

# **Dr. David Turner, Matthew**

## **Lecture – 3A – Matthew 5:1-16: The Sermon on the Mount I: Introduction and the Beatitudes**

### **NotebookLM**

1) Abstract, 2) Briefing Document, 3) Study Guide, FAQs

#### **1) Abstract**

This academic lecture, likely delivered by **Dr. David Turner**, provides an **in-depth analysis of Matthew 5:1-16**, focusing on the **Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes**. The lecture explores **various interpretations of the Sermon's historicity**, ultimately favoring the view that Matthew presents a **reliable summary of Jesus's actual sermon**. It also **breaks down the literary structure of the Sermon on the Mount**, explaining its division into five blocks within Matthew's Gospel and outlining the **narrative framework and thematic progression** within the sermon itself. Finally, the lecture discusses **different approaches to interpreting the Sermon on the Mount**, emphasizing its **personal ethical implications** for believers and their role as **"salt and light"** in the world, while also examining the **structure and meaning of the Beatitudes** as gracious blessings rather than legalistic requirements.

**2) Briefing Document:** This detailed briefing document reviews the main themes and most important ideas or facts presented in the provided source material, "Turner\_Matthew\_Lect03A\_English.pdf," focusing on the **Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes**.

#### **I. Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount**

Dr. David Turner's lecture introduces the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) as a foundational text in the Gospel of Matthew, emphasizing its historicity, literary structure, and major interpretive approaches.

## A. Historicity of the Sermon on the Mount

The lecture addresses various theories regarding the Sermon on the Mount's appearance in Matthew compared to its partial presence in Luke and absence as a discrete sermon in Mark.

1. **Matthew as Creator:** Some theories suggest Matthew fabricated the sermon from traditions, documentary sources, and his own ingenuity, making it an unhistorical theological construct. This view is deemed "unacceptable to evangelical Christians since it tends to make the Gospels unhistorical fabrications concocted strictly for theological reasons."
2. **Matthew as Compiler:** Another view posits that Matthew collated various teachings of the historical Jesus, originally uttered at different times and locations, into the sermon's current structure. While held by "many evangelicals," this view is not followed in the lecture because it requires ignoring or fictionalizing Matthew's "historical markers" (5:1-2 and 7:28-8:1) indicating a specific time and place.
3. **Matthew as Reliable Summarizer (Preferred View):** The highly preferred view, held by conservative evangelicals, is that Matthew "accurately records the gist, or the abscissa novox, the very voice of Jesus, from a historical sermon that he actually uttered." This means Matthew provides a "reliable summary" of Jesus' teaching, preserving "the important parts of it" without adding his own notions. The repetition of some sayings in other Gospels (Mark and Luke) is attributed to "Jesus repeating key themes in his itinerant ministry."
4. **Matthew as Verbatim Recorder:** The most conservative view suggests Matthew provides an "exact and complete, word for word, abscissima verba, the very words, verbatim" of Jesus, like a "shorthand transcription or an audio tape." This view is less preferred due to the genre of the Gospels and the practicalities of historical transmission.

## B. Literary Structure of the Sermon on the Mount

Matthew organizes his Gospel into "five blocks of discourse and narrative material," with the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) forming the first discourse block

(chapters 3-7). These blocks are typically "divided by the key phrase that came about when Jesus had finished."

The Sermon on the Mount is presented as "the representative ethical teaching of Jesus," framed by summary statements in 4:23 and 9:35, which highlight Jesus' "ministry of teaching and doing miracles." The sermon itself demonstrates "the authority of the kingdom of heaven" through Jesus' words.

The sermon's internal structure includes:

- **Narrative Framework (5:1-2, 7:28-8:1):** Places Jesus on a mountain, teaching disciples, and concludes with the crowd's amazement at his authoritative teaching.
- **Introduction – The Beatitudes (5:3-12):** Describe "the character traits of disciples."
- **Body of the Sermon (5:17-7:12):** Jesus' relationship to the Law (5:17-20) and six contrasts explaining it (5:21-48).
  - Hypocritical vs. genuine religious practices (6:1-18).
  - Materialism and anxiety (6:19-34).
  - Spiritual discernment (7:1-6) and prayer (7:7-11).
  - Concluding summary statement on obeying the law and prophets (7:12).
- **Conclusion (7:13-27):** Three vivid contrasts emphasizing the need for "a correct response to Jesus' teaching": the narrow road, avoiding bad fruit/false prophets, and building on a solid foundation.

### C. Major Interpretive Approaches

Various approaches to understanding the Sermon on the Mount are discussed:

1. **Dispensational:** Views the sermon as "Jewish law for the kingdom in the future, not gracious teaching, which is directly relevant for the Church." This view is criticized for mistakenly assuming Matthew was written to Jews.
2. **Lutheran:** Sees the sermon as "law, not gospel," designed to expose sinfulness and draw people to the cross for forgiveness.

3. **Schweitzerian:** Interprets the sermon as an "ethic for the supposedly short interim period that Matthew conceived between the advents of Jesus."
4. **Personal Ethics for Today (Preferred View):** The lecture's preferred view is that the sermon "does certainly amount to personal ethics for followers of Jesus today." It is not "a privatistic thing" but calls followers to be "salt and light in this world."
  - It provides authoritative teaching on how believers, "Jewish believers" especially, "should live under God's saving rule, the kingdom of heaven."
  - It clarifies "how Jesus' teaching related to the Old Testament" and that their "righteousness must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees."
  - It stresses practicing religion for "God's reward, not for human approval," proper perspective on "physical needs and material possessions," and the priority of "spiritual discernment and prayer."
  - It also includes warnings for "carelessly" listening individuals to "enter the narrow gate, to avoid fruitless trees, and to build on the rock."
  - Full obedience to these standards is understood to be attained "at the future coming of the kingdom, chapter 6, verse 10."

## II. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)

The Beatitudes serve as the "first major section of the Sermon on the Mount," introducing the "character traits of disciples."

### A. Literary Structure of the Beatitudes

- There are "nine Beatitudes in 5:3 through 12," with the ninth (5:11-12) being "an expansion of the eighth Beatitude in 5:10."
- The preferred structure is "two sets of four" tightly-knit parallel Beatitudes (5:3-10), rejecting the three sets of three proposed by some interpreters.
- **First Set (5:3-6):** Emphasizes "the disciples' vertical relationship to God."
- **Second Set (5:7-10):** Emphasizes "the disciples' horizontal relationship to people."

- Both sets occur "in an atmosphere of oppression," highlighting that "the disciples are persecuted."
- The first and last Beatitudes (5:3 and 5:10) speak of "the presence of the kingdom," stating "theirs is the kingdom of heaven," while others use future verbs for their promises.

## B. Meaning of the Beatitudes

The central question regarding the Beatitudes' meaning is whether they are "requirements that we must meet in order to be admitted to the kingdom" or "blessings which come to us with belief in Jesus as our Messiah."

- **Requirements View:** Implies one must "try to work up the characteristics mentioned here so that one might earn God's approval."
- **Gracious Kingdom Blessings (Preferred View):** This view is deemed "correct." It emphasizes thankfully acknowledging "the grace of God that these characteristics are evidence of God's gracious working in our lives," and that "we should cultivate them as we live as disciples of Christ."
- The Beatitudes "reveal key character traits that God approves of in his people." These are "gracious gifts indicating God's approval, not requirements for works which merit God's approval."
- However, "those who have repented should cultivate these characteristics."

## Key Character Traits Approved by God:

- **Relation to God (5:3-6):** "admitting their spiritual poverty and mourning over their sin, humbly seeking spiritual fullness."
- **Relation to Others (5:7-12):** "mercifully and purely as peacemakers, even though such people may be persecuted for their righteous behavior."

**Counter-Cultural Nature of the Beatitudes:** The Beatitudes "directly confronts several cultural views of God's approval":

- **Popularity:** Contrasted with persecution (5:10-12).
- **Rule-Keeping:** Insufficient; "only a righteousness which surpasses mere rule-keeping will suffice" (5:20).

- **Material Possessions:** Preoccupation with them is "antithetical to the values of his kingdom" (6:19-21, 33).
- **Miraculous Displays:** Not a guarantee of divine approval (7:22-23).
- **Knowledge/Education:** Obedience to Jesus' words is paramount, not mere knowledge (7:26).

In conclusion, "the character traits of kingdom rule are chiefly humility toward God and mercy toward people." These traits are "present in principle in the lives of God's people" by grace, but God's people "must cultivate these traits so that they are actually present in fact." This makes disciples "Christian counterculture," following their master, Jesus, "who perfectly exemplified the character traits of the Beatitudes."

### III. Disciples as Salt and Light (Matthew 5:11-16)

This section expands on the implications of the Beatitudes, particularly persecution, and describes the disciples' influence on the world.

#### A. Expansion of the Persecution Beatitude (5:11-12)

The ninth Beatitude (5:11-12) expands on the eighth (5:10) by:

- **Personalization:** Switches to the second person ("blessed are you").
- **Challenge:** Commands disciples to "rejoice during persecution."
- **Rational Satisfaction:** Mentions the reason for persecution (connection with Jesus) and provides historical context (like the prophets).
- **Specific Reward:** Promises a "great reward." This indicates that "the disciples' influence on the world will often be unappreciated and opposed."

#### B. Kingdom Testimony: Salt and Light (5:13-16)

Jesus uses two vivid metaphors to describe the disciples' influence:

##### 1. **Salt (5:13):**

- Disciples are to "purify and preserve their society."
- This is only possible "if they retain their saltiness," which means "cultivating those Beatitude principles."

- Salt is ineffective if it "loses its flavor," but its flavor is "not meant to be kept in a salt shaker." This implies disciples "must mingle with the world in order to flavor, purify, or preserve it."

#### 1. **Light (5:14-16):**

- Disciples are "a prominent hilltop city" and "an oil lamp set upon a high stand, not under a basket."
- Their "good deeds will result in praise going to the Father if only they display that light prominently for all to see."
- This implies disciples "must remain distinct from the world in order to illumine it."

**Reconciling Salt and Light (Engagement vs. Distinction):** The lecture highlights a "tension" between the salt and light metaphors, representing engagement with the world versus distinction from it.

- **Salt:** "Reformed Christians more generally tend to try to engage the world as salt and to transform the culture." This means "we have to be engaged with the world. We have to be like salt permeating the food."
- **Light:** "Baptists tend to be separatists and tend to sort of try to be the light set apart on the hill somewhere." This means "the salt has to maintain its purity, or it loses its flavor."
- **Integrated Approach:** The lecture advocates for having "both images in our minds to be effective." Isolationism is rejected: "the isolationism of some Christians...can't be sustained."
- Jesus himself "was not an ascetic" and "was often associated with disreputable sinners," yet "did not lose his saltiness nor conceal his light."
- The answer to the "wiles of the world, the flesh, and the devil" is "not isolation but active engagement, which leads to the conversion of individuals and the transformation of culture. Anything less is an inexcusable truncation of the gospel of the kingdom."

The command to be "salt of the earth and the light of the world" underscores Matthew's stress on "the Church's universal mission." The entire earth must be

salted, and the whole world must be illuminated, meaning disciples are not to be "a little community hiding in a corner somewhere."

### C. Connection to Law and Righteousness

The following section (5:21-48) explains how Jesus' fulfillment of the law impacts disciples' ethical lives, teaching them "the type of behavior that constitutes good deeds" and how their "righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees." This specific righteousness is what makes them "show up as salt and light in the world."

### IV. Conclusion: Twofold Obligation and Discipleship

The lecture concludes by emphasizing the twofold nature of Christian obligation, mirroring the greatest commandments: loving God and loving neighbor.

- The first four Beatitudes illustrate "how to love God."
- The second four Beatitudes illustrate "how to love people."

These "lofty goals" are achievable through empowerment by the Spirit and support from fellow believers. As disciples "cultivate" these Beatitude characteristics, which are already theirs "in principle through conversion," they "become salt and light in the world." This counter-cultural living, shining "the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus on a culture, on a world which has been darkened by sin," constitutes a true and effective testimony.

## 3) Study Guide: Understanding the Sermon on the Mount: An In-Depth Study Guide

### I. Introduction to the Sermon on the Mount

#### A. Historicity of the Sermon on the Mount

1. **Synoptic Gospel Variations:** The Sermon on the Mount (SOTM) appears in Matthew (5:1-7:29) as a discrete sermon, while in Luke it is partially present (Luke 6:17-7:1) and absent in Mark as a unified discourse.



- **Theories of Variation: Matthew's Creation:** Some believe Matthew fabricated the sermon from traditions, documentary sources, and his own ideas. This view is largely rejected by evangelical Christians as it implies the Gospels are unhistorical fabrications.
  - **Matthew's Collation:** Many evangelicals believe Matthew compiled various historical teachings of Jesus, originally uttered at different times and places, into the sermon's structure. This view is not preferred here due to Matthew's clear historical markers (5:1-2, 7:28-8:1).
  - **Reliable Summary (Abscissa Novox):** Matthew provides a reliable summary of the "gist" or "very voice" of a historical sermon Jesus actually delivered. It's a summary, not a verbatim transcription, but it accurately conveys Jesus' essential message. This is the highly preferred view.
  - **Exact and Complete (Abscissima Verba):** The most conservative view suggests Matthew provides an exact, word-for-word account of Jesus' sermon, like a shorthand transcription. While held by some evangelicals, it's considered less likely due to the genre of the Gospels and the practicalities of historical transmission.
1. **Jesus' Repetitive Ministry:** The presence of similar sayings in different contexts in Mark and Luke is attributed to Jesus repeating key themes during his itinerant ministry.

## B. Literary Structure of Matthew's Gospel

1. **Five Blocks of Discourse and Narrative:** After Jesus' infancy narrative (Matthew 1-2), Matthew structures his Gospel into five alternating blocks of discourse (Jesus' words) and narrative (Jesus' works):
  - Block 1: Matthew 3-7 (Sermon on the Mount)
  - Block 2: Matthew 8-10
  - Block 3: Matthew 11-13
  - Block 4: Matthew 14-18
  - Block 5: Matthew 19-25

1. **Concluding Phrase:** Each discourse block concludes with the key phrase, "And it came about when Jesus had finished..."
2. **Representative Ethical Teaching:** The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) serves as the representative ethical teaching of Jesus, developing the summary statement of 4:23.
3. **Framing of Jesus' Ministry:** 4:23 and 9:35 act as "bookends" for Jesus' ministry, presenting a "word-deed complex" where His teaching (5-7) and miracles (8-9) both demonstrate the authority of the kingdom of heaven (7:28-29 for words, 9:6-28 for works).

#### C. Outline of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)

- **Narrative Framework: Beginning (5:1-2):** Jesus on the mountain, seated, teaching his disciples.
  - **End (7:28-8:1):** Crowds amazed by Jesus' authoritative teaching.
1. **Introduction (Beatitudes):** 5:3-12 serve as an introduction to the character traits of disciples (those who have repented and seek to live by kingdom standards).
  2. **Body of the Sermon (5:17-7:12):** This section is framed by an inclusio (bookends) referring to the law and the prophets.
- **Jesus' Relationship to the Law:** 5:17-20
  - **Six Specific Contrasts:** 5:21-48 (explaining the law more clearly)
  - **Hypocritical vs. Genuine Religious Practices:** 6:1-18
  - **Materialism and Anxiety:** 6:19-34
  - **Spiritual Discernment:** 7:1-6
  - **Prayer:** 7:7-11
  - **Summary Statement:** 7:12 (completes the theme of obeying the law and prophets).

1. **Conclusion (7:13-27):** Three vivid contrasts indicating the need for a correct response to Jesus' teaching (narrow road, avoiding bad fruit/false prophets, building on a solid foundation).

#### D. Major Interpretive Approaches to the Sermon on the Mount

1. **Dispensational:** Views the sermon as Jewish law for a future kingdom, not directly relevant for the Church today. This view often assumes Matthew was written primarily to Jews.
2. **Lutheran:** Interprets the sermon as law (not gospel), with its high legal standards intended to reveal sinfulness and draw people to the cross for forgiveness.
3. **Schweitzerian:** Views the sermon as an ethic for a supposedly short "interim period" between Jesus' advents, as Matthew supposedly conceived it.
4. **Ethic for Today (Diverse Views):** Many interpreters see the sermon as directly applicable personal ethics for Jesus' followers today, though they may differ on whether it also entails a political agenda.
5. **Preferred View (Personal Ethics for Today):** The sermon is Jesus' authoritative teaching on how believers should live today, especially those who have repented and live under God's saving rule. It is not merely privatistic; disciples are to be "salt and light." It relates Jesus' teaching to the Old Testament, emphasizing a righteousness exceeding that of the scribes and Pharisees, proper religious practice (for God's reward), proper perspective on material possessions, and prioritizing spiritual discernment and prayer. Full obedience is ultimately attained at the future coming of the kingdom (Matthew 6:10).

## II. The Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)

### A. Literary Structure of the Beatitudes

1. **Nine Beatitudes:** Matthew 5:3-12 contain nine Beatitudes, with the ninth (5:11-12) being an expansion of the eighth (5:10).
2. **Two Sets of Four:** The first eight Beatitudes are structured as two tightly knit sets of four.

- **Set 1 (5:3-6):** Emphasizes the disciples' **vertical relationship to God** (spiritual poverty, mourning over sin, meekness, hunger/thirst for righteousness).
  - **Set 2 (5:7-10):** Emphasizes the disciples' **horizontal relationship to people** (merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, persecuted for righteousness).
1. **Kingdom Presence vs. Future Blessing:** The first (5:3) and last (5:10) Beatitudes speak of the *present* presence of the kingdom ("theirs is the kingdom of heaven"). The other Beatitudes (5:4-9) use the *future* verb for their promised blessing.
  2. **Parallelism:** Specific Beatitudes within the sets exhibit clear grammatical and thematic parallels (e.g., 5:4 // 5:9; 5:5 // 5:8; 5:6 // 5:7).

## B. Meaning of the Beatitudes

- **Gracious Kingdom Blessings vs. Ethical Entrance Requirements:** **Entrance Requirements:** The view that the Beatitudes are requirements one must meet to earn God's approval.
  - **Gracious Blessings (Preferred View):** The Beatitudes reveal key character traits that God approves of in His people, understood as gracious gifts and evidence of God's work, not works that merit approval. Those who repent (3:2, 4:17) acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy and rejoice in God's salvation.
1. **Cultivation:** While gracious gifts, those who have repented *should* cultivate these characteristics.
  2. **Structure:** Each Beatitude contains a pronouncement of who is blessed and a promise of why they are blessed.
  3. **God's Approval:** God approves of humility toward Him and mercy toward people.
- **Relating to God (5:3-6):** Admitting spiritual poverty, mourning over sin, humbly seeking spiritual fullness.
  - **Relating to Others (5:7-12):** Being merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, even when persecuted for righteous behavior.

1. **Countercultural Nature:** The Beatitudes confront superficial cultural views of divine approval, such as popularity, mere rule-keeping, material possessions, miraculous displays, or mere knowledge. They describe a "Christian counterculture."
2. **Likeness to Christ:** Jesus perfectly exemplified the character traits of the Beatitudes (e.g., meekness, mourning, fulfilling righteousness, showing mercy, being persecuted). Disciples cultivate likeness to Jesus by pursuing these graces.

### III. Disciples as Salt and Light (Matthew 5:11-16)

#### A. Expansion of the Beatitude on Persecution (5:11-12)

1. **Personalized:** Switches from "blessed are those who" to "blessed are *you*."
2. **Challenging:** Commands disciples to "rejoice" during persecution.
3. **Rationalized:** Explains persecution occurs because of connection with Jesus, similar to the prophets.
4. **Specific Reward:** Mentions a "great reward."
5. **Influence:** Highlights that disciples' influence on the world will often be unappreciated and opposed.

#### B. Kingdom Testimony: Salt and Light (5:13-16)

1. **Metaphorical Description:** Disciples' testimony is described as salt (5:13) and light (5:14-16).
2. **Light Imagery:** Further pictured as a prominent hilltop city (5:14) and an oil lamp on a stand (5:15).
3. **Purpose:** These pictures aid disciples in their task of "illuminating the world" (5:16).
4. **Public, Not Private:** This section refutes the notion that discipleship is a private matter. Disciples have a definite influence.
  - **Salt (5:13):Function:** To purify and preserve society.
  - **Retention of Saltiness:** Retained by cultivating Beatitude principles.

- **Engagement:** Implies mingling with the world to flavor/preserve it.
  - **Light (5:14-16):Function:** To display good deeds, resulting in praise to the Father.
  - **Prominence:** Must be displayed prominently, not concealed.
  - **Distinctness:** Implies remaining distinct from the world to illumine it.
  - **Tension between Salt and Light:Salt (Engagement):** Disciples must engage with the world, permeating it like salt. This counters isolationism.
  - **Light (Purity/Distinctness):** Disciples must maintain their purity and distinctness, or they lose their effectiveness.
1. **Universal Mission:** The terminology "salt of the earth" and "light of the world" underlies Matthew's stress on the Church's universal mission, impacting the "entire earth" and "whole world."
  2. **Jesus' Example:** Jesus himself was not an ascetic; He associated with sinners but did not lose His "saltiness" or conceal His "light."
  3. **Active Engagement:** The answer to the dangers of the world is not isolation, but active engagement leading to conversion and cultural transformation.

#### IV. Conclusion of the Lecture

##### A. Twofold Obligation

1. **Love God:** Illustrated by the first four Beatitudes.
2. **Love Neighbor:** Illustrated by the second four Beatitudes.

##### B. Empowerment and Support

1. **Spirit Empowerment:** Lofty goals of the Sermon are achievable through the Holy Spirit.
2. **Believer Support:** Supported by fellow believers.

##### C. Being Salt and Light

1. By living according to the Beatitude characteristics (which are already ours in principle through conversion), believers inherently become salt and light.

2. Their lives are a "good testimony" that "shines the glorious light of the gospel of Jesus on a culture... darkened by sin."

Quiz: Sermon on the Mount and Beatitudes

**Instructions:** Answer each question in 2-3 sentences.

1. Explain the "reliable summary" (abscissa novox) view of the Sermon on the Mount's historicity, and why it is preferred over the "exact and complete" (abscissima verba) view.
2. How does Matthew structure the body of his Gospel, and what phrase marks the end of each major discourse block?
3. Briefly describe the narrative framework that begins and ends the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew.
4. According to the lecture, what is the primary purpose of the Beatitudes in relation to discipleship?
5. What are the two contrasting views regarding the meaning of the Beatitudes (requirements vs. blessings), and which view is preferred in the lecture?
6. How are the first four Beatitudes (5:3-6) distinguished from the second four (5:7-10) in terms of the disciples' relationships?
7. What is significant about the verb tense used in the promise clauses of the first and last Beatitudes (5:3, 5:10) compared to the others (5:4-9)?
8. How does Matthew 5:11-12 expand upon the eighth Beatitude (5:10), specifically in terms of personal address and expected response?
9. Explain the "tension" between the metaphors of "salt" and "light" as they apply to disciples' witness in the world.
10. According to the lecture, what two fundamental obligations are highlighted by the Sermon on the Mount, and how do the Beatitudes relate to these?

Answer Key

1. The "reliable summary" view states that Matthew accurately records the gist or "very voice" of a historical sermon Jesus uttered, providing a trustworthy summary rather than a word-for-word transcription. This is preferred because

word-for-word transcription was unlikely given the historical transmission process and the genre of the Gospels.

2. Matthew structures the body of his Gospel into five alternating blocks of discourse and narrative material, stressing Jesus' words and works. Each discourse block is divided by the key phrase, "And it came about when Jesus had finished..."
3. The Sermon on the Mount begins with a narrative framework placing Jesus on a mountain, seated and teaching his disciples (5:1-2). It concludes with a complementary narrative framework highlighting the amazement of the crowds at Jesus' authoritative teaching (7:28-8:1).
4. The Beatitudes serve as an introduction to the character traits of disciples. They describe those who have repented at the preaching of the kingdom and who seek to live according to its standards, outlining the qualities God approves of in His people.
5. The two contrasting views are whether the Beatitudes are ethical entrance requirements one must meet to earn God's approval, or gracious kingdom blessings that are evidence of God's working in our lives. The preferred view is that they are gracious blessings.
6. The first four Beatitudes (5:3-6) emphasize the disciples' vertical relationship to God, focusing on internal spiritual states. The second four Beatitudes (5:7-10) emphasize the disciples' horizontal relationship to people, focusing on outward actions and interactions.
7. The first (5:3) and last (5:10) Beatitudes use the present tense ("theirs *is* the kingdom of heaven"), indicating a present reality. All other Beatitudes (5:4-9) use the future tense for their promised blessing, pointing to a future fulfillment.
8. Matthew 5:11-12 expands on the eighth Beatitude (5:10) by making it more personal ("blessed are *you*"), more challenging (commanding to "rejoice" during persecution), and explaining the reason for persecution (because of Jesus, like the prophets). It also promises a more specific reward.



9. The "salt" metaphor implies that disciples must *minge* with the world to flavor, purify, and preserve it, countering isolationism. The "light" metaphor implies that disciples must *remain distinct* from the world to illumine it, maintaining their purity. The tension lies in balancing engagement with distinctness.
10. The Sermon on the Mount highlights a twofold obligation: relating to God and relating to our fellow humans, much like the greatest commandments to love God and love neighbor. The first four Beatitudes show how to love God, and the second four show how to love people.

#### Essay Format Questions (Do Not Answer)

1. Analyze the various views on the historicity of the Sermon on the Mount presented in the lecture. Argue why the "reliable summary" (abscissa novox) view is considered highly preferable, discussing its implications for understanding the Gospel accounts.
2. Discuss how the Sermon on the Mount serves as the "representative ethical teaching of Jesus" within Matthew's Gospel. Explain how Matthew's literary structure, including the "word-deed complex" and framing passages, supports this understanding.
3. Compare and contrast the different major interpretive approaches to the Sermon on the Mount (Dispensational, Lutheran, Schweitzerian, and the preferred view). Detail the strengths and weaknesses of at least three of these approaches and explain why the lecture's preferred view is considered most appropriate for today's followers of Jesus.
4. Examine the literary structure and meaning of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12. Explain how they are divided into two sets of four, describing both the "vertical" and "horizontal" relationships of disciples. Furthermore, discuss how they serve as "gracious kingdom blessings" and their countercultural implications.
5. Discuss the significance of Jesus' disciples being "salt and light" in the world as described in Matthew 5:13-16. Explain the function of each metaphor and elaborate on the "tension" between them regarding disciples' engagement with and distinctness from the world. Use examples from the lecture to

support your points on the importance of active engagement versus isolationism.

### Glossary of Key Terms

- **Abscissa Novox:** Latin phrase meaning "the very voice" or "the gist." In the context of the Sermon on the Mount, it refers to the view that Matthew provides a reliable summary of what Jesus said, capturing the essential meaning without being a word-for-word transcription.
- **Abcissima Verba:** Latin phrase meaning "the very words," verbatim. In the context of the Sermon on the Mount, it refers to the most conservative view that Matthew provides an exact, word-for-word record of Jesus' sermon.
- **Beatitudes:** A series of blessings recounted by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:3-12), describing characteristics of those who are blessed by God's kingdom.
- **Christian Counterculture:** A term used to describe the way disciples of Jesus live in contrast to the prevailing values and norms of the surrounding world, as exemplified by the principles taught in the Beatitudes.
- **Dispensational Interpreters:** A theological school of thought that traditionally views the Sermon on the Mount as Jewish law primarily applicable to a future earthly kingdom, rather than as direct gracious teaching for the Church today.
- **Discourse Blocks:** The five major sections of Matthew's Gospel (e.g., chapters 3-7, 8-10) that alternate between Jesus' teachings (discourses) and narrative accounts of His works.
- **Historicity:** The historical authenticity or factual basis of an event or text. In this context, it refers to the debate over whether the Sermon on the Mount was a single, actual sermon delivered by Jesus or a compilation by Matthew.
- **Inclusio:** A literary device where a passage is framed by the same or similar phrases or themes at its beginning and end, creating a literary "bookend" effect.

- **Itinerant Ministry:** Refers to Jesus' ministry style, involving traveling from place to place to preach and teach, which explains why similar sayings might appear in different contexts in the Gospels.
- **Kingdom of Heaven / Kingdom of God:** A central theme in Jesus' teaching, referring to God's sovereign rule and saving reign. The Sermon on the Mount outlines the ethics and character traits of those who live under this rule.
- **Literary Structure:** The way in which a written work is organized and arranged, including its divisions, frameworks, and thematic connections.
- **Lutheran Interpreters:** A theological school of thought that often views the Sermon on the Mount primarily as "law," designed to expose human sinfulness and lead individuals to Christ for forgiveness, rather than as a set of rules for salvation.
- **Narrative Framework:** The surrounding narrative elements that introduce and conclude a particular discourse or section within a Gospel, providing context for the teaching.
- **Salt of the Earth:** A metaphor used by Jesus in Matthew 5:13 to describe disciples' role in society as agents of purification, preservation, and flavor, implying engagement with the world.
- **Sermon on the Mount (SOTM):** Jesus' extensive discourse found in Matthew 5-7, considered a foundational teaching on kingdom ethics and the character of discipleship.
- **Synoptic Gospels:** Matthew, Mark, and Luke, so called because they present similar accounts of Jesus' life and ministry, allowing for a "synoptic" or "seeing together" view.
- **Word-Deed Complex:** A concept describing the intertwined nature of Jesus' ministry, where His authoritative teaching (words) and His miraculous actions (deeds) both demonstrate the authority of the kingdom of heaven.

## FAQs

### 1. What is the Sermon on the Mount, and why is its historicity debated?

The Sermon on the Mount, found in Matthew chapters 5 through 7, is a pivotal collection of Jesus' ethical teachings. Its historicity is debated because it doesn't appear as a standalone sermon in Mark and only partially in Luke (Luke 6:17-7:1), unlike its prominent presentation in Matthew.

Several theories attempt to explain this variation:

- **Matthew's creation:** Some scholars believe Matthew fabricated the sermon from traditions, documentary sources, and his own ingenuity, meaning it did not originate directly from the historical Jesus. This view is generally unacceptable to evangelical Christians as it implies the Gospels are unhistorical fabrications.
- **Matthew's collation:** Another view suggests Matthew compiled various teachings of Jesus, originally delivered at different times and locations, into the sermon's current structure. While many evangelicals hold this view, it struggles with Matthew's specific historical markers (5:1-2 and 7:28-8:1) indicating a specific time and place for the sermon.
- **Matthew's reliable summary (gist):** A highly preferred view among conservative evangelicals is that Matthew accurately records the "gist" or "abscissa novox" (the very voice) of a historical sermon Jesus actually delivered. It's not a word-for-word transcription, but a reliable summary put together by Matthew. This view accounts for Jesus repeating key themes in his itinerant ministry, explaining why some sayings appear in different contexts in Mark and Luke.
- **Matthew's exact transcription (verbatim):** The most conservative view proposes that Matthew provides an exact, word-for-word "abscissima verba" (the very words) of Jesus, as if it were a shorthand transcription. However, this is difficult to conceive given the likely author, Matthew, was not yet a disciple at the time of the sermon.

The source leans towards the third view, suggesting Matthew offers a reliable summary of what Jesus said, bearing the marks of an editor, and acknowledging Jesus likely repeated key themes throughout his ministry.

2. How is Matthew's Gospel structured, and where does the Sermon on the Mount fit within it?

After the unique infancy narrative in chapters 1 and 2, Matthew structures the body of his Gospel into five distinct blocks, alternating between Jesus' works (narrative) and Jesus' words (discourse). These sections are divided by the key phrase, "it came about when Jesus had finished."

The five blocks are:

1. **Chapters 3-7:** This block includes the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7).
2. **Chapters 8-10**
3. **Chapters 11-13**
4. **Chapters 14-18**
5. **Chapters 19-25**

The Gospel concludes with Jesus' death, resurrection, and mission mandate in chapters 26-28. The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is considered the **representative ethical teaching of Jesus**. It develops the summary statement in 4:23, which presents a "word-deed complex" — Jesus' ministry of teaching and performing miracles. The Sermon on the Mount represents his teaching, while chapters 8 and 9 represent his miracles. Both his words and works demonstrate the authority of the kingdom of heaven.

3. What are the main sections and themes within the Sermon on the Mount?

The Sermon on the Mount, though challenging to outline precisely, can be structured as follows:

- **Narrative Framework (5:1-2, 7:28-8:1):** It begins with Jesus on a mountain, seated and teaching his disciples, and concludes with the crowds' amazement at his authoritative teaching.

- **The Beatitudes (5:3-12):** This serves as an introduction, outlining the character traits of disciples—those who have repented and seek to live by kingdom standards. The ninth Beatitude (5:11-12) expands on the eighth (5:10), focusing on persecution.
- **Kingdom Testimony: Salt and Light (5:13-16):** This section emphasizes the disciples' influence on the world, described metaphorically as salt (purifying and preserving society) and light (illuminating the world).
- **The Body of the Sermon Proper (5:17-7:12):** This core section begins and ends with references to the law and the prophets, forming an "inclusio."
- **Jesus and the Law (5:17-20):** Jesus defines his relationship to the Law.
- **Six Contrasts (5:21-48):** Jesus explains the Law more clearly through specific contrasts, illustrating the righteousness required for the kingdom, which must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees.
- **Genuine Religious Practices (6:1-18):** Contrasts hypocritical religious practices with genuine ones.
- **Materialism and Anxiety (6:19-34):** Addresses putting physical needs and material possessions in proper kingdom perspective.
- **Spiritual Discernment (7:1-6) and Prayer (7:7-11):** Prioritizes these matters.
- **Golden Rule (7:12):** A final summary statement that completes the theme of obeying the law and the prophets.
- **Conclusion: Call to Response (7:13-27):** This section features three vivid contrasts (narrow road vs. wide road, good fruit vs. bad fruit/false prophets, building on rock vs. sand) that emphasize the need for a correct and obedient response to Jesus' teaching.

#### 4. What are the major interpretive approaches to the Sermon on the Mount?

Different traditions and scholars interpret the Sermon on the Mount in various ways:

- **Dispensationalism:** Traditionally views the sermon as "Jewish law for the kingdom in the future," not direct gracious teaching for the Church today. It

relates to Jesus' earthly ministry, the future tribulation, or the millennium, and mistakenly assumes Matthew was written only to Jews.

- **Lutheranism:** Similar to dispensationalism, sees the sermon as "law, not gospel." However, its high legal standards are believed to reveal human sinfulness, thereby drawing people to the cross for forgiveness.
- **Albert Schweitzer:** Interpreted the sermon as an "ethic for the supposedly short interim period" Matthew envisioned between Jesus' advents.
- **Contemporary Ethical Approaches:** Many interpreters across denominations view the sermon as an "ethic for today." They differ on whether it's solely a personal ethic or an agenda to be implemented through political processes.

The source's preferred view is that the Sermon on the Mount **amounts to personal ethics for followers of Jesus today**, though not in a privatistic sense. Believers are called to be "salt and light" in the world, living according to God's saving rule (the kingdom of heaven). This includes understanding how Jesus' teaching relates to the Old Testament, practicing religion for God's reward, prioritizing spiritual matters over material possessions, and exercising spiritual discernment and prayer. It acknowledges that full obedience to these standards will be perfectly attained at the future coming of the kingdom.

5. How are the Beatitudes structured, and what is their primary meaning?

There are nine Beatitudes in Matthew 5:3-12, with the ninth (5:11-12) expanding on the eighth (5:10). The most likely literary structure understands them as **two sets of four Beatitudes**:

- **First Set (5:3-6):** Emphasizes the disciples' **vertical relationship to God**. These describe those who admit spiritual poverty, mourn over their sin, humbly seek spiritual fullness, and ultimately receive God's blessings.
- **Second Set (5:7-10):** Emphasizes the disciples' **horizontal relationship to people**. These describe those who are merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and persecuted for their righteousness, demonstrating God's approval of their character.

Both sets occur in an atmosphere of oppression and persecution for the disciples. The first and last Beatitude (5:3 and 5:10) highlight the "presence of the kingdom of heaven," while the others (5:4-9) use future verbs for their promised blessings.

The primary question regarding their meaning is whether they are "requirements" for entering the kingdom or "gracious blessings" that come with belief in Jesus. The source firmly asserts the latter: the Beatitudes are **gracious kingdom blessings**. They are not ethical entrance requirements that one must "earn" God's approval. Instead, they reveal key character traits that God approves of in his people and are evidence of God's gracious working in believers' lives. Those who repent acknowledge their spiritual bankruptcy and rejoice in God's blessings. While these characteristics are gifts, believers are called to cultivate them in their lives as disciples.

6. What cultural views does the spirituality of the Beatitudes confront?

The radical spirituality presented in the Beatitudes directly challenges several common cultural views of divine approval:

- **Popularity with Peers:** The Beatitudes contradict the idea that peer popularity indicates divine approval. Instead, those persecuted for their righteous behavior (5:10-12) are declared blessed, indicating God's approval despite social opposition.
- **Mere Rule-Keeping:** Jesus states that a righteousness surpassing mere rule-keeping is required for his kingdom (5:20), challenging the notion that simply adhering to a prescribed set of rules guarantees divine favor.
- **Material Possessions:** The idea that an abundance of material possessions signifies divine favor is refuted. Preoccupation with such possessions is antithetical to kingdom values (6:19-21, 33).
- **Miraculous Displays:** While often associated with divine approval, Jesus warns that some miracle workers will not be acknowledged by God on the Last Day (7:22-23), indicating that performance alone is not the measure of true approval.



- **Knowledge vs. Obedience:** In a world that values education and knowledge, Jesus emphasizes the importance of obeying his words, not merely knowing them (7:26).

In summary, the Beatitudes emphasize **humility toward God and mercy toward people** as the core character traits of kingdom rule. These traits are given by God's grace and are to be cultivated by His people, leading them to be a "Christian counterculture" in a world that often values pride and aggression.

7. How are disciples meant to be "salt and light" in the world, and what tension does this imply?

In Matthew 5:13-16, Jesus describes his disciples' influence on the world metaphorically as "salt of the earth" and "light of the world."

- **Salt (5:13):** As salt, disciples are to **purify and preserve** their society. This implies **mingling with the world** to "flavor" and impact it. The crucial condition is that salt must retain its "saltiness" by cultivating the Beatitude principles (humility, mercy, etc.). If it loses its flavor, it's useless.
- **Light (5:14-16):** As light, disciples are to **illumine the world** through their "good deeds," which will result in praise going to the Father. This light must be displayed prominently (like a city on a hilltop or a lamp on a stand), not hidden. This implies remaining **distinct from the world** to properly shine.

The source highlights a **tension** between these two images:

- **Salt:** Encourages active engagement and transformation of culture (often associated with Reformed Christianity).
- **Light:** Implies being set apart or distinct from the world (sometimes associated with separatist tendencies in Baptists or fundamentalists).

The lecturer argues that both images are necessary for effective witness. Disciples **cannot isolate themselves** from the world (as some fundamentalists might attempt) because salt needs to permeate and engage. However, they also **must maintain their purity** and distinctiveness (like salt maintaining its flavor) to remain effective as light. The goal is active engagement that leads to the conversion of individuals and the transformation of culture, without losing

spiritual integrity. This universal mission is equipped by the gracious blessings described in the Beatitudes.

8. What is the ultimate obligation of Jesus' followers according to the Sermon on the Mount, and how do the Beatitudes relate to this?

The Sermon on the Mount, particularly through the Beatitudes, presents a twofold obligation for Jesus' followers: **to relate rightly to God and to relate rightly to their fellow humans**. This mirrors Jesus' later summary of the greatest commandments: loving God with all one's being and loving one's neighbor as oneself.

- The **first four Beatitudes** (5:3-6) illustrate **how to love God**, by acknowledging spiritual poverty, mourning over sin, seeking spiritual fullness, and cultivating humility towards Him.
- The **second four Beatitudes** (5:7-10) illustrate **how to love people**, by being merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and enduring persecution for righteousness, embodying mercy towards others.

These "lofty goals" are achievable through empowerment by the Holy Spirit and support from fellow believers. As disciples cultivate these character traits—which are already theirs in principle through conversion—they naturally become "salt and light" in the world. Their countercultural witness, grounded in humility and mercy, allows them to shine the "glorious light of the gospel of Jesus on a culture, on a world which has been darkened by sin." The Sermon challenges believers not to pursue superficial fads of testimony, but to embody the character described in the Beatitudes, thereby inherently testifying to the world.