

# (Matthew) ch.4:8-5:5

by Zac Poonen

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*Jesus' ministry was a model of evangelism and disciple-making, and we need to follow His example by proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and making disciples.*

**Duration:** 54:40

**Topics:** "Disciple Making", "Evangelism"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher discusses the Sermon on the Mount, specifically focusing on the connection between evangelism and disciple-making. Jesus engaged in evangelism by teaching, proclaiming the gospel, and healing diseases, which led to the making of disciples. The preacher emphasizes that there should be no evangelism without disciple-making in Christian work today. Jesus preached the message of repentance, which was also proclaimed by John the Baptist and continued by Peter and other men of God throughout history. The sermon also highlights the temptation to seek worldly honor and glory, which involves compromising and bowing to Satan. Jesus' ministry serves as an example of focusing on those interested in becoming disciples rather than just preaching to the multitudes. The sermon concludes with an explanation of the characteristics of those who are part of the new covenant kingdom of heaven, starting with being 'poor in spirit.'

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## Transcript

Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel and chapter 4 and verse 8. In our last two studies we were considering how God allowed Satan to tempt Jesus, his son, after Jesus was baptized and anointed with the Holy Spirit. And we saw the first two temptations that came to him, the first in the wilderness and the second in the Holy City. No doubt the devil brought these as images into his mind in the wilderness and in the Holy City.

And that is how the devil tempts us to, through thoughts put into our mind, which when our mind responds to, we sin. And Jesus did not respond to those temptations that were flashed into his mind. The third temptation came on a very high mountain.

We read in verse 8, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in their glory. As we considered in our last study, there is no place where the devil does not seek to tempt us. It can be in the wilderness, can be in the Holy City, it can be in the mountain, it can be in times of depression and discouragement and failure, which the wilderness would symbolize, it can be in our holiest moments of religious activity, as the Holy City would symbolize, and it can be in times of great

accomplishment, as the high mountain would symbolize, when we've really done something great and are, as they say, on top of the world.

There is no circumstance or situation where the devil does not have some particular and particularly appropriate temptation with which he seeks to knock us down and pull us away from the Lord. And that's why the word of God says, Be alert and sober at all times, for your adversary, like a roaring lion, seeks whom he may devour. 1 Peter, chapter 5, verse 8. We are to be alert at all times and in all situations, when we are depressed, when we are elated, when we are in the midst of religious activity or secular activity, it makes no difference, in the city, in the wilderness.

Again the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, and he said to him, All these things will I give you, if you fall down and worship me. Again here we find a twofold temptation. First of all, to seek all the honor and the glory of this world, which involves compromise, which involves bowing the knee to Satan, and that is a temptation that can come to us in many ways.

It can come in secular situations, whereby compromising a little, by telling a little lie, by signing a small false statement, we could make more money or get more honor or get into a particular position. There are parents who give false age certificates for their children, so that they can put them into a school at an earlier age, etc. All types of situations where a little bowing the knee to Satan can get us something in this world.

And we can think of so many situations where we attempted to give a little bribe, we can call it by a more dignified name as a tip or something like that, but it is a bribe in order to get something for ourselves from this world. Satan invites us to bow the knee to him. He says, If you'll bow the knee to me here, if you'll give this little bribe here, I'll give you all these things.

Then we must remember this temptation. It can also be in the religious world, where we can be tempted to keep quiet on certain topics, so that we get a wider circle in which we can preach. Think of the opportunities the devil will offer us.

Keep quiet on certain things concerning the whole counsel of God, the devil says. Just speak on certain things which will not offend all your congregation and audience. Because if you speak on certain topics, even though they are written in scripture and part of God's whole counsel, the people here might be offended, Satan says.

So keep quiet on those matters. Then you have a wider audience. You can be a more popular preacher.

There are many, many areas like this, where the devil invites us to bow the knee just a little bit to him, and he says, I'll give you a wider opening, many open doors, etc., and Jesus would not fall for that deception of Satan. The other temptation here is to bypass the cross. The devil knew that Jesus had come to win the kingdoms of the world for his father, and he says, I'll offer you a shortcut to that.

You don't have to go through that painful, hard way of dying on the cross and then winning the kingdoms of the world to the father. You can get it through a shortcut. Just bow your knee to me, and I'll give it to you straight away.

And that can be a tremendous temptation, to avoid the pathway of the cross, to find a shortcut that bypasses the cross, and we think we can accomplish God's purposes still. And Jesus was not going to be

fooled. There is a time coming when we read in Matthew, in Revelation chapter 11, that the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ.

But that has come through Jesus going the hard way, the difficult way, the way of the cross. If Jesus had yielded to Satan's temptation, he would have sinned. Remember this, when God is appointed a particular way for the accomplishment of His purpose, any shortcut that bypasses that God-appointed way will only lead you into sin, and it will never accomplish God's purpose at all.

The kingdoms of the world could never have become the kingdom of the father if Jesus had bowed his knee to Satan. We can never accomplish God's purposes by compromise or by responding to the subtle suggestions of Satan to find an easier way. We read that Jesus steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, to the cross, to death, because He knew that that was the way the Father had appointed for Him.

And He says to us, if any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily, Luke 9, 23, and follow Me. It is impossible to follow Jesus Christ without denying ourselves and taking up the cross every day, and if we find that the devil suggests a pathway to us in which there is no cross and no death to self, we can be sure that it involves bowing the knee to Satan in some way or the other. And Jesus said to him, Matthew 4, verse 10, Be gone, Satan! For it is written, You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only.

Notice in all three temptations that Jesus overcame Satan only by quoting the word of God. It is written, verse 4, it is written, verse 7, it is written, verse 10. He never got into a discussion with Satan like Eve got into in the Garden of Eden.

It's always dangerous to get into a discussion. Satan will outwit you. The sword of the Spirit we read in Ephesians 6, 17 is the word of God, and Jesus used that sword to overcome Satan.

He just quoted Scripture. Scripture was the final authority for Jesus Christ when He was here on earth as a man. And that is a good example for us to follow as well, that when God's word has spoken on a particular subject, there is no need for further discussion on that matter.

If Christians would follow the example of Jesus Christ here, that Scripture is the final authority, not man's traditions, not what has helped someone or blessed someone, but what does the word of God say. I believe that we would overcome Satan in many situations. Jesus replied saying, You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve.

Notice here in this response of Jesus the connection between worship and service. The two are linked. To worship, according to Romans 12, 1 in the New Covenant, is to offer our bodies as a living sacrifice to God so that His will can be accomplished in our bodies in the use of our eyes, hands, legs, tongue, etc.

And it's only when we worship the Lord like this through the presentation of our bodies to Him that we can serve Him. There are many people today trying to serve Him without worshiping Him by the presentation of their bodies to Him. Notice the order, not first service and then worship, but first worship and then service.

You shall worship the Lord your God and serve Him only. The offering of our bodies, worship is not just speaking words of praise, but the offering of our bodies to God in a complete surrender to Him. Then we can serve Him effectively.

We read in verse 11, Then the devil left him, and, behold, angels came and began to minister to him. And we know from Luke's Gospel, chapter 4, that the devil left him only for a season. He tempted him again for the remaining part of his three and a half years on earth, but for the time he had overcome.

God does not allow us to be tempted beyond our ability, and He is always there to encourage us and strengthen us. Angels helped Him, and God is always there to help us and encourage us, even today, if we are faithful, if we follow in the footsteps of Jesus, overcoming temptation, quoting God's Word, and standing true to the Lord. Let's turn today to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 4, and verse 12.

In our last three studies, we were considering the three temptations that came to Jesus Christ at the end of His forty days fast in the wilderness. And after the temptations were over, we read in Luke's Gospel, chapter 4, and verse 14, that Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit. He had gone into the wilderness, filled with the Holy Spirit from the River Jordan, and He had gone through temptation for forty days, culminating in the three temptations that we have just considered in our last three studies, and returned in the power of the Spirit.

And that's very significant. It's not mentioned here in Matthew 4, but we read in Matthew 4.12 that He came into Galilee, but it's mentioned in Luke 4 that He came in the power of the Holy Spirit, which teaches us that temptation does perform a function. We can be filled with the Spirit like Jesus, and yet we need to be tempted for our spiritual muscles to be strengthened.

This is one reason why God has not destroyed Satan. He allows Satan to exist so that we can be tempted. And as a result of that, our spiritual muscles are strengthened, and we can move in the power of the Spirit.

Jesus came forth as a tested person, one who had overcome. It's not enough that we are anointed. We need to be tested.

Jesus was anointed. He was also tested, and then He went forth into His ministry. Many would like to move out straight from the anointing.

We need the anointing, but we also need to be tested and to be proven in the times of temptation that we are faithful before God can commit to us a ministry. This is the lesson we learned from this section. By this time, John had been taken into custody, Matthew 4.12, John the Baptist, and Jesus withdrew into Galilee.

And leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. We read in Matthew 4.14, This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, by the way of the sea beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who were sitting in darkness saw a great light. And to those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, upon them a light dawned.

So we see here that even the movement of Jesus from Nazareth to Capernaum in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali was the fulfillment of Scripture. We can say, Well, that is because it was Jesus Christ. Everything was prophesied concerning Him in the Old Testament.

But the word of God reveals very clearly that God has a plan for our lives, too. Ephesians 2.10 is very clear when it says that we have been recreated in Christ Jesus so that we might walk in good works which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. In other words, God has made a plan for our lives, and our movement, whether it is from Nazareth to Capernaum or from one town to another or one city to another or one country to another, must be in the will of God.

It must be the fulfillment of God's Word and God's plan for our lives. Jesus moved in fulfillment of God's plan for His life. Even a simple thing like leaving Nazareth, verse 13, and settling in Capernaum was to fulfill the word of God.

If only we'd be gripped by this, that God has a plan for our lives exactly like He had a plan for the life of Jesus Christ, we would be more careful in our movements. We can't just go anywhere we like because it's comfortable or convenient for us. It must be in fulfillment of God's plan for our lives.

Then we can fulfill God's purpose for our lives. Otherwise, we may still live a godly life, but we can never fulfill God's purpose and plan for our lives. We can say that a godly life can be lived anywhere on the face of the earth, but God's plan and purpose for our lives can only be fulfilled in that place or those places that God has appointed for us in His plan.

And there it's important that we don't seek our own convenience and comfort, but the glory of God in the interest of His kingdom. From that time, Jesus began to preach and say, Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. John had preached that gospel, and when John was imprisoned, we can say that Jesus took the baton from John's hand and continued this relay race, proclaiming the message of repentance.

When Jesus died and rose up and ascended into heaven, in Acts 2.38, we read that Peter took the baton and continued the same relay race. And through the centuries, God has always had His men who proclaim the same message of repentance. This is the great need of the hour, this message of repentance.

And we need to take that baton today from men of God who have preceded us and proclaim the same message. Not that the kingdom of heaven is at hand now, but it has already come. But Jesus' second coming is at hand.

Repent. That's the message for the unbelievers and for the church. Turn from sin.

Turn from sin is the message that John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles always preached, and that we need to proclaim even today. And walking by the Sea of Galilee, verse 18, he saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, Follow me and I'll make you fishers of men.

They immediately left the nets and followed him. Notice that Jesus never called a single unemployed person to be one of his apostles. Every case of Jesus calling someone that we read off in the Gospels was of someone who was employed somewhere, whether it was Matthew sitting at the collection of taxes, or Peter and Andrew that we read off here a little later, James and John.

They were working people. Jesus never called any unemployed people to serve him full-time. This is the tragedy today.

There are many people who've come into full-time Christian work who've never been in any secular employment, and one has to seriously question whether they were ever called by God. It's very important that we follow the scriptural principles of find a job, be employed, and then if you're faithful in those things that God gives you there, then if it is God's will, he may call you into the ministry. If we go out into the ministry on other terms, we'll find frustration and fruitlessness and a missing of God's will.

But when Jesus called, they left the nets and followed him. The response was immediate, as Jesus expects it to be. People who are slow in responding to any call of God usually end up missing God's plan for their lives.

Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother, in the boat with Zebedee, their father, mending their nets, being faithful in their tasks, helping their parents, and he called them. God calls those who are faithful in their earthly tasks, faithful at home, faithful in their place of work. It's only those who have proved themselves of faithfulness at home and in their secular job who can be entrusted with a spiritual ministry.

And they immediately left the boat and their father. Here was something more. They not only left their job, they broke that connection with their father and they followed him.

There are two things we need to break a connection with. Our attachment to anything earthly in our job or to our earthly relatives. It didn't mean they didn't care for their father, but when Jesus called, his call took precedence over their other earthly connections.

It's very important to bear this principle in mind. And Jesus was going about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, healing every kind of disease and every kind of sickness among the people. We can say that the ministry of Jesus described here was summed up in teaching, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, evangelism, and healing.

Healing always accompanied the ministry of evangelism in Jesus' life and also in the lives of the Apostles. Healing was the way by which doors were opened for people to respond to the gospel that Jesus and the Apostles preached. And the news about him went out into all Syria.

And they brought to him all who were ill, taken with various diseases and pains, demoniacs, epileptics, paralytics, and he healed them. And great multitudes followed him from Galilee and Decapolis in Jerusalem and Judea and from beyond the Jordan. Through the healing gift that he received through the anointing of the Holy Spirit, doors were opened for him everywhere to proclaim the gospel.

But the gospel he proclaimed is not called here the gospel of forgiveness of sins. It's called the gospel of the kingdom. It's very important to notice that.

A lot of evangelism today, even connected with the ministry of healing, proclaims merely the gospel of the forgiveness of sins. But here it says that Jesus proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom, verse 23. Even in the Old Testament, forgiveness of sins was proclaimed.

We read in Psalm 32, blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute iniquity, and Psalm 103, blessed the Lord, O my soul, who forgives all your iniquities. He forgives every sin of ours. What then is this gospel of the kingdom? We consider that that was the message John the Baptist preached.

The kingdom of God, as opposed to the kingdom of self. The kingdom of heaven, as opposed to the kingdom of earth. It was the kingdom of heaven, of a life where our mind is set on heavenly things, not on earthly things.

Where God's interests take precedence over our own personal interests. This is the gospel that Jesus proclaimed. And this is the gospel that we need to proclaim today, too.

Jesus was not going to be taken up with the multitudes and seek popularity. He proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom, that they had to deny themselves and become disciples. And here is another area where we need to follow the example of Jesus once again and evangelize and proclaim the gospel and engage in evangelism in the same way that Jesus did it in his day.

Let's turn now to Matthew chapter 5 and verse 1. Beginning here, we read of what is commonly known as the Sermon on the Mount. Verse 1. And when he saw the multitudes, he went up on the mountain, and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. And opening his mouth, he began to teach them, saying.

Now notice the connection between this verse and what we read in the previous verses, which are the last verses of Matthew chapter 4. Jesus was going about in all Galilee, we read in Matthew 4.23, teaching, proclaiming the gospel, healing every kind of disease. He was engaged in evangelism, and the news went about him into all Syria, and great multitudes followed him, from Galilee, verse 25. But the evangelism that Jesus engaged in, which included healing, led on to the making of disciples in chapter 5, 6, and 7. And this is the important thing that we need to see, that as far as Jesus was concerned in his ministry, there was no evangelism without disciple-making.

And that is what is missing in much of Christian work today. There's evangelizing without disciple-making. Jesus told us to preach the gospel to every creature in Mark 16, and he also said in Matthew 28, the last few verses, to go and make disciples.

One must lead on to another, to the other, and Jesus' own ministry is an example, a perfect example of this. Having healed the sick, having proclaimed the gospel all over, he went on from there to concentrate on those who were interested in becoming disciples. And so we see here that when he saw the multitudes, he didn't just continue to preach to them and continue to bring all of them to conversion.

Seeing the multitudes, he went up to the mountain and began to speak to his disciples. And he told his disciples about the characteristics that were to be found in those who were to be a part of this new covenant kingdom of heaven. He began to teach them.

He did not teach the multitudes now, he had finished with that. He now began to teach the disciples. And he said to them, blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

And here we need to understand what it means to be poor in spirit, because this is the opening verse of these three wonderful chapters. And we can say that this is the key to the whole sermon on the mount. It is the key to the kingdom of heaven.

If you think of the kingdom of heaven as a large mansion with many rooms, Jesus said that you could possess the whole mansion if you were poor in spirit. In other words, this is the master key to every room in the kingdom of heaven. And if people don't understand what it means to be poor in spirit, they will not be able to possess the kingdom of heaven.

And this is the reason why many believers have not possessed all of God's riches in the kingdom of heaven. What does it mean then to be poor in spirit? We can take an illustration from what it means to be poor materially. When you think of a beggar who has no resources, no job, no savings, no house to live in, he lives from day to day with his begging bowl, going from house to house collecting money.

And at the end of the day, his bowl is still empty because he's used up what he got that day for his needs that day. And the next morning, his bowl is empty again. And that's how he lives day after day after day

after day.

That's what it means to be really poor materially. And we can apply this illustration to the spiritual realm to understand what it means to be poor in spirit. To be poor in spirit, therefore, is to have a constant sense of our own spiritual lack and need, so that, just like that beggar has to go from house to house every day, and what he got yesterday was not good enough for today, in the same way we need to go to God every day, sensing our own helplessness, our utter lack of confidence in our own abilities to live for God, to do His work.

In other words, it's the complete opposite of being self-sufficient. To be poor in spirit is the opposite of being self-sufficient. And when we look at the opposites of these beatitudes mentioned in Chapter 5, we will see clearly the difference between the race, the new race that God is making through Jesus Christ as the head, and the old race that has come through the headship of Adam.

We see that in the race of Adam, self-sufficiency has got a great value in the world. For example, in business organizations and in every worldly setup, a self-sufficient, self-confident person is highly valued and appreciated. In the kingdom of God, it's exactly the opposite.

It's a person who has a recognition that he is totally insufficient in himself, not for worldly things, but for the kingdom of God. That is the person who is going to possess all of the kingdom of heaven. So if this is the key, then we can say that the only person who can possess the kingdom of heaven and all of its rooms in this mansion is the one who is perpetually aware of his own limitations and his own inability.

In the Old Testament, the mark of the Jew was circumcision. If you turn to Philippians in chapter 3 and verse 3, we read that circumcision had a spiritual meaning, and the spiritual meaning was this. Philippians 3.3 Paul says, We are the true circumcision who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.

So we see here that the mark of the new covenant Christian is this new covenant circumcision, which means no confidence in what we are after the flesh. When you look at the example of Jesus Christ himself, we read in John chapter 5 and verse 19 these amazing words which show us how Jesus himself was really poor in spirit. John 5.19 Jesus said, Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of himself unless it is something he sees the Father doing.

And he says in verse 30, I can do nothing on my own initiative. Is it really true that Jesus Christ could do nothing? He could do a lot of things, just like we can do a lot of things. But the point here is that anything that we do on our own initiative has no spiritual value, and Jesus recognized that.

And he didn't want to do things which had no spiritual value, and therefore he did nothing out of his own initiative. There are very few believers who live like this. There are very few believers who really live in perpetual poverty of spirit.

It's easy to begin our Christian life like this, when we are first converted, to recognize our own inability, but after a while, when God's blessed us and we know the word and God's used us, perhaps in some way, then we find a certain self-confidence and certain self-sufficiency coming in, which ruins us spiritually. This is the history of many, many believers, and this is what we need to be aware of, to remain in poverty of spirit like Jesus did all through his life. Consider, for example, the matter of our intellect.

Our intellect is very useful in worldly things, but can be a tremendous source of a hindrance to our spiritual welfare and spiritual progress. We read in 1 Corinthians chapter 3 and verse 18 that if anyone is wise in this age, let him become foolish that he may become wise. In other words, if you want to progress spiritually, you need to recognize that your intellect is not good enough for spiritual things.

You need to come to God's word and say, Lord, I'm an idiot when it comes to spiritual things. Please teach me, otherwise I'll never understand. My intellect's good enough for chemistry and physics and maths, but not good enough to understand spiritual things.

Here I need the revelation of the Holy Spirit. That's one aspect of being poor in spirit, a recognition of the fact that my clever mind is of no use in understanding spiritual things. The Word of God says that He has hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and revealed them to babes.

And that's the position that we need to take, the position of a babe who cannot understand and who has to come in helplessness. We can say a babe is an example of poverty of spirit. Think of a helpless babe lying in a cradle, six months old or three months old, dependent on its mother and father for everything.

It cannot do a thing for itself. Jesus said we are to be converted and become like little children to possess the kingdom of heaven. That is the same as to be poor in spirit, to be perpetually dependent.

This is the life of faith. A life of faith, when it says the just shall live by faith, means a life of perpetual helpless dependence upon God for everything, a perpetual awareness of our own inability, our lack, our insufficiency to do spiritual work, and therefore a leaning on God in total confidence in Him, trusting Him to take care of all our need and to help us to go on. Let's turn now to Matthew chapter five and verse four.

In our last study we were considering the key to the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And we saw that that sense of our own inability to live the Christian life and to do God's work is the key to possess all of God's kingdom.

God does not help those who can help themselves, as the world says. But God helps those who cannot help themselves and who are aware of their own insufficiency and who live in perpetual dependence on Him. In fact, no one can have true faith if he is not poor in spirit.

The self-confident, self-sufficient person cannot have true faith because he leans upon himself. Faith means a total leaning of the personality upon God in absolute confidence in His wisdom, love and power. And he goes on to speak about those who will be comforted in this kingdom.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. The word blessed that occurs a number of times in the first part of this chapter is a word that means happy or someone who is to be really envied. If you want to envy someone, don't envy the rich person.

Don't envy the highly educated capable person. Envy the person who has these qualities listed here. In fact, the qualities listed here in these verses are very good for us to have a spiritual check-up of our lives with frequently to see whether we are progressing in these virtues.

Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. If you really want to envy someone, don't envy the jovial, happy-go-lucky person, but the person who mourns. And as you go through this list, you'll see that the qualities that Jesus gave importance to are exactly the opposite of what the world gives importance to.

We considered that last time in our study of being poor in spirit, that the world values the self-confident, self-sufficient person, but in the kingdom of God, it's the poor in spirit who are going to possess all of God's riches. We can also say that these virtues listed here are a contrast between the spirit of Christ and the spirit of Satan. Here is the spirit of Christ, to be poor in spirit.

The opposite of that, being self-sufficient, is essentially part of the spirit of Satan. As far as spiritual things go, we need to see this contrast very clearly so that we don't get confused as to what true spirituality is. Likewise here, blessed are those who mourn.

In the world, people appreciate those who are laughing and joking all the time, and yet it's an amazing thing that we never read of Jesus laughing and joking in the scriptures. Mourning has more value in the kingdom of God. There is a place for a sense of humor, for God has given us that.

It's a useful safety valve in the pressures of life, but there's a difference between having a sense of humor and being always jovial and cracking jokes and laughing all the time. Is there a place for mourning in your life? Mourning over what? That's an important question. Many people mourn because of what other people do to them.

The world is full of people who are mourning because they've been treated unjustly or because other people have hurt them in some way or injured them in some way. It's not that type of mourning that Jesus is speaking of because there's no blessedness in that. In fact, that's a miserable thing to do, spiritually speaking.

To get people to sympathize with you and to feel sorry for yourself and to be drowned in self-pity is of the essence of the spirit of Satan. Jesus never had any self-pity in him. He never shed a tear for his own sorrows or difficulties or trials, not once.

Here is an example, dear friends, for us to follow. Never to shed a tear, never to mourn for that which we suffer ourselves. What then are we to mourn about? We can say, first of all, we are to mourn for sin that we see in our life.

And then it's a question of what we understand to be sin. Our understanding of sin depends on our spiritual growth. For some people, sin is only gross evil like murder, adultery, theft, etc.

We can go one step beyond that and think of a lot of other evils that there are in the world, gambling, drinking, smoking, etc., that are ruinous to our Christian life. Or we can go still further and think of the standards that Jesus laid down and think of dirty thoughts and the love of money as sin. And we can go still further to the highest level and say that everything that is unchristlike is sinful.

An unchristlike attitude to another human being is sin. An unchristlike attitude towards money and material things is sin. An unchristlike word, an unchristlike thought or action is sin.

And it is when we judge ourselves by this standard that we shall find plenty of opportunity to mourn if we are really interested in being transformed into the likeness of Christ. If we see that the greatest thing that the Holy Spirit wants to do in our life is to conform us, to transform us and make us really like Jesus in every aspect of our personality, when we see this as the goal towards which God is working, we will mourn for failure. And then we will find it is very easy to make restitution, to set right what we have done wrong, to return money that we have taken wrongfully in our past life.

It will be easy if we mourn that what we have done is dishonored God. Why do people find it so difficult, for example, to make restitution in the matter of money? Or it could be restitution in terms of making an apology to someone whom you have hurt or injured or spoken harshly to. Very many believers never think of doing that.

Many husbands who hurt their wives never think of going and apologizing to their wives. That is because they have no desire to be like Christ. If they had a desire to be like Christ, they would be mourning over that unchristlike attitude and the words they spoke.

That mourning would drive them to go and apologize to the person whom they hurt. It is those who mourn who are comforted. The comfort here speaks of the Holy Spirit, the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus spoke about the Holy Spirit as a comforter in John chapter 14, or a helper. It has the meaning of strengthening. The word fort in the middle of comfort refers to strength.

It is like the Spirit of God building a fort around you and strengthening you. That sin which we mourn over is the sin we are going to get victory over. If you do not get victory over some sin, the chances are that you do not mourn over it.

Ask yourself whether you have wet your pillow at night with your tears for the dirty thoughts that pass through your mind during the day, and then you will know why you are not getting victory over those dirty thoughts. The Lord wants us to have a clean, pure thought life, but we will never get that comfort and strengthening of the Holy Spirit to help us to have that life unless we mourn over our failures. This is the opposite of the spirit of the world.

The spirit of the world is one whose attitude to sin is very loose and lax. The only thing that the world is careful about is to ensure that it makes a good impression on others and has a good testimony before men. But the true God-fearing disciple is one who mourns over sin in his hidden life, who is grieved because his failure in his hidden life has dishonored God.

And once we begin to mourn over sin in our personal life, Jesus never had to mourn over that because He never sinned. But Jesus did mourn over something else into which we can also enter once we have graduated out of the first step. The first step is to mourn over sin in our private life.

Then we can enter into the mourning that Jesus had, which was a mourning for others. If Jesus wept, it was for others. It says He wept over the city of Jerusalem.

Mourning because God's name was dishonored in Jerusalem. And we can think, dear friends, of how God's name is dishonored in our country and other countries in the world. And to mourn and to long that God's name will be hallowed and glorified in our land, that is a level of intercession and concern which very few seem to rise to.

But we can never rise to that if we don't finish once and for all with this mourning for our own sorrows. We must follow in the footsteps of Jesus who had no tears for His own griefs, who never grieved over the way other people treated Him. His only concern was that God should be glorified.

And when God, the Father, was dishonored, that made Him mourn. That's why He mourned over the city of Jerusalem. And so here are two areas of mourning.

One in our personal life where our own personal sin has dishonored God. We can't move into the second until we have finished with the first. And when we are mourning in this area, we qualify to move on, to be concerned that God's name should be honored in our land and to be burdened in our heart, a burden that leads to a mourning and a longing and an intercessory prayer to God that rises from our hearts that God's name will be honored.

Blessed are those who have learned to mourn like this, for they shall be strengthened to fulfill God's purpose and for God to fulfill His ministry through their lives. Let's turn now to Matthew's Gospel, chapter 5, and verse 5. We've been looking at the characteristics of those who are disciples of Jesus under the new covenant, of those who will partake of the wealth of God's kingdom. And we see here a third characteristic of virtue mentioned as belonging to those who are the blessed in Jesus' eyes.

Blessed are the gentle or the humble and the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. We can say that these are laws of the spirit by which we must live, these characteristics mentioned from verse 3 to verse 11. We also consider that it's a description of the spirit of Christ as opposed to the spirit of Satan that rules on the children of Adam.

And if self-sufficiency is the opposite of the poverty of spirit mentioned in verse 3, and if a casual, jovial attitude to life is the opposite of that mourning serious attitude mentioned in verse 4, then we can say that it's a quarrelsome spirit that is the opposite of this gentleness and meekness mentioned here in verse 5. It is said about Jesus Christ in Matthew chapter 12 and verse 18 and 19 that Jesus was beloved by the Father, a servant of the Father whom He had chosen, beloved in whom the Father was well pleased, in whom the Father would put His spirit on Him. Because verse 19, He would not quarrel. And that's a very important thing, that we have a testimony that we will never quarrel with any person.

What do people quarrel about? Usually about some earthly thing, about material possessions, about something that they want for themselves, their rights, their reputation, their name, their honor. They quarrel about the fact that they are everything concerning earthly things, the honor of men, possessions. People can quarrel because they want something for themselves.

And in contrast, Jesus said, blessed are those who are gentle. The people who quarrel are trying to inherit the earth. They are trying to possess the earth.

People who quarrel over property, for example, they want more of the earth for themselves. And that's why they fight for a little piece of earth, even go to law courts for it. But Jesus said, ultimately the earth is going to be inherited by those who have given up their rights and those who refuse to fight.

It's a very beautiful example of this in the Old Testament, in the story of Abraham and Lot. We read in Genesis chapter thirteen that the herdsmen of Lot and the herdsmen of Abraham were fighting with each other. There was strife between them, Genesis thirteen verse seven, because they each had so much of livestock and they could not graze together in the same area.

And see the graciousness of Abraham at that point towards his nephew. He says in Genesis thirteen eight, let there be no strife. And he tells him, the whole land is before you.

We can say the whole earth. This land is before you. Take what you want.

You have the first choice. There was no need for Abraham to do that. He was older.

He was an uncle. He was the one whom God had called to Canaan by every possible way that you look at it. Abraham had first right to choose, but he gave it up.

That's what it means to be gentle and meek, to give up one's rights. And Lot selfishly chose for himself the best part of the land, which happened to be Sodom and Gomorrah. And the interesting thing we see here, that God was watching this whole thing from heaven.

For it says in verse fourteen that when the Lord saw this attitude that Abraham displayed to Lot of giving up his right and choosing the worst part of the land and letting Lot choose the best part, God was so delighted with Abraham, just like he was delighted with Jesus as we read in Matthew chapter twelve, that he told Abraham in Genesis thirteen fourteen, after Lot had separated from him, he says, just lift up your eyes now and look towards the north and the south and the east and the west. And all the land which you see, including the land which Lot has just grabbed selfishly, I will give it to you and to your descendants forever. The descendants of Lot were the Moabites and the Ammonites.

The descendants of Abraham are the ones whom we know as the Jews. And we can ask today, in nineteen eighty-seven, nearly four thousand years after God spoke to Abraham, as to who is living in that land today. It's not the descendants of Lot.

It's the descendants of Abraham, who are living in that land, even the land which Lot grabbed selfishly. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. And there is an example of that.

For us, who are disciples of Jesus Christ, we do not seek an earthly inheritance now. This is a promise for the future. The point is that Jesus never sought anything on this earth.

Once, when a man came to Jesus and said, Lord, tell my brother to divide the property with me, Jesus said, no. He refused to be drawn into that dispute between two brothers about some earthly thing. You can never go to Jesus in prayer to help you to fight against somebody else for some earthly thing, because the Lord will never be interested in that.

Jesus told that man in Luke chapter twelve, who asked him to resolve that dispute, saying, Who made me a judge over you? And he said, Take heed and beware of covetousness. No, if we are gentle and meek, we give up our rights, and God will take care of our rights. That was the attitude Jesus took.

The spirit of Lucifer, who became Satan, one who was the head of the angels, is one of grabbing, of possessing for oneself. The clenched fist is an appropriate symbol of the human race, the children of Adam, clenched in the sense of having a fighting attitude towards those who will take something which is mine, clenched in the sense of grabbing tight to what is mine already. Jesus came with an open palm, not with a clenched fist.

And the open palm is the opposite of the clenched fist. The race of Adam is symbolized by the clenched fist, and those who are under the headship of Jesus Christ have an open palm. They do not fight for their rights.

The earth is the Lord's, the Bible says in 1 Corinthians chapter 10, and everything in it. And if somebody possesses a part of the earth today, it is only a temporary loan. But one day God will give it as a permanent possession to those who are gentle.

There is no gentleness, basically, within us in our flesh. In our flesh there is a hardness. There is a hardness in our attitude towards others.

Jesus told us in Matthew 11, 29 to learn gentleness from Him. He said, Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, He said in Matthew 11, 29, for I am gentle and humble in heart. Jesus never taught us to learn from Him how to preach or how to heal the sick, but He told us to learn how to be gentle, how to be gentle towards our marriage partner in the way we speak, how to be gentle in our attitude towards our children, in our conversation, in our attitude.

Gentleness instead of hardness. If we have this clenched fist demanding our rights attitude, we will remain hard. We have to learn to give up and to mortify this clenched fist attitude in our flesh, and to learn from Jesus Christ this open palm attitude of giving up our rights then we can learn gentleness.

And that will affect every area of our life. We read about Moses in Numbers chapter 12, that he was the meekest man on the face of the earth. What was the distinguishing thing about Moses among many other things? One was this, that he never fought for his own rights.

When people questioned his authority as a leader, he always just fell down on his face and let God defend him. He would not defend himself, and God defended him mightily. You read that again and again in the book of Exodus, in the book of Numbers.

Very beautiful to see, and an example for all who are spiritual leaders. One of the most important requirements for a spiritual leader is this, that he does not fight for his position or the authority God has given him. If God has given him an authority, he will take care of that.

If God hasn't given it, then it's no use defending it in any case. Blessed are the gentle, God will give them what belongs to them. We cannot get anything by grabbing.

Jesus came not with the spirit of grabbing that Lucifer had, but the spirit of giving up. And therefore, Jesus has been made Lord, and one day the kingdom of the whole earth will belong to him. We are to follow his example, and follow in his footsteps.

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