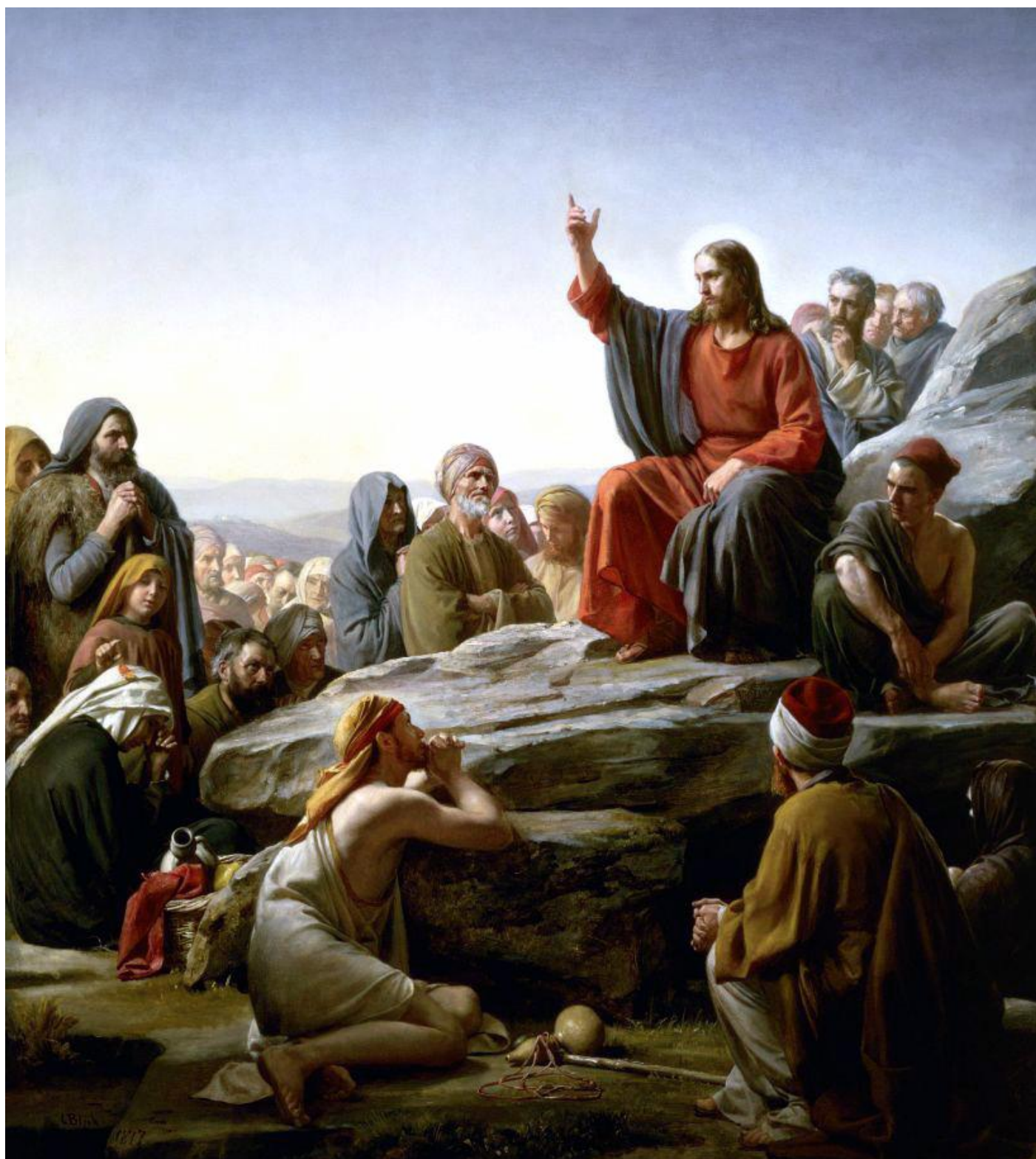


# The Sermon on the Mount

Matthew 5-7



*\*\*Groups can choose either to complete this introductory study using the following questions, or, if preferred, just by reading the material on page 3\*\**

# 1. Radical Preacher

## Introduction and Context

“Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:...” (Mt 5:1-2)

Jesus, the crowds and the disciples have already been introduced in Matthew. Read **4:12-25** to find out their background and what prompts the Sermon on the Mount, using the following questions as a guide:

1. How does the author of Matthew reveal Jesus’ identity as the Messianic King? (4:14-17) (See Isaiah 9:1-7 and Daniel 7:13-14).
  
2. a) What is the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven (4:17-23)?  
  
b) What does this good news (gospel) require of the fishermen? What role will they play in the Kingdom (4:19)?
  
3. How do the crowds respond to Jesus (4:23-25)? Why?
  
4. a) Why might the sight of the crowds (5:2) have prompted Jesus to give the Sermon to his disciples?  
  
b) What kind of things might you expect Jesus to say to them?

5. See Matthew 7:28-8:1. In what sense is Jesus' sermon both public and private? How does this relate to the scope of his message?

6. Why is Jesus giving his sermon *on the mount*? What significance might this have for a Jewish audience? (If time have a brief look at Exod 19 and Deut 4:10-14, 5:1-5 and 5:22-33 [which reflect on Exod 19]).

**For reflection and discussion:**

\* How do your everyday attitudes about Jesus compare to those of:  
- the disciples?  
- crowds?  
- the Messianic view of Jesus presented by the author of Matthew?

\* Are you as keen as the disciples were to listen to Jesus?  
What can you do to prepare yourself to *really* listen to him in the coming weeks?  
What stops you from listening well? How can you deal with this?

\* What does the good news of the Kingdom require of you? How have you responded to this good news in your life? What can you do in 2015 to rightly respond to this news?

# 1. Radical Preacher

## Introduction and context

“Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them, saying:...” (Mt 5:1-2)

Jesus, the crowds and the disciples have already been introduced in Matthew’s Gospel. In particular, 4:12-25 provides important background information about these characters and the events leading up to the Sermon on the Mount. Before you begin this study series, it would be helpful for you to read this passage for context’s sake.

Firstly, in 4:14-17, the author of Matthew points to Jesus’ identity as the Messianic King. Quoting the prophet Isaiah (see Is 9:1-2), he indicates that Jesus is the one who was prophesied to bring light to those living in the region of Galilee, to Zebulun and Naphtali. Jesus begins his public ministry in Galilee, an area that has been under the “shadow of death” since the time of the Assyrian invasion and which had become home to the Gentiles, to a people living in darkness—spiritually as well as politically. The Messianic King was expected to rule over the nations and to have a kingdom of peace, justice and righteousness that would last forever (Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:13-14). Jesus is seen to be this light as he brings the message of hope about this kingdom. In v.17, Jesus heralds the good news that this kingdom – the Kingdom of Heaven – is near. He calls people to respond to this news with repentance.

In 4:18-25 we are introduced to some of the people that Jesus encounters and the different ways that they respond to Jesus and his good news. The first recorded interactions are with the four fishermen by the Sea of Galilee – Peter, Andrew, James and John (vv18-22). The response Jesus requires of them and which they immediately provide is that they follow him. This is quite a costly and decisive step, for in doing so they leave behind their family, work and possessions. Jesus tells them that he will make them “fishers of men”, a phrase referring to their role in calling people to respond to the good news of the Kingdom of Heaven by repenting and following Jesus, just as they had done. As these men are among the disciples to whom Jesus directs his teaching (5:2), it seems that the Sermon on the Mount is the beginning of their training as fishers of men.

In contrast to the disciples, it seems that the crowds are following Jesus because of his great works of healing and his subsequent fame (4:23-25) rather than because of a specific directive to follow him. They have come from afar to hear him, including from Gentile regions. Interestingly, the author notes that it is the sight of the massive crowds that prompts Jesus to give the Sermon. As such, it is possible that Jesus sought to correct his followers’ expectations about the Kingdom of Heaven and what it meant to follow him. While it is the disciples to whom Jesus is directing his Sermon (5:1-2), it was not entirely private – the crowds were listening in as well (7:28-8:1). Thus, one might consider the scope of Jesus’ message to reach both those inside and outside the Kingdom, those who have decided to respond to the good news of Jesus and those who have not yet made such a decision. Furthermore, that Jesus decides to give His Sermon on the *mount* has special theological significance. The Jews among Jesus audience would be highly aware of the strong resonances to God’s giving of the law to his people Israel through the prophet Moses on Mount Sinai (Exod 19; c.f. Deut 4:10-14, 5:1-5, 5:22-33). Jesus was therefore indicating that his words ought to be carefully listened to.

## 2. Radical Discipleship

### Matthew 5:1-16

#### **Read Matthew 5:1-16.**

1. What does 'blessed' mean? What does it *not* mean?
2. Who is 'blessed'? What do you notice about the characteristics of the 'blessed'? Are such people considered 'blessed' in our world today?
3. So why *does* Jesus consider them blessed?  
What truths does he reveal about the Kingdom of Heaven – what will it be like and who it will belong to?
4. In what ways is the 'blessed' a picture of Israel (c.f. Isaiah 61, Psalm 37)? What might Jesus be saying about the true Israel? (Consider his audience, their location)
5. Why will Jesus' disciples be persecuted?  
How is it possible to rejoice in this? (vv11-12)
6. How might Jesus' teaching have challenged the disciples' ideas and expectations about what it means to be blessed in life (especially given the response of the crowds)?

## **Read Matthew 5:13-16**

7. What are the three images in this passage and what do they all have in common?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. How is Jesus calling his disciples to live and why?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How do these verses relate to vv3-12? How might they relate to the response of the crowds and disciples to Jesus in Chapter 4?

### **For reflection and further discussion:**

- \* What do you believe is the “blessed life”?  
What hopes and expectations do you have for your life?  
How is this reflected in the way you live?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- What circumstances or aspects of our life might bring us to being the ‘poor in spirit’, ‘meek’, etc.?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- \* How has this passage challenged your ideas and expectations about what it means to be blessed in life?  
Are you prepared for a life of persecution?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- \* What hope and comfort does this passage offer you?

### 3. Radical Righteousness (Part A)

#### Matthew 5:17-26

**Read Matthew 5:17-20**

1. a) What has Jesus come to fulfil (v17)?  
  
b) How might 'fulfil' have a number of meanings?
  
2. What has Jesus *not* come to do?
  
3. Can Jesus both fulfil and abolish the law? How would this work?
  
4. How is "the law" different now for the Christian than it was for the Jew?
  
5. a) What kind of view of the Law did the "Pharisees and teachers of the Law" have? How did their law-keeping reflect this?  
  
b) What does Jesus think of their view?
  
6. What kind of righteousness is required in the Kingdom of Heaven? Is this possible? What is the motivation for this?

**Read Matthew 5:21-26**

7. What teaching does Jesus quote on in these verses and from where does it come?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. What new commands does he introduce and what is the heart issue or root problem that they address?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How does Jesus fulfil this aspect of the law and live out his own teaching?

**For reflection and further discussion:**

- \* What areas of your life are challenged by Jesus' teaching and example?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- \* Describe ways in which moralism sidesteps, minimises or distorts godliness, even while trumpeting its cause?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- \* In what ways might you be sidestepping the law's true intention?



## 4. Radical Righteousness (Part B)

### Matthew 5:21-48

#### **Read Matthew 5:21-48**

1. In groups, complete the table on the following page and then share your answers
2. What is the significance of the repeated phrase “You have heard that it was said... but I tell you...”? Is Jesus contradicting the Old Testament commands? Why or why not?
3. Describe Jesus’ views on sin and the true intentions of the Law. How do these compare to the views of the Pharisees? How is Jesus demonstrating what it means to have a surpassing righteousness?
4. What does it mean to be ‘perfect’ (v48) and is this possible? Why are Jesus’ followers to be perfect?
5. What other reasons does Jesus give for obedience to his teachings and how do they reflect the dawning of the Kingdom of God (e.g., v.22, v.30)

#### **For reflection and further discussion:**

- \* How does this passage help you to heed Jesus’ call to live distinctively? How does Jesus supply what he demands in this regard?
- \* How have you been encouraged to pursue a more whole-hearted devotion to the law?

Verses	Old Testament Command "You have heard that it was said"	Jesus' teaching		Example of Jesus fulfilling this	Application of this principle in your life
		Heart issue or root problem described	New Command "but I tell you..."		
21-26	<i>Do not murder</i> <i>(Ex 20:13, 21:12; Lev 24:17; Deut 5:17)</i>	<i>Anger and contempt</i>	<i>Settle matters and reconcile quickly with the one who has something against you</i>	<i>Jesus, who had no sin, reconciles sinners to God 2 Cor. 5:19-20</i>	<i>Be quick to initiate reconciliation, even if this is costly</i>
27-30					
31-32					
33-37					
38-42					
43-48					

# 5. Radical Devotion

## Matthew 6:1-18

### Read Matthew 6:1-18

1. In groups, read one of these passages 6:2-4, 6:5-15, 6:16-18, and then discuss:
  - a) What aspect of devotion is being described?
  - b) What are Jesus' followers NOT to do? Who does this? Who is their audience? What is their reward?
  - c) What ARE Jesus' followers to do? Who is their audience? What is their reward?
  - d) Draw Jesus' followers contrasted with their counterparts

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2. What did the three passages have in common? How might v1 function as a heading?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why doesn't Jesus provide more practical details (e.g., how to fast, how much to give)?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What motivations should and should not lie behind our prayer, giving and fasting?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How does Jesus' teaching help us to test and guard our intentions?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. How does this passage relate to what Jesus has already said about righteousness and rewards in Matthew 5? How does Matthew 5:16 compare?

**For reflection and further discussion:**

- \* Do you act to an audience of one (your Father in Heaven)? What motivates your prayers, giving and/or fasting? (What other activities might this passage apply to?) How could you better safeguard your intentions?

# 6. Radical Prayer

## Matthew 6:7-15

### **Read Matthew 6:7-15**

1. a) How should the prayers of Jesus' disciples be distinct from the prayers of the pagans (v7) and why?  
  
b) How does Jesus demonstrate this in the way that he prays?
2. a) What does Jesus pray for?  
  
b) How are the prayers in vv9-10 different from those in vv11-13?
3. Whose priorities shape Jesus' prayer? What does this imply for his disciples and their priorities, both in prayer and in the way they live?
4. a) In what ways does Jesus' prayer reflect the nearing of the Kingdom of Heaven?

b) How is this prayer appropriate for one who belongs to this Kingdom?

5. Why is forgiveness of others' sins absolutely essential for Jesus' disciples?  
Why might Jesus be emphasising this point?

**For reflection and further discussion:**

\* Is Jesus saying never to pray in public? Why or why not?  
On what basis would you decide whether to do so or not?

\* What do you pray for? What does this reveal about the concerns of your heart? To what extent do your prayers reflect the priorities and will of your Heavenly Father, to Whom you pray?

# 7. Radical Aspirations

## Matthew 6:19-34

### Read Matthew 6:19-24

1. Where should Jesus' disciples store their treasures?  
Why is this a good place to store them?
2. Where else could they store them and why is this inferior?
3. What could the word 'treasures' represent? How might this relate to 'rewards'?  
(Compare Matthew 5:3-12)
4. How and why are one's treasures linked to their heart? (How is this similar to last week's passage?)
5. Why is it important that our eye is good (vv22-23)? What might the eye symbolise and what could this have to do with 'treasures'?
6. Why is it impossible to serve God and Money (v24)? What does this verse suggest about the kind of service God deserves?

### Read Matthew 6:25-32

7. What are we not to worry about and why do human beings spend so much time worrying about such things?
8. Why can we be free of these concerns? What kind of logic and examples does Jesus use to prove this?

9. a) What are we instead to seek after (v33)?
- b) What does it mean to seek after these things *first*?  
Why is this fitting for followers of Jesus?
10. What do we learn about God's character in this passage and how could this help us to obey Jesus' teaching here?
11. In what ways is this passage similar to the Lord's prayer? ( Matthew 5:9-13)

**For reflection and further discussion:**

- \* Where do you store your treasures? What are you investing in?  
Are you living for this world or the next?

How do we live in the world but not of the world?

- \* In what ways do you find yourself serving Money rather than God?  
How does this sneak up on you? Who or what else might you serve?  
How does this affect your devotion to God or your loyalty to Him?  
How could you protect this?

- \* What are you anxious about? What do you seek after first?  
How does 'anxiety' about the Kingdom help anxieties about ordinary life?

What worries have you been encouraged to relinquish and how might this passage help you to do this?

- \* What will it look like for you to seek after God's Kingdom and His Righteousness first in your life ?  
How can you support one another to do this?



# 8. Radical Relationships

## Matthew 7:1-12

### Read Matthew 7:1-12

1. Why are we not to judge others?
2. What attitudes, beliefs or behaviours encourage judgmental thoughts and actions?
3. How have these already been addressed by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount?
4. What will happen if we judge others? Compare Mt. 6:14-15 – how is this similar?
5. What two things are we to do instead of judging others (v.5)?
6. For what purpose may some judgment be necessary (v.6)? (How might v.6 act as a balance to vv1-5?) (See also v15 and v20)
7. What kind of judge do we have and what sort of relationship do we have with him (vv7-11; See also vv21-23)?
8. How should this lead us to act towards God (vv7-8)? Towards others (v 12)?

9. In what ways could v12 also be construed as a summary verse of all that Jesus has said so far in his Sermon?

**For reflection and further discussion:**

- \* What might be the 'logs' in your eyes at the moment?  
In what ways are you prone to judging others?  
Do these have any relation to your 'logs'?

Once you have removed these 'logs' and are able to see more clearly, what opportunities might there be for you to help your brothers and sisters (v5)?

- \* In what ways does v12 speak to your personal circumstances at the moment?  
When is this really hard for you to obey?
  
- \* How has this passage sharpened your understanding of God's character and how is this a comfort or help to you at the moment? For example, prayer is something we can become guilty thinking about – why can we trust our gracious Father in this?

# 9. Radical Choice

## Matthew 7:13-8:1

### **Read Matthew 13-14**

1. What are the gate and road metaphors of?
2. Why are the gate and road that lead to life narrow?
3. How has Jesus already alluded to the path that leads to life? to its narrowness?
4. When Jesus says “enter through the narrow gate”, what is he commanding us to do? (Why do we need to be told?)

### **Read Matthew 7:15-23**

5. Who do we need to watch out for and why? What road are they on?
6. What are the ‘good fruits’ and ‘bad fruits’ by which they can be recognised?
7. How *does* one enter the kingdom of heaven (v21)?
8. Why does Jesus say “Away from me, you evildoers!” (v23)? What does this tell you about Jesus?

**Read Matthew 7:24-8:1**

9. a) What did the wise man do? Who is like the wise man?
- b) What did the foolish man do? Who is like the foolish man?
- 10.a) What are the “words of mine” (v24 and v26) that Jesus is referring to?  
What does he imply about the importance of his words? Why are they rock-like?
- b) How does this relate to verses 15-23 (especially v21)?
- c) What reaction did the crowds have to Jesus’ words and why (7:28-8:1)? How does this compare to their initial response to Jesus? (4:23-25)

**For reflection and further discussion:**

- \* What choice do each of the contrasted images (narrow vs. broad gates and roads, good vs. bad trees and fruit, wise vs. foolish builders, houses built on rock vs. sand ) present? Summarise how these contrasts describe the two options.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- \* Why does Jesus give no ‘third’ way or half way option (of road/tree/builder)? What could this be considered controversial about this?

- \* At the end of the day, the heart of Christian faith is hearing, believing and acting upon the words of Jesus (7:24). How can we get this order wrong? Given the Sermon has been directed towards those who have repented and believed in Christ, what comfort does v25 bring to compromised disciples like us?
  
- \* “When Jesus finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching” (v.28). At the end of this bible study series, reflect on your own reaction/s to Jesus’ words in the Sermon the Mount... How would you describe your personal response to Jesus’ teaching?
  
- \* What impression have Jesus’ words made on your thinking about discipleship?
  
- \* How can you be more like the wise man who built his house on the rock? Which of Jesus’ words have you been exhorted to put “into practice”?
  
- \* Read Matthew 28:16-20 – As fishers of men, what place will the Sermon of the Mount hold in the rest of your life?