

Bridgeway Community Church
Founding & Senior Pastor Dr. David Anderson
Series: Living a MAKE IT BETTER Life
September 18, 2022

Living a MAKE IT BETTER Life
“8 Attitudes to Make You Better”

Introductions are the most important part of any message.

It's in the introduction that you tell your audience what the crux of the rest of your talk is going to be about. It is in the introduction that people decide whether or not they are interested in listening to the topic at hand or whether they will check out mentally, by looking out the window, looking at their phones, taking a little nap, or just day-dreaming about what's next on the day's agenda.

Today's topic is discussing the opening of Jesus's greatest sermon...known as “The Sermon on the Mount.” After being baptized and coming out into public ministry; after being tempted in the wilderness by the devil himself, Jesus is ready to preach & teach on the public stage.

Question:

**For this important talk, the biggest speech of his public life, what would Jesus
INTRODUCTION to this sermon be?**

What would Jesus's opening lines be?

What would Jesus take as his subject?

What would Jesus address as a way of ushering in all other topics he would preach about?

What would the Master of Communication start with in this talk before a large crowd for his big debut? Would he open with a...

- A joke,
- a story,
- a famous quote from Abraham or some Old Testament historical hero that everyone in the crowd respected,

- a persuasive statement,
- or maybe even a political slogan?

Question:

If it were you, what would *your* first words be?

Imagine...

You are the messiah of the world coming from heaven. Crowds are swelling around you like a rock star. You now have the attention of hundreds of people, if not more. What would your first words be? If it were me, I'd be like...

"David is the best in the whole wide west on CBS in the whole US, oh Yes!"

"Hey everybody, I'm here!! How y'all doing? Good to see you. Told y'all I would make it! What? What took me so long? Excuse YOU! Don't worry about it. I was about my father's business!" I would've caught an attitude... "Were YOU out in the wilderness fighting the devil for 40 days and 40 nights? Okay... Don't be asking me dumb questions like that! You ought to be glad I'm here! You know what? Fine. Forget it. Just go to hades! Sheol. Gehenna. Abraham's bosom. Be gone, pagans!"

Seriously though, out of all the introductory options to wow the crowd; out of all the messages Jesus could've given as the first words out of his mouth;

The first line of the greatest sermon ever told was:

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." (Matthew 5:3 NIV84)

Huh? Hold up! Skirt! Back it up! What?

THAT is your big intro, Jesus!?

"Blessed are the poor in spirit"?

Jesus doesn't stop there. He goes onto say in Matthew 5:3-10:

- *Blessed are the **poor in spirit**, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
(Matthew 5:3 NIV84)

- *Blessed are those who **mourn**, for they will be comforted.*
(Matthew 5:4 NIV84)
- *Blessed are the **meek**, for they will inherit the earth.*
(Matthew 5:5 NIV84)
- *Blessed are those who **hunger and thirst** for righteousness, for they will be filled.*
(Matthew 5:6 NIV84)
- *Blessed are the **merciful**, for they will be shown mercy.*
(Matthew 5:7 NIV84)
- *Blessed are the **pure in heart**, for they will see God.*
(Matthew 5:8 NIV84)
- *Blessed are the **peacemakers**, for they will be called sons of God.*
(Matthew 5:9 NIV84)
- *Blessed are those who are **persecuted** because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 5:10 NIV84)*

Transition:

Let's look at the first few statements of Jesus this week, and then next week we will look at the rest in this sermon *8 Attitudes to Make You Better*.

In verses 1-2 we see the immediate context (the situation around it).

- V. 1 *"Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him and he began to teach them saying..."*
- *"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (v.3)*

Observation:

Jesus is TEACHING

I also want you to notice WHO Jesus was teaching. (His Disciples!) Prior to this episode Jesus was **PREACHING**.

- In fact in **Matthew 4:17** it says: *“From that time on Jesus began to PREACH, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.”*
- In verses **Matthew 4:18 through 22**, Jesus calls his disciples (*hand picked students who would follow Jesus for the rest of his life, and theirs*).
- By the time you get to **4:23-25** we see that Jesus is now full blown into public ministry.
- In fact, **verse 23** says: *“Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people.” (NIV84)*

Jesus’s kingdom ministry on earth was primarily done through preaching, teaching, and healing. Contextually speaking, Jesus transitions from preaching repentance in Matthew 4 to teaching his disciples in Matthew 5, as he walks among the people. He turns to his disciples while compassionately looking at the crowd and says something like this:

“Do you see all of those people”?

Well, guess what? They are blessed by me! They have my favor upon them! The kingdom of heaven is populated with people like that right there...

Jesus is teaching the disciples a New Kingdom Mindset! Remember, he is bringing to earth the Kingdom of Heaven! This was a completely different mindset than they were used to!

Question:

What do you mean that these people are “blessed”, Jesus?

It is the rich who were blessed, isn’t it?

The rich can buy their way into heaven, right? ...duh.

The royals are, of course, a shoo in, right?

Heaven is populated by, well..., the popular, right?

The rich young ruler even asked Jesus, “*What must I do to be saved?*” *Basically, can I buy my way in?*

Nicodemus, a religious ruler and powerful man, asked Jesus, “*What must I do to enter the kingdom of God?*” **(John 3:1-8 NIV84)**

These men must have been hearing Jesus’s teachings and were worried about their place in eternal glory.

Even James and John were arguing about who would sit at Jesus’s left and who would sit at his right in heaven.

Jesus told them that the greatest among them was *the one who serves!*
(Mark 10:42-45)

Wow, Jesus was flipping the script. This was totally countercultural.

Here in this introduction to the greatest sermon ever told, we find Jesus teaching the disciples important truths about the Kingdom of Heaven. The first important truth about the Kingdom of Heaven is that...

1. ALL PEOPLE ARE VALUABLE AND MATTER TO GOD!

- Not just the wealthy
- Not just the *successful*
- Not just the *athletic*
- Not just the *academics*
- Not just the *men*
- Not just *wedded child-bearing women*
- Not just the *powerful*

But ALL PEOPLE!

In order to make this point, Jesus’s first focus (his big intro) was on the Poor! He wants us to learn that *people have more value than our valuables!* Jesus is not saying that Wealthy People *don’t* matter to God. *He is saying that the Poor matter too!* We need to give special attention to them, because society dismisses them.

Jesus arrives on the scene and flips the script by teaching a NEW KINGDOM MINDSET:

- Blessed are the *poor in spirit!*
- Blessed are *they that mourn*
- Blessed are *the meek*
- Blessed are those that *hunger and thirst* for righteousness

WOW. For his disciples, this must have been mind blowing!

“Oh, okay, I understand, Jesus, you must be speaking metaphorically, right?”

“You must be speaking “spiritually” right? “

“Not the poor, poor...but the spiritually poor, right? Got it.”

*“Not those that are truly **sad & suffering**...mourners are losers, aren't they?*

“They just need to toughen up and get over their grief, right?”

“Not the meek, meek...like the weak, wimpy, wire-y, no-spine middle schooler, right?”

“I know people say ‘meekness’ is not ‘weakness’, but it kinda is!”

“You're not talking about real hungry & thirsty people...”

“You must mean those who are spiritually hungry & thirsty...for righteousness, right?”

Transition:

There is this idea that Jesus is talking spiritually here only.

I don't agree.

Yes, he is speaking spiritually and attitudinally, but Jesus is also talking literally. He is talking physically and tangibly. Let me show you in the scriptures. Shall we go deeper?

Check out Luke 6:20-26 (NIV84)

*Looking at his disciples, he said: “Blessed are you **who are poor** for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are **you who hunger now**, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are **you who weep now**, for you will laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they **exclude you and insult you and reject your name** as evil because of the Son of Man. 23 Rejoice in that day and leap for joy because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the*

prophets. 24 Woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.”

Woah! Luke tells us that this isn't just spiritualized poverty! These are real poor people! There is something about the poor that draws Jesus's attention. Not just the spiritually poor, but the actual poor!

Luke's Audience - *Gentile Converts (presenting Jesus as the Messiah, as a man for the everyday people; even those outside of Judaism)*

Matthew's Audience - *Jewish Converts (presenting Jesus as the Messiah, as King)*

For some groups of Christianity it's *all about spiritual growth and personal meaning*.

- They are the conservative, pure doctrinal believers.

Then you have those more liberal Christians in the faith that *only seem to care about social justice and feeding the poor*.

- But they have no sense of theological commitment to the word of God.

While the **liberal believers talk about works**, the conservatives are there to remind them that *they cannot get to heaven without faith*.

While the **conservative believers talk about faith**, the liberals are there to remind them that *“faith without works is dead”*.

There is where balance needs to come in.

Jesus comes onto the scene to help us **RETHINK** what the Kingdom of Heaven is all about. It is about PEOPLE. ALL PEOPLE!

The first important truth is:
ALL PEOPLE ARE VALUABLE AND MATTER TO GOD!

The second Important Truth...

2. THE ATTITUDE YOU HAVE TOWARD THE POOR & LOWLY IS A REFLECTION OF YOUR HEART TOWARD GOD

Jesus counter-culturally, lifts up the poor and the least of these. In fact, Jesus said in Luke 4 that:

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

(Luke 4:18-19 NIV84; cf Isaiah 61:1-2).

Jesus also said in **Matthew 25:42-46 (NIV84)**...

42 “For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.”

44 “They also will answer, Lord, when did we see you hungry and thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison and did not help you?” 45 He will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me. 46 Then they will go away to eternal punishment but the righteous to eternal life.”

Jesus is calling us to Bless the Poor, to comfort the hurting who are sad and mourning loss, to feed the hungry & thirsty, and lift up the meek and lowly.

Proverbs 19:17 (NIV84) says: *“Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.”*

God sees how you are serving the poor.

God rewards those of you who are kind to the lowly.

What is your attitude toward poor people?

What is your attitude toward the underclasses of people in our society?

How do you talk about people who are disadvantaged or not as well-off as you?

Review:

We have given you two important truths:

1. ALL PEOPLE ARE VALUABLE AND MATTER TO GOD!

2. THE ATTITUDE YOU HAVE TOWARD THE POOR & LOWLY IS A REFLECTION OF YOUR HEART TOWARD GOD

Question:

How can today's message Make You Better?

Here are 3 practical applications that will Make You Better in this regard...

1. RETHINK the way you think about the poor

- Whenever you see people from an underclass or people who are underprivileged, think about them as if you were looking into the face of God.
- See Jesus's image in them.
- See that they are of more "value" than your valuables!

2. REPENT if you have forgotten the poor because of your privilege

- Jesus says, "*What you have not done for the least of these, you have not done for me.*" (Matthew 25:45 NIV84)

3. REINVEST your resources and energy in ministries they serve the "least of these"

- "*The generous will themselves be blessed for they share their food with the poor.*" (Proverbs 22:9 NIV84)
- **Invest in Bridgeway Ministries:** (Give an offering generously. Give online. Text to give. But give! Give a lot! Set up a recurring payment so that every week, or two weeks, or month your money is going right to the church without fail.)
- **CARE** (*Community Cupboard at both campuses gives free groceries away every weekend after every service*)
- **GLOBAL MISSIONS** (*Give a donation as the team goes back to Ukraine, Romania, and Moldova next month*)

- **PRAISE THROUGH RECOVERY** (Our own Lisa Bryson, who is in our Ministry Training Track here at Bridgeway and runs our addictions recovery ministry is hosting a Gala next month to raise money for ladies and men who are recovering from addictions. Personally support this gala!
 - Email Lisa at:
PRAISINGTHROUGHRECOVERY@COMCAST.NET)

Conclusion:

A good sermon has *a captivating introduction, a body of good teachable content*, and then it ends with *a conclusion that inspires action*.

Jesus's STUNNING CONCLUSION to The Sermon on the Mount was a parable about Wise and Foolish Builders...

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash." 28 When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching, 29 because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law. (Matthew 7:24-29 NIV84)

Bottom Line:

Don't just *preach* about caring for the poor, but *practice* caring for the poor.

Or as *NIKE* would say - **"JUST DO IT!"**