

Matthew: His Life And His Gospel – Part 3

Matthew 4:18-22 [New King James] *“And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.”*

This was **not** the first encounter with these men, the apostle John tells us that at least some of them were already disciples of John the Baptist, [**John 1:35-42**].

No doubt they had already talked with Jesus Christ and had listened to Him, but in this moment there came a challenge once and for all to throw in their lot with Jesus Christ.

These were ordinary men whom Jesus Christ chose, also they were fishermen, and good fishermen must possess the very qualities that will turn them into good “fishers of men.”

Patience – they had to wait patiently until the fish takes the bait. Every person who is a witness for Jesus Christ must realise that they will **not** see quick results, if the person is **not** just emotionally attracted to Jesus Christ.

Perseverance – they must never be discouraged and always be ready to try again.

Courage – they must be ready to face persecution like a fisherman rough seas.

Eye for the right moment – a fisherman knows well there are times when it is hopeless to fish, he knows when to cast and when not to cast their nets.

Fit the bait to the fish – Paul said he would become all things to all men in order that he may win some, [**1 Corinthians 9:19-22**].

Keep himself out of sight – a wise servant of Jesus Christ will present Jesus Christ to people, **not** themselves, just as fish will not bite even if the shadow of the fisherman is seen on the water.

Matthew 4:23-25 [New King James] *“And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him, from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.”*

Jesus Christ had chosen to begin his mission in Galilee and we have seen how well prepared Galilee was to receive His message.

Within Galilee Jesus Christ chose to launch His campaign in the synagogue. The synagogue was the most important institution in the life of any Jew, for it was essentially a teaching institution.

Also the synagogue service gave a new teacher a chance to be heard.

The service was divided into three parts; prayers, reading from the law and the prophets, reading in which members of the congregation took part.

The third part was the address. There was no such thing as a professional ministry. The president of the synagogue presided over the arrangements for the service. Any distinguished stranger could be

asked to give the address, and anyone with a message to give might volunteer to give it, and if to the president or ruler of the synagogue judged him to be a fit person to speak he was allowed to speak.

Therefore at the beginning of His ministry the door of the synagogue was open to Jesus Christ.

It was in the synagogue that Jesus Christ would find the most sincerely religious people of His day, and the way to speak to them was open to Him.

After the address there came a time to talk and questions and discussion.

Jesus Christ did not only preach, He also healed the sick. It was a little wonder that people came crowding to hear Him, see Him and to benefit from His compassion.

The fame of Jesus Christ spread throughout the whole region, Gentiles as well as Jews came to Galilee to hear Him or be healed by Him.

Matthew 5:1-2 [New King James] *“And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. Then He **opened His mouth** and taught them, saying:”*

Note this teaching was for the disciples of Jesus Christ, to this group of people who faithfully followed Jesus Christ, He gave them important guidelines as to what they could expect and follow.

Matthew 5:3-12 [New King James] *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”*

Anyone who heard these verses and the rest of Jesus Christ’s teaching, [**Matthew chapters 5-7**] as listed by Matthew would be exhausted long before the end.

As we have seen, Matthew is essentially the teaching gospel, and it is Matthew’s characteristic that he collects the teaching of Jesus Christ under certain major headings like this so-called “*Sermon on the Mount*” recorded in a form that allows us to study and meditate on them over a period of time.

The term “*opened his mouth*” means in the Greek language what you are about to hear is a solemn, grave and dignified utterance.

Also the term is used when a person is really opening their heart and pouring out their mind to you.

It is used of intimate teaching with **no** barriers between the speaker and those hearing the person’s words.

This is the record of Jesus Christ opening His heart and mind to all His disciples; that is, all true Christians.

Our study now will break this great teaching of Jesus Christ into small parts so that we can fully understand the depth of its meaning.

“**Blessed**” – is a very special word in Greek. “*Makarios*” describes that joy which has its secret within itself, that joy that is serene and untouchable, self-contained, completely independent of all changes in life, because it is one of the very “*fruits*” of the Holy Spirit within the life of a true Holy Spirit led Christian, [**Galatians 5:22-25; John 16:20-22**].

Matthew 5:3 [New King James] *“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

“Poor in spirit” the Greek word translated *“poor”* is *“ptōchos”* which describes absolute and abject poverty, a person who has nothing at all, destitute.

This describes a person who, because they have no earthly resources whatsoever, puts their whole trust in the Creator God. It is a poverty of spirit, **not** physical poverty.

The Hebrew word is *“ani”* or *“ebion”* describes the same type of person, [Psalms 34:6; Psalms 35:10; Psalms 68:10; Psalms 107:41; Psalms 132:15].

In all these scriptures the poor person is humble, helpless and has put their trust in God. All these psalms there is a sense that such a person who is dear to the Eternal God.

Note this scripture does not actually state physical poverty as a good thing, it is the *“poverty of spirit,”* where the person realises their own utter lack of resources to meet life, and finds their help and strength in the Eternal God.

Jesus Christ was teaching about the Kingdom of God, so it was natural for people to ask, ‘how can I be a part of that Kingdom?’

When we add to this statement that in **Matthew 6:10** that God’s Kingdom is composed of people who do the will of God, putting their whole trust in God, the foundation of obedience, will they be part of that Kingdom of God?

Now let us put this altogether –*“Oh the joy of a person who has realised their utter helplessness and has put their whole trust in God by rendering to God perfect obedience that will allow God to make them a citizen of His created Eternal Kingdom.”*

Matthew 5:4 [New King James] *“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.”*

The Greek word for *“mourn”* is the strongest word of sorrow in the language, *“pēnthēō”* meaning to grieve and wail in their sorrow. **It is a kind of grief which takes such a hold on a person that it cannot be hidden.**

Sorrow can do two things for us; it can show us, as nothing else can, the essential kindness of fellow human beings, but even more help us to experience the comfort and compassion of the Eternal God through the recorded life of His Son Jesus Christ.

True Christianity is caring, and the person who cares intensely for the suffering and sorrows and needs of so many people in this world will find joy in that caring, for God is seeking out such people to be comforted and become comforters.

Ezekiel 9:4 [New King James] *“and the LORD said to him, ‘Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.’”*

When we consider the state of mind and body of all who will at the time of Jesus Christ’s Second Coming have lived in and through *“the great tribulation,”* [Matthew 24:21] the result of Satan’s great wrath, [Revelation 12:12]. Such people will need the physical and spiritual comfort from all true Christians who are part of the first resurrection, [1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:4-6].

Isaiah 61:1-4 [New King James] *“The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn, to console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the*

garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified. And they shall rebuild the old ruins, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations.”

Isaiah has this great vision of how God can use those who experience sorrow in a word that have lived through generations of pain and sorrow in the “*acceptable year of the Lord*” that is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

There is no doubt that also in this verse is the joy of a person who is desperately sorry for their own sins and unworthiness, after repentance experiencing the forgiving love of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, expressed in His sacrifice on the cross and His resurrection back to life having experienced death.

Now let us put our thoughts and learning about this verse together – “*Oh the joy of the person whose heart is broken in deep grief for all the suffering in this world and for their own sins, for they will be comforted and will be able to comfort others.*”

Matthew 5:5 [New King James] “*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*”

Meekness nowadays carries the idea of spineless and subservience an ineffective person.

This is **not** the meaning of the Greek word “*praotēs*” used here for meekness.

The meekness manifested by our Saviour and Lord, Jesus Christ, and commended to His disciples is the fruit of power.

Meekness is the happy medium between too much anger and too little anger, Jesus Christ express both great anger, [John 2:13-17] at the misuse of the temple court where people came to pray, yet He was silent before those who abused Him, [1 Peter 2:21-23].

Jesus Christ illustrated this attitude when He entered Jerusalem as King [Matthew 21:5] fulfilling Zechariah’s prophecy, [Zechariah 9:9].

“*Praotēs*” describes the attitude of humanity that accepts the necessity to learn and for all humans, to be forgiven, the only attitude that any human can have before their Eternal Creator God.

“*Shall inherit the earth*” – it is a fact of history that it has always been the people with this ability of self-control who have been great in this world, this attitude is essential if we are to have a part in the world tomorrow after the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

Moses, the greatest leader of Israel, was a man who was very meek, [Numbers 12:3]. He was no spineless character, he could be blazingly angry, but it was only released when the time was right.

It was the lack of this quality that ruined Alexander the Great, who in a fit of uncontrolled drunken temper killed his best friend.

No person can lead others until they have learnt to control themselves.

Matthew 5:6 [New King James] “*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.*”

Few in this modern society know what it is like to be really hungry and really thirsty. Only in parts of this world and in the ancient world it was very different.

The day labourer in Israel in Jesus Christ’s day was never far from the border-line of real hunger and actual starvation.

This was the background to Jesus Christ’s parable in **Matthew 20:1-15**.

The hunger and thirsting in this verse is that of a person on the edge of death by starvation.

This verse is asking us the question, ‘Just how much do we want to reflect the righteous character of our Eternal Creator God?’

Most people have an instinctive desire for goodness, but that desire is only wistful and nebulous rather than intense. When the moment comes they are **not** prepared to make the effort and the sacrifice which real goodness demands.

When we approach this statement of Jesus Christ it is most demanding to the extent of being frightening, but it can also be the most comforting.

It is the person who longs for this state of righteousness, that is who has a right relationship with their Eternal Creator God who will be satisfied.

The righteousness referred to is imputed, credited righteousness, the Greek word “*dikaiōs*” the result of our faith in Jesus Christ and the promises of the Eternal Creator God, [**Romans 4:13, 16, 18-24**].

For us to receive total righteousness we have to have total faith in our Saviour and Lord.

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

This is the starting point of receiving the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The key to understanding the completeness of this radical change in our lives is the Greek word used to be translated “*bodies*,” it is “*soma*” meaning our whole life, physical body, mind and human spirit, [**Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11**].

Also to realise that the sacrifice mentioned is the sacrifice made as an offering for sin in which the whole sacrificial animal is burnt up on the altar, [**Leviticus 6:30**] even blood is burnt on the altar.

Matthew 5:6 tells us that we cannot be satisfied with partial righteousness.

Matthew 5:7 [New King James] *“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.”*

It is consistent teaching in the New Testament that indeed only the merciful will receive mercy.

The Greek word used for mercy is “*ēlēēmon*” meaning compassionate, not simple, showing pity and sorrow but to seek to see the situation from their viewpoint, through their eyes, feel things as they feel.

This is exactly what the Eternal Triune God has done through the Word, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, [**John 1:1-4, 14**] so that He could show mercy to the human beings that He had created, [**Hebrews 2:17-18; Hebrews 4:14-16**].

Matthew 5:8 [New King James] *“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.”*

Here is a statement of Jesus Christ which demands that every person who reads it should stop and think and examine themselves.

The Greek word translated “*pure*” is “*katharōs*” meaning clean or being cleaned, also unmixed, unadulterated.

A person whose motives are always entirely unmixed will see God.

Too often an act of generosity can easily cause some self-approval, some pleasure in the praise and thanks and credit we will receive.

We need to examine our motives by an exacting self-examination.

Is our work done from motives of service towards God or other people or self-display?

Do we even fellowship in Christian groups to fulfil conventional respectability?

Even our prayers and study of God's Word, the Christian Bible, may give us a pleasant feeling of superiority to those who do not indulge in these acts.

Is our religion a thing in which we are conscious of nothing more than our need for God in our lives, [John 15:1-8] and that our lives may bring glory to God, or are we comfortable in the thoughts of our own piety?

To examine our own motives is a daunting and shaming thing, for there are few things in this world that even the best of us do with completely unmixed motives.

It is one of the simple facts of life that we only see what we are able to see, **not** only in the physical sense but also the spiritual sense.

This statement is a warning that by God's grace, His mercy, we are able to keep our hearts and minds clean, otherwise by our human lust we soil them and we will never see God.

Job 19:23-27 [New King James] *"Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!"*

Does our whole being desire for the same future as Job did and through his trust and faith in God's promises will experience.

1 Corinthians 13:9-12 – Paul had this same desire to see God face to face continually, this goes beyond seeing Jesus Christ who taught him personally, [**Galatians 1:11-17**].

Matthew 5:9 [New King James] *"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God."*

The word used for "peacemaker" is the Greek word "eirēnopoios," it does **not** mean peace-lover.

It very often happens that if a person loves peace in the wrong way, they succeed in making trouble and not peace. We may, for instance, allow a threatening and dangerous situation to develop and avoid taking any action for our own peace's sake.

The peace that this statement of Jesus Christ refers to is not from the evasion of issues, it comes from facing with them, dealing with them and conquering them, not passive acceptance.

Such people are called "sons of God" for they will be doing a God-like work of Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace, [**Isaiah 9:6**].

The Triune Eternal God is called "the God of Peace," [**Romans 15:33; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 13:20**].

The ultimate result of being "peacemakers" is to build a right relationship between the Eternal Creator God and all human beings, the work of reconciliation, [2 Corinthians 5:18-19].

Matthew 5:10-12 [New King James] *"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and*

say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

One of the outstanding qualities of Jesus Christ was the sheer honesty of what would happen to you if you chose to follow Him as His disciple.

A person who makes the decision to become a true Christian will find that their work will be disrupted.

I know this personally; I had to give up my job to obey Jesus Christ by keeping the seventh day Sabbath. I was married with two children, yet God did not forsake me, what had been a hobby became a full-time self-employed job.

It has taken a lifetime to restore in part the damage that my decision changed my family life, even after 55 years neither my wife or my children have joined me in my life as a true Christian.

The family social life also changed; we were divided in how we spent of time outside work, [Matthew 10:34-39].

When a person has to suffer something for their faith, that is the way to the closest possible fellowship with Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ will reward such a person if they continue to remain faithful to Him.

Matthew 5:13 [New King James] *“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavour, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men.”*

In the ancient world salt was highly valued.

Salt was connected with purity and was used in religious sacrifices, [Leviticus 2:13].

Salt in the ancient world was the commonest of all preservatives.

Salt lends flavour to our food. Christianity is to life what salt is to food; it lends flavour to life. The presence of a Christian defeats corruption and helps others to live a good life.

As salt was valuable in the ancient world and some merchants added other cheap ingredients to it out of greed that could cause it to lose its pure taste.

The same can happen to our Christian life if we depart from the high standards set by Jesus Christ.

Matthew 5:14-16 [New King James] *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”*

A true Christian is a light in this society that has been blinded by Satan to the real reason for human life, [2 Corinthians 4:4].

It is only if we allow all we come in contact with in life to know by our actions and words that we are Christians, that this veil of darkness can be lifted, [1 Peter 3:15-16].

As a result of using our lives as a light to the world we can bring glory to the Eternal Creator God, by more people coming to know who and what He is.

For us to be a true light to this world we must allow the active Holy Spirit in us to flow out from us in good deeds and love for other human beings.

John 7:37-39 [New King James] *“On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of **living water**.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.”*

*“**Living waters**”* refers to life-giving waters, that lead to the gift of eternal life, [**Romans 6:23**] as a result of faith in the life, words and sacrifice of our Saviour Jesus Christ, [**John 6:66-68**].