**The Structure of Matthew**

**The Introduction to our Series**

**The Sermon on the Mount / Living Transformed Lives / A Call to Live Counter Culturally**

* **Matthew 4:23** is a summary statement of Jesus’ earthly ministry!

**Matthew 4:23:**

23And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

**This Verse Restated:**

* **Jesus made it his ministry to preach the coming of the kingdom**, teach the way of the kingdom, and demonstrate the purpose and power of the kingdom by healing the sick. Preaching, teaching, and healing.

**Matthew 9:35:**

35And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

* Matthew 9:35 is almost verbatim the same summary of Jesus’ ministry.

**What is Sandwiched Between these two Summary Descriptions? – Two Major Sections**

1. A Collection of Jesus’ Teachings: Called “The Sermon on the Mount” (chapters 5-7).
2. A Collection of Stories Mainly about Healings (chapter 8 and 9).

* What we appear to have from Matthew is a five-chapter unit designed by Matthew to present to us first some of what would be typical teachings (actually ***ethical teachings***) of Jesus covering **the way of the kingdom** (another way of saying the ethics of the kingdom), and second some typical healings and miracles that demonstrate the power of the kingdom.

**Jesus’ Audience: The Crowds and the Disciples**

* Matt. 5:1 points to him speaking to his disciples, and Matt. 7:28 mentions Jesus addressing what appears to be an outer circle of the “crowds.” So even though Jesus is primarily teaching his disciples the kingdom’s ethics, he is also addressing a listening outer circle of people listening in.

**The Sermon Begins**

* The disciples are gathered at the feet of Jesus and with the crowds listening in.
* **Jesus begins by pronouncing a certain kind of person whom is fortunate** (even though that person may not seem to be fortunate from the worlds view). We call the pronouncements the “beatitudes,” which comes from the Latin word for *happiness* or *blessedness*.

**The Beatitudes**

* **Another Explanation:** The Beatitudes or the blessings that represent **an announcement of who is or will be “happy” because of experiencing the acceptance of God**.

**Big Point:**

* The Beatitudes announce who it is that God will bless and reward in the forth coming era when God removes the current opposition to the kingdom. In that day, mourners will be comforted, the meek will inherit the land, those hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be satisfied, the merciful will obtain mercy, the pure in heart will see God, and the peacemakers will be called children of God.

**Notice the Unique Structure of the Beatitudes:**

* There are eight beatitudes mentioned. Verse 11’s is really an extension of the beatitude mentioned in verse 10.

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is ***(present tense)*** the kingdom of heaven.
2. "Blessed are those who mourn, *for they shall or will* ***(future tense)*** *be comforted*.
3. "Blessed are the meek, *for they shall inherit the earth*.
4. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, *for they shall be satisfied*.
5. "Blessed are the merciful, *for they shall obtain mercy*.
6. "Blessed are the pure in heart, *for they shall see God.*
7. "Blessed are the peacemakers, *for they shall be called sons of God*.
8. "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. "Blessed are you when men reviled you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you."

**The Structure Explained**:

* The 1st (vs. 3) and 8th (vs. 10) Beatitudes seem to relate to the present: The disciples are assured that “theirs is the kingdom of heaven,” even in the very present difficulties.
* While the 2nd through the 7th (versus 4-9) Beatitudes seem to relate to the future, or are eternal promises (promises to be fully experienced in Heaven).

**How to Make Sense of This:**

* Jesus had brought the kingdom of heaven to earth in his own kingly power and fellowship, and we can *enjoy foretastes of it here and now*; but *the full experience of the life of the kingdom will have to wait* *for the age to come*.

**Our First Beatitude:**

1. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

**Let’s explore what it means to be poor in spirit!**

**Mark 2:17:** “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.”

* The only people who will ever come to get what Jesus has to give are sick people, people who know that they are spiritually and morally and very often physically crippled.

**Our Messiah proposes to replace the following:** Self-reliance, Self-confidence, Self-determination, and Self-esteem.

**What does Jesus replace these *SELF* attributes with?**

* Self-Reliance with childlike **God-Reliance**
* Self-Confidence with **Submissive God-Confidence**
* Self-Determination (determining one’s own life) with **Sovereign Grace**
* Self-Esteem with **Magnificent Mercy for the unworthy**

**Biblical characters that are possibly examples of being poor in spirit:**

**Abraham**

* In dealing with the Lord about Sodom and Gomorrah, he said, "Behold, I have taken upon myself to speak to the Lord, *I who am but dust and ashes*" ([Gen. 18:27](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen%2018.27)).

**Jacob**

* When Jacob returned to the promised land after spending 20 years in exile, he wrestled with God in prayer and said, "*I am not worthy of the least of all* the deeds of steadfast love and all the faithfulness that you have shown to your servant, for with only my staff I crossed this Jordan, and now I have become two camps.”([Gen. 32:10](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Gen%2032.10)).

**Moses**

* When God came to him with a mission to lead his people out of Israel, he said, "*Who am I* that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt? . . . Oh, my Lord, *I am not eloquent, either in the past or since* you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue.” ([Exod. 3:11](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod%203.11); [4:10](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exodus%204.10)).
* The reason God got angry at Moses is not because of his humble assessment of his own abilities, but of his lack of faith in God's ability. God responded and said to Moses, "Who made man's mouth? Who makes him dumb, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak" ([Exodus 4:11–12](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Exod%204.11%E2%80%9312)).

**Take Notice:**

* **The biblical answer to low self-esteem** **is not high self-esteem**, but rather it is sovereign grace. God did not tell Moses “stop putting yourself down, you are somebody, or even you are eloquent of speech.” What God said was “*Stop looking at your own unworthiness and uselessness and look at me. I made the mouth. I will be with you. I will help you. I will teach you what to say. Look to me and live*!”
* In other words, God’s way of freeing and mobilizing his people who may have low self-esteem is promise help, and a reminder that he is our redeemer (and that he knows we need him).

**More biblical characters that are examples of being poor in spirit:**

***Job* 42:5-6 -** “I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you; 6therefore *I despise myself, and repentin dust and ashes*.”

***Isaiah* 6:5 -** 5And I said: “*Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips*; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

**John the Baptist - John 1:27; 3:30:** "I baptize with water; but among you stands one whom you do not know, even he who comes after me, *the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie*… *He must increase, I must decrease*" 🡪 Could this be why Jesus said, "Among those born of women, none is greater than John" (Lk. 7:28).

**Peter - Luke 5:8:** When he saw the power of Jesus on the Lake of Gennesaret, “Simon Peter fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, ‘*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man*, O Lord.’”

**Paul - Rom 7:18:** 18For *I know that nothing good dwells in me*, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out.

**2 Cor. 4:7:** 7But *we have this treasure in jars of clay*, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.

**1 Cor. 3:6-7:** 6I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. 7*So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth*.

**1 Tim. 1:15-16:** 15The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that *Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost*. 16But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

**What then is being poor in spirit?**

* It is a sense of powerlessness in ourselves.
* It is a sense of spiritual bankruptcy (ruin) and helplessness before God.
* It is a sense of moral uncleanness before God.
* It is a sense of personal unworthiness before God.
* It is a sense that if there is to be any life or joy or usefulness, it will have to be all of God and all of grace.

**Conclusion:**

* We are invited into an amazing relationship with God, in which we learn and realize that we aren’t expected to be perfect, but actually the reality and expectation is the opposite. God knows and reveals to us that we are not perfect. We are blessed because God has revealed this reality to us. We need to admit this reality, and come to God with the proper attitude. We are a people who are **God-Reliant**, **God-Confident**, trusting in God’s **Sovereign Grace** in our lives, and a people who humbly realize how **unworthy we truly are of God’s Magnificent Mercy**.