

Sermon on the Mount Series Study Guide:

Quite a bit taken from Spring Harvest Bible Studies: Sermon on the Mount by Jenny Baker but quite a bit of our own input in them too!

13th Sept: Matthew 5.1-12:

Welcome:

Where do you go for wisdom? Is 'wisdom' something that you look for in life? As we study the sermon on the mount we see through Jesus' teaching a huge amount of wisdom.

Word:

READ MATTHEW 5.1-12

- Can you give some examples of how people are celebrated in our society today – what are they celebrated for? How shocked would people today be to hear Jesus describe who is blessed in his kingdom and how he isn't taken in by celebrity, wealth, power etc?
- What does the word 'blessed' mean?
- What does it mean to be 'poor in spirit' (Luke 18.13), 'to mourn' (Matthew 26.75) and 'to be meek' (John 13.5)? What is the connection between the first half of the verse and the second?
- Why do the poor in Spirit receive the kingdom of heaven? Who gives it to them? When do they receive it?
- When do we get physically hungry and thirsty? What kind of experience causes a spiritual hunger and thirst for righteousness?
- What does showing mercy look like (does anyone have a real life example)? Jesus says God will treat us in the same way we treat others. Why? What other examples of this principle does Jesus give in the gospels?
- How do you become pure in heart?
- What's the difference between being a peacekeeper and a peacemaker?
- Have verses 10-11 ever happened to you? Why does being a beatitude person sometimes provoke a negative reaction from the world?
- The beatitudes are really challenging and to: apply them, remember them and act on them will require some intentionality. To start with what could you do to remember them in a culture

where the media bombards us with immediate and worldly images of a 'blessed' life that is so different from God's kingdom?

Worship:

Over zoom or live: play a suitable piece of music and slowly read the beatitudes over the music. Invite people to sit comfortably with eyes closed and palms facing downwards, invite people to use this as an opportunity to confess to God where they don't display those characteristics. Then after a pause, invite people to turn their hands over ready to receive. Read the beatitudes once more and invite people to ask God in the quiet to work in their lives in these areas. Finish with a closing prayer.

Witness:

This coming week look for opportunities to display the characteristics of the beatitudes and look for examples in others – make a note of these and bring them next week.

20th Sept: Matthew 5.13-20

Welcome:

Where do you find a sense of community in London? This isn't always easy to find in a big city? How can we best help each other belong in community?

Word:

READ MATTHEW 5.13-20

- Jesus didn't give this sermon so people had some new ideas but rather to establish a community to live out the truth – to model life as God intended – this is the vision for the church. How is the church to be distinctive from any other group?
- Jesus uses three metaphors: salt, light, a city on a hill – metaphors aren't exact parallels but what things can you draw from these three to enhance your understanding of the church? In what ways are we fulfilling this? Where could we do better?
- Looking at verse 13: *You are the salt of the earth. If salt becomes tasteless, what else is there to salt it with?* It's a really challenging verse to any disciple – and it's worth noting that 'becomes tasteless' has been translated from the Greek *μωρανθη* which has a meaning of 'to become foolish' – instead we're to bring the flavor of wisdom. I think it's interesting that bringing wisdom to situations is often admired in our current culture and some people are leading with that as a way into evangelism. How can we stay salty?
- In John 8.12 we read that Jesus is the light – here we're told that we are the light – is this a contradiction?
- In what ways should the church be like a city on the hill?
- In what way should our righteousness be different to that of the Pharisees? What is Jesus saying in this section?
- Salt needs to thoroughly be mixed in to fully flavour or preserve the food – it can be a good idea to keep a diary of your interactions over a month – where do you give your time – is there a good blend between time with friends, church family, people in the community – are you ever in danger of just spending time with Christians or conversely never investing in your local Christian family?
- As a church leader – I often hear people within the church say things like: 'the church really should be doing 'x'..' or 'the church

should be better at..' and I often find myself nodding, agreeing with them and asking what they'll do about it – you see the church can only be a corporate expression of what we are individually – how can we encourage each other to keep growing individually as salt & light? How can your lifestyle both as an individual and as part of a church community, become more visible and bring glory to God?

Worship:

Say the Anglican night prayer together or hold some quiet either in silence or listening to music.

Witness:

Pray for one another's life places: communities we live in, places we work, our homes, our church and friends – ask God to help us be salt!

27th Sept Matthew 5.21-48

Welcome:

Has anyone got some good examples of people showing integrity – share stories.

Word:

READ MATTHEW 5.21-48

- What do verses 21, 27, 31, 33, 38 & 43 have in common? Is Jesus criticising the law God had given?
- Integrity of Temperament: verses 21-26 & 38-48:
 - Is it wrong to be angry? When have you felt your anger has been justified? So what type of anger does Jesus say is to be avoided?
 - Verses 38-42 – what type of situation today might require this kind of reaction? When though does mistreatment become abuse that needs to be resisted and help sought?
- Sexual Integrity: verses 27-30- sexuality is a beautiful gift from God how do we sometimes spoil that gift? How can we have a healthy attitude to our sexuality from what the bible teaches us? How can lust harm us?
- Marital Integrity: verses 31-32 - divorce though sometimes necessary is nonetheless often painful and brings sadness of regret, brokenness, loss, betrayal etc. What could help us to support strong healthy marriages in our community? How can we stand alongside those experiencing divorce? How can the church be salt and light in this area?
- Verbal Integrity: verses 33-37 dishonesty, fake news and covered up truth is something we see - who do you trust to speak truth?
- We're made right with God because of what Jesus has done for us in his death and resurrection – why then do we need to be concerned about our behaviour?

Worship:

This is a challenging passage and as we read it we're aware of how we so often fail and need God's forgiveness. Think about an appropriate way you could allow some space for people to confess, then play a song (Rescuer by Rend Collective) or read some scripture that reminds us that when we confess God forgives us completely and this should

lead to joy in our hearts as Jesus completely removes all our sin from us.

Witness:

Could you take some time this coming week to encourage someone who is speaking out with integrity in our world today. OR is there something God is nudging you to speak out on?

4th Oct Matthew 6.1-18

Welcome:

In the Sermon on the Mount we see Jesus' teaching which leads his followers to lead radically different lifestyles but those lifestyles founded on a relationship with God. Our passage today focuses us on developing that relationship – being intimate with God. What spiritual practices have helped you recently connect with God?

Word:

READ MATTHEW 6.1-18

- What pattern do you notice as Jesus speaks about giving, praying and fasting? What's the significance of Jesus saying 'when you give...' instead of 'if you give...?'
- We've just been look at the importance of community! Why should these things be done in secret?
- Spirituality can be a popular word – what does it mean? What kind of spirituality is being encouraged in this passage?
- Christians need to both know truth about God and to have friendship with God – what is the danger of focusing too much on knowing the truth and having the right doctrine? What's the danger of overemphasising the need to experience God?
- What tips can you share in your group for helping each other to give, pray and fast?
- What do we learn from Jesus' model prayer – have you used it to frame your own prayer times?
- D. Carson writes this: *The thrust of Matthew 6.1-18 is humbling. The Matthew 5 demand for righteousness is now complemented by the insistence that such righteousness must never become confused with pious ostentation, with play-acting piety. The question is raised in its most practical form: Whom am I trying to please by my religious practices?* Discuss

Worship:

Have some time for quiet reflection & prayer. Play the song 'Nothing Else' by Cody Carnes

Witness:

This week (or month) why not make a note of when you give, pray & fast – this is of course just for yourself – it's often encouraging to see –

perhaps keeping a little journal of bits of the bible you read and things you sense God highlighting to you.

An overflow of our spending time with God is that we will reflect God more to the world.

11th Oct Matthew 6.19-34

Welcome:

What adverts do you like that you've seen, what ones do you hate & what ones do you find annoying? Have you ever been taken in by an advert?

Word:

READ MATTHEW 6.19-34

- Is Jesus saying it is wrong to be wealthy?
- Some people think shopping is our new religion – our malls our new temples. Do you agree with that? What parallels are there between shopping and religious activity? In what ways does money rival God?
- What does this passage tell us about storing up treasures in heaven?
- Verse 24 – a personal spiritual check-up – how attached are you to your possessions?
- Verse 25 – do you worry about these things? What does Jesus give as the reason not to worry (verses 25-33)?
- How could praying the Lord's prayer help us confront our worries and focus afresh on God?
- Have a go at practicing explaining to an unbeliever what it means to 'seek first the kingdom of God'.
- What examples do people in your group have of seeking first God's kingdom and then seeing God's provision?

Worship:

Depending upon the group – you could pray in smaller groups for each other especially focusing on any money worries, distractions or hoarding tendencies.

Then you could re-read verses 31-33 and spend sometime thanking God that he knows all about what you really need and spend sometime sharing that with God and ask God to help you to trust. You could play the song: Seek Ye First.

Witness:

Pray for friends, family & contacts that don't know Jesus. Pray especially for opportunities to help people see how fleeting the things of this world are.

18th Oct Matthew 7.1-12

Welcome:

A woman was waiting at an airport one night, with several long hours before her flight. She hunted for a book in the airport shops, bought a bag of cookies and found a place to drop.

She was engrossed in her book but happened to see, that the man sitting beside her, as bold as could be. . .grabbed a cookie or two from the bag in between, which she tried to ignore to avoid a scene.

So she munched the cookies and watched the clock, as the gutsy cookie thief diminished her stock. She was getting more irritated as the minutes ticked by, thinking, "If I wasn't so nice, I would blacken his eye." With each cookie she took, he took one too, when only one was left, she wondered what he would do. With a smile on his face, and a nervous laugh, he took the last cookie and broke it in half.

He offered her half, as he ate the other, she snatched it from him and thought... ooh, brother. This guy has some nerve and he's also rude, why he didn't even show any gratitude!

She had never known when she had been so galled, and sighed with relief when her flight was called. She gathered her belongings and headed to the gate, refusing to look back at the thieving ingrate.

She boarded the plane, and sank in her seat, then she sought her book, which was almost complete. As she reached in her baggage, she gasped with surprise, there was her bag of cookies, in front of her eyes. If mine are here, she moaned in despair, the others were his, and he tried to share. Too late to apologize, she realized with grief, that she was the rude one, the ingrate, the thief.

Ever miss-judged? Any stories of times when you've judged and it has had consequences? When is it good to judge?

Word:

READ MATTHEW 7.1-12

- What happens when we judge others?
- Verse 1 is often misused. In what ways are Christians expected to judge and use discernment? What kind of judgement is Jesus condemning?
- Verse 6 has sometimes been used as an argument against evangelism – but the context is judging others – what is Jesus saying?

- What will you choose to take on board specifically for yourself from verses 1-6 today?
- What kind of requests do children make of parents? How do parents feel about these requests?
- In verse 7 Jesus encourages us to be both confident and persistent in our relationship with God. What things get in the way of us asking, seeking, knocking? How do you cope with prayers that don't seem to be answered?
- Carson writes this: *Sadly, many of God's children labour under the delusion that their heavenly Father extracts some malicious glee out of watching his children squirm now and then. Of course, they are not quite blasphemous enough to put it in such terms; but their prayer life reveals they are not thoroughly convinced of God's goodness and the love he has for them. Jesus' argument is a fortiori: If human fathers, who by God's standards of perfect righteousness can only be described as evil, know how to give good gifts to their children, how much more will God give good gifts to them who ask him? We are dealing with the God who once said to his people, "Can a mother forget the baby at her breast and have no compassion on the child she has borne? Though she may forget, I will not forget you!" (Isa 49.15).* Discuss
- What good gifts has your heavenly Father given you?

Worship:

Allow some space to think about how much God has forgiven each of us. Sometimes simply remembering this can be a great aid in forgiving others. Other times we need more grace and help from God to forgive those who wrong us and if anyone needs more space to pray that through do get in touch with our prayer team or one of the clergy. You could encourage people draw or paint out their areas where they need to forgive others and themselves – then over the top place cut out white crosses to remind us that God's forgiveness covers sin and read Psalm 103.7-18

OR

You may want to focus on how we can approach God confidently and like little children take some time to bring our requests.

Witness:

How could forgiveness transform situations in your life. Pray for the grace to forgive.

25th Oct Matthew 7.13-29

Welcome:

Check in how everyone is doing – try and break into groups of just 2-3 and spend some time listen to each other and praying for one another.

Word:

READ MATTHEW 7.13-29

- Verses 13-14 – list the differences between the two gates.
- Jesus is speaking about entering the fullness of life that God's Kingdom offers and it's not a once in a lifetime choice but an ongoing one – look at verse: 5.3-10, 5.19-20, 7.21, 18.3, 19.14, 19.23, 21.31, 25.34 – to discover things that are required to enter God's Kingdom.
- Verses 15-23 – what do they mean for today? How should we recognise people by their fruits?
- Have a go at explaining the parable of the wise and foolish builders to someone who has never heard it before.
- What storms have you been facing – how firm have t=your foundations been? Have any storms exposed foundations that aren't as solid as you thought?
- Having spent time with Jesus wisdom – how will we be the people who apply it? The people who put it into practice?
- As we finish this series – how can we at Christ Church W4 encourage one another into the fullness of the kingdom of God?

Worship:

Put on some quiet music and allow people some time to flick back over the sermon on the mount – to reflect on what God has been speaking to them and to make a note of anything specific – if people are willing perhaps they could share and be prayed for.

Witness:

Some people have suggested that one way to reach out to people is to by using Jesus' wisdom and applying it to life. When they spot good wisdom they'll want to know where it comes from and that can be an opportunity to then share Jesus. Does anyone have any examples of showing wisdom at work or with friends? I once heard of a lady who started a new teaching job and noticed there was huge amount of tension in staff room over the milk in the fridge – everyone had labelled bottles and got cross if their milk was stolen. She got up early the next

morning bought a massive carton of milk and labelled it 'everyone's' – she changed the atmosphere in the staff room by using a bit of Christian generosity – applying her faith into action – she was then over time given lots of opportunities to share her faith more directly. As we reflect on this series what wisdom could you take out into the world?