

Against the Rebellion

Matthew 5:1-2
Halifax: 21 September 2003

Introduction

Jesus Christ is King!

- Of the four gospels, Matthew is the most concerned about presenting Jesus as King.
- In the first four chapters,
 - I have shown you how Matthew presents Him as the promised Messiah who came to reign:
 - In chapter 1, He is shown as the one that was promised to Abraham, David, and captive Israel...
 - And as the One who came from Heaven, born of a virgin, God with us.
 - In chapter 2, Matthew shows you how even the magi from the east recognised that He was King and came to worship Him...
 - And how Herod also realised that He was God's king and thus tried to destroy Him—
 - even as the prophets had shown.
 - In chapter 3, Matthew shows you how John went forth as His herald, announcing that He was coming and calling everyone to prepare for Him—
 - And how John's message was confirmed at Jesus' Baptism when a voice was heard from heaven declaring Jesus to be God's Son.
 - In chapter 4, I showed you how Jesus began to establish His reign—
 - First, by overcoming Satan's temptations in the wilderness,
 - Second, by beginning His public ministry in Galilee, preaching, teaching, healing, and calling disciples.

Today, I want to introduce to you the Manifesto of King Jesus...

- that great sermon He preached to His disciples as it is recorded for us in Matt. 5-7.
- This is, of course, what is known as: "The Sermon on the Mount,"
 - Augustine gave it that name in the fourth century.

Before we begin to look at the particulars (which I plan to do in the coming weeks),

- I want to present to you an overview of this sermon.
 - I want to do that by showing you what King Jesus requires His disciples if they are to obtain His blessing.
 - I want to show you what He requires of you if you would obtain His blessing!

I. First, King Jesus requires that you be broken if you would be blessed.

A. Just look at the ones He says are blessed in the Beatitudes!

1. He says,

- Blessed are the poor in spirit!
- Blessed are they that mourn!
- Blessed are the meek!
- Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness!

2. What kind of a kingdom is this?

- We would say just the opposite!
 - blessed are the rich in spirit,
 - blessed are the ones who are comforted,
 - blessed are the self-assertive,
 - blessed are the ones who are full of righteousness!
- Jesus seems to admit that we are right—
 - He says the reason the poor and hungry are blessed is because they will obtain the things they lack now...
 - the poor will inherit the kingdom of heaven
 - the mourners will obtain comfort
 - the meek will obtain dominion of the earth
 - the hungry for righteousness will be filled with righteousness.

TRANS> But why are the blessed ones in such a condition now?

B. These beatitudes only make sense in the context of a fallen world!

1. Jesus set up His kingdom in order to establish righteousness in a world that was ruined by sin and rebellion!

a. And so the blessed ones are not those who are content and satisfied with themselves in this rebellious world...

- You show yourself to be dead in your sin by such contentment!
- You show that you don't even realise that you lack the best thing of all—righteousness.

b. And so you see that no one who is content and satisfied with himself in this rebellious world is blessed.

- The blessed ones are those who are opposed to themselves as sinners and to this world as a world in rebellion against God.

2. Do you see?

- Jesus' purpose as King is to establish righteousness in the world—
 - and unless you are unhappy with your wickedness, you are at odds with Him.
 - If you stand united with Jesus in His opposition to sin...
 - Then you are poor in spirit because you are grieved by the wickedness you find in your own heart...
 - And you mourn because of it...
 - And you are meek because you no longer look to run your own life, but are looking to God's counsel alone...
 - And you are hungry for righteousness—you want it and you know that you don't have it...
 - And you are merciful to others because you see others in the same condition that you are in...
 - And you are pure in heart because you are not pretending to be something you are not—there is an honesty and a sincerity...
 - And you are a peacemaker because you are promoting the agenda of King Jesus, the prince of peace, in a world that is at war with its Maker...
 - And you are persecuted because the world is opposed to your agenda and your values—after all, you are following Jesus and look how he was received!—
 - The world reacts to you the same way it reacted to Him.
3. You know nothing of King Jesus and His purpose if you think you share His ideals and values and you are sitting there today satisfied with yourself!
- Jesus' Kingdom belongs only to those who have risen up in rebellion against their own rebellion toward God!
- a. King Jesus Himself was so broken and so distressed by the rebellion of this world that He came into this world to change things!
- And in order to do that, it meant, among other things, that He had to go to the cross to take away our sins!
 - He was so unhappy with what we had become that He was willing to go to such extreme lengths in order to redeem us and restore us to righteousness!
- b. If you are in league with Jesus in His opposition to the rebellion of mankind—
- Then you are salt and light in this fallen world!
 - By your dissatisfaction with your own sin as well sin in general, and your continual pursuit of holiness—

- you continually influence others for Jesus in this world.
- What is needed in evangelism more than anything today is disciples who are living out the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount!
- If you are not radically opposite to this world,
 - then how can you expect to lead people into a kingdom that radically opposite?

TRANS> King Jesus requires that you broken about your own unrighteousness if you would be blessed in His kingdom.

- That is the first thing that Jesus requires of His disciples.
- The second flows out of it and is found in 5:17-48, namely:

II. King Jesus requires that you uphold God’s standard of righteousness if you would be blessed in His kingdom.

A. In verse 17-20, Jesus makes it clear that He came to establish God’s righteousness in the world, not to cast it aside!

1. Matthew 5:17-19

- “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass way, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them* , he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

2. Clearly, Jesus did not come to abolish God’s standard...

- a. He did not come saying,
 - “Since they can’t keep God’s standard, I will change it to a standard they can keep.”
 - Instead, He said,
 - “Since they cannot fulfil God’s standard, I will fulfil it for them as their King.”
- b. The very fact that He went to the cross establishes God’s law as an absolute, inviolable standard!
 - The very reason He had to go to the cross was because God’s righteous law demanded it if sinners were to be made righteous!
 - And the reason He baptises with the Spirit is not because we are now fine as we are, but in order that He might make us holy.

- c. Jesus' work was not to abolish the law, but to fulfil it...
 - To fulfil it by meeting all its demands for us!
- B. Jesus indicates, in verse 20, that the Pharisees' standard of righteousness is too low!
1. He says that anyone who wishes to be part of His kingdom must have a standard that exceeds their standard...
 - Matt. 5:20: For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."
 2. Now you know that the Pharisees' standard was a very admired standard!
 - They even went beyond God's law just make sure!
 - They went so far as to forbid spitting on the ground on the Sabbath...
 - because a person might be tempted to kick dirt over the spit and that would be ploughing on the Sabbath day!
 - They fasted twice a week and took tithes of everything!
 - They even tithed the produce of their herbs.

TRANS> But even though their standard was so high...

3. Jesus says that the standard required for His disciples is a much higher standard than that of the Pharisees!
 - Their standard was too low because according to it,
 - sinners could claim that they had met God's standard of righteousness!
 - You can see right away that such persons are complete strangers to what is called for in the Beatitudes!
 - Hungering and thirsting for righteousness?
 - Far from it!
 - They were satisfied with their own righteousness.
 - If you exchange God's standard for a standard you can keep,
 - you will not remain poor in spirit because you will no longer be coming short of God's glory in your own mind.
 - The Pharisees' standard was too low!
 - It was a superficial, partial, external righteousness that they had established.
- C. In the remainder of chapter 5, Jesus shows what the true standard of God is like.

1. It is important to see that this is not a new standard—
 - What Jesus is doing is giving a true exposition of God’s law over against the distorted expositions that were given by people in His day.
2. He shows that God’s standard is by no means merely external!
 - a. God looks upon the heart!
 - Therefore, when He says, “Thou shalt not murder,”
 - He forbids hating your brother in your heart, even if you never say or do anything against him!
 - And when He says, “Thou shalt not commit adultery,”
 - He forbids looking on a woman to lust after her—
 - even if you never touch her or say a word to her...
 - it is adultery before God’s eyes to lust with your eyes.
 - b. To understand the commandments properly,
 - you must remember that they are given by God!
 - You must answer to Him and He sees the heart as clearly as the action.
3. Jesus also shows that God’s standard is not superficial.
 - a. He is not impressed with those who twist God’s law around to meet their own purposes—
 - Some had made divorce acceptable for a man who was simply displeased with His wife about something...
 - Some had established loop holes about oaths in order to make them non-binding...
 - b. Jesus is not impressed with you if your goal is to do as little as possible to meet what you consider to be the bare requirement of God’s commandments.
 - For example, when you are very careful to make sure that you are fully avenged when wronged—
 - but are very slack about insuring that you make full restitution when you have wronged others.
 - Or when you give only what is legally required,
 - but have no compassion for people in need...
 - Or when you do good only to those who can return the kindness in some way and never for your enemies!

- This all betrays a wicked heart!
- c. You must not look at God's law with a heart that says,
 - "What must I do to get by?"... the way you look at paying taxes...
 - But rather,
 - "What can I do to please God?"...
 - the "what else can I do" attitude you have when you are a salesman who is breaking into all sorts of wonderful markets.
 - "What else can I do to attract more customers!"
 - A sincere heart looks at God's law as something desirable and attractive that it wants to do.
 - It wants to have all of God's counsel it can get!
 - When God says:
 - "Love your neighbour as yourself," it says...
 - I am going to try to do that for as many people as I can—both friends and foes.

TRANS> Now you tell me—

- A person with an attitude like that about God's law...
 - Is He going to be satisfied with himself and say that He has kept all of God's commandments?
 - I don't think so!
 - For Him, God's commandments are neither superficial nor merely external, but comprehensive and exceedingly broad!
 - His goal is nothing less than what Jesus presents in verse 48!
 - Matt 5:48: "Therefore you shall be perfect as your father in heaven is perfect!"
 - But if you are living under the realisation that you are not living up to God's standard,
 - that will either drive you away from Him if you think He is unwilling to help...
 - or it will drive you to seek Him with all your heart if you know that He is gracious.
 - And Jesus presents this as the next characteristic of His disciples:

III. King Jesus expects you, if you would be His disciple, to depend on God the Father.

- A. This will especially be the case in your acts of worship!
1. In chapter 6, Jesus talks about giving to the poor, praying, and fasting...
 - And He sharply condemns those who do these things because they want to show everybody how spiritual they are!
 - Is such a person poor in spirit?
 - Is such a person mourning because of his unrighteousness and because of the unrighteousness in the world?
 - Is he hungering for help to do God's will, and longing for His reign to be established in the world?
 - I think not!
 2. But if you are really concerned about your unrighteousness,
 - you are not going to bring your offerings and make your prayers and do your fasting to make a show before other people!
 - Worshippers who know their Spiritual condition come before God in order to seek His help!
 - They want to find His favour and obtain His blessing because of their desperate need!
 - That is why they pray: "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."
 - That is why they pray for the forgiveness of sin and for God to keep them from temptation and to deliver them from evil!
 3. And what's more, when you are poor in spirit and have a broken heart to seek God, you are not impressed with your own worship anyway!
 - a. What I mean is,
 - You don't even feel like your worship is something that would want to parade before others!
 - You are there to honour God as best you can and to seek His grace, but you feel that whatever worship you have to offer is wholly inadequate.
 - b. Interestingly, Jesus promises that God will reward this kind of worship!
 - He tells us that even a cup of cold water given in His name will not lose its reward!
 - True saints will be surprised when God rewards them!
 - They will say, "When did we do these things?"
 - But God will reward them openly!

TRANS> Jesus continues in 6:19-34 to show how earnest His disciples are in seeking God's righteousness.

B. He shows you that if you are true disciple, you will seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness above all else!

1. Jesus tells you here that you ought to:

a. "lay up treasure in heaven rather than on earth..."

- "serve God rather than riches..."

- "seek God's kingdom and God's righteousness rather than food and clothing!"

b. In other words,

- you ought to be more concerned about your (and others) lack of submission to God and about your unrighteousness than you are about whatever you may seem to lack in food and clothing!

2. Jesus shows that seeking righteousness from God includes depending on Him to determine and to do what is best for you in this world.

a. If it is best for your growth in holiness for you to be poor, then He will send poverty...

- If it is best for His kingdom and your growth for you to be sick or oppressed, then you will be submit to him with patience.

b. Those who know their need or righteousness are not prepared to quarrel with God about their lack of worldly possessions and comforts...

1) And the reason is because they are trusting in their heavenly Father to do what is best for them!

- Such a person knows that he himself is entangled in sin, and he is not about to dictate to God about what his lot in this world ought to be.

- He has come to be delivered from sin, and that is his greatest concern.

- If the Father sends sickness, pain, oppression, and shortages,

- He knows that it is for His salvation!

2) Unbelieving Israel failed at this very point when they came out of Egypt!

a) God had brought them into the wilderness to humble them and teach them to depend on Himself alone...

- But rather than trusting God, they began to grumble and complain and say it would have been better for them if they were still in Egypt!

- They thought they were brought out Egypt for their immediate comfort when in fact they had been brought out to be reconciled to God!
- b) It was this same thing that brought about the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden?
- It seemed to them that God was depriving them of something that would be good for them to have by forbidding them to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - They were not able to trust what He had appointed for them as best for them—
 - But they took more for themselves and perished.
- c) The Lord Jesus was completely different!
- Though the plan of the Father meant that He would be despised and rejected by Israel and then delivered up to be crucified,
 - Jesus knew that He had come to redeem a sinful world...
 - It demanded patience in time of the deepest deprivation and sacrifice!
 - He trusted that His Father knew best!
3. The real question has to do with what you are seeking!
- a. Jesus says, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness!”
- That is what Jesus Himself did, and at every moment He was given precisely what was best for obtaining righteousness.
 - Until the appointed time, that meant provision of food and clothing and safety from His enemies—
 - And then at the appointed time, it meant deliverance to be crucified.
- b. If you are more concerned about growing in righteousness than you are about your present comfort—
- then you will not be so concerned about your present condition in this world.
 - If you are truly poor in spirit and hungering for righteousness, your focus will be on God’s kingdom instead of on your station in this world!
 - You must be brought under God’s rule as one who says, “I need what He sends!”
 - If Jesus needed to go to the cross to make us righteous, how can I complain if I am called to suffer for Him?

- C. In chapter 7, Jesus also shows that a true disciple will depend on God's judgement rather than his own when it comes to assessing other people...
1. Far from him will be a censorious, fault-finding attitude!
 - a. Rather than setting up your own standards like the Pharisees did,
 - you are to submit to God's standard alone.
 - b. When you look at God's standard, you will always find yourself coming up short.
 - Take the matter of our psalm singing without instruments...
 - Many of us believe that this is what God requires of us...
 - But God forbid that you should make a righteousness out of it and become proud.
 - The question is:
 - "How can you proud about your singing when you consider God's standard?"
 - His standard exposes the fact that although you may be singing the right words—
 - what about that distracted heart or yours that wanders away as you sing...
 - and that does not rejoice when great things of God are recounted in your song?
 - It's hard to proud and to harshly judge others when you see God's standard.
 2. I have talked to you parents about this matter before as well!
 - a. When you correct your son for telling a lie,
 - you ought to be repenting of your own deceitfulness at the same time!
 - b. Or when you are challenging him about his materialism...
 - you ought to be considering how you have taught him to make an idol of possessions by your all to frequent complaining about having to do without!
 - c. I don't mean that you refrain from correcting your son...
 - but that you correct him as a sinner correcting another sinner—
 - as one who stands with him in coming short of God's glory and who desperately needs God's help.

3. Of course, this also means that you won't set up your own standard in place of God's standard in a desire to be lenient either!
 - This is probably the most common problem in our society!
 - People will say, "We are not supposed to judge"
 - and what they mean is, not at all!
 - Not even by God's standard!
 - Jesus is not at all commanding that we throw out God's standard of judgement.
 - He is commanding that we do not set up our own standard in place of God's
 - or begin to judge the motives of others which judgement is reserved for God alone.

D. Jesus concludes this section about depending on God in 7:7-12

1. Here He encourages you to keep asking, seeking and knocking with a promise!
 - He says,
 - Matt 7:7: "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you."
2. But you must not forget all that He has said thus far in the sermon!
 - This is not an open invitation to seek whatever your craving heart desires!
 - He has told you to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness...
 - He has called you to be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect...
 - and to hunger and thirst after righteousness!
 - This is what you can be sure that God will give you if you ask Him!

IV. Jesus then concludes His sermon with an urgent exhortation to enter His kingdom.

A. He issues this call in verse 13-14...

- Matthew 7:13-14: "Enter by the narrow gate; for wide *is* the gate and broad *is* the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow *is* the gate and difficult *is* the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.
1. Jesus admits that the way is narrow and difficult...
 - He admits that there will be many who will never enter this way,
 - and others who will not continue in this way.

2. He graciously warns you to watch out for two dangers.
 - a. First, the danger of listening to false prophets.
 - 1) He says that you will be able to identify them by their fruit.
 - They will not have the fruits that He has called for in this sermon.
 - A teacher's life is supposed to up for public inspection.
 - If there is no fruit, then he should not be teaching...
 - I have recently been distressed by reformed churches in Canada that seem to have no qualms about allowing men in their pulpits whose lives are clearly not in accord with God's requirement for teachers.
 - 2) If you follow such teachers, you will almost certainly be led astray!
 - If they have set themselves up as judges of God's word, why would you listen to them?
 - And make no mistake, if they reject God's word at any point, they **have** set themselves up as judges of Him.
 - You are responsible about who you hear.
 - b. Secondly, Jesus warns about the danger of pretended righteousness.
 - 1) The wide path is the path in which there is no such brokenness as we saw in the beatitudes!
 - It is the path in which disciples are satisfied with themselves rather than poor in spirit and hungering for righteousness!
 - It is the path in which God's standard is looked at as a keepable standard...
 - And in which disciples are proud of their use of the means of grace rather than diligent and urgent in their use of them.
 - 2) Look at what Jesus says about you if you have only a pretended righteousness!
 - Matt 7:21-23: "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!'"
 - Notice that they are claiming to be His disciples!
 - They feel that they have done much for Him!
 - But they have failed to honestly look at what He requires of them!

- B. O my friends, you must not reject what Jesus says in this sermon!
1. Some people have looked at the high standards of this sermon and have said,
 - “This is too hard, surely it does not apply to every one.”
 - a. There has always been a pernicious tendency in the Church to divide Christians into two classes:
 - the Saints and the ordinary believers...
 - Or: the spiritual Christians and the carnal Christian.
 - Those who do this often say that this sermon does not pertain to all Christians—
 - Some have even said that it does not belong to Christians at all!
 - b. But we should listen to what Jesus Himself says!
 - 1) He speaks in very absolute terms!
 - Matthew 7:24-27: Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat o that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.
 - 2) I want you to notice two things here.
 - a) First of all, that Jesus speaks about “**these** sayings of mine.”
 - He is not speaking about some other teaching of His in some other place—
 - but about this very sermon that He just delivered—
 - the sermon we call the Sermon on the Mount.
 - b) Secondly, notice that He says “**whoever hears** these sayings of mine” in verse 24, and “**everyone who hears**” in verse 26.
 - These expressions make it clear that the sermon pertains to everyone who hears it!
 - c) Jesus says plainly that your eternal destiny depends on whether you build your life on what He preaches in this sermon.
 - If you hear and obey, you will be blessed.
 - If you hear and do not obey, you will fall!

3) Now I am sure someone will say:

- Yes, but it only pertained to those Jewish disciples to whom He spoke, it does not pertain to Christians...

a) But what does Jesus command His disciples to do at the end of Matthew's gospel?

- Does He not command them, saying,
 - "Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you..."
- What was that?
 - "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you!"
- In the Sermon on the Mount,
 - we have a wonderful summary of the things that Jesus has commanded them...
 - These are the things that they are to teach people from every nation to observe!

b) No wonder we find the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount taught again and again by the apostles in acts and in their epistles.

- They went everywhere commanding all men to repent...
 - To turn against their own way in order to embrace God's way!
 - To be broken about what they are as the beatitudes require...
 - To measure themselves up against God's holy standard that is not superficial or merely external...
 - And to depend completely on God for His blessing and His reward, not on anyone or anything else.

2. Now perhaps you would say—

- "but isn't it setting up works-righteousness to require people to obey this sermon with all of its high demands?"

a. And I say, "No not at all!"

- As long as you are in this world, you are to be poor in spirit because of your wickedness—
 - and you are to mourn about that...

- and you are to become meek, not self-assertive before God...
 - and you are to hunger and thirst for righteousness.
- b. The very thing that violates this sermon is to lower God's standard of righteousness so that you no longer feel the pain of coming up short.
- That is what the Pharisees did...
 - They tried to establish their own righteousness by changing the standard!
 - When they did, they were no longer dealing with God—they had rejected His standard!
- c. Chapter six is the heart of the gospel!
- Here you are taught to pray and fast with sincerity,
 - pleading with God to establish His kingdom in the world,
 - to forgive you of your sins,
 - and to deliver you from evil!
 - This is not works righteousness but gospel faith!
 - You are called in this chapter to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness!
 - Not to establish your own righteousness!
 - And this injunction should be even clearer to you now than it was to those to whom it was first preached!
 - You live after the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus!
 - You know how He was crucified to take away your sins—
 - and how He rose again for your righteousness!
 - And you know how He poured out His Spirit on the church so that she, in asking God for good things,
 - might be given the Spirit who begins a good work in every believer and brings that work to perfection.

Conclusion:

So let me make it as clear as I can!

- Unless you are united with Jesus in His opposition to sin—
- Then you are at odds with the King who came to establish righteousness in this world.
 - You are at cross-purposes with King Jesus!

- You are not a part of His kingdom of righteousness!
- And I testify to you that on the last day,
 - You will hear the dreaded words from His holy lips:
 - “Depart from me, I never knew you!”

He only knows you if you have joined Him in His rebellion against our rebellion!

- He came to establish righteousness.
- What zeal He has for this kingdom of righteousness!
 - What sacrifice He made to see that it was established!
 - Come and join yourself to Him!