

## Luke 6:17-20

Sermon: **The Sermon on the Mount**

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### JESUS SETS THE STAGE

1. Let's remind ourselves — in the previous sermon, Jesus had just chosen the twelve apostles who would proclaim His teaching to the rest of the world after His return to the Father.

1.1. Now we turn to a completely new moment — one in which Jesus is about to deliver the greatest and most important message of His entire earthly ministry. Some biblical teachers call this sermon “The Gospel of all Gospels” — The Sermon on the Mount. And I fully agree with them.

1.2. We know that The Sermon on the Mount appears in both the Gospel of Matthew (chapters 5–7) and the Gospel of Luke. Are these two different events? In Matthew, for example, we read that Jesus went up a mountain, sat down, and began to teach. But Luke writes that Jesus came down to a level place and began to teach the people. So, do we have a Sermon on the Plain and a Sermon on the Mount? I don't believe so. I believe it's the same event. Though Matthew's record is longer and more detailed, both accounts align in meaning, in context, and in the message Jesus intended to convey to His disciples and the people. If we approach the text that way, we can use both together to gain a fuller picture of what happened and what Jesus actually wanted to say.

1.3. Now, let me give you my suggestion as to how Jesus' descent from the mountain might have unfolded. To make it clearer, I'll use both accounts side by side.

1.4. After Jesus had chosen the apostles, He came down the mountain with them. **(Luke 6:17) “Then Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place; and there was a large crowd of His disciples, and a great throng of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, who had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases.”**

1.5. We read that He stopped on a level place, surrounded by a large crowd. As He descended, He healed them all, and everyone tried to touch Him to be cured of their diseases.

1.6. On the other hand, we have **(Matthew 5:1–2)** “When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. Then He opened His mouth and began to teach them, saying...”

1.7. Here we read that when Jesus saw the multitude, He decided to climb up a nearby hill, sat down, and began to teach the people.

1.8. I believe what happened was this: as Jesus descended from the mountain where He had chosen the twelve, He already knew that this was the moment He would deliver His most important message — not only to His disciples and to Israel, but to all of humanity. To set the atmosphere for what was about to come, He began performing many great miracles of healing. When the air was filled with awe and wonder, and as the crowd marveled at what they had witnessed, Jesus — seeing the multitudes fixed upon Him — chose to step up from the plain onto a nearby hillside. There, He sat down, looked His disciples in the eyes, and began to teach. When we combine both records, the image of His descent and preparation for the sermon becomes clear and complete.

## TEACHING ABOVE HEALING

2. We read that Jesus sat down before He began to teach. As I’ve mentioned before, in those days it was customary for a rabbi — a teacher — to sit when teaching the people.

2.1. Let’s continue: “Many people from all Judea and Jerusalem, and from the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon, came to hear Him.” Luke lists all the places from which people had come to see the man called Jesus. By doing this, he emphasizes that Jesus had reached the height of His earthly fame — there was not a single person in Israel who hadn’t heard of the Nazarene.

2.2. “They had come to hear Him and to be healed of their diseases.” Knowing myself, I can admit — that would have been my first reason, too: to be healed. And I believe most in that crowd had come for the same reason. Yet regardless of their motives, in God’s plan, the miracles Jesus performed served a higher purpose — they were the means through which the crowd would gather to hear His teaching. In God’s design, Jesus’ teaching always surpasses healing. That’s the very reason the Messiah came into the world.

2.3. **(Luke 6:18)** “And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were being cured.”

2.4. Notice that Luke separates those who were tormented by unclean spirits — he doesn’t group them with the physically sick. Why does he do that? First, Luke was a physician, most likely trained in Greece — an educated and rational man. Isn’t it interesting that someone with such a background includes a statement like this — that people were tormented by unclean spirits? Wasn’t he embarrassed to write such a thing?

2.5. Not at all. And that can mean only one thing: that it was completely normal in those days to encounter someone possessed by an unclean spirit.

2.6. Let’s return to the question: why does Luke distinguish the possessed from the sick? I believe that as a doctor, Luke had seen miraculous healings of physical ailments. But I don’t believe he — or

anyone else before Jesus — had ever witnessed someone being freed from an unclean spirit. And if he had, he knew that such deliverance was clearly an act of God. No human being in history, before Jesus, ever possessed the authority to command a spirit to leave — and have that spirit obey.

2.7. That's why Luke sets this apart. He wants to emphasize that Jesus is the authority we must trust and obey. One of the greatest proofs in those days that Jesus was indeed the Messiah was His divine authority to cast out unclean spirits.

## THE IRRATIONAL ATTITUDE OF THE PHARISEES

3. Matthew 12:22–28) describes a moment when Jesus confronts the Pharisees with this very truth. When He healed those possessed by evil spirits, the Pharisees claimed that He did so by the power of Beelzebul, the ruler of demons. Jesus then exposed the absurdity of their statement: *"Satan's goal is to deceive and destroy humanity, not to set it free. Can't you see how senseless it is to say that Satan is working against himself? It's illogical. Satan doesn't destroy his own kingdom."*

3.1. Then Jesus confronted them with another truth: *"By whom do your sons cast them out?"* At that time, the Pharisees referred to their disciples as "sons," so Jesus was essentially asking: *"By whose power do you Pharisees cast out demons?"* They knew the answer — they had no such authority. They knew that only Yahweh Himself had that power. And so, in the eyes of both the Pharisees and the people, the authority Jesus displayed was undeniable proof that He truly was the Messiah, sent by God the Father. Jesus was, in effect, declaring: *"I am the Messiah whom God has sent to reign forever over His people. I prove this through the miracles I perform. No human being has ever been able to free another person from an evil spirit — only Yahweh can do that. But now My Father is showing you that I am His Son, for He has entrusted His authority to Me."*

## UNLIKE THE MODERN CHURCH

4. (Luke 6:19) **"And all the people were trying to touch Him, for power was coming from Him and healing them all."**

4.1. We read that everyone was reaching out to touch Him, and all were healed. Something remarkable is happening here — unlike previous healings, Jesus doesn't stop, look, speak, or lay His hands on anyone. His very presence, His simple movement through the crowd, heals them. Every hand that brushed against Him received life. I can only imagine the charged, almost electric atmosphere that filled that place.

4.2. Unlike the modern Church, which often seeks to display the presence of God through grandeur — massive screens, stages, golden candlesticks, and domes reaching toward heaven — Jesus needed none of that. His miracles alone were enough to reveal the true authority the people were meant to listen to.

4.3. Throughout history, the Church has been skillful at creating an appearance of awe toward those who claim to represent divine authority. Yet never have its "sons" — priests, pastors, leaders — possessed the power to perform miracles as Jesus did. That's why today, we must not submit to church authority merely because it stands in a "holy place," but only if it leads us to the feet of Jesus,

setting Him alone as the One to whom all authority belongs. Jesus' way of demonstrating the weight of His words surpasses every human or institutional attempt across history. He is the only One sent by the Father — and God confirmed this through the miracles performed by His Son.

## AN ELECTRIFIED ATMOSPHERE

5. Personally, I would give anything to have witnessed that moment. I can only imagine how people felt as they were healed from their sicknesses, as they saw those beside them being restored at the same time. Hundreds upon hundreds of people sharing the same instant of liberation — tears of joy, shouts of amazement, people leaping in celebration, clapping their hands, falling to their knees in gratitude to God — all because a man named Jesus passed by. Wow. The hearts of those present must have been on the verge of bursting with emotion. And it's with that image in mind that we must enter the Sermon on the Mount. Let's try, for a moment, to step into the shoes of someone in that crowd, watching Jesus climb the hillside to sit down and begin teaching.

5.1. And I believe we can do that — not literally, but imaginatively. We are human beings, created in the image of God, and one of the gifts we share with Him is imagination. When we visualize an event — and have enough understanding to connect with it — we can, in a sense, become participants through our imagination. In that way, just like those who were actually there, we too can feel the awe and anticipation in the air before hearing what our Messiah has to say.

## IT BEGINS

6. All right, let's continue with the text. **(Luke 6:20)** *"And turning His gaze toward His disciples, He began to say: 'Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.'"*

6.1. We read that when Jesus sat down — as we know from Matthew 5:1 — He looked at His disciples and began to teach. Although His eyes were directed toward the disciples, His words were meant for everyone present — and for us today. Perhaps His deliberate gaze upon them signified something deeper: that after His return to the Father, it would be their responsibility to carry the Sermon on the Mount to the rest of the world. Perhaps — but that is only my assumption.

6.2. Before we dive into the Sermon on the Mount, I want to say this: throughout history, countless interpretations have been written about what it truly means and to whom it is directed. Some have suggested that if humanity truly lived out Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, society itself would become the best civilization history has ever known. Others have argued that it's impossible to fulfill, that Jesus' sermon is meant for those who will live in God's kingdom one day — because only they will be capable of keeping it. Some claim that the "merciful" refers to those without sin. Others say the "poor" literally refers to those who are socially impoverished.

6.3. Yet when we truly understand God's plan — and when we grasp the unity of the Old and New Testaments — we realize that one of Scripture's central questions is this: "Who will inherit the kingdom of God? Who are the chosen?" For that reason, I believe this sermon — the Gospel above all Gospels — describes the kind of person who will inherit the kingdom of God. In other words, it reveals the values, attitudes, inner condition, and ultimately the outward fruit of one who has been chosen by God to share in His kingdom.

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## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

7. Now, let's look at the text itself: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." Throughout church history, the kingdom of God has often been interpreted as a place in heaven — a realm where angels dwell, where the disembodied souls of God's children live in eternal worship of the Father and His Son upon the throne. Some of us call this place Paradise, some say the place where we will live forever, and others describe it as a temporary dwelling where we will wait with Jesus until He establishes His kingdom on earth, when our souls will receive new, immortal bodies. In short, there are many ideas circulating within the Christian world.

But I believe we must always ask: how did Jesus — as a Jew — understand the concept of God's kingdom? How did the Pharisees and the rest of the Jewish people view it?

7.1. Through studying the Old Testament, I've come to the conclusion that the Jewish people had a very different understanding of the kingdom of God than most of us do<sup>1</sup>. They know that from the very beginning, Yahweh promised His chosen people that One would come who would reign forever in God's kingdom<sup>2</sup>. He would establish His rule in Jerusalem and govern righteously over Israel — and over the nations of the world. In the prophets and in the books of Moses, this promised One is called the Messiah, the Son of God, the Son of Man. Jews born in the time of Jesus' first coming had been taught this truth since childhood in their synagogues.

7.2. For that reason, I believe that when Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, speaks about the kingdom of God, He means a kingdom that will literally and physically be established on the earth — not in heaven. In the minds of the Jews listening to Him, the picture forming was of a tangible, physical, and real kingdom. They never imagined that after death they would drift among the clouds, joining the angels in praise around a heavenly throne. That was never their concept of God's kingdom. Therefore, I believe Jesus is speaking of the kingdom He will establish at His second coming, where He — the King, the Son of God — will reign in righteousness upon the throne in Jerusalem. And we — whether Jew or Gentile — if we are asleep in death at His coming, will be raised from that first death, caught up to meet Him in the heavens. There we will be united with all of God's people throughout history and with our King, Jesus Christ, who will give us new, immortal bodies — bodies free from sin. In the twinkling of an eye, we will become morally perfect human beings, just like our King, Jesus Christ. Then we will descend with Him back to the earth, where He will establish His kingdom<sup>3</sup>.

When His reign is established, He will assign to each of us a place and role within His Millennial Kingdom<sup>4</sup>. We will rule alongside our King, promoting His righteousness and His commands throughout the world. As the apostle Peter wrote, we will be "priests of God"<sup>5</sup>.

7.3. Personally, I've always found the Church's traditional teaching about the kingdom somewhat abstract — distant, intangible, and hard to relate to. Moreover, Christianity is not the only faith with the concept of "eternal life." Polytheism, Buddhism, Hinduism, the New Age movement — all speak

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 15:18-21; Genesis 26:3-4; Genesis 28:13-14; Numbers 34:1-12; Deuteronomy 11:24-25

<sup>2</sup> 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 7:13-14; Micah 4:1-2; Zechariah 14:9; Luke 1:32-33

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 25:31-34; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; 1 Corinthians 15:51-53

<sup>4</sup> Revelation 20:4-6

<sup>5</sup> 1 Peter 2:9

of a “spiritual realm” that awaits us beyond this life. It’s no wonder that people throughout history have focused more on the here and now than on the life to come. We are physical beings. Through touch, sight, hearing, and smell we explore and engage with the reality around us. With our intellect we study the world and the laws that govern it. All this becomes part of the “archive” of our lived experience. That’s why this reality feels so near — it’s part of us, and we are part of it.

7.4. To teach that one day we’ll become disembodied souls floating “somewhere up there” is difficult for us to comprehend. We might imagine it, but we can’t connect to it intimately — and because of that, we easily lose interest. It feels distant, unreachable, detached from life as we know it.

7.5. Only when we begin to embrace the true biblical perspective of the kingdom of God — when we understand that it will be established here, on this very earth — can we connect with it on a personal level. I know Jerusalem; it’s a real city and a vital part of our shared history. I understand what it means for a king or president to rule. I can picture what an earthly kingdom looks like. I live in a system that functions because of people who govern — we call them “the government.”

7.6. So yes, as I’ve said, I can relate intimately to the Jewish idea of God’s kingdom — because it’s real. It’s not “somewhere up there”; it will happen here, where we live. And through the experiences and understanding I’ve gained in life, it makes sense to me. In other words, the more I study the prophetic descriptions of that coming kingdom, the more I long to be part of it. Why? Because I understand it.

7.7. And I believe the Jews who listened to Jesus thought the same way about God’s kingdom. They desired it deeply because they were literally standing on the soil where it would be established. They lived in the land of Israel — the very land over which the King, the only begotten Son of God, would one day reign and bring with Him the fullness of God’s kingdom. When we see it that way, we also understand Jesus’ prayer: “Our Father who is in heaven, Your kingdom come...” In the mind of a Jew, that prayer was a plea for Yahweh’s kingdom to descend — to come down and dwell among them.

7.8. In the end, God does not ask us to meditate on what is incomprehensible; He asks us to reflect on what is accessible and understandable. That’s why, like the Jews, I can daily form in my mind a clearer picture of what that kingdom will look like when our Messiah returns the second time. The Bible presents a radically different idea of eternal life — one unlike anything written in the sacred texts of the world’s religions.

7.9. We will continue unpacking the Sermon on the Mount in the next sermon.