach to.

Now, the other little twist on this is a dispensational twist, and in older dispensationalism, the Sermon on the Mount was not for the church. It was the end of the law. So, in dispensationalism, Jesus was saying the Sermon on the Mount for Jews, for people living under, in their construct, living under the law, and we will be able to obey this in the Millennial Kingdom, but it doesn't apply to any of us.

And I'm thankful that that attitude in dispensationalism, for the most part, is gone, as far as I can tell. Dispensationalism doesn't relegate the Sermon on the Mount or all of the Gospels to the Millennial Kingdom anymore. And the fact of the matter is that most of what Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount is repeated somewhere else, right? So, you have Peter 116, Be holy as your Father in heaven is holy.

Be perfect as your Father is perfect. It's the same thing. So, a lot of the ethics of the Sermon is repeated elsewhere.

So, anyway, the point I'm trying to make is that the Sermon is for all people of all time. And that means our people have to struggle with it. They have to struggle with gouging out the eye and cutting off the hand.

All right. Okay, so that was point two, okay? All right. Point three is just to emphasize Stott's title.

Discipleship in God's Kingdom is countercultural. They've changed the name of Stott's book in different editions and printings. And I know some of them have the title of countercultural, and some don't.

But it's a wonderful phrase. I wish they had left it alone. What we live and what we preach is phenomenally countercultural.

In fact, sometimes I think if I ever find myself agreeing with the world, then I'm mis-exegeting the Bible. Because we're so countercultural to this world. At almost every level, what we believe and how we behave is different.

So, the world praises individual achievement and rugged independence, right? The Marlboro Man, who, by the way, never smoked. The guy who played that wasn't a smoker. He just looked like a man.

So, they just, anyway. I was a photojournalism major in college, so I had access to a whole other bunch of information. Anyway, the world celebrates individual achievement and rugged independence.

We celebrate poverty of spirit. We celebrate meekness and willing submission to God's authority. You know, it's just countercultural.

The world insists on our rights, boy, especially today. In fact, I was flipping through the news this morning, and I saw that someone sprained an ankle and is suing the building or whatever for five million dollars. Oh, it's Al Sharpton's daughter.

I don't know any of the details. What, five million dollars for a sprained ankle? Hmm. Now, the world's message is rights.

Our message is the golden rule. Our message is love. The other person will sue them.

You love them. And the sermon, again, I think this is part of the problem in our churches, is that it's so countercultural that you can't straddle the fence, can you, on the sermon? You either have to give yourself wholly to the sermon, or you have to abandon it entirely. You cannot straddle the fence.

I made that comment in, I've been thinking about China a lot lately, and I made that comment in China, and the wife of the pastor was doing the translation work, and I stopped, and I looked at her, and I said, do you have that expression in Mandarin, straddle the fence? Because I hadn't seen any fences. Well, I guess there are some, but nothing like we have. Her husband answered from the front row and said, actually, she switched to a really good Chinese metaphor.

This is a great illustration of translation work. I said, what was the Chinese metaphor? He said, a foot in two boats. Isn't that great? Straddle the fence.

A foot in two boats. The Sermon on the Mount doesn't let us keep a left foot in one boat and a right foot in another boat. It's going to be impossible.

You have to commit, or you have to ignore it entirely. You know, it's stated explicitly in 624. You can't serve two masters.

You just can't serve two masters. You have to choose between God and money. You have to make a choice.

You have to make a choice. But the call to radical discipleship is explicit in that passage, but it's implicit all over the place, isn't it? You are the salt of the earth. The only reason that salt can do its job is that it's different from the meat.

It's different from what it's purifying, right? If it weren't different, it couldn't do its job. You are the light of the world. The only way for light to do its function is to be different from the darkness, right? So implicitly all the way through, and in certain places explicitly, it's just really clear.

We are so counter-cultural. And so when I was preaching this, I told the people in the church, be ready to get uncomfortable for two and a half years because you're going to either have to ignore everything I say, or you're going to accept it, and it's going to be hard. So counter-cultural.

Number four, and this is getting to the real meat of the matter. I'm going to cover this, and then we're going to stop and talk about it for a bit. How do we understand the extreme nature of Jesus' ethics? How are we going to handle the words? How are we going to preach the words? How are our people going to hear these words? If your right-hand causes you to sin, cut it off.

If you lusted, you've broken the commandment against adultery. I'm saying that lust and adultery are the same thing, as some people say, but it's the attitude that leads to the action that violates the commandment. How are we going to handle that? Be perfect.

I think in almost every verse, we're going to be struggling with the absolute nature of Jesus' ethic, and again, I think the tendency, I don't think I know, the tendency in the church is to say, well, it can't mean that, and so they ignore everything. I think that's what happens, and again, this is another one of your suggested position papers. I love position papers.

Actually, we'll talk more about it later, but a position paper, I wrote a ton of these for the church, and they were in areas that were outside the statement of faith, but they were things that guided the direction of the church, and so a position paper is meant to be read by the people in your church, and so that's one of the suggested position papers because we'll talk about that later. So, how are we going to understand the extreme nature of Jesus' ethics? A, I think we have to give it its full weight. We have to let the words mean what they say.

I mean, you think about the phrase, if your eye caused you to sin, gouge it out, and you go, I can't mean that, but then the second half of it, it's better to go through the earth, go through life with one eye, than to go to hell with two, right? Same thing with the right hand, and we look at that, and we go, well, yeah, the second half of that's true. If I had to choose between having one hand and going to heaven and two hands and going to hell, I'm going to go through one hand. Maybe go on Dancing with the Stars.

You've been watching that? The amputee, the vet, and his arms are here. I don't know where he is. He's way up near the finals, Dancing with the Stars. Anyway, it's better to go through life without this and go to heaven than to have both of these and end up in hell.

And so, we look at the second half and go, oh, yeah, yeah, I understand that. Yeah, that's right. But then you look at the first half, and you go, well, I can't mean what it says, so I'm going to ignore it.

That's the problem that we're having. You know, it says the kingdom of God is for the poor in spirit. We look at it, and we go, yeah, I can accept that.

It has to be for that. So, we just have this, if we seek first the kingdom of God, all these things will indeed be given to us. So, you can't throw out some and keep others, the point I'm trying to make.

And so, my challenge to you is to find a way. And one of your textbooks spends quite a bit of time at the beginning trying to figure out Jesus's ethic and how to handle these words. And my encouragement to you is, A, the words mean what they say.

The words really do mean what they say. But there's the other half, and this is where it gets really hard, is that, and the best word I know is simplistic. We simply can't be simplistic in our interpretation.

Jesus often states a truth very strongly to drive a central point home. That doesn't mean there aren't exceptions or other things that come into our full understanding of it. But time and time again, He really says things strongly to drive the main point home, right? We're going to look at the divorce passage.

You know, Marcus says, don't do it. In a divorce-riddled culture in that day and age, that was just revolutionary. What do you mean, don't get divorced? Almost everybody got divorced.

Well, you come to Matthew, it says, well, don't get divorced except for adultery. Oh, well, which is it, Jesus? I hear Jesus say, well, I have to make every qualification every time I say something. Can't I just say something to make the main point, and you understand it contextually? Give my words their full meaning. God intended marriage to be permanent.

Okay, can I just say that without exceptions? Paul comes along in 1 Corinthians and says, well, if an unbelieving partner is willing to, is not willing to live with you, is willing to abandon you, which is the Roman form of divorce, which is in Roman divorce law, you leave, that's the divorce. He says you're not bound. That's another thing that breaks the marriage covenant.

So, it's like, Jesus can say these words and say them very strongly and we need to feel the impact of the strength of those words. But we can't be simplistic. This is not the only thing that Jesus taught.

This is, I think, a very crucial balance that we have to have. Jesus says, don't pray in the corner, go into your room, shut the door and pray in private. Then when the disciples come and say, how do we teach us to pray? He teaches them a communal public prayer, our Father, not my Father, but our Father.

He often prayed with disciples in wide open areas. So what was the point he was trying to drive home, but we can't be simplistic. Make sense? I get in trouble, I get probably in trouble for this more than anything else, is I tend to, I like to think I'm like Jesus in this one small area.

I tend to say things pretty strongly and not qualify myself. And I was, especially when I was teaching, I was always getting in trouble. But I was trying to make a point, and so I would state it strongly.

And students would think of all the exceptions. You know, let me just make the main point and make it strong, all right? All right. So, we're still under point four.

So, A and B are the interpretations that must give full weight to Jesus' words. B, but our interpretations can't be simplistic. That's one way to understand the strength of the language.

But let me give you another way, and this is the key. For me, this is the key to everything. And this is how I understand this sermon.

Are you familiar with the phrase, already but not yet? Okay, the fulfillment and consummation. All right. I think if you apply that to the sermon on the mount, it starts to make sense.

All right. The already but not Greg Beale's latest New Testament theology, he is the champion of this, and he is, I mean, this has been around since George Ladd in the 70s when he wrote his stuff. But Beal is a teacher at Westminster now. Was it Gordon Conwell? He is pushing and pushing and pushing on this theme as a dominant, he would probably say the dominant theme, theologically in the New Testament.

It's the already but not yet. I can still remember George Ladd, people would say, has the kingdom of God come? And he would always quote the same verse. If I by the thing of God cast out demons, you know the kingdom of God has come in your midst.

Yes, the kingdom has come. Has the kingdom come in its fullness? Well, no, the kingdom won't come in its fullness until every knee bows and every tongue confesses that Jesus Christ is Lord. Some will bow willingly, some will bow unwillingly, but all will bow, right? So you have fulfillment when the kingdom comes in the work of Jesus and spreads through his disciples, but you have ultimate fulfillment at the end of time.

The already it's already here, but it's not yet come to its fullness, all right? All right, I think if you, actually I was, we were just down at Johnny and Friends. We're working with them in biblical training there. They have a concern about training people with disabilities to be leaders in the church.

The way I like to say it is, have you ever listened to a blind pastor preach? Why not? I think it'd be fascinating because I'll bet you a blind pastor sees things differently than you and I see them, pun intended. It's probably the only pun I'll tell this whole week. Yeah, I would love, I would love to listen to someone in a wheelchair because they're going to look at life differently than I do.

And it's, so that's why we're working with Johnny and Friends is how can biblical training train people with disabilities to be leaders in the church? Who generally can't go to normal classes and don't have the money. Anyway, in the course of the discussion, I read her book or pamphlet on suffering, and she uses the already but not yet to explain suffering in this world. God allows what He hates in order to accomplish what He loves.

I don't know if she got the line from Keller or Piper; she made it up, but that's the line that she uses. And she'll say, look, why should disabilities and suffering be any different from anything else? There's the already, but not yet. God has begun to heal, but healing won't be complete, and suffering won't be completely gone until heaven.

Why should suffering and disabilities be any different than anything else in the Christian law? It's a fabulous argument, by the way. So, I'm getting off track. So, I want to. I'm going to be all the way through this Sermon using the already but not yet theology to explain things in the Sermon.

So, we pray, for example, may your kingdom come. Pray, may your will be done. Is God's will being done now? Somewhat? Imperfectly? But it is being done at some level, right? I need a nod.

Okay. Yeah, it's, yeah, it is being done. Is it being done on earth as it is in heaven? No.

That won't happen until the new heavens and the new earth. So, it's already being done imperfectly, incompletely, but at the fulfillment of the new heavens and new earth, it will be done on earth as it is in heaven. So, there's the already but not yet.

And so, yeah, blessed are those who mourn, for they'll be comforted. Are you comforted now when you mourn over your sin? Yeah, I hope so. But when we have that final great mourning, M-O-U-R, mourning, where we give account for every careless word we've ever said, I said, probably that's going to be the last of the mourning.

Then at that point, we will be finally fully and completely comforted because sin will be gone. There'll be nothing to mourn about, just nothing but rejoicing for eternity. So that's the already, but not yet.

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they'll be filled. As we pursue God, as the deer pants for water, so my soul pants for you, as that is true in our life, we are being comforted, and it's real, and it's vital, and it's crucial, and it's important, right? We don't want to belittle that. But when we hunger and thirst for God's righteousness in heaven, our comfort is that our filling is going to be radically different, much, it'll be complete, right? Already, not yet.

I think that's, this is the key to the Sermon on the Mount. Another way to say it is this, the Sermon on the Mount is a picture of who we are in Christ. It's the picture of what we are becoming by God's Spirit and by His grace, and it's a picture of who we ultimately will be in the new heavens and the new earth as we stand on the other side of judgment.

And it's a cycle, right? This is who we are, this is who we are becoming, and it holds out the promise that this is who we ultimately will be. It's often pointed out that the Spirit and grace are nowhere present in this sermon, and you're going to have to figure out how you want to express that. The way I express it is that the Spirit is the unspoken hero of the sermon, and grace is the unspoken underpinning because none of this is possible without the Spirit and without grace.

And again, you have to look at the Sermon on the Mount in the context of Jesus' teaching as a whole, and while they're not explicitly stated, and you know, historically, when Jesus said the Sermon on the Mount, my guess is the Spirit, the disciples didn't know about the Spirit, hadn't learned much about grace, and so the sermon probably overwhelmed them. But we are on this side of the cross, and we have a fuller understanding of what's going on. So, it's who we are, what we are becoming, who we will be by God's grace, enabled by His Spirit.

Okay, so do you have any comments or questions on that? Yes, sir. Well, I would say that, you know, much like Esther, you know, the angel of dominoes, you know, because the name of God was never mentioned, but yet the hand of God was probably seen throughout. It permeates the book, and so you could say that grace and the Holy Spirit are in the background.

Yeah, yeah, that's a good illustration. You can't. If you go to Israel and you want a scroll, the only one they'll sell you is Esther. I have one.

Handwritten vellum, all that kind of stuff. But the reason they'll sell it is that God's name's not in it. But you can't read Esther without seeing God everywhere.

Well, I mean, Mordecai says it, right? You know, who knows, but for this very reason, you are now queen. Well, I wonder who put her in that position. It's like C.S. Lewis' Narnia.

Is it the boy, the boy in the chair? Is it the boy and his horse? Horse and his boy. You occasionally, for example, it's a long time since I read it, obviously, but he's riding someone, he starts to go the wrong direction, and the horse hears a lion roar out on the side, and it directs, and it fixes it. You know, you read the book, and at first, you go. Come on; I want to find out about Aslan.

Well, the whole point is that God is not always visibly there, but He's all around all the time. Yeah, it's a good parallel. Did the air conditioner just go off in this room? Don't think it ever came on.

Yeah, I thought it was, but let's see if we can get some air going because, unlike you, I really probably shouldn't take my shoes off. Oh, no, it's okay. He kicked it on.

This is a crucial issue in the sermon. So, any other, I saw another hand. He used to have a dean that was legally blind, and he would go out and preach, and he would say, yes, I see that hand.

I see that hand. He couldn't see anything. Oh, that's wonderful.

Thank you. They may have turned it off for the video, but I have these wonderful audio filters that can just make that go away. It won't even be in the video.

So, what's been your experience in preaching this sermon? I don't know if you've preached through it or preached passages out of it, but what has been the reaction that you have felt, either personally or from your people to the strength of the language in the sermon? Yeah, yeah. It's impossible. Can't do it.

Okay, yeah, the meaning of the Makarios, yeah, we'll get to that. It's a great discussion. Have you preached out of the sermon? Yeah.

Yeah, and you know, you're going to be gouging out eyes and cutting off hands if you do take it at face value. That's a good phrase. If you take it at face value, you're going to misunderstand it, but then in the process, it's all thrown out.

Have you ever preached, seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you, and people say, how do you explain the people who starve? Have you ever had that happen? The Bible preaches that if you seek God, He's going to take care of all your physical needs. Then how come 40,000 children die of starvation a day, some of them believers? The answer is the already, but not yet. That what is given is given now impartially, but it will be given fully.

Yeah, anyway, the sermon is a challenge. It's a challenge, and I don't know if spending two and a half years preaching through it was a good idea. Maybe I should have broken it up or something, but it's hard to hear this sermon slowly preached.

One of the most interesting things that happened to me was I preached the passage on, if you say raka, you'd be judged by the loser. If you do that, you're going to be judged, and I just preached it for what he said. A really neat kid, about 25-year-old kid, committed to the church, committed to the Lord.

I mean, this was not a peripheral Christian kind of thing. Came to me the next Sunday before the first service, and he said, I just want you to know something. I went, what is it? He goes, I want to know that I've forgiven you.

I said, okay, tell me what happened. And he said, you made me question my faith all last week because I get angry and call people names periodically, and you said I'd be liable to judgment in the fires of hell, fires of Gehenna. And I couldn't really go into the discussion because I was getting ready to preach the service, but I did say, what did I say that was wrong? Where did I misread Jesus? And he wouldn't answer me, but he just really didn't like it.

But I'll guarantee you, he didn't call anyone loser, stupid, idiot, numbskull, nitwit that week. As he was thinking through, what was the point Jesus was driving at? And that's the way we deal with things. We override ourselves.

Yeah, we have to let Scripture interpret Scripture otherwise you're going to run into all kinds of problems. And I'm sure in the sermon I preached on Rachah, that I could check my notes, but I'm sure I talked about the justifications by faith and faith alone, that this is not, that you've got to balance it with the rest of Scripture. The very word that Jesus says will make us liable to judgment is the word he uses in Matthew 24 in addressing the Pharisees.

Good example. So, either Jesus is in hell, which he's not, or giving the word their full force, you understand it contextually. And it's hard.

You know, if your people are just kind of wanting to live on the surface, they'll never figure it out. But if people want to really understand Scripture deeply and in context,

then these are things that are good to struggle with. I mean, I wonder what it would be like to minister in a church where people's language was always seasoned with grace, where there was no judging going on, just love.

No verbal retaliation in public or in private. I mean, what if we just took that one passage about Rachah, moreh, and I forget what the other word is, and said, we're not going to talk like that. We're not going to think like that.

We're not going to treat one another like that. Man, would I love to go to that church! I've never seen a church like that.

I'd love to go to a church like that. I could put up with bad preaching. Yeah, I could if I were in a church like that.

Anyway. Hey, I meant to ask Frank, and I forgot, what are breaks like normally? Do we take a break every hour? Every 25 minutes. Yeah, all right, yeah.

We take an hour break every hour. Yeah, that's not why you're here. Is it, do you guys, do you break about an hour for 10 minutes? Is that kind of how it works? Or do you go, or do you have one break in the morning and one break in the afternoon? One break, both? It's different every class.

Okay. All right, all right. Well, let's, okay, let's have one break this morning because, because you need to take care of the money stuff, and that way we can have a slightly longer break, is what I'm thinking.

All right, all right. Okay. Well, with that as an introduction, let's jump into the Beatitudes and start with, well, let's start with 5:1. Now when Jesus saw the crowds, he went up to a mountainside and sat down.

His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them. The NIV makes what I consider to be a really, really, really bad mistake at this point. If you have any other translation, I skipped a phrase, didn't I? You know, the Greek says, and opening his mouth, he taught them saying.

I wasn't on the committee when this decision was made. I will try to bring it back up and fix it. The opening of the mouth is an Old Testament metaphor that emphasizes the significance of what's going to happen.

It's a phrase that says, you need to pay really, really, really close attention. He opened his mouth, and he said, and the NIV, I've asked the committee members about it, and they said, it's an idiom that is meaningless, and so they just said, he began to teach them. I disagree respectfully.

Jesus is up on a mountain. You've seen in the textbook the parallels with Jesus and Moses, that this isn't a new law, but it's Jesus as one who is greater than Moses is now giving that which is greater than the law. You have heard that it was said, but I say to you.

So, there are all kinds of Old Testament imagery and significance going on. Anyway, he opened his mouth, and he taught them what to say, and then we have the Beatitudes. The English word Beatitudes is from a Latin word that means generally happy, but the point is that Marianne, that's your name, right? Marianne, M-A-R-I-O-N.

Marianne. Marianne, M-A-R-I-O-N. Okay.

Oh, is that it? A-N is. Okay. Okay, all right.

This is a point that she raised. The Beatitudes, the Greek word is Makarios, it's translated, in most translations, as blessed, which is where the phrase beatitude comes from. It doesn't mean happy, and I think one of the translations does it.

Is it the NLT? It's the Good News, it does it, okay. It doesn't mean happy. It doesn't mean cheery.

A blessed person can be miserable, but he or she is still blessed. By the way, that's the other thing I wish we had from Chinese. Chinese has a third-person singular pronoun, ta, T-A, and it's not marked for gender.

So, they don't have to say him or her. They say ta. So maybe, I thought of maybe adopting ta into the English language.

Anyway, the two ladies, three ladies, I should say, on the NIV are comfortable when we use the word guys. It's really interesting. They hear guys as totally gender-neutral.

Now, if you call them a gal, it's offensive and demeaning. But they're comfortable with guys, so I picked up guys and folk.

So anyway, maybe I'll pick up ta for singulars. I think that's, you know, like, hi guys. Yeah, yeah.

We all have different registers, don't we? Anyway, what does it mean to be blessed? Because it's not just, it's not happy and cheery. At the most fundamental level, to be a person who is blessed is a person who is approved by God.

We're talking about people who are living in right relationship with God and have His approval. That's what a blessed person is. Someone who has God's approval, living in right relationship with Him.

Biblical blessedness looks far beyond happy. It moves far beyond circumstances. Regardless of how a blessed person feels, ta knows that he's approved or she's approved by God.

That is the fundamental. And what's nice about the Beatitudes is that it hangs meat on that skeleton, so to speak, because a blessed person is living in the kingdom.

A blessed person means they're comforted. To be blessed means you inherit the earth. To be blessed means you're filled.

So, the Beatitudes are filling out the details of what it means to be blessed. But at its most fundamental level, the word means that we are approved by God, that we are living in relationship, proper relationship with Him. It's interesting, the Holman Christian, do any of you use the Holman Christian Bible? Okay, well, Holman Christian Bible is an interesting translation.

One of the things I like about it is that they're not bound by tradition at all. Tradition plays a very large role in translation, and it should be at one level because you don't want to come up with a translation of a familiar verse that sounds so totally different that people kind of, what? Or, from a publisher's standpoint, they don't buy your book. John 3.16 is a perfect example.

It was mistranslated grossly, and I think it was intentionally mistranslated in most translations. For God so loved the world. What does so mean? It's hutos in Greek.

It does not mean a degree. It only means in this way. So, I think it's the NLT and maybe the NET that are the only ones that have been honest to the Greek and said, this is how God loves the world, colon, He gave.

And the NIV, thankfully, assigned me the task of finding a way, a proposal to make to fix the NIV. Gross mistranslation, because everyone here is so, oh, He loves us so much, and that's an impossible translation of the Greek, impossible translation of the Greek. So, tradition has a role, but it can get in the way is what I'm trying to say.

Holman Christian is willing to move away from tradition somewhat. So, for example, a manger, which is a meaningless word, what's a manger? Well, that's what Jesus was born in. What's a manger? That's what Jesus was born in.

It's a feeding trough, and I think that's what the HCSB does. They translated it: He was laid in a feeding trough. Wonderful translation.

So, anyway, Holman Christian's translation of the Beatitudes is that they fudge with the order a little. So, for example, in the first Beatitude it says, the poor in spirit are blessed, for the kingdom of God is theirs. So, it's really emphasizing, this is what it is to be blessed.

Number one, you have the kingdom. And that's good; I like that. Anyway, the Beatitudes are the pronouncement of God's blessing, which, at its deepest level, means these are the people approved by God. The Beatitudes hang meat on that and give us some specifics.

Okay? All right. So, the first Beatitude in verse 3, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God. What does poor in spirit mean? I'm not going to deal much with a parallel in Luke.

I'm not convinced they're the same sermon. I think Jesus was a Jewish rabbi who repeated himself all over the place. It would be really odd if He didn't repeat Himself all over the place.

Everyone did that, it's the way they taught, by repetition, by rote. You learn by rote. But in Luke it has blessed are the poor.

Some people argue, if they think both sermons are the same, that Matthew understood Jesus' deeper intent and made it clear by adding in spirit. It's possible, or they're just two different sermons. But what does poor in spirit not mean? Well, it doesn't mean financial poverty alone, right? And Matthew's making sure that we don't misunderstand that.

There is no doctrine of salvation by poverty. You might get that from Luke, but you're not going to get that from here. And a poor in spirit is not an insignificant, worthless, body-feeding scum.

And that's kind of how the world thinks of, if you say, what's poor in spirit? I mean, low-life scum-level kinds of things. The Old Testament background, and by the way, I know that a lot of you know a lot of what I'm saying, all right? So, I don't want to come across as saying you've never heard this before because my guess is most of you have heard most of what I'm going to talk about, all right? But I still need to cover the material, right? Fill in the holes, perhaps. The best way to understand poverty in spirit is to go to the Old Testament and understand the doctrine of who the poor are, right? The poor are certainly people who are financially poor, but because they are poor, they cannot trust in their riches, and therefore, they turn to trust in God.

So, in the Old Testament, when the Old Testament writers pronounce a blessing on the poor, it's not just because they don't have any money. It's because it's a group of people that properly, because the poverty was an avenue through which God drew them to Himself, and they could not trust in their wealth because they had none, and therefore they turned and trusted in God. They looked not to themselves, but they looked to God, and they saw God as their only means of salvation.

Okay, that's the poor in the Old Testament. So, the phrase I use for poverty of spirit is that these are people who recognize their spiritual bankruptcy before God. A person who is poor in spirit is a person who recognizes Todd's spiritual bankruptcy before God.

It's people who come to God with an admission of unworthiness and dependence on Him. I often like to contrast two songs or two poems. Perhaps, you know, *Invictus*; I am the master of my fate, I am captain of my Soul, is the theme song of the world. The theme song of a person who is poor in spirit is saying nothing in my hand. I bring simply to thy cross, and I cling.

Now, I brought this up at commencement two days ago, and no one had heard that line before. At least no one responded. So it got, it made me wonder, is that a song, is that a hymn? It is a hymn, isn't it? Okay, all right.

So it wasn't okay; I was afraid maybe it was a poem I had learned when I was a little kid. So, yeah. He washed me white as snow, yeah.

Nothing in my hand I bring simply to thy cross I cling. This is the poor in spirit. This is the person who understands that they have nothing to give in exchange for their soul to answer Jesus' question, right? What can you give in exchange for your soul? There's nothing.

You have nothing of equal value. I am spiritually bankrupt. And the thing that we all have to deal with in the pastorate is people understand this at point of conversion, don't they? This is not that hard to convey at conversion.

It's their spiritual bankruptcy that draws them to God in the first place. I'm living outside of a relationship with my Creator. I do not want to die and live forever apart from a relationship with my Creator.

There's nothing I can do to take care of my sin that is alienated from my Creator. And therefore, I believe that Jesus did on the cross for me what I could not do for myself, right? That's poor in spirit. And it's easier for people to grapple with that truth when it comes to conversion.

But we're all Galatians, right? We start with His Spirit, and we end it with works, don't we? I'm not, you know. I thought I was a sinner saved by grace, but really, it wasn't that hard for God to save me, right? I was a good kid. This is all hypothetical. I was a pretty good kid.

I hadn't raped and pillaged, right? Hadn't killed anyone. I didn't even kick my dog, right? I was a good kid. It wasn't that hard for me.

And look at everything I've done for God since then. I've written Greek books and commentary. We start with His Spirit.

We start with grace. We get off the throne of our life, and we put God on it. And then the battle from that day to the day we die is we keep trying to climb back up on the throne, right? Galatians was a 3-1, you know, wicked Galatians of who has bewitched you.

You started it in the Spirit. You're going to complete it now with the law. Pouring Spirit is the same thing.

We start with pouring Spirit, but we never cease to be spiritually bankrupt. Righteousness is imputed into us. Christ's righteousness is put into us.

We are made the righteousness of God, not through anything we've done, but through what Christ did on the cross. And we understand that we're not worthy. But then you start to get this sense of entitlement.

Does anyone here not have this struggle? Does anyone know anyone in your church who doesn't have this struggle? And so that's why I said earlier that the Sermon on the Mount is about how you enter the kingdom, and how you enter the kingdom is how you live in the kingdom. You know, at the altar, we mourned over our spiritual bankruptcy, but do we ever cease mourning over our sin? No. I mean, depending upon your interpretation of Romans 7, you got Paul mourning over his sin.

What I don't want to do, I do. The very thing I want to do, I can't do. Who's going to save me from this wretched body of mine? Thanks be to God.

Romans 8:4, I think it is. So, we start spiritually bankrupt, and even though we've made a new creation, given a new heart, regenerated, justified, redeemed, reconciled, adopted, all these wonderful things, we still have nothing. We're still spiritually bankrupt, right? So, how we enter the kingdom is how we live in the kingdom.

I have a quote from William Carey, and I'm trying to think of where I...oh, it's on here. One second. Here it is.

William...this is from William...I don't know where I got it. Oh, it's one of John Piper's blogs. He says, the biblical...this is Carey, the biblical answer to the paralysis of low self-esteem is not high self-esteem, it's sovereign grace.

You can test whether you agree with this by whether you can gladly repeat the words of Isaiah 41, 13. Is this the right quote? Fear not, you worm of Jacob, I will help you, says the Lord. Your Redeemer is the Holy One of Israel.

In other words, God's way of freeing and mobilizing people who see themselves as worms is not to tell them they are now beautiful butterflies but rather to say, I'll help. I am your Redeemer. So, I don't know.

That's not a great example, but that's what poverty of spirit is. I'll just say there are two kinds of people, regardless of wealth and personal achievement. There are those who are poor, wretched, and blind and know it.

And there are those who are poor, wretched, and blind and don't know it. Right? There are only two kinds of people in this world. And for those who understand that, the pronouncement of blessing is, for theirs is the kingdom of God.

Let me talk about the kingdom of God, and then we'll take a break. What on earth, I guess pun intended, I told the second one, what on earth is the kingdom of God? What is the kingdom of God? Again, George Ladd wrote what I think is the definitive book on this, and it's a very, very good book. The kingdom is not primarily a place.

I used to say the kingdom is not a place. And I got into a discussion with Gordon Fee during a break on a translation project, and he corrected me on that. He said, no, there is a spatial component to the kingdom of God, but it's not primarily a place.

The kingdom comes from Ladd, the kingdom of God, which is the sovereign rule of God in the hearts and lives of His children. The kingdom is the sovereign rule, the kingly rule of God in the hearts and lives of His children. Dr. Ladd used to say that it's the rule and reign of God in your life.

Now, what Gordon helped me understand is that that means the kingdom is spatially present when I am living under the kingship of God. And as through my witness and preaching and whatever, as other people submit to the kingly rule of God, there is a spatial component to it. I think it's a fair way to say it.

And the reason I like this is that it fits into the already, but not yet, because someday the kingdom will be a spatial place, right? It will be the new heavens and the new earth. And so it's the already, but not yet. It begins with God's kingly rule in me, and it is present where I am present.

And it is slowly spreading through all of our ministries, all of our witnessing, what we say, what we do, how we influence people. And, but it's all a precursor to what's going to happen at the end of time when you get the new heavens and the new earth. You know, I was trying to think of the title.

You know, it went through several, he wrote several books on the same thing. The something of the future. Let me look it up at the break.

I'll recognize it when I see it. Now, if I tell you things that are truly controversial, I'll try to append it. Just so you know, I'm going out on a branch, okay? And I'm going out in a little bit of a branch here.

And this point could be made for every beatitude. So, I'll just state it here. There is a, the Greek has a slight emphasis.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for to them and them alone is the kingdom of God. The normal word order in Greek is conjunction, verb, subject, and direct object. Now, most people who know Greek are not aware of that because the order gets changed so much.

But what you do in Greek is when you want to emphasize something, you push it forward. Actually, if you put anything out of order, it gets emphasized. But if you really want to emphasize, the best example is, for by grace, you have been saved.

You can hear what the emphasis is, right? Well, in all of these beatitudes, it's for of theirs is, and the of theirs is completely out of place. It belongs about four words later. But it's of theirs is the kingdom of God.

And the point that Jesus is making, and I don't want to overstate this. I don't want to say it's a, you know, he's pounding the pulpit. But there is an emphasis, I think.

And he's saying, Now, that becomes really interesting as we go through the beatitudes. What that means is that in the kingdom of God, the only people in the kingdom are those who are poor in spirit. The only people in the kingdom, the only people who are comforted are those who mourn.

The only people who inherit the earth are the meek. The only ones who will be shown. This is where it gets really hard. The only ones who are going to be shown mercy, verse 7, are those who have shown mercy.

The only ones who are in the kingdom, verse 10, are those who were persecuted. Now, we know that from elsewhere, right? 2 Timothy 3, everyone who seeks to live a

godly life will be persecuted. We know it from Romans 8, that it is only those who suffered are really truly disciples.

So, we know this from somewhere else. That's one reason I'm comfortable emphasizing the Greek word order. But it brings in some, and we'll talk mostly about it when we talk about the mercy beatitude.

But it's very powerful. If you think through the ramifications, are there people in your church who think that they're going to heaven who are not poor in spirit? Are there people in your church who are expecting to receive mercy at the final judgment who show no mercy in this life? Or if you go to the Lord's Prayer, are there people who think they've been forgiven by God when they themselves don't forgive others? Jesus has a whole parable saying no, right? From the unmerciful servant. The Master says, you should have shown mercy because I showed you mercy.

And he throws him in prison until he's paid the last penny, which, of course, never is going to happen. So, you start looking at this, and what you thought was difficult is almost becoming impossible, right? This is hard stuff. I encourage you to think through this and come to your own conclusions.

But I am absolutely convinced that Jesus means what he says here and that the only people who are going to be shown mercy in life and at judgment are those who show mercy in life. Now, you don't know this about me, but I need to tell you I am reformed. I'm going to sound really Wesleyan.

I know this is really disappointing to Frank, but I am reformed. I'm becoming less and less reformed as I read the Bible more and more, sorry. I'm down to about two and a half out of the five.

That's okay. But it's, you know, for example, Calvin argued vociferously that the faith that saves is faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone. It's a miscarriage of Calvin that says if you're elect or damned, you may not even know about it.

I had an office mate in grad school that believed this, that he's either elect or damned, and he would never really know until he stood before judgment, and nothing he ever did mattered at all because God had preordained everything. That's not Calvin in any shape, way or form. Larry was a missionary to India.

And I asked him, I said, so you don't believe that anything you did in India mattered at all because God had preordained everything. He said, that's right. Why'd you go? He goes, to be obedient.

So God sent you to do something that had no effect on the kingdom at all. And he goes, yeah. That's not Calvinism.

I don't know what it is, but it's not Calvin. And Calvin held to the necessity of not only the fact of perseverance but the necessity of perseverance. So, I'm getting off track here.

But my structures and how I think are Reformed structures. Limited atonement is the one that I absolutely cannot accept because I don't believe it's taught in Scripture. Anyway, so as a somewhat badly Reformed person, like Jesus, mercy will be shown only to those who show mercy.

The kingdom of God is only for those who are poor in spirit. That's what we all have to wrestle with on the Sermon on the Mount. Entrance to the kingdom is dependent upon this one central truth.

There is no one in the kingdom here or in heaven who is not poor in spirit. And life within the kingdom depends upon this one central truth. Christians so often think we have become rich, Galatians 3. Revelation 3, Jesus says to the Laodiceans, For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

So, this is what I'm saying. My grandma had a great illustration of the cycle of poor in spirit, describing who we are, what we are becoming, and what we ultimately will be. And she used to talk about, you wake up in the morning, it's early, and you can only see a few things in the bedroom, right? You can see maybe the chest of drawers or the bed you're lying on or something.

You can only see the big objects. If you lie in bed long enough, the sun comes through the window, which tells you when my grandma got up, and you start seeing other things. You see the clothes you left on the floor, you see the open door, or whatever.

And if you lie in bed long enough and the sun gets stronger, you start to see the specks of dust in the sunlight, right? And she said that's the Christian life. When we become Christians, we see the big things in our lives, and God goes to work on them, major visible issues that put you out of conformity with the character of God. Then, the longer you are a disciple, the more light shines, and you start seeing other things.

Eventually, you see all the little bits and pieces of sin that still permeate our bodies. That's why Paul is a very mature Christian, can crowd in Romans 7, I think. The things I want to do, I don't do.

I remember one commentator saying, this is not a manly Paul, which tells me more about the commentator than it does about Paul. Paul was a mature Christian who understood that poverty of spirit, to use Jesus' words, it's a cyclical thing, and you're

always learning, and you're always growing, but you never stop being poor in spirit. You, in fact, become more and more and more aware of your poverty in spirit.

I appreciate Grandma's illustration. I used to be really afraid. You know the phrase, "We're going to give an account for every careless word we say?" Does that bother you? It used to terrify me because I just, my mouth, all my life is just... I didn't talk until I was two years old, and then my mom says I've been making up for it ever since.

I just... And that was a real point of fear for me, and I finally, a while back, realized I'm not fearful of it at all anymore. In fact, I'm really, really looking forward to it. And here's why.

By the time it happens, there's been a lot of light coming into my bedroom. I can see so many things where I live out of step with God, in my character, in my actions, and in my thoughts. And my problems, I became a Christian when I was seven. I was raised in a Christian family.

I was a good little kid. I didn't go through a period of rebellion against God. Well, except for that one year, I guess.

But mostly, it's been an upward trajectory. And for people like me, understanding that we're saved by grace, not of ourselves, is a hard thing, right? Some of you are on the same boat as me, right? If you're saved from a world of womanizing, drugs, and other stereotypical sins, you can really feel the change that God makes in your life. But for those of us who were raised Christian, we don't feel the change, right? All right.

You all are being very non-expressive, and I'm not sure why. I'll figure it out. Especially you, Seth.

I know you well enough to know that you're an expressive guy. All right. Don't get him started.

Maybe we'll wait till tomorrow. The reason I'm looking forward to giving you an account for every careless word I've said is because I'm going to see all my sins piled in one place, and I'm finally going to get it through my thick skull. I was saved by grace.

I don't think I'm ever going to really grasp that fact until I can see the depth of my sin and fully understand, as much as a human being can fully understand, what poverty of spirit is about. And so, I look forward to it. I know I'm saved through grace, through faith.

I now realize eschatology, and John, I've already passed into life. I know all those things. There's no fear in that.

But I want to know what I was saved from. And only then will I really understand God's grace and love. So, I look forward to it, fully understanding poverty of spirit.

Let me say one other thing in closing, and we'll take a break. The reason I spent so much time on this is that this is the key to the rest of the Beatitudes. Martin Lloyd-Jones talks about a golden chain, and it's a great analogy.

Every Beatitude is a link. And the only way to understand the fifth link is to understand the fourth, third, second, first. So, in a very real sense, this is the sermon.

This is how people live in the kingdom of God. They live in recognition of who they are, and who God is, and what God has done. The Beatitudes 2 through 8 are an explanation of poverty of spirit, and the sermon is an explanation of the Beatitudes.

And I really think that's how you approach the sermon. So, you've really got to come to grips with this particular one. Now, Paul calls it justification by faith.

Great. I love it. It's a legal metaphor.

It helps me understand it. That's not the metaphor Jesus uses as the core. It's poverty of spirit.

Okay, so don't worry, we won't spend this much time on any other verse.

This is Dr. Bill Mounts in his teaching on the Sermon on the Mount. This is session number one, Introduction and Beatitudes.

.