

I. Review SOTM

A. Beatitudes - Jesus starts this Sermon with a section that has become known as the Beatitudes. These eight heart conditions are given as the purpose and context of the rest of the sermon. They are considered as the essential components of the spiritual life of the believer and an onramp to the culture of the Kingdom of God. These beatitudes are so much more than a good idea or idealistic poetry. Jesus is revealing the deep things of His love to us and inviting us to behold and be transformed by them. (Ex. 34:6-8; Mat. 11:29; 1 Cor. 2:6-16)

1. Poor In Spirit – His desire for intimacy with God compelled Him to choose to empty Himself and rely only upon the words and help of His Father.
2. Mourn for the Kingdom – Jesus carries a constant yearning and mourning to come and institute His rule and reign upon the earth to restore all things.
3. Meek – Jesus restrains His personal power and strength for the higher purposes of righteousness.
4. Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness – Jesus hungers to carry His heart and walk in the fullness of love and life that perfect righteousness brings.
5. Merciful – Jesus is compassionate over our fallen state and desires and actively works to free us from that state.
6. Pure in Heart – Jesus loves with absolute sincerity, with an undivided heart, without reservation, and without expectation.
7. Peacemakers – Jesus is zealous and active in working for the total elimination of contention and war in hearts towards God and towards man.
8. Persecuted – Jesus's heart embraces persecution of righteousness

B. After Jesus lays out the Beatitudes as the goal of God's will for our lives, He then spends the rest of His teaching instructing us how to move forward in the destiny of becoming like Him. Jesus gives us six “hindrances”; then four “Positioners”, as He encourages and implores us to grow in intimacy with Him and be transformed by His beauty. (Mat. 25:1-4)

1. Hindrances - Six Aspects of the Fallen Heart or Old Man that is being transformed/put to death in the garden of our heart. (Mat. 5:21-48)
 - a. Spirit of Murder
 - b. Spirit of Covetousness

- c. Spirit of Treachery
 - d. Spirit of Manipulation
 - e. Spirit of Revenge
 - f. Spirit of Animosity
2. Positioners - Four activities that position us to encounter Jesus and be transformed (Mat. 6:1-34)
- a. Charitable Deeds (Giving of yourself for the gain of others)
 - b. Prayer (Meditation, Contemplation, Intercession, Worship and Dialogue)
 - c. Fasting (Prioritizing Spiritual Food over Physical Food)
 - d. Giving (Prioritizing our Spiritual Security over Physical Security)

II. Overview and Understanding of this Portion of the SOTM

- A. As we set ourselves to study the next portion of Jesus's SOTM discourse it is very helpful to lay some groundwork in our understanding of the two main themes of the why behind the what of this portion of Jesus's teaching. Why is He calling us to give ourselves to living a lifestyle of doing these four things? What are we hoping to accomplish by doing them?
- B. We know that we cannot add to our righteousness before God in Christ through good works so we dare not conclude that these four activities make us more righteous in the Father's sight. We also must not fall into the religious trap of thinking God loves us or likes us more when we do these activities that Jesus exhorts us to do. This only leads down the heretical road of self righteous legalism, and a roller coaster of satanic pride and condemnation.
- C. With this in mind, it is my strong conviction that Jesus is exhorting us to these activities with two primary motives in mind which are both central to His desire to have relational intimacy with us.
- 1. Positioning ourselves to Encounter God
 - 2. Positioning ourselves to Receive Rewards

III. Positioning to Encounter

- A. Defining Encounter – Before we move on to studying the four positioners for encountering God that Jesus gives us, it is important that we define what we mean

by “encountering” Him. A simple working definition of encountering God is as follows..

Biblically speaking, “Encountering God ” is when the Holy Spirit reveals truth about God to your spirit. In turn, this truth must be understood or comprehended by you through the work of the Holy Spirit to the level that it moves and transforms your heart in love. (Jhn 16:14-15; 17:20-26; 1 Cor. 2:9-14)

1. It is important to point out that many times God reveals Himself to individuals but they in turn do not press into understanding or comprehension by the Spirit. When this happens, the encounter falls short of its divine intention and the heart remains unmoved. More often than not a religious spirit is produced.
 2. It is also important to understand that in the SOTM Jesus is not telling us that encounters with God only happen through these four positioners. Rather, He is pointing out the four primary ways we can posture our hearts before Him to experience an encounter.
- B. Prioritizing Encounter – From Genesis to Revelation the scriptures emphatically exhort us to position ourselves to encounter God. They inform us that encountering God is the why and the what of our existence and therefore the very substance and purpose of life.
1. Scriptural Descriptions and Exhortations to Encounter God –
 - a. Behold His Glory
 - b. Seek His Face
 - c. Behold His Beauty
 - d. Behold Him
 - e. Behold God
 - f. Gaze upon God
 - g. Gaze upon Beauty
 - h. Look to God
 - i. Look upon Him
 - j. Seek/Find/Gain Wisdom
 - k. Seek/Find/Gain Truth
 - l. Seek/Find/Gain Revelation
 - m. Seek/Find/Gain Understanding
 - n. Hear Him Speak

- o. Hear His Voice
- p. Seek Him
- q. See Him
- r. Know Him
- s. Receive Him
- t. Eat Bread of Life
- u. Drink Living Water
- v. Look upon God
- w. Abide in Him
- x. Be in His Presence
- y. Perceive God
- z. Be His Friend
- aa. Receive Him
- bb. Dwell with Him
- cc. Stand in His council
- dd. Seek His counsel
- ee. Sit at His Feet
- ff. Walk with Him
- gg. Eat/Drink Spiritual Food/Drink

C. Fashioned for Encounter – When God made man He fashioned him uniquely in His image, therefore the human stands alone in creation as the only being who was created for encounter with God. All of creation is called and created to worship and revere God but man was made with the unique facilities and capacities to encounter Him. There are two primary longings within the human soul in which the uniqueness of being created for encounter are seen clearly.

1. Need/Desire for the Pleasure of Fascination – Humanity longs for endless fascination. No other created beings line the edges of the grand canyon to gaze at its beauty and magnificence, nor stand in line for hours upon end to experience the rush of a 60 second theme park ride. We are mesmerized by beauty and we live for drama and excitement. We were fashioned for endless fascination because we were made by a God in Whom is found endless beauty.
2. Satisfaction in the Creation – The second longing of humanity that clearly points to the reality that we were created to encounter God is our longing to be satisfied. Tomas Dubay rightly describes humanity as “incarnate thirst”, and many have used the imagery of all of humanity having a God shaped hole in their soul that only God can fill. Over and over we have proved to ourselves that no amount of worldly success,

power, wealth or pleasure can satisfy us. The creation fails to satisfy us because we're fashioned to find our satisfaction in encountering the uncreated God.

- D. Promise of Encounter – Continually God declares both His burning desire and His unfailing promise to encounter those who position themselves to encounter Him. We must never think of ourselves as the initiators of relational encounter. It is Him who has the burning desire to be known in love and reaches out unceasingly with opportunities for us to know and love Him more.
- E. Transformed by Encounter – The only form of true growth of love and sanctifying obedience is found only in the transformative effect of encountering Jesus through the work of the Holy Spirit. Knowing Jesus is not just the way to salvation; knowing Jesus is the way forward into the fullness of our life. We are never exhorted to try harder in our obedience nor are we even told to ask for power to be Godly. We are exhorted over and over to ask for power to encounter the relational knowledge of God so that our hearts would grow in love and our souls in holiness. (Jhn. 16:16, 17:3, 26; Eph. 1:15-21, 3:14-19; Col. 1:9-12, 2:1-2; 2 Pet. 3:17-18)

IV. Positioning for Rewards both Temporal and Eternal

- A. Motivation – There is a teaching held by some in the body of Christ that informs its hearers that desiring or seeking rewards is actually a selfish pursuit and therefore we should not exhort one another to gain rewards. As virtuous as this teaching may seem it simply does not hold up to scripture and especially does not hold up to the exhortations of Jesus Himself for us to desire to obtain rewards.
 - 1. Rewards have very little to do with gaining better eternal jobs or titles of authority and everything to do with relationship with Jesus. According to Jesus, His desire to obtain eternal rewards was directly tied to His desiring to abide with us in continual and increasing love and intimacy.
 - 2. We must also keep in mind that any good work we do that gains us a reward comes from the grace and mercy of God to begin with. The mercy, kindness, and generosity of God is absolutely mind blowing to think about. First, He gives up His life for us to have access to His righteousness, then, He gives us power by His Holy Spirit to walk in righteousness and love, and when we do, He rewards us eternally for it. All we did was choose to say yes to the invitation. In that sense the reward is actually a praise to Him and belongs to Him.

- B. Exhorted by God – Jesus taught on the theme of rewards--both temporal and eternal--more than any other person in the bible. He especially expressed His joyous desire to reward us openly for our voluntary love offered in secret. (MT. 5:5, 12, 19; 6:4-6, 18-20; 10:41-42; 16:27; 18:4; 19:21, 28-30; 20:16, 27; 22:14; 23:11; 25:21-23; MK. 9:41; 10:21, 42-43; LK. 6:23, 35; 9:48; 12:21, 33; 14:11; 16:11; 18:14, 22; 19:17-19; 22:26-30; JN. 12:26; REV. 2:7, 10-11, 17, 26-28; 3:4-5, 9, 11-12, 18, 21; 11:18; 16:5; 19:7-8; 22:12)

V. Conclusion

- A. As we continue through this portion of the SOTM and explore in depth these four activities that Jesus called us to walk in as a lifestyle, let us continue to bear in mind that the why of these activities is far more emphasized than the what and encourage one another to position ourselves to encounter Jesus and to press into the rewards of intimacy with God.