

Sermon on the Mount Overview
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What is the Sermon on the Mount and what is Jesus' main point?

The Sermon on the Mount is found in Matthew 5-7 and is the only complete sermon of Jesus that we have in Scripture. These three chapters have been some of the most life changing in my own journey. I'm convinced that the fundamental point of the Sermon on the Mount is that the Kingdom of God has broken into human existence and Jesus is teaching us the implications of living in light of that reality.

Particularly, the Sermon answers the question, "How do we begin to live in light of the Kingdom?" In Matthew 5:20, Jesus says that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Scribes and the Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. These would have been terrifying to the original group of people Jesus spoke to. The pharisees and the scribes were the ones that had it all together religiously, if anyone should have earned God's favor it was them. Jesus' point is to show us that left to our own abilities there is nothing we can do to be right with God in our own power. This Kingdom life is entered into as we embrace our brokenness rather than our religious accomplishment or successes. If the Sermon the Mount is all about the Kingdom of God, what is it?

What is the Kingdom of God?

In Matthew 4:17, Matthew summarizes the teaching ministry of Jesus in a single phrase- "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." For Jesus, the reality of the presence of the Kingdom of God transformed everything. It was probably the most ground breaking realities of human existence. What is it?

At it's core, the Kingdom of God is the reality that God has drawn near to be with His people and as people are with Him, they join Him in His Kingdom plan to transform lives. *This presence of God in our lives changes everything about the world around us. It means that life transformation and spiritual growth first and foremost flow from the reality that God has drawn near to us. In His presence, he is bringing restoration and renewal to humanity.*

This has led many to ask, if the Kingdom has come, why is there so much brokenness still in our world. The answer of Scripture is that on one hand the Kingdom has come, but on the other, we still await it's fullest realization. It's a subversive kingdom that comes in not through overthrowing political regimes, but through the transformation of hearts. This reality changes everything.

For example, I'm convinced that the purpose of the "Beatitudes" are not to become something that we do, but rather they are descriptors of what kingdom life really looks like. I've heard them called the "Be-Attitudes" or these are the attitudes WE should cultivate in our lives. This would miss Jesus' point. Throughout the Sermon, Jesus reemphasizes that we cannot be right with God in our own power and that sin is merely

an outflow of the sinful attitudes and desires of the heart. What this means is that Beatitudes are now a descriptor of the implications of the Kingdom. In other words, your brokenness, mourning, desire to be a peacemaker and the like are evidence that the Kingdom of God has broken into your life. Now even in the darkness of our human condition God is setting all things right. He does it by filling, transforming, and renewing a people who join Him on a kingdom mission to transform lives.

Jesus says the way that we respond to the presence of the Gospel is to “Repent.” This word for repent is metanoia in Greek. It most literally means to “change one’s mind.” I’ve heard it said that repentance is a change of behavior and that is true, but it is a change that has come because one’s fundamental perspective on the world has been altered. In other words, we enter into the Kingdom as we adopt Jesus’ perspective on ourselves, on God, and on the world. As we do so, our behavior will naturally change. The biggest implication of this is that true life transformation in the Kingdom comes not by my own religious efforts, but in the presence of God who is renewing and transforming me for His Kingdom.

What are the main points of the Sermon on the Mount?

In my study, I’ve believe that the Sermon on the Mount can really be broken down into three main points.

1) Being People of the Kingdom (5:3-16)

This section focuses in on the Beatitudes and Jesus reminding us that everything has changed in what we thought the world was really all about. In Jesus’ Kingdom it is the broken, the meek, and the persecuted that are the most blessed. They become an invitation to recognize that God is up to something in His people even in the darkest circumstances of life.

2) Living as People of the Kingdom (5:17-7:12)

This section deals with some of the practical implications of Kingdom life. How do we begin to live in light of these realities.

A. Sin is about the heart not actions(5:17-48)

The Pharisees believed that sin was about the things that a person did or didn’t do. However Jesus says that our actions in sin are merely a reflection of what is going on in my heart. The act of adultery isn’t just sin, looking on another person with lustful intent is just as sinful. I’m convinced Jesus’ purpose in this section is to show us that left to our own abilities, there is nothing we can do to overcome sin in our lives. The Old Testament Law could only tell us what was right or wrong, but it was completely unable to help us do it.

B. The Kingdom calls us to singular devotion to God. (6:1-34)

In this section, Jesus exposes two of the greatest hinderances to Kingdom life. First, our own desire for religious recognition.(6:1-18) In other words, we want to be seen as “spiritual” people. Jesus warns us that if we pray, fast, or

give to be seen as spiritual, we'll get what we are looking for - people will see us as spiritual but we will fail to receive the joy of God's Kingdom.

Secondly, He'll warn us about the danger of looking to material things as our god. (6:19-24) Doing so will throw us into a state of anxiety that will cause us to miss out on Kingdom life. Our hope is not in the provision of our material things, but in the fact that God is generous and as we seek His Kingdom he promises to meet our every need.

C. Grace Filled Relationships (7:1-12)

In this section, Jesus will show us how the reality of the Kingdom impacts the way we relate to one another. We are to be gracious avoiding judgment and in light of God's generosity to us to love one another as we would have them love us. His point is that the reality of the kingdom in our lives directly impacts the ways in which we relate to one another.

3) Obeying as People of the Kingdom (7:13-8)

In this final section, Jesus teaches us that the truest test of our devotion and participation in Kingdom life is our obedience. The Kingdom can't simply be something that we talk about. Everything about our lives needs to change in light of this reality. To do anything else is to build our faith on a foundation of shifting sands and to do so is disastrous.

The reality of the Kingdom in our lives changes everything. Our relationships with God and others, our understanding of sin, and ultimate hope all surround this single fact. God has come and filled His people and He invites us to join Him in His kingdom plan to transform lives.

Conclusion

If sin is about the heart, allowing God's Truth to reign becomes the only means to overcome it. Life Transformation then is not about impressing others, but being freed from the anxiety of this life to embrace the reality of the Kingdom. It is in the context of these grace filled relationships that we begin to experience genuine Authentic Community. Finally, in the call to love others we obey Christ and model a life of external focus. The reality of the Kingdom changes everything and my heart and prayer is that through this time God would increase our understanding of it's power and freed by the presence of God among us, we would experience the joy of living in the set right life.