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**January 31, 2018—“The Preaching of Jesus”**

**I Prayer**

**II Introduction**

Last week, in talking from the topic, “The Duality of Jesus,” we looked at *Matthew* 3 and 4, examining how God became flesh and existed in a dual state: Jesus was wholly human, while simultaneously being wholly divine. We also talked about how certain theological beliefs are symbolized in our faith tradition, including Jesus’ duality, for example, by the two candles that sit atop the altar.

In *Matthew* 3, after witnessing Jesus’ baptism and John’s rebuttal of those who assumed John was the messiah, we moved to *Matthew* 4, where we saw Jesus spend 40-days and nights in the wilderness, fasting and praying, in preparation for his public ministry. We also noted that, at the conclusion of chapter 4, after Jesus successfully overcame three different forms of temptation from Satan, Jesus called his first four disciples and began the work of ministry with preaching, teaching, and healing people of various sicknesses. By the conclusion of chapter 4, Jesus had built up quite a following of people.

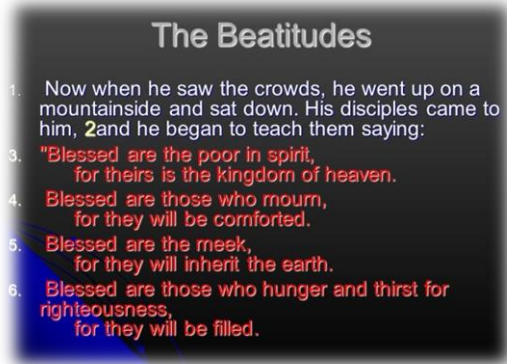
In *Matthew* 5, we transition from last week’s “Duality of Jesus,” to now discuss “The Preaching of Jesus.” In working his way through the crowds, Jesus’ disciples drew near as he went up on an elevated parcel of land in the countryside and began his first recorded sermon, *Matthew*’s “Sermon on the Mount.” The sermon runs through *Matthew* 5, 6, and 7, and is Jesus’ longest continuous communication as recorded in the New Testament. It is also the first of five major discourses in *Matthew*, drawing a parallel with the Pentateuch, and adding to *Matthew*’s uniqueness (unlike *Mark*, *Luke*, or *John*) as a gospel of history that is rooted in Judaism (“the Jewish Gospel”). Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount includes some of Jesus’ best known teachings, including the Lord’s Prayer, as well as some of Jesus’ most popularly quoted expressions.

*Matthew* 5, the first of 3 chapters comprising Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, can be divided into three parts: (1) verses 3-12 are the “Beatitudes,” Jesus’ expressions regarding the character of people of the Kingdom of Heaven; (2) verses 13-16 present Jesus’ metaphors on “salt and light,” completing his description of people in verses 3-12; and (3) verses 17-48, the longest portion of the sermon, Jesus challenges certain Old Testament laws with a new covenant in salvation.

The best way to digest Jesus' Sermon on the Mount is to recreate its atmosphere and listen very carefully, as we see ourselves in the biblical text, sitting and listening to Jesus . . .

### III Textual Examination: *Matthew 5* (read out loud, VERY SLOWLY!)

- In verses 3-12, Matthew records “the Beatitudes,” expressions regarding people who (will) belong to the Kingdom of Heaven . . . in other words, these are expressions about YOU! How and where do you see yourself described in the Beatitudes?
- In sharing the Beatitudes, to “who” do you think Jesus was speaking? Was he talking to citizens of the Roman Empire or was he talking to ordinary, everyday people? If this was today and Jesus was giving the “Sermon on the Lakefront” in New Orleans, to whom would Jesus be talking and why does he use the language he shares?
- In verses 13-16, I think Jesus is trying to encourage those to whom he is speaking to not give-up against the hierarchical power structure within which they were low on the food chain. In a society where people ate grains and raised food, along with the fish they caught, and cattle they raised, salt was used as a preservative. It allowed the people to preserve meats, a commodity that was fairly expensive. What do you think Jesus means with the “salt and light” comparisons and how does that relate to YOU!



- In verses 17-48, Jesus discusses the law and the prophets and how he came not to abolish the law, but in fulfillment of it. He essentially is ushering in a “new law.” What do verses 21-26 teach us about reconciling our emotions, forgiveness, and our treatment of one another?
- How does this relate to how YOU treat others, especially others within the Body of Christ?
- In verses 38-48, the focus is on forgiveness. Are YOU able to “turn the other cheek” after someone offends you? Do you pray for your enemies, or do you look for an opportunity to get even or show them up? Discussion . . .

### IV Comments and/or Questions

### V Closing Prayer