

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

Taught by Bruce Bickel

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Heavenly Father, you're the God of all mercy and God of all compassion. We thank you humbly, Father, that you do not treat us as our sins deserve. We thank you that you give us credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of your Son, and therefore at the moment of our justification, we are no more closer to you than we ever will be because the cross is enough. May our eyes be focused upon you this day and may the Holy Spirit lead us into truth. Open our eyes that we might behold you more clearly for Christ's sake. Amen.

Continuing our study on the Sermon on the Mount. I trust you have the new handout. We've been looking at the character of the citizens of the kingdom of God as described for us in the Beatitudes, those eight wonderful, beautiful attitudes. Remember the word "blessed" is the Greek word makarios. That means the state of mind that's aware of happiness. Literally it means happy in spite of circumstances. You're not happy in your life because of the surroundings or the events of the happenings of your life; you're happy because of the state of being that you have as a believer and a citizen of the kingdom. So happiness is certainly something that we're aware of, but it's not the cause of our joy. The cause of our joy is the state of being that you're aware of your happiness because of who you are in Christ.

That's what Jesus is saying because every one of those verbs, "blessed are," is in the present tense. He's saying this is who you are moment by moment, every day, consistently, perpetually, all the time. It's not something that fluctuates. Now we will experience the deviation of the happiness because of our awareness, certainly. But he's saying that your real happiness is not a function of the happenings of which you find yourself or the surroundings. Your happiness really is because you're aware of the state of being that you have, that you have a saving relationship to God the Father through God the Son. As a result of that, you take that state of being into your circumstances and you discover your awareness of happiness. That's what it means to be blessed.

Now in those eight Beatitudes, they culminate in the last one which says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." Not for stupidity, but for righteousness' sake.

When you look at the character of the citizens of the kingdom, they're described in these beautiful attitudes known at the Beatitudes. The consequence of that as we'll see in a moment is the witness of the citizens of the kingdom is that you're salt and light. Jesus says that its present tense reality that you're going to slow down corruption (salt) and you're going to expose sin (light). That's your impact upon the world. Your impact upon the world is because of your state of being, of aware of your happiness in the midst of circumstances, and you respond to things radically different than anybody else because of your state of being of having membership as a citizen of the kingdom of God.

Now I don't think that we in America really understand significantly that summary statement of that last Beatitude. It says, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." In other words, because our righteousness is not of this world; it's of the kingdom of God. The world is either going to praise you for it or they're going to persecute you for it. Those are the two responses that Jesus says you're going to get. We should not be overly discouraged when we're persecuted, nor should we be proud of it. It's just a function of who you are. It's a function of who we are in the present tense reality of being salt and being light. But I don't think we really understand in America what it means to be persecuted for righteousness because of your faith.

Bishop Rogers has been involved in ministry around the world far more than us in the locations of the United States. Not only in the US, but around the world. I'm going to ask Bishop Rogers if you could

just take a minute or two and help us understand the big picture around the world of what means that people are persecuted for their faith. We don't understand that. We're harassed here in America, we're irritated here in America, but can you honestly say that you have really been subjected to some degree of tremendous physical or emotional or societal pressure or persecution because of your faith? I have to be honest and say I don't think I've ever experienced that. I'm harassed a little bit, and I'm irritated, and things of that nature, but have I really been persecuted? So Bishop Rogers, could you just take few minutes and help us understand the big picture of that Beatitude as a summary statement.

***Bishop Rogers:** I know I can't tell you the big picture. Let me just give you one or two examples. I think this comes home to you when somebody you know and love, you suddenly find, live right on the edge of dying any day in their families. One of our graduates...we have a number of African graduates at the Trinity Episcopal School for Ministry, now called the Trinity School for Ministry; we've dropped the word Episcopal because of the state of the Episcopal Church. One of our graduates was living in Uganda, but he is natively a Rwandan. Then the whole thing of the whole holocaust broke lose when the Hutu's and the Tutu's started to kill each other in Rwanda. The UN simply had to stand there and watch it because they didn't have any kind of legal grounds to intervene. It drove the guy who, the general, who was there for the UN, literally went nuts for a while because he had to stand there and watch it because he didn't have a piece of paper that allowed him to intervene. That lead the Bishop of Rwanda later to say he would never stand and watch Christians be persecuted for their faith by other Christians and not intervene because it broke some kind of a rule. That's the kind of context in which this graduate of our school, who we knew. My wife gardened with his wife. I taught him in class. He had, living in Uganda, had kept sneaking over the border and helping during this terrible time. Well then after it was all over, he was elected a Bishop in Rwanda where he had been helping. So I'm going North to Canterbury to a big meeting to get help from the healthy parts of the Anglican Community to help us in our dire states in this country. We stumble across a meeting of all these Rwandans. I happened to have known their Archbishop. He gave us an ear so we could make our plea. When I saw him, there was my former student and his wife and all their wives. The Archbishop pointed to him and he said, "John, keep an eye on the [UNCLEAR]. They could die any day." They live with that. People coming from the Congo, claiming to be Islamic, but also being simply warlike, threatened that they live, they literally live in a compound where they hire people to have guns to protect them day by day. He and his wife have lived that way now ever since.*

We have a member of our board from Nigeria, in the Northern part of Nigeria—Bishop [UNCLEAR], the Archbishop of [UNCLEAR]. His wife has been beaten. He has been beaten up and run out of the diocese at gun point, four or five different times. They go back and the church is growing, but it's a constant fight. They could die any day.

As you get to see these people, you rejoice in them because you know they live right on the edge. This brings this kind of widespread suffering church, you read it in the book, in the magazine on the martyred church, that brings it home to you when you know the people that are involved in it, who you might really literally not see again. They're really living on the edge, gang. Militant Islam is a dangerous place. They all tell us, "You guys are living in a la-la land over here." It's not a question of freedom of religion; it's a question of being killed.

Thank you, sir. You know, the young man, our brother, Tin, we're trying to help. The pastor of the church when I was in Vietnam, who I got involved with in 1969 and 1970 and built the orphanage, was a young Vietnamese pastor who had come to saving faith through a French missionary. He had escaped from North Vietnam as a teenager. Came into South Vietnam and was converted as a teenager. Went to Bible school and started the church that I happened to come across in 1968-69. We built the orphanage in Tin and all that, and in the picture, you see the church, the Tin Lanh Church, which in Vietnamese means good news.

He had a ministry to the Montenyards. The Montenyards were the mixed-blooded biracial people who were the mercenaries. They lived in the mountains between Laos Cambodia in South and North Vietnam. They were on the side of whoever gave them the biggest rice bowl. One day they would be on our side; the next day they would be with the Viet Cong, because whoever came by and gave them the largest rice bowl, the most food, “Alright, we’ll be on your side.” They moved in villages. They would go into battle and their wives and their kids would be up on the hillside watching and then they’d come back at night, and they’d just move. They were just mercenaries. Well Pastor Win had a ministry to the Montenyards.

There was a law in South Vietnam that says you cannot associate with Montenyards. In fact, the worst profane name you could pronounce upon a young kid in our orphanage was you called him a Montenyard, that was worse than calling him an SOB or something else. Because it meant this—I can have no relationship with you. The South Vietnamese were not permitted to have relationships because of their prejudice and the hatred because of their mixed blood. They were a combination of French, Laotian, Cambodian and Vietnamese—four lines of blood. The Vietnamese just looked down upon them. There were laws that you could not associate with the Montenyards. He had a ministry to the Montenyards.

When I wasn’t flying combat missions, I would get an Army helicopter and fly him up into the mountains. He would take medical supplies to the Montenyards. I began to hear about all of this, and the laws against that. I asked him one day, “How is it that you handle the pressure you’re under?” The North Vietnamese wanted him dead because he was an escaped North Vietnamese who became a Christian. They wanted him dead. The South Vietnamese government wanted him dead because he had a ministry to the Montenyards, so it was this—he could walk outside his door and either the North or South could get him.

I asked him one day, “Brother, how do you live with the pressure of realizing that at least I know who’s on my side? You have no one on your side. How do you handle that? I mean, you could walk outside this door one day, and the North Vietnamese could get you, or you could walk outside and your own government could get you. Either one would say we did the right thing. How do you handle that?” Here was his response, “God will not let me live one second too long or take me one second too soon.” “Oh come on now! Let’s be realistic.” {LAUGHTER} “Tell me how you feel.” I mean, it just blew me out of the water when he said this. I went back that night, in my tent, and I thought, “I need think about that. You talk about the magnificent, compassion, sovereignty of God. He said this, “God will not take me one second too soon or let me live once second too long.”

When I was wounded and sent back to the States over the next couple of years, I supported the orphanage and I got a letter from his wife one day that took about six weeks to get to me. She told me that he went out one day to the Montenyards and no one has ever seen him. I have no idea what happened to him. I won’t see him again until this side of heaven, but I know I’ll rejoice with him in heaven. But brothers, do you understand, you know how fortunate we are, and yet we gripe and complain and bitch and moan about such trivial little things in our life. “Oh, I got stuck in the Fort Pitt tunnel today.” {LAUGHTER} “Whoa am I being persecuted.” You look at all those...look how tritely we take the things that are freedoms for us. We take them with so little relevance because we think that we’re being inconvenienced.

You see, our life may be inconvenienced, but we can’t even understand what it means to be persecuted for righteousness’ sake. All I’m saying, brothers, is let’s take seriously and pray for the church worldwide. I mean, we’re all one body. The real sign of our togetherness is the unity of the body of Christ. Let’s just remember as you’re praying for yourself and griping about the things that you and I go

through, just remember our brothers and sisters around the world who really are being persecuted for righteousness, and may they be an example of courage to us. That's why we need to have a warrior mentality in our faith—not warlike—but a warrior mentality that says nothing's going to deter me from accomplishing my mission, and that is being salt and light in this world because I have the state of being of a mind that I recognize my happiness comes from God and not from me and my circumstances.

Don: Later on in the Beatitudes, Christ says [UNCLEAR]...he doesn't say [UNCLEAR]...but I guess it's hard for me to imagine someone going [UNCLEAR]...rejoicing. I guess that has to be something that the Holy Spirit produces [UNCLEAR]. I don't know if you can elaborate on that.

Absolutely. Let me go back to our passage. Go to Matthew 5. Now the summary statement of the first seven Beatitudes is what Bishop Rogers just alluded to. We read this, "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." (Matthew 5:10a) Now whose righteousness are we talking about?

Audience Member: Christ.

We're talking about Christ's righteousness. When you're justified by faith, you're given credit for the righteousness of Christ. We're not talking about our holier-than-thouism that we think that we live with in America, or that I'm such a good guy. We're talking about this imputed righteousness where you get credit for the sinless perfection and perfect obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ. He gives you that. And you can be no more righteous than at that moment that God declares you justified. There's nothing you can do to add to it. There's not merit in anything that you and I do. What we do is we express that in rejoicing and praising him for the privilege of being associated with the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He says you're going to be persecuted for the righteousness of Christ. In other words, it's our Christ-likeness that we're persecuted for; not our your and my goodness. It's his righteousness that the people see in us, as we'll see in a moment.

^{10b}For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. ¹¹Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account." (Matthew 5:10a-11) Now notice, here's the next verse, which Don eluded to, ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matthew 5:12) Now that's something that is absolutely supernatural. It's a function of grace. We need to understand this, brothers. Not only are you saved by grace, but you're maintained by grace. You're not saved by grace and maintained by works. I add nothing to my salvation. The cross is enough. The cross is enough.

What you and I do is we walk by faith. The righteous person lives by faith. You have to understand that that response of rejoicing and praising him for your persecution is absolutely out of this world. That's why it's only for kingdom citizens. This isn't for the rebellious people of the world. This isn't written to everybody. It's for those who entered into the kingdom of God by being poor in spirit. You see, we have to understand that. When you recognize your spiritual bankruptcy, the consequence will be, these character of qualities of biblical maturity will come into your life, that are expressions and functions of the ministry of the Holy Spirit. The end result of that is you and I are trusting the Holy Spirit is the supernatural grace that God will give you at the moment you need it.

Now grace is applicable at the time of application not contemplation. You and I will think about a situation, "Oh, I've got to go to this meeting. I don't know what I'm going to do. I'm going to have this difficult conversation," and we start sweating about it, we start worrying about it, and we wonder what will I do, how will I handle it. There's nothing wrong with that. Certainly pray for it because prayer is preparation for the right response. That's what prayer is. Prayer is preparation me, preparing me to have the right response when I'm up for the situation.

Now we understand that from John 18 where Jesus was taken captive by the religious leaders and the soldiers the night that he was betrayed. Peter withdrew his sword and cut the ear off of the high priest's slave. You see, you have the same situation and two men responding radically different. Peter was asleep; Jesus was praying. Now 20 minutes or a half hour later, whatever the time would be, they are now confronted with the same identical circumstance. Peter saw the soldiers. Jesus saw the soldiers. Peter saw the religious leaders. Jesus saw the religious leaders. They saw Judas come and kiss him and turn him over. They both saw that, but look at the difference in response. One says, "I've got to defend God, so I'm going to draw my sword out and I'm going to defend God." How many times have you walked through your life thinking, "Oh I'm going to defend God"? My goodness, the audacity to think that we can do that. Jesus says, "Put the sword away because if you live by the sword, you die, because how would the Scriptures be fulfilled." You see, there you see what was Jesus doing before that incident? He was praying. What was Peter doing before that incident? He was asleep. One responded out of trepidation. Peter responded out of fear. Fear is the idea that I've lost control. I can't control the situation. That's what fear is. I have lost control of this situation; therefore, I am fear full. That's what Peter was, and he had to respond in his own strength, his own resources. He responded out of trepidation.

Jesus responded out of preparation. That's where prayer is preparation for us to have the right response. Wonderful picture for us. That's what prayer is. Prayer prepares me to have the right response at the moment I need it, and that's when you get the grace. You don't need to grace before the event. You need it during the event. We fret so much thinking, "What will I do? What will my response be?" We get all worried and all psyched up and our palms begin to sweat and all these things because we get so agitated and irritated and so anxious because I'm wondering, "What will I do? What will I do?" You'll get the grace at the moment when you need to do it. That's what prayer does. You'll get it when you need it.

I think I told you about my first combat mission. I spent nine days going across the Pacific Ocean into Vietnam into to South China Sea wondering what will I do the first time I'm shot at on my first mission. What will I do? I worried about that for nine days. I mean, I lost 11 pounds. Not really, but I was just...I was really sweating that. I mean, will I panic? Will I flee? What will I do if my first mission I get shot at? Well my first mission I got shot at. And do you know what? I did what I was supposed to do. I did what I was supposed to do. I came back and realized grace is applicable at the moment of application not contemplation. I spent nine days worrying about will God give me the grace. When did God give me the grace? At the moment when you needed it. That's exactly what Don is saying. When you're in that situation, don't worry about what will I do at that moment. Just trust God and be praying beforehand because it's prayer that prepares us for the right response when it comes. If you see persecution coming, begin to pray, "Lord, give me the grace when I need it. I don't need it right now. I might need it when I'm persecuted. May my response be praise and joy." Rejoice and be glad.

You see, you will get the grace at the moment that you need it. Grace is applicable at the point of application not contemplation. That's what it means to trust Christ and the Holy Spirit. This is a supernatural act of God's grace. No one can rejoice and be exceedingly glad when they're persecuted apart from kingdom citizens, people who are members of the kingdom. That's why this is a summary statement at the end because Jesus is saying when you take on these characteristics, this will be the consequence in your life. You will rejoice and you will be exceedingly glad should you be persecuted because my Holy Spirit is going to be moving in you because you're a member of the kingdom. You take on the characteristics of the kingdom of God and you have a witness of the kingdom. You see, that's his first staff meeting's message. It wasn't some strategic plan. It was this is who you're going to be, and because this is who you're going to become as a kingdom citizen, this is how the world's going to respond to you. It's either going to be praising you or persecuting you. It's going to be one or the other. By God's grace you'll be given the grace at the moment when you need it. You see, that's our depending upon the resources of the Holy Spirit.

It all starts, brothers, with the first Beatitude, “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” because I realize this. I am spiritually bankrupt. I have no resources to make verses 10, 11 and 12 a reality. That is not me, in my natural human state. But apart from the intervention of the Holy Spirit by my regeneration from a sovereign God in heaven who planted a holy life in my life and your life, a life that has its origin in heaven not in this world, apart from that, you and I are lost. We are absolutely spiritually bankrupt and have no resources to do that. It’s a consequence of who you are in Christ.

You see, that’s why the word “blessed” is so important to understand. It means you have the state of being, you’re in a state of being in the midst of that persecution that you are aware of your happiness and rejoice because of God’s grace. It’ll happen, guys. It’ll happen. There’s no formula for it. I can’t give you ten steps to make it happen. All I can promise you is this. Should God be pleased to have us go through persecution, if it’s his will, as part of the abundant life...do you realize part of the abundant life is suffering. Really? Oh, I thought God wants you to be healthy, wealthy and wise and have no joint pains. {LAUGHTER} Well if that’s the case, then I’m out of his will. {LAUGHTER} But you see, part of the abundant life is persecution. 1 Peter says that in 1 Peter 2 and 1 Peter 4. If you suffer, if it’s God’s will, do good while you’re suffering. You see, Peter is saying this. It’s better to suffer and do good than to not suffer and do nothing. You see, it’s better to suffer and do good while you’re suffering than it is to not suffer and do nothing. You see, it’s part of the abundant life.

***Brian:** Over the last two weeks I’ve been really convicted [UNCLEAR] down. You said something earlier today that we should either receive praise or persecution for what we do. I really look at us as the American churches, [UNCLEAR] things passively. We don’t get either.*

Interesting.

***Brian:** That speaks volumes to what we’re doing.*

Did you hear what he said? We don’t get praise, we don’t get persecution; we get apathy. That may be the worst judgment on the church of anything. If the churches are being persecuted, that would be praise the Lord. If we were getting praise for the church, it would be praise the Lord. But when the church gets apathy, boy, that is a judgment against us in our culture.

Dick you were telling me something about the church this morning. Why don’t you tell us about that? You were listening to...

***Dick:** Yeah, I was listening to James MacDonald on the way coming in and he was just giving the status of the American church. He was using numbers that churches were closing like five to six thousand churches a year. The attendance in churches was dropping off close to a million individuals a year, they would just come in and not leave because they didn’t like what was being taught; they left completely because they didn’t want to be a part of the truth that was being taught in church. He was just saying the American churches have been in really a very, very unhealthy state in this country.*

Thank you. That’s a great point, Dick. Thank you. Let me take you to our next passage as an introduction. We want to work our way through this Sermon on the Mount. We talked last week about the consequences, the witness of the character of the citizen of the kingdom will be salt and light. Salt slows down corruption. In the ancient days, during the biblical times, salt was used as a preservative. They had no refrigeration and the way that they preserved decaying food was they put it in salt. One of the things they wanted to make sure is that you got no sand mixed with your salt. When you got sand mixed with your salt, the salt became unsalty. Notice what Jesus says in the Beatitudes, “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored?” (Matthew 5:13a) You see,

that's a reference to getting sand mixed in with the salt.

We get the world mixed in with our doctrine, we become salty-less. We are saltless. No longer do we have the impact. It's when the church begins to be influenced by the world that we no longer have our impact. It's a direct reference to the mixture of sand in salt in the biblical times which was used to preserve it. He said make sure that there's no sand in your salt because nothing happens then. It just decays and all the events that you're trying to preserve are no longer preserved. You see, that's our impact upon society. As a citizen of the kingdom, one of the consequences of your life is going to be salt. That means that you're going to slow down the moral decay and putrefaction of society.

When you and I get the world in us, we lose the power of that saltiness and lose the power of the preservation of the standards of the kingdom. That's a consequence of who you and I are. It's wherever we go, you need to understand the impact that you're having. That's why I say, and I say this truthfully, but with somewhat humor, the best thing you do for your corporation is to show up. You just go to work. Show up. Your presence as a member of the kingdom of God is slowing down the moral corruption and putrefaction of that company, by your mere presence. That's because of who you are in Christ. That's what Jesus is saying. That's a consequence of those Beatitudes being in your life.

The second thing is that you're light. You're going to expose sin. That's why you'll either be praised or persecuted. Unfortunately, we get apathy. I'm not suggesting if you're not persecuted you're not spiritual. I'm not saying that. Understand that. Persecution is something that God controls, not you and me. He permits that. It's for his glory. You and I don't go making it happen. Remember we're persecuted for righteousness' sake, not because of my creativity or my manipulation. Let God take care of the circumstances.

All I'm saying is the other consequence that Jesus says, the witness of the citizens of the kingdom will be this—you're going to be light. You're going to expose sins. That's exposing sin because people are coming in contact with you and me because we have the righteousness of Christ imputed to us at our justification.

Do you realize...how many times have you heard somebody say, "Well you're holier than thou"? Well in your own mind you ought to say, "Thank you." You don't say that verbally. But in your own mind, you think, "Yeah, you're right. Thank you." Not in a sense of pride or ego, or self-esteem. I'm not saying that. But that's the reality. You see, they're recognizing something about you because they expect you and me to be more holy because you're associated with the person and work of Christ, because their perception of Christ is what? Holy. "Oh, you're a Christian." Holy. You see, that's their expectation of us. What do we try to do? Well I'm going to dress like the world. We're going to worship like the world. We're going to do all the things the world does because we want to make sure that we bring God down to our level so people will understand that he is a good guys. He's the great Steeler in the sky, and in the spring, he's the great Pirate in the sky. So we just change the name. You see what we do? We have this mentality that says, "In order to get people to respond to us, we need to bring him down to our level. I would say no, no, a thousand times no. We take people up to his level. That's what we do. We've got to live a style of life that's different. That's a function of grace. You don't go make these things happen.

These are the consequences of you're being a grace filled, grace saved person because of the sovereignty of the work of God, whose names were written before the foundation of the world and chosen before the foundation of the world. When did you become a Christian? You and I have a Trinitarian salvation. You became a Christian when God the Father ordained it, before the foundation of the world. You became a Christian when Christ accomplished it at the cross. He didn't make it possible. He accomplished what the Father gave him. Thirdly, you became a Christian when the Holy Spirit applied the Gospel to your life, changed the heart of stone and gave you a heart of life, the heart that now beats in the sense of the

spiritual things. When you were converted, that was a function of the Holy Spirit. Your salvation and my salvation is a Trinitarian salvation—God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit were all involved. Brothers, we need to think about that. What the Father ordained, the Son accomplished and the Holy Spirit applied. You see that's the significance of what Jesus is saying in these Beatitudes. As a result of that, the consequence of who you are, not what you do, the consequence is who you are, your state of being is going to be this. Your impact upon the world is going to be salt and light. That's your impact because of who you are.

He now gets into saying now this is how you walk. We've talked about the witness, we've talked about the character of the citizen, now he takes us into the next verses in Matthew 5:21 all the way through Matthew 6:34, we see now the conduct of the citizens of the kingdom. Let me just read you this passage as a quick introduction. ¹⁷Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." (Matthew 5:17-20)

Now what were the Pharisees known for? External perfection. External perfection. Remember the situation in Matthew 22 where one of the Rabbis came to him and said, "Teacher, what is the great commandment"? You see, what was going on, this Rabbi was a rep...he was an attorney we're told. He was a lawyer. He was representing all the scholars, all the theologians, all the Pharisaic Rabbi Teachers. They used to argue over what was the most important thing...what was the greatest law. You see, they took the Ten Commandments and added 603 others. They had 613 laws that they followed impeccably because it was their externalism of the righteousness as an expression of what they said is their religiosity. So they used to argue about it and they had little cliques. If you thought 612 was the best law, then you followed that Rabbi. If you thought number 427 was the most important, you followed that Rabbi. They had their little cliques. Kind of sounds like us, doesn't it? We have our little cliques. We like this guy because, or this guy because, or that guy because.

And so this Rabbi was sent to Jesus and said, "What's the greatest...if you're the greatest teacher, tell us. Resolve this. What's the greatest?" In Matthew 22:37 he says the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, all your soul, all your mind and your neighbor as yourself. He's basically saying, "Love God with all faculties, every faculty you have, you love God because a whole-hearted God should not have a half-hearted response." You see that? We love him with all of our heart.

That's what Jesus is going to teach us now in these Beatitudes. If you were to take the verses that I just read and you understood the next verses beginning at Matthew 5:21 all the way through Matthew 6:34, there are 62 verses. Those are the laws of the kingdom, of how you and I are to live. Now that's it. Only 62 verses. Compare the U.S. code. Look at our tax laws. Look at all the laws we have. What do we do? Every four or five years, we change them because we're trying figure out what's the next law I can add. We're like the Pharisees. Let's add to the basics. Jesus now gives us in Matthew 5:21 through Matthew 6:34, 62 verses that cover everything related to you and me personally, to you and me socially, and to you and me nationally. If a country were to follow these 62 verses, you could throw away all the laws of the land. You wouldn't need them because right there they are. They cover every contingency, every situation, that you and I will ever be confronted with as an individual person, as an individual member of society, or the individual member of a nation. They're all covered in these next verses, and that's what we're going to begin to look at as we begin next week.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your ministry to us through your Word. We thank you that what

we're discovering is absolutely out of this world because it is all of you and not of us. Remind us of our spiritual bankruptcy. Father, may we understand that grace is applicable at the time of our need, not when we think we should have it. And to that end, Father, we just pray that you would allow us to be salt and light today, that we would understand the state of our being and enjoy the happiness we have because of our relationship to you through Christ, and may it be so for Jesus' sake. And all the Brave Men said...Amen!!