



river west church

Door to Grace
Matthew 5:1-6
Pastor Guy Gray
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The Sermon on the Mount Revisited

Two weeks ago I shared a message from Matthew 7, the parable of the wise and foolish builders. In that message I gave a short overview of the entire Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). I did this because in His parable, Jesus said that the wise person is the one who “hears these words of mine and puts them into practice.” The words that Jesus is referring to are specifically His words in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus says we must actually put these words into practice in our lives, the words the Sermon on the Mount. If we do, we will be building our lives on the rock! But if we don't, we will be building on sand, and when the storm comes, what we are building will certainly fall.

The message I gave two weeks ago has been burning in my heart. It won't let me go! I sense we need to stay with this theme a bit longer. Jesus wants to speak to our hearts. Jesus wants us both to hear and to do. Jesus wants us to build our lives and our church on the Rock.

So we are going to take a bit more time with the Sermon on the Mount. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus is telling us what it means to be His true disciple in this fallen world. His words are radical. His words are life giving. In this teaching Jesus shows us how to enter into a life that is radically transformed. He shows us how our lives and our church can become a light shining in a dark world. He shows us how to build something that will last. Isn't that what you really want?

But there is something crucial we must see. Jesus shows us the true starting place for all these things. It's what I am calling the door to grace. In the opening words of the Sermon on the Mount (the beatitudes), Jesus shows us the way to this door.

The Door to Grace Revealed

Christ meets us at our lowest point. Christ meets us in our pain, brokenness and need. No one ever needs to pretend in front of Jesus. In fact, if we pretend that we have it all together, we will never find the door to grace. True life, healing and transformation only come to those who receive it as a gift. This is why the Sermon of the Mount begins the way it does. Jesus says an odd thing. Jesus says that we are blessed when we are destitute. This sounds strange to us. Jesus says we are blessed when we are mourning, when we feel the pain of our lives and the hurt in the world around us. Jesus says we are blessed when we are meek. Those who are meek do not assume that they can get what they need or want by being aggressive and demanding. They know they need help and cannot force the outcome they want. But what kind of blessings are these? These are the greatest of all blessings, simply because these are the qualities that place our lives at the door to grace. These are the qualities of life that cause us to look beyond ourselves, to focus on Jesus, to throw ourselves completely on His love, His promise and His power. This is the door to grace. Every good thing in the spiritual life begins here. And it isn't a one-time experience from which we move on to other things. It is the very atmosphere in which true discipleship really thrives, all the time. This is the theme we will explore in our study today.

The Wise Builder is the One Who Hears These Words and puts them into Practice!

But how can you put the qualities into practice? These words aren't like a spiritual to-do list! These words invite us to examine our hearts. That is what Jesus wants us to DO. These words call on us to recognize our need of Jesus – His love, grace, strength and blessing. Do you recognize that the very difficulties and pains that you have experienced or are experiencing in life are opportunities for you to connect the grace of God for your life? They bring you right to the door of grace. Will you enter? Will you receive?

One helpful exercise is to think through the qualities that are the opposite of the beatitudes. What is the opposite of “poor in spirit”? Is it arrogance? Independence? Self sufficiency? What is the opposite of “mourning?” Having a calloused heart? Being insensitive? Not caring? What is the opposite of “meek.” Being aggressive? Demanding? Entitled? It’s guaranteed that a person who is arrogant, self sufficient, insensitive and demanding is nowhere near the door of grace!

So this is our starting place, as individuals and as a church. This is a radical departure from conventional wisdom. That’s why it is easy to hear these words and never put them into practice. We are so busy trying to become self sufficient, happy and “take charge” kind of people, that these words just seem foreign to us. But think again. Examine your heart. Know that Jesus wants to come near you and bless you and transform you and use you. But for this to happen you simply must enter through the door of grace. There is no other way.