

Series: From Israel to Everyone: Disciples who Demonstrate God's Presence (a study of Matthew).

Sermon Text: 5:13-20 Fulfilling the Law
(to ask questions)

(See App for lesson, slides, and

Good morning, Landmark Church. It's good to see your faces and hear your voices. This community does wonders for my spirits. And isn't it a wonderful feeling to have finished Revelation? Last week was the 70th sermon, the 70th Sunday. Our hope is that you have been filled with hope, that Jesus is coming back, and that He will bring heaven with Him. Our kiddos in the Family Discipleship Center have also been reading about God's big plan and how Jesus wins. I want to read for us some of The Jesus Storybook Bible. Notice how it describes the last parts of Revelation to our little ones...

"And the King says, "Look! God and his children are together again. No more running away. Or hiding. No more crying or being lonely or afraid. No more being sick or dying. Because all those things are gone. Yes, they're gone forever. Everything sad has come untrue. And see—I have wiped away every tear from every eye!" And then a deep, beautiful voice that sounded like thunder in the skies says, "Look, I am making everything new!" ...And John knew, in some mysterious way that all this would be hard to explain, that everything was going to be more wonderful for once having been so sad. He knew then that the ending of the story was going to be so great, it would make all the sadness and tears and everything seem like just a shadow that is chased away by the morning sun. "I'm on my way," said Jesus. "I'll be there soon!" And John came to the end of his book. But he didn't write "The End." Because, of course, that's how stories finish. (And this one's not over yet.) So instead, he wrote: "Come quickly, Jesus!" Which, perhaps, is really just another way of saying... To Be Continued. (pg 347-349)

Doesn't that hit the core of you? And The Jesus Storybook Bible also has beautiful artwork as well! You may want to consider volunteering in the Family Discipleship Center one of these Sundays so you can read one of these beautifully crafted stories to our kiddos... and see their eyes grow with wonder at God's word. With Revelation now successfully journeyed through, we can turn our attention back

to the gospel of Matthew, picking up right after the Beatitudes near the beginning of Matthew's famous, Sermon on the Mount. If you want to follow along in your bibles, turn to ***Matthew 5:13-16: You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how shall its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled under people's feet. You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*** We spent a few weeks on the Beatitudes, remember...

5:3 Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

5:4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

5:5 Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

Jesus started his famous sermon on the mount by revealing to his disciples and the crowds listening in, that those who you would think are not gonna make it into the kingdom of God, are the very people that the kingdom of God is full of! The poor and marginalized, the damaged and broken, the failures and social rejects, these are the people the Kingdom of God deliberately grabs! It's these kinds of people that Jesus said are the salt of the earth, the light of the world! These are the people, Jesus declares, these are the ones who help usher in the kingdom of Heaven and who especially give glory to God. These kinds of people are Jesus' FIRST PICK to help him make all the sad things come untrue, and to fight against evil, empire, Babylon, and chaos. For us today, on the other side Christianity molding and shaping our culture and slowly changing our perspectives for 2,000 years, Jesus choosing the underdogs of society already kind of makes sense.

Those who mourn probably know how to gently show compassion. Those who are poor in spirit probably know what it's like to be shamed and talked down to, they are very likely to encourage and be patient with others. Those who are peacemakers often do so because they have lived under, endured conflict and know the damage and devastation it can cause. Who better to bring into hostility and tension, than those who have navigated and worked through, in their own lives, disputes and

conflicts? No wonder Jesus calls them, calls us, the salt of the earth. Isn't it just like God, the infinitely imaginative creator of the universe, to use EVERY single part of our lives for our own and others' healing? And what's even better, is that God calls us to be in community with each other, to live out his LAW, to grow and mature and encourage and practice living the life he designed for us. The things of life, of goodness and love and flourishing take a lot of time and sweat and energy. These are hard skills to develop... All good and enduring things are hard to grow and cultivate. But notice what Jesus doesn't say here. He doesn't say, 'Go slave away in your own strength to manufacture flavor.' He doesn't treat spiritual growth like a grueling corporate climb where you just need more sweat, grit, and willpower.

Becoming who we are designed to be is messy work. It's hard work, and we can't do it alone... we were NEVER designed to be alone. True transformation happens as we abide in Christ, together as a family. That's why Jesus invites us to be a city on a hill! WE, ALL OF US, are the light of the world... by our love for one another, we showcase God's love, acting as his neon sign to attract the world to himself, to peace, to shalom. That light turns on when we forgive each other when it's hard, when we pull up an extra chair at the dinner table for the lonely, and when we drop our defensiveness. We don't have to force it to shine; when we actually love each other like that in the trenches of daily life, God's light naturally breaks through the darkness. How we love one another is the main evidence God has chosen to demonstrate how effective and good his way is, and Jesus invites us to partner with him as he gathers the world to himself. At the structural center of the Beatitudes are two blessings that bring this whole salt and light thing into focus...It's in Matthew 5:6-7: *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy."* Does your stomach ache for the ways of God? Do you thirst after God's goodness and justice? For God's rule and reign to spread across the land? Then show mercy to your oppressors, your enemies, those who hurt you, ignore you, reject you, dismiss you, who make your life difficult. Show them mercy, like God shows mercy. And in this way, along with the other Beatitudes, we join Jesus in being the salt and light of the world, we help bring hope to the world because we bring God's kingdom.

And as the crowds gathered around Jesus teaching his disciples, from all over the region Jews and gentiles, merchants and Pharisees, I can imagine that many were scratching their heads in confusion. Jesus was teaching something different to their ears, a way of interpreting the LAW of Moses, the 10 Commandments, all 613 other laws and rules, that didn't line up with what has been passed down through the generations. I can imagine the crowds, especially the teachers of the law, the scribes, the Pharisees, wanting to raise their hands and question Jesus. *“That’s not what has been passed down to us! No credible teacher worth their salt would teach Torah like that! You are throwing away our heritage and telling us that God’s kingdom belongs to those who are clearly suffering from the consequences of their sins! Are you saying that we no longer have to keep Torah? Are you doing away with LAW?”*

If these sorts of statements were not explicitly spoken out against Jesus, many amongst the crowds definitely thought and felt them. We know this because of what Jesus says next in **verses 17-19: *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*** Wow... How can Jesus say this and get away with it!? At the end of the Sermon on the Mount, in chapter 7:28-29, Matthew states something very important: *“And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes.”*

We'll get there in a few weeks, but I wanted to point this observation out, that Jesus taught as one who had authority. Now, to understand why their jaws hit the floor, you have to know how scribes taught back then. Scribes had borrowed authority. They would stand up and say, “According to Rabbi Hillel...” or “As Rabbi Shammai interpreted this text...” They relied entirely on quoting recognized human experts to validate their teaching. But Jesus didn't do that. Jesus didn't stand up, namedrop Rabbinic credentials, or ask for an official endorsement from the religious

establishment. Jesus looked at them and said: “You have heard that it was said... BUT I SAY TO YOU.” That isn't just a rabbi offering a bold new commentary; that is the Lawgiver Himself standing on the mountain. He didn't speak with borrowed authority—He spoke with inherent authority. So when Jesus says in verse 17, “*I have not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it,*” He isn't just saying, “*Hey, I've got a better interpretation.*” He is declaring that every single law, every shadow, every command in the Old Testament was pointing directly to HIM. He isn't tweaking the rules; He is the living embodiment of the righteousness God required all along.

Getting back to chapter 5... Jesus calls out his accusers in **verse 17: *Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.*** Jesus says that he has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets not to abolish or do away, or render them invalid. For the Jew, 2,000 years ago, when they heard Jesus declare that he was fulfilling the Law and the Prophets, they understood exactly what Jesus was claiming. To fulfill the Law meant two very important and very connected things:

1. Jesus was interpreting the Scriptures rightly. Jesus' theology and understanding of Torah was correct.
2. Jesus, with his correct understanding, was also living out what the Scriptures were saying perfectly, as they were meant to be lived out!

When Jesus speaks about fulfilling the Law, He is blowing open the doors to what God has wanted for humanity from the very beginning. All the way back at Sinai, when God wrote His words on stone tablets, the goal was never external conformity. The goal was always a transformed heart. God wanted a people so saturated in His goodness that their collective life would draw a dark, searching world into His peace. But like Israel back then, we constantly get off track. We shrink God's magnificent vision down to rules we can control, or we give in to self-preservation and choke out the light. We try to secure ourselves rather than trust Him. Jesus steps into our failure not to condemn us, but to do what we could never do on our own. He embodies the perfect heart of the Law—and then offers us His very spirit so that His light, His

righteousness, can finally flow through our lives. God's people, from the start, were always supposed to partner with God and be such a radiant bride that it would make all the sadness and tears and everything seem like just a shadow that is chased away by the morning sun.

But it's no surprise to us, though, that God's people back then, and like us today, acted out of fear and pride and self-preservation. And they lost the big picture. They lost the very spark--the very light of life and love that made them shine. They, like us, were so easily distracted and prone to forget who God designed them to be. The Scribes and Pharisees started out with beautiful intentions. Intentions of preserving and reminding God's people of his laws so that they would be found faithful in God's eyes and through their obedience, usher in God's rule and reign. Aren't those noble and wonderful intentions? But they lost God's grand story. Instead of preserving God's ways, like salt that enhances the flavor of food and keeps it from rotting, they spoiled it, turning God's commands from drops of honey to a mouthful of sand. The Scribes and Pharisees made God's word burdensome. Where God intended freedom for us to live as we were designed, they turned God's commands into shackles that bound Israel's feet as if they were back in Egypt under Pharaoh. God called his people to gather the rest of the world to himself, like a city on a hill, wonderfully displaying God's attractive light and captivating beauty. But, out of fear and pride and stinginess, the Scribes and Pharisees turned inward, protecting their precious flame from any and all possible threats of rain and wind, essentially choking out the bright flame of God's love.

They had lost their way, and so Jesus rebukes them in ***verse 20: For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.*** In other words, unless your hunger [for God's ways] place you at the feet of Jesus, like one of his disciples...And unless your thirst [for God's rule and reign] lead you to showing mercy to those you interact with, you cannot take part in God's kingdom. And now we're back in the Beatitudes. They really are the key to living a flourishing life with God's community and within the Kingdom of Heaven. And for you. Now. This morning, if you find yourself wanting to be part of God's kingdom but feel as if you've lost your way like the Scribes and

Pharisees Jesus rebuked. Or if you feel you've done too many bad things, or maybe you have too much shame and guilt, or you fear that you've disappointed God or made Him angry. Or maybe this sermon resonates with you, and you hunger and thirst for more of what Jesus has to offer. I want to close my time up here with the first line of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount: "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" Remember, you don't have to take your next steps alone. Would you pray with me?

Sunday to Monday Connection: Jesus calls us the salt of the earth and the light of the world. He doesn't ask us to manufacture holiness or prove ourselves worthy. He calls us to follow Him, receive His grace, live from His righteousness, and let His love become visible in the ordinary places of our lives.

- **Question:** Where might God be inviting you to let His light shine through your story, especially in a place where you've experienced brokenness or difficulty?
- **Next Step:** If you are not a Christ follower and would like to explore what all this might mean for you, please speak with someone you know here or one of our church leaders.
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Takeaways to discuss with your people (in addition to the underlined questions above!):

Considerations for discussion leaders:

1. Keep circling back to the big idea and main points of the passage to stay on track.
2. Keep the group small for deeper sharing. Single underlined sentences are for discussion, while key points are double underlined.
3. Keep the discussion around 30 mins. Once you hit the "sweet spot", spend your time there.
4. Keep these simple questions in your back pocket: What is God teaching you? What are you going to do about it? How will it help you love & serve others?

Other Articles/Songs/Videos: Please ask us for help obtaining other resources.

- Bible Project - Gospel of the Kingdom [Videos](#) and [Podcast episodes](#).
- Bible Project - Heaven and Earth [Videos](#) and [Podcast episodes](#).
- Bible Project - Temple [Videos](#).
- Bible Project – Day of the Lord [Podcast episodes](#).

Quotes related to this passage:

- **Big picture:** “People often say what wonderful teaching the Sermon on the Mount is, and that if only people would obey it the world would be a better place. But if we think of Jesus simply sitting there telling people how to behave properly, we will miss what was really going on. These ‘blessings’, the ‘wonderful news’ that he’s announcing, are not saying ‘try hard to live like this.’ They are saying that people who already are like that are in good shape. They should be happy and celebrate.” (Wright, 36)
- **Layout:** Recalling the passage’s design, we will be attentive to each description, and especially to the ways in which the eight are arranged and joined. In accord with literary features noted above, we may view these subjects as two sets of four. The people portrayed in verses 3–6 know their need of God, depend on him, weep before him, long for him to establish his rule, and patiently wait for him to do so. Verses 7–10 describe persons who have received the grace of God’s rule, experienced its powers and submitted to its commands. Yet all eight beatitudes remain connected to each other: the actions of 5:7 and 9 flow from the attitudes of 5:3–6; the activists stay focused on God (5:8); persecuted believers (5:10) will evidence the qualities of 5:3–6 to an exceptional degree. (Chamblin, 313)
- **Blessed:** “The phrase ‘How blessed’ would sound familiar to any educated Jew. The Hebrew word *ashrey* is common throughout the Psalms and the *siddur*/prayer book. The root word (*asher*) would more accurately mean ‘happy,’ not in some superficial sense in the temporal world, but in the most fulfilling reality of doing the will of God. Some of the specific beatitudes do not seem good in themselves; yet if a person fulfills God’s will in these ways, there is a blessing and even a sense of happiness that the world cannot offer.” (Kasdan, 45)
- **A new perspective:** The gospel offers a radical reinterpretation of life on earth, and the Beatitudes dare us to take it for a test drive. Jesus wants us to taste and see that His heavenly perspective is a better way to live and specifically that “*The life you think is easy may be empty, and the life you view as miserable may be where God does His best work.*” Or as He put in later in Matthew 16:24-26 NLT “*If any of you wants to be my follower, you must turn from your selfish ways, take up your cross, and follow me. If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it. And what do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose your own soul?*”
- **Righteousness:** “The ultimate source of this kind of righteousness is God himself (cf. Ps. 42:1–2; 63:1). His enablement is the only satisfaction for those who long for his standard of righteousness written in his law (119:10–11, 20, etc.). Although the teachers of the law and the Pharisees focus on attaining righteousness through studying and interpreting the law, their efforts result in self-righteousness, which will not enable them to enter the kingdom of heaven (cf. 5:20). But for those who deeply long for God’s multifaceted righteousness, they will be filled. That divine satisfaction will come in a final sense in God’s future reign, but it will be experienced in the present by those who respond to Jesus’ invitation to kingdom life and enter into a relationship

with him as he fills their deepest personal hunger and thirst for righteousness (cf. 12:1–8; 26:26–29; John 4:13–15; 6:35ff.).” (Wilkins, 208)

Bibliography (Note: Our use of these materials does not imply full agreement with them)

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