



THE KING'S SPEECH

A DEVOTIONAL ON THE
SERMON ON THE MOUNT



“JESUS OPENED HIS MOUTH AND TAUGHT THEM”

SAYING: BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN
SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE
KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BLESSED
ARE THEY THAT MOURN, FOR THEY
SHALL BE COMFORTED. BLESSED
ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL
INHERIT THE EARTH. BLESSED ARE
THE MEREYFUL AND HUNGER AND
THIRST AFTER 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.

MATTHEW 5:1–2 ESV

**“Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain,
and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.
²And he opened his mouth and taught them...”**

The Sermon on the Mount is one of the most influential discourses in human history. Delivered by Jesus somewhere on the hills near Capernaum and recorded by Matthew the Apostle, it reads as a summarised distillation of Jesus' wider teaching ministry – yet it is intentionally and beautifully arranged within the Gospel text as a coherent and unified whole.

Across three remarkably concise chapters (considering their seismic content), Jesus compresses the ethic, imagination, and reality of the Kingdom of God into a series of unforgettable soundbites. Within His carefully-chosen words, He reveals the nature of life in the Kingdom and offers us all an invitation to enter and experience it for ourselves. It is the consummate, ultimate King's Speech.

For centuries, these teachings have resonated across cultures, denominations, and eras, impacting millions with their countercultural wisdom. And, just as they have done throughout history, Jesus' words continue to disrupt our assumptions, reorder our desires, and challenge the ways we move through the world today.

In an age shaped by hurry, distraction, and individualism, Jesus' call is relevant, challenging and timely: return to the slow, steady, humble formation of a life rooted in God's reign and rule...and uncompromisingly resist the destructive ways of the world.

Over the coming days, we'll explore ten signature soundbites from the Sermon – giving ourselves room to breathe, to reflect, and to allow Jesus' life-giving words to work in us. Each day opens a window into Christ's Kingdom vision, grounding us in this ancient text that has the power to completely turn our lives upside-down...if only we will let it.

“BLESSED ARE...”

SAYING: BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH. BLESSED ARE THEY WHO DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER 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.

MATTHEW 5:3–12 ESV

- ³ “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ⁴ “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
- ⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.
- ⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
- ⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
- ⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
- ⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
- ¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- ¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.
- ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

“Blessed” might just be the most overused spiritual word in modern culture...and the most misunderstood. We attach it to holidays, promotions, engagements and suntans – as if “blessing” were a mood board of things going well. “Blessed are those on the beach, with nice cars and jobs” etc.

But when Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount, He reaches back into one of the Bible’s oldest words and flips our superficial definitions of ‘blessing’ upside-down.

The Greek word Jesus uses is makarios – a word that doesn’t describe how someone feels, but the objective state they stand in. Makarios is the language of divine favour, of a ‘happy and to-be-envied’ people who find themselves in a loving relationship with the living God.

What makes Jesus’ use of ‘blessing’ shocking is who He applies it to. Not the wealthy, but the spiritually bankrupt. Not the strong winners, but the grief-stricken. Not the influential, but the invisible. In other words: the very people who feel least #blessed are the ones Jesus calls blessed first.

In Scripture, blessing is not the evidence of a ‘successful’ life. Rather, it’s the evidence of God’s nearness: the relational joy and privilege of belonging to Him. The Old Testament hints at this through God’s promises, provision, and protection for Abraham (and, subsequently, the whole line of Israel). Jesus, though, makes the subtext explicit: blessing has never been about what you have, but whom you have. Jesus, not earthly prosperity, is the mark of blessing.

So when Jesus says, “Blessed are...,” He’s upending cultural norms and articulating the heartbeat of a new Kingdom reality – one where God’s favour flows to (and through) ordinary, weak and humble disciples: the dependent, the meek, the grieving, and the poor.

In Christ, today, YOU are blessed, regardless of your circumstances. For you are held and known, loved and cherished, made holy and consecrated by the King of kings Himself.

“YOU ARE THE SALT OF THE EARTH”

SAYING, “BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT, FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN, FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK, FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH. BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER 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.”

MATTHEW 5:13 NIV

“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.

Of all the metaphors Jesus could have used to describe His ragtag group of followers, salt seems the strangest. ‘Light’ makes intuitive sense. ‘A city on a hill’ is understandable. But living as ‘salt’ feels abstract...and therefore difficult. So what did Jesus mean?

Like a salt crystal, sparkling differently from every angle, the answer is wonderfully multi-faceted.

In the ancient world, salt was indispensable – for many reasons. It enhanced flavour, preserved food, purified wounds, and even symbolised covenant faithfulness in the Jewish scriptures. Jesus intentionally draws on all these associations, compressing our extraordinary Kingdom mission into a single, salty image.

SALT ENHANCES. Ancient cooks used it to bring depth and richness to food. Jesus calls His disciples to live lives so distinctive, holy and loving that they “bring out the God-flavours of the earth” (Matthew 5:13, MSG). This applies to us. Every day, in little ways, we’re called to make the world more reflective of God’s beauty and goodness.

SALT PURIFIES. It cleansed wounds, absorbed moisture, and neutralised odours. In a culture bent toward injustice, exploitation, and moral erosion, Jesus’ followers are to resist the rot. We’re called to absorb pain rather than spread it, to stand up against oppression, and to embody hope when the world slips into despair.

SALT CONNECTS. ‘Sharing salt’ in the ancient Near East was a symbol of friendship. Jesus is saying that our relationships should taste like grace, loyalty, forgiveness, and the kind of steadfast love that builds resilient communities.

Perhaps most profoundly, though, salt was the scriptural sign of covenant permanence for God’s people. In the Old Testament, every grain offering in Israel was seasoned with “the salt of the covenant” (Leviticus 2:13 ESV), to symbolise God’s enduring promises to His people.

So when Jesus calls His followers “the salt of the earth,” He’s naming us (YOU and ME!) as the chosen carriers of His new covenant — people who, by our very presence, preserve God’s saving purposes in the world by embodying the love and grace found in Jesus Christ. What a stunning calling!

“I HAVE COME TO FULFILL THE LAW AND THE PROPHETS”

MATTHEW 5:17–18 NIV

**“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.
¹⁸ For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.**

In case you’ve ever thought the Kingdom of God was somehow Jesus’ ‘shiny new’ passion project while He was on earth, distinct from all that had gone before Him, today’s soundbite shows us how deep the rabbit hole goes.

When Jesus declares that He has come not to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfil them, he positions himself squarely within Israel’s wider story. Rather than rejecting the Torah (and thousands of years of Israelite history), He claims to be bringing to completion everything it anticipated. He positions Himself as the long-awaited Messiah, following the tradition of the Hebrew prophets who for centuries had pointed to the need for a new covenant and a new heart so that people can follow the laws.

In this one sentence, Jesus declares Himself to be the cornerstone around which the whole story of God revolves. As one commentator observes: “the one who fulfills the law and prophets displaces them in so far as he must become the center of attention.”

N.T. Wright makes this observation on Matthew 5:17: “Some think of Jesus as just a great Jewish teacher without much of a revolution. Others see him as so revolutionary that he left Judaism behind altogether and established something quite new. This passage shows how Jesus held the two together. He was indeed offering something utterly revolutionary...but it was, in fact, the reality towards which Israel’s whole life and tradition had pointed.”

In Jesus, every strand of the Old Testament converges. The prophetic promises, the wisdom literature, the narratives of Israel’s failures and hopes, even the sacrificial system itself – all find their telos (completion) in him. The sacrifices, the commandments and the promises all point towards Jesus and the Kingdom he inaugurates.

Today, we remember: Jesus does not set aside the Old Testament but brings it to its intended climax. In Christ’s life, teaching, death, and resurrection, God’s new covenant purposes are clarified, completed, and unveiled for all who would seek him. The Law and the Prophets are wonderfully “filled full” in Jesus.

“LOVE YOUR ENEMIES”

MATTHEW 5:43–45 NIV

“⁴³You have heard that it was said, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

“Love your enemies” is arguably the most disruptive soundbite in the entire Sermon, a line that captures the shocking beauty of Jesus’ upside-down kingdom. It is here that Christ’s earlier call to be “salt” and “light” becomes uncomfortably concrete. It’s easy to imagine being ‘distinctive’ or ‘shining’ from a distance. It is far harder to imagine loving someone who has wounded us or actively opposes us. Yet this is precisely where Jesus locates the heart of kingdom life.

Christ’s first listeners lived in a world overflowing with tension. Roman soldiers patrolled the streets. Heavy taxes and strict laws created resentment. National resistance movements stirred unrest. Even within Judaism, divisions were becoming more marked, with a few becoming rich and the majority being very poor. Into this climate, Jesus drops a seemingly-impossible challenge: Love. Your. Enemies. In one phrase, He invites ordinary people to step out of the familiar cycles of retribution and into a way of life shaped by the creative, restorative love of God.

This love is not sentimental. The word Jesus uses, *agapao*, describes a deliberate posture that expresses itself through choices rather than feelings. In the Sermon itself, Jesus specifically connects enemy-love to action: “pray[ing] for those who persecute you” (Matthew 5:44 ESV), “giv[ing] to the one who begs from you” (Matthew 5:42 ESV) and greeting those you would normally avoid. It is a love that refuses to mirror the behaviour of the other person. Instead, it resolutely reflects the heart of the Father, who continually extends mercy to those who resist him.

This teaching becomes believable when we watch Jesus embody it. Surrounded by mockery, he answered with silence. Faced with violence, he did not retaliate. As nails pierced his hands, he prayed for his executioners. Once again, we’re reminded: The Sermon is the script of Jesus’ own life. It is His kingdom, embodied, for us to receive and imitate.

To love our enemies today is to allow Jesus’ script to reshape us. In a world defined by rivalry and suspicion, this upside-down way of being human still has the power to change the world.

“YOUR KINGDOM COME”

MATTHEW 6:9–10 NIV

**“This, then, is how you
should pray:**

**“Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.”**

“Your Kingdom come” may be one of the most familiar prayers on the planet, yet it remains one of the most revolutionary. Have you ever stopped to consider what it means?

Jesus places this short but punchy petition at the centre of the prayer He gives his disciples (which, itself, forms the centre of the whole Sermon). It’s as if He is trying to guide all Christian desire towards a single longing: that God’s reign would become visible here, now, in the places and communities we inhabit. Far from an escape route from earthly life, the prayer, “Your Kingdom come”, is an invitation to imagine the world as God intends it and to participate in its renewal.

N. T. Wright captures the heart of this beautifully when he describes this request as “a plea for heaven’s reality to saturate the earth”. To pray these words is to ask: What would it look like if God were running this world? What shape would our shared life take if Jesus’ justice, peace and love were allowed to reorder human society from the inside-out?

In Jesus’ ministry, the answer begins to take form. The Kingdom is not some vague ideal or a distant horizon. It erupts in practical acts of healing, forgiveness, integrity and enemy-love. It shines through meals shared with outsiders, through challenging unjust patterns, and through the restoration of the marginalised. Wherever Jesus moves, the world tilts back toward God’s original design.

Praying “Your Kingdom come” is therefore not a passive request. It is a declaration that God’s reign has already broken into history through Jesus and that those who follow him are called to embody its reality. We cannot repeat Christ’s once-for-all victory on the cross, but we can enact its implications. Each act of mercy, kindness, justice and reconciliation becomes a signpost of a world made new.

Today, this simple soundbite still carries the power to upend our prayers and reorient our desires. What might it look like for God’s kingdom to break into your day today?

“NO ONE CAN SERVE TWO MASTERS”

MATTHEW 6:24 ESV

“No one can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money.”

Jesus' declaration that “no one can serve two masters” (Matthew 6:24 ESV) exposes a subtle cultural illusion. We are taught today that freedom means having no masters at all. To be truly free, we're told, is to answer to no-one. Yet Jesus names this as a fiction. Every life is shaped by devotion, often in multiple directions. We all serve someone's (or something's) agenda, whether we recognise it or not. The real question, therefore, is not whether you serve, but whom or what.

To speak of a 'master' is to speak of total belonging. In the world Jesus addressed, a master claimed your loyalty, defined your identity and determined your future. To give yourself to a master was to offer your exclusive service. This is why Jesus insists that a divided heart cannot flourish in His kingdom. You can only be a disciple of one master, never two. When loyalties are scattered, our loves grow thin and our identity becomes blurred. The human soul was not designed to live with competing centres of gravity.

Jesus distils the whole issue by contrasting the agendas of God and “mammon”.

Mammon, translated in today's passage as 'money', was the Greek name for the worldly system (or idol) of materialism, wealth and self-reliance. This system is not a faithful master. It promises peace while constantly demanding more, offers comfort but never rest, and distracts us while emptying us. God, by contrast, offers us identity before performance, belonging before achievement, and a purpose that endures for eternity. We cannot have both.

In Jesus' upside-down Kingdom, freedom is not found in independence but in wholehearted devotion...to God alone. Life becomes spacious not when we remove all masters, but when our hearts settle under the care of the right one. When Jesus is at the centre of it all, our desires are reordered, our anxieties loosen their grip and our lives finally begin to make sense.

So, who are you serving today?

DAY SEVEN

“SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD”

MATTHEW 6:33 ESV

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

By the time today’s soundbite drops, over halfway through Jesus’ masterful sermon, the shape of God’s kingdom has become clear. It’s an upside-down way of life marked by enemy love, radical generosity, justice, humility, prayer and trust. It is a Kingdom in which Jesus reigns as king and ordinary people are invited to live differently amid their ordinary lives.

Yet this life doesn’t form by accident. Our modern world is a hullabaloo of competing urgencies. We tend to live with a hundred mental tabs open at once. Notifications, responsibilities, ambitions and anxieties all compete for our attention. Without realising it, we can be shaped more by what shouts the loudest than by what matters most.

And so, Jesus gives us some timeless, corrective advice: “seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness”. Put the Kingdom first, Jesus says, and everything else will fall into place. Put something else first, and nothing will fall into place. It’s a call to reorder our inner lives and outer commitments around God’s reign and ways.

How, though, do we do this? A simple audit can help reveal your current priorities. Using four ‘T’s to guide your reflections – your **time**, **thoughts**, **treasure** and **talents** – ask yourself honestly, but non-judgmentally:

How do I spend my time?

What occupies my thoughts?

Where do I invest my treasure?

How am I using my talents?

These four questions will highlight what your life is currently organised around. Then, you can ask the deeper question: Is my life being shaped primarily by God’s Kingdom, by my own agenda, or by someone else’s expectations?

Where your answer reveals a gap, identify one small step you can take to put God first again. This is how ‘seeking first’ becomes practical: one step at a time. You don’t need to rush it. Following Jesus is a lifelong realignment into freedom, peace and purpose under His loving reign.

“ASK AND IT WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU”

SAYING. BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT. FOR THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN. BLESSED ARE THEY THAT MOURN. FOR THEY SHALL BE COMFORTED. BLESSED ARE THE MEEK. FOR THEY SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH. BLESSED ARE THEY WHICH DO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS. FOR THEY SHALL BE FILLED. BLESSED ARE THE MERCYFUL. FOR THEY SHALL OBTAIN MERCY. BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART. FOR THEY SHALL SEE GOD.

MATTHEW 7:7-8 ESV

“Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. ⁸ For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.”

Having taught us how to pray through the Lord's prayer, Jesus soon returns to the theme of prayer as His sermon unfolds. Today's soundbite reminds us again that prayer is the engine room of Kingdom life. It is essential. Jesus invites us to approach God regularly, with boldness, as beloved children coming to their Father.

N.T. Wright captures the heart of Christ's invitation: “For many of us, the problem is not that we are too eager to ask for the wrong things. The problem is that we are not nearly eager enough to ask for the right things. ... If he's a father, let's treat him as a father, not a bureaucrat or dictator who wouldn't want to be bothered with our concerns. When he says he's still got time, space, and love to spare for each of us, we should take him at his word.”

Watch how Jesus' choice of language itself draws us into ever-deeper engagement with God. Do you see how each verb is more confident than the last? We are invited first to **ask**, acknowledging our needs with honesty and humility.

Then, we move to **seeking**, actively searching for God's wisdom and direction as we navigate our surroundings. Finally, we are encouraged to **knock**, adopting a proactive, courageous persistence that leans into God's promises and refuses to give up hope. Jesus is telling us to really get after it!

It's important to note that this movement does not place the burden on how good we are at praying. As theologian Jonathan Pennington observes, “The emphasis is not on the skill or even the persistence of the seeker in prayer, but on the character of kindness of the heavenly Father.”

Whatever you are carrying today, you are not meant to carry it alone. You are invited to bring it directly to Jesus. Ask. Seek. Knock. Your Father is listening.

“WHATEVER YOU WISH THAT OTHERS WOULD DO TO YOU, DO ALSO TO THEM”

MATTHEW 7:12 ESV

“So whatever you wish that others would do to you, do also to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.”

Often referred to as the Golden Rule, today’s soundbite stands as one of the most profound (and challenging) ethical statements ever spoken. In a single sentence, Jesus offers a vision of life that is both disarmingly simple and theologically vast. It is the kind of wisdom that reveals Christ’s deep knowledge of the human heart, and His strategy for its redemption.

As Jesus proclaims the Golden Rule, he gathers the entire moral vision of the Old Testament into one command. Echoing Leviticus 19 (“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18 ESV)), he places proactive, self-giving love at the centre of a fruitful and faithful Kingdom life.

The brilliance of this command lies in how honestly it engages our humanity. Just one verse earlier, Jesus acknowledges the uncomfortable truth that human beings are naturally bent toward self-interest, going as far as calling us “evil” (Matthew 7:11 ESV).

We instinctively protect our own needs and prioritise our own comfort over others. Rather than denying this, though, Jesus carefully redirects it. He takes the very desires that turn us inward and turns them outward into practices of love. He turns our weakness into strength.

We all long to be seen, valued, respected and treated with kindness. Jesus invites us to use these longings as a blueprint for our daily actions. Offer to others the patience you want to receive. Extend the grace you hope will be extended to you. Speak the kind words you need to hear. In doing so, our communities will be transformed. The Kingdom of God grows through love like this.

Pause and reflect on what you are hoping for today in your life. Is it encouragement? Understanding? Belonging? Peace? Now think about how you might become the answer to that longing for someone else. Every time you act like this, the Kingdom takes root: one moment of love at a time.

“A WISE MAN WHO BUILT HIS HOUSE ON THE ROCK”

MATTHEW 7:24–25 ESV

“Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock.”

After speaking many words, Jesus concludes His Sermon on the Mount by turning our attention to how we respond to those words. This isn't a sermon to be 'memorialised' or 'admired from afar'. It's a way of life to be embodied and actually lived. We may agree with Jesus' vision of the Kingdom, but unless His words are practiced, they remain unrealised in us. The life Jesus describes is accessed through obedience.

Obedience is an unfashionable concept in today's culture. We don't like the idea of having to do what somebody else says. Jesus, though, flips the tables on this. He presents obedience as the pathway to true wisdom. To build our lives around His words is to align ourselves with the deepest truths of reality, choosing His authority over the many competing voices that seek to shape our loves and loyalties.

In today's soundbite, Jesus frames His call with images of storms and foundations. His is a realistic account of life in our broken world.

He assumes the storms will come, and does not promise a life without pain. Instead, He offers a way to become resilient within it all. His rules, commands and principles are not there to restrict our life, but to hold and cover us: to teach us how to navigate this volatile world in right relationship with God.

N.T. Wright captures it perfectly: “Doing what Jesus says, or not doing it: this makes the difference between a house that stays standing in a storm and a house that falls with a great crash.”

As we conclude our musings on the King's Speech, let's hold this in mind: God's Kingdom becomes visible in us through practiced obedience. Take a moment to let that land. Where in your life might you need to realign yourself with Jesus' words today?

As a bonus reflection: Which soundbite has stood out to you the most over these past days? Why not return to it now to meditate on it a little further.