

LESSON II

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

(Sermon on the plain in Luke)

The Beatitudes

Matthew 5:

³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.¹

Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God (Luke 6:20). ²⁴ “But woe to you who are rich,
for you have already received
your comfort.

⁴ Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh (Luke 6:21). Woe to you who laugh now,
for you will mourn and weep.

⁵ Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.

⁶ Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.

²¹ Blessed are you who hunger now,
for you will be satisfied (Luke 6:21). ²⁵ Woe to you who are well fed now,
for you will go hungry.

⁷ Blessed are the merciful,
for they will be shown mercy.

⁸ Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.

⁹ Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰ Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

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¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

²² Blessed are you when people hate you,
when they exclude you and insult you
and reject your name as evil,
because of the Son of Man.

²³ “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets (Luke 6:22-23).

²⁶ Woe to you when everyone speaks well of you,
for that is how their ancestors treated the false prophets (Luke 6:26)

¹³ “You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.

The Fulfillment of the Law

¹⁷ “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. ¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore anyone who sets aside one of the least of these commands and teaches others accordingly will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Murder

²¹ “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder,^[a] and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ ²² But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother or sister^{[b][c]} will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother or sister, ‘Raca,’^[d] is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

²³ “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you,²⁴ leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

²⁵ “Settle matters quickly with your adversary who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still together on the way, or your adversary may hand you over to the judge, and the judge may hand you

over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I tell you, you will not get out until you have paid the last penny.

Adultery

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’^[L]²⁸ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

Divorce

³¹ “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’^[L] ³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.

Oaths

³³ “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but fulfill to the Lord the vows you have made.’ ³⁴ But I tell you, do not swear an oath at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne; ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. ³⁶ And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. ³⁷ All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one.^[L]

Eye for Eye

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.’^[L]³⁹ But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. ⁴¹ If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Love for Enemies

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor^[L] and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. ⁴⁶ If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

²⁷ “But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, ²⁸ bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If someone slaps you on

one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. ³³ And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. ³⁴ And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. ³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful (Luke 6:27-36).

COMMENTARY

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew is the Sermon on the Plain in Luke. They both occur in about the same place in the accounts of Matthew and Luke. While there are some similarities between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain, there are also significant differences.

In general we can say that Matthew spiritualizes the sermon that we find in Luke. One way to note this is by paying attention to the blessings that Matthew has which Luke doesn't. Matthew has blessings for the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers. Luke has none of these blessings.

The blessings that they share are the poor, those who mourn, and the hungry. Luke and Matthew treat mourning essentially the same. But there are quite substantial differences when it comes to the poor and the hungry. Luke blesses the poor and says that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Luke apparently values the poor. Matthew spiritualizes the poor. He blesses the poor in spirit. Luke blesses the hungry. Matthew blesses those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. So Luke apparently holds up as special the poor and hungry. Matthew is concerned with righteousness and spiritually poor. But at the conclusion of the blessings, both Luke and Matthew bless those who are persecuted on Jesus' account. And both Gospels say that their reward will be great in heaven.

Another difference between Matthew and Luke is that for each blessing in Luke, Luke adds a curse. So when Luke says, “Blessed are you who are poor,” he adds, “But woe to you who are rich.” And so with those who mourn/laugh, and hungry/well-fed. Matthew doesn't have the curses. Luke sounds like the conclusion of Deuteronomy, where God holds out blessings for those who follow God's ways and curses for disobedience.

Luke's Sermon on the Plain is considerably shorter than Matthew's Sermon on the Mount. Matthew's Sermon on the Mount takes up 3 chapters. Luke's Sermon on the Plain takes up 1 chapter. Also, Matthew spiritualizes certain prominent Old Testament laws. The Old Testament commandment against murder is spiritualized to a prohibition of the inward feeling of anger against the neighbor. The Old Testament commandment against adultery is spiritualized to a prohibition of lustful feelings. The Old Testament law about divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1) is nullified altogether except for infidelity. The Old Testament says to swear oaths only by God's name, Yahweh, and to keep one's oath faithfully. Matthew again nullifies this law by saying not to swear at all. Instead, be honest— “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything beyond this comes from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37).

The conclusion of the Sermons are pretty much the same, being about love for enemies. A subtle difference is that Matthew introduces love for enemies in the context of the Leviticus law, “an eye for an eye” (Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20). Matthew counters that law with “turn the other cheek.”