

Guest speaker: Pastor Guy Roberts

- We are at the end of Matthew, Chapter 4: When Jesus is calling these disciples, it's important to make a distinction that He's calling the Apostles. The reason I want to make this distinction before we move on is because He is calling the Apostles, not just the people who are following Him. Matthew is going to designate between these two groups. He does this intentionally. We need to see it too, or we won't be able to understand the Beatitudes and what they're for.
- So He calls His disciples, but not all of them. A side note: Matthew is writing these first Five Chapters, but he's not called until Chapter 9. That's interesting and worthy of note. He could have been part of the Sermon on the Mount and part of the crowds, but he is not called until later. There are a lot of "maybe's" there.
- Some of the disciples had been called, in Matthew 4:18-22, and then Jesus ministers to great crowds, Matthew 4:23-25. Jesus is walking around and is doing things that God does. He's teaching, preaching, and healing, as described in Verse 23: *"Jesus went throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom, and healing every disease and sickness among the people."* That's pretty impressive of itself. Then in Verse 24, the news is getting out. His fame is spreading. *"News about him spread all over Syria, and the people brought to him all who were ill with various diseases, those suffering severe pain, the demon-possessed, those having seizures, and the paralyzed, and he healed them."*
- They are bringing these people to Him, because at the very least, He can fix the problems. This is not saying anything about these people except they want and need healing or help. They come because someone is available and they need help. If Jesus was walking among us today, people would be bringing all their cancer patients friends and family to Him. Just like anytime something pops up that might help, alternative medicine or any glimmer of hope on the horizon, people flock to it. This is what we've got going on here.
- Matthew 4:25: *"Great crowds from Galilee, the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea and the region across the Jordan followed him"*. They come from beyond the Jordan, so He's drawing people from a large area. It's important we have this in mind when we go into the next break. Jesus is walking around and the throngs and disciples are following Him.
- **Chapter 5:** *"Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountains side and sat down. His disciples came to him."* Who comes to Him? Those who were "called by Him". *"And he began to teach them, saying..."* and we get into the Sermon on the Mount.
- There are Five Discourses in the Book of Matthew, the first of five major times when he lays out what He is about and why He is here. If you have the red letter edition, these are the large sections of red writing with no breaks of black in between. This is the way Matthew structures his Book and what he chooses to teach. This is why we're having this Bible study series about discipleship. *"Go make disciples by baptizing them, teaching..."* Matthew really holds up Jesus' teaching in his account of the Gospel. Other writers have different things they are focusing on but for sure Matthew is concerned that Jesus' teaching is recorded and handed down.
- Matthew 7:28 - this is the end of the first Discourse and at the end, Verse 28, *"When Jesus had finished saying these things, the crowds were amazed at his teaching because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law."* He is talking to His Disciples. The crowds still follow him and were listening. So we get two things from Matthew: Who was he directing this to? The disciples. And who was hearing? Everybody.

- Now we come to this image of Jesus coming up on the mountain. He gives the Beatitudes, Salt and Light, Anger, Lust, Divorce, Murder. It makes us think of The Ten Commandments. We have a guy on the mountain bringing the Law. Sound familiar? Like Mount Sinai and Moses going up to get the Ten Commandments. It's natural for us to make this jump, this connection. Even in Hebrews, Chapter 3 there is a whole section titled "*Jesus is Greater Than Moses.*" There's precedence for talking this way, but in Chapter 3 there's nothing wrong with making this a typology. A typology is where we take something and attribute it to something else. So Moses bringing the Law is a type of Jesus doing this in Chapter 5. He is a smaller, lesser version of Jesus doing this. Hebrews, Chapter 3: "*Jesus is Greater Than Moses, Therefore, holy brothers, you who share in the heavenly calling, fix your thoughts on Jesus, the apostle and high priest whom we confess. He was faithful to the one who appointed him, just as Moses was faithful in all God's house. Jesus has been found worthy of greater honor than Moses, just as the builder of a house has greater honor than the house itself. For every house is built by someone, but God is the builder of everything. Moses was faithful as a servant in all God's house, testifying to what would be said in the future. But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope of which we boast.*" This type is everywhere; it is going to also be in John, Chapter 6.
- This is not especially helpful in understanding as we read the Beatitudes. I want to show you how it's not very helpful. If you go back to Exodus, Chapter 19, we have Moses on Mt. Sinai. Moses is going up on the mountain in Verse 9. The Lord said to Moses, "*I am going to come to you in a dense cloud, so that the people will hear me speaking with you and will always put their trust in you.*" And the Lord said to Moses, "*Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow.*" Basically, they are going to be in My presence, so they need to be clean. But in Verse 15, He tells them to not have any sexual relations. Verse 16: "*On the morning of the third day there was thunder and lightning, with a thick cloud over the mountain and a very loud trumpet blast.*" The people were freaked out, they are in the presence of God and they're not even in His presence. He's hidden Himself still, but they are terrified of Him, just as we would all be. Verse 17 "*Then Moses led the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain*". Moses went forward. Verse 18: "*Mount Sinai was covered with smoke, because the Lord descended on it in fire. The smoke billowed up from it like smoke from a furnace, the whole mountain trembled violently and the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder. Then Moses spoke and the voice of God answered him. The Lord descended to the top of Mount Sinai and called Moses to the top of the mountain.*" So Moses went up and the Lord said to him: "*Go down and warn the people so they do not force their way through to see the Lord and many of them perish. Even the priests, who approach the Lord, must consecrate themselves, or the Lord will break out against them.*" "*Moses said to the Lord, 'The people cannot come up Mount Sinai, because you yourself warned us, 'Put limits around the mountain and set it apart as holy'. The Lord replied, 'Go down and bring Aaron up with you. But the priests and the people must not force their way through to come up to the Lord, or he will break out against them.'*" So, there's a lot concern for the people that they not get killed by coming too close to Him. Verse 25: "*So Moses went down to the people and told them.*" Chapter 20: "*And God spoke all these words,*" and He gave them the Ten Commandments.
- If you're going to make a "type" of Jesus and are going to compare these stories; you cannot compare Jesus to Moses in this story. Jesus is God. He's not the greater example of Moses, He is God. There is a difference between these two stories. When they come to the mountain, it's filled with smoke and trembling; He's warning them that if they come too close they will die. Then He gives them the Law. How does God do it in Matthew 5? He walks amongst them. He's got them following Him all over the place, doing things only God can do.
- Matthew 5:1: He goes up the mountainside and sat down and began to teach. See the contrast between these two approaches? In Exodus, He has hidden Himself for protection and gives them the Law, and now in Matthew He has revealed Himself in flesh, sitting amongst them as God. He starts differently in this sermon than He did back in Exodus. In Exodus He just starts going into the Law. If you do these things, this is what it means to be My disciple, to be My child. And this is why I'm making a big deal because what happens is we read the Beatitudes like we read the rest of the Sermon on the Mount; we miss the significance of the scene. Who is He talking to? The disciples, who are already called. They are already following Him. And as this Beatitude section says, they have already received

the reward of heaven. He is not talking to the crowds and He's not giving these three verses to as "this is what you need to be". They are being trained, but it's already been done. It's a "now" but "not yet" sort of a thing. In Matthew 5:3-11, the Beatitudes are not a description of what you "need to be", they are a description of "who a disciple already is". This is a blessing! One who has been called in the faith. This is just who we are and the Lord is blessing us.

- People always want to know what does it mean to be "*poor in spirit*." What's next in Verse 3 is "*for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*." We want to know what that looks like, so I can "be that". But as Jesus sits on the mountain as God, looking out at His people, He already sees this. He's just describing and blessing those sitting at His feet. This would make no sense to the crowds. This is why at the end, their reaction is amazed, astonished. He's speaking with the kind of authority we only ascribe to the priests and scribes.
- The crowds have no idea what is going on, and the disciples have no idea what is going on. It doesn't matter because it is about what He is saying; what their part is in it, or what our part is in it. As we read the Beatitudes, we have to resist the way we always take it. If Jesus was just a greater Moses coming down, then from beginning to end, we're just trying to figure out what we need to do. But He's God. He begins with a blessing. Matthew 5:3 says, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*." Who are the poor in spirit? The poor in spirit are the disciples at His feet. In our situation, it is us. We are all poor in spirit because we belong to Jesus. He claimed you and made you His own. We are poor in spirit...get over it!
- Matthew 5: 4-5: "*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth*." I look at you and you're not all meek, but guess what? You are meek. It doesn't matter how I see you, it matters how God sees you. See how this changes the way we read the Beatitudes? It's important that we read them this way because they are a blessing from God.
- We have two sections here. Matthew 5:3-11, God starts out as a "blessing". That's a little different than in Exodus where God is freaking them out, terrifying them, and then giving them the Law. Here He starts with the blessing in person and then He moves into what the calling of life is about. Now that you are mine, this is how I would have you live. It doesn't matter what my perspective is, I'm poor in spirit. It matters what His perspective is. He's looking out as God upon His disciples and He's blessing them saying that now you are His, not at a time in the future.
- Matthew 5: 12: "*Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven...*" Is that a future construction; meaning that something that will happen in the future? No, it is already done. Your reward is in heaven. Matthew starts, "*Repent for the kingdom of God is near*". That's how Matthew starts his Gospel. He's standing there. It's already been done, even though He hasn't died on the cross yet. He is the Messiah. He has physically called them into faith. They don't get it or understand. They're not actually poor in spirit as we would measure it. But as He looks at them, they have nothing to offer. Literally nothing. It's the same for us today. So it's a matter of how we read this.
- Again, we have two sections here. We have the blessing of God upon His disciples and then the rest of that section, Chapter 5:13-27: now this is the calling for your life. And even that's read differently because the work has already been done. The work will be done in Christ and now you're free here to see what I would have for you. That's the way God's Law is seen by us. There are multiple ways. One is as a guide, a gift. If you just do this, you won't mess up your life as bad. As the loving will of our Father. But it's also then for the crowd that's listening, it's nonsense or its making them feel horrible, or it could be terrifying. But not for the disciples, who are being blessed by Jesus.
- *Matthew 5:6* "*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled*." You get the point. Again, it's from His perspective, not ours. Do we thirst for righteousness all the time? No, we don't. But in Christ we do. This is the sinner/saint thing. What's important here in this first section is His perspective, not ours. And what He's doing is blessing.

- *Matthew 5:7-12: "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*
- Now we go to the next section, in which He said "this is what I have for you". And none of this makes any sense unless you see the guy sitting on the rock as God. And did the crowds see him as God? No. Did the disciples, to be fair? Probably not. But they knew enough.
- In John 6: The Gospels are written in ways that don't align, but they kind of overlap. We get the broad strokes of different perspectives of different people. Luke is telling the story as He has heard it, Matthew as he has seen it, although he may not have been there for the Beatitudes. John was there for all of it. So he tells it from his perspective. In John 4 we have the miracles, like the Woman of Samaria and the well, the living water. So He's teaching. Then in John 4:46, He heals the Official's Son. John 5, healing at the Pool on the Sabbath. They start to grumble at Him right after that, that He's making Himself equal with God. So they are starting to notice that He's making this claim about Himself. John 5:19, The authority of the Son witnesses to Jesus and in John 6 we have this incredible miracle where Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand.
- Back in Matthew 4:23-25, Jesus is teaching, preaching, healing, and casting out demons. Doing these miracles. Things that God does.
- We get the jist but from a different perspective. In John 6:26, Jesus says about Himself, in reference to the crowds who have gathered around Him. This is from John's perspective as he writes things down. Jesus says to them when they come to Him, they are looking for food; it's incredible, at a time when food is hard to come by.
- John 6:26: Jesus says, *"I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for the food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval."* Their response has at the end of it, a question mark. Like always, what are you talking about?
- John 6:30 they say to Him: *"What miraculous sign then will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven."* Again, Jesus is equated to Moses, but Jesus is God in this account. In Verse 35, Jesus says it: *"I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe."* Verse 41: *"The Jews began to grumble. Verse 52, "Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Verse 60: "On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" You're asking me to believe that you are God? Verse 62, Jesus takes offense to this. "What if you see the Son of man ascend to where he was before! The spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him."* He went on to say, *"This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."*
- He is calling people into the faith with the Trinity and that we'll never understand. Verse 66: *"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Did he get it? No. He didn't get it until after Jesus ascended into heaven. But he knew enough to say I've got nothing else. There's nowhere else to turn.*
- How would anyone get that, on that side of the resurrection? We have it now because hindsight is 20/20. Does that sound like someone who is poor in spirit? I don't know, Lord. Here we go. Follow me.
- John 6:70 *"Then Jesus replied, 'Have I not chosen you, the Twelve?"* That's an interesting question; especially in light of the Beatitudes. He is speaking with those He chose, He is blessing those He chose. That's hard for us to come to grips with. But then He also says in Verse 70 *"Yet one of you is a devil!"*

- In John they are already called at this point. I am not saying there is a direct correlation. What I'm saying is broad strokes overlap. In Matthew they have large crowds following Him and His teaching. At this point in John's perspective when the large crowds are following Him, it becomes very clear who He is or who He says He is. The mark of the disciples are those who say "we're still here", but "we have nowhere else to go." What you have is a description that lines up nicely of how He describes us as disciples in the Beatitudes—poor in spirit, meek, those in need of mercy, but "be merciful". When we start to see this, they're just a description of who we are. Imperfect, no doubt. It's not that they got it, that they were perfect Christians. Peter ends up denying Jesus three times. He's not an example for us but that's who Jesus sees us as in Himself.
- So you can't even understand the rest of the Beatitudes without coming to grips with this because our natural inclination is always to figure out what the checklist is to "get in". But Jesus is saying right here from the beginning that you're already in. You are mine. That's been done.
- So what's fascinating when you get this is you have two different kinds of people listening to this. You have the disciples who are hearing it as God. In John 1:43, Philip and Nathanael talk about Jesus. Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God". Philip tells Nathanael, "We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." Do they know what that means? No, but they recognize that. He called them and gave them faith. So all these disciples when they are sitting at His feet and hear His teachings, they already recognize His Lordship. They think they know what He's talking about. They do stuff and He's correcting them. You and I would be so frustrated with them, knowing He's God and our limitations.
- The point of it is they have been given faith. You have two different groups of people sitting at Jesus' feet. You've got the disciples who hear Him as the Son of God, whatever that means. They probably don't have it down yet. They at least are there for that reason. And then you have the crowds because Jesus is healing their people. He's their bread train. They still don't get it, but neither would the disciples if Jesus had not called them to faith. The reason we're sitting here is Jesus called you. And that's how we're the same and how the Sermon on the Mount is so helpful for us. He called them; they recognize Him as that, they give profession of that, not that's it's all that important. So here is where we live and how we read these.
- We are the same as those twelve, although we are a little different. We're not the same as the Twelve, we're different. They walked with Jesus. But in this sense, we are the same. We hear those words as those sitting at His feet, like those disciples. So we receive the blessing of Matthew 5:3-11, then the calling of the rest of it. That's what discipleship is. We have moved from the blessing (baptizing in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit), and now we're in the teaching them to obey, not to appease the trembling God of the mountain but because God has come to us, made us His child and said this is My Will for you.
- Apostles are when they are "called by Jesus". They're His disciples, but there's a distinction when they're one of the Twelve and the rest of the disciples. We have this tendency to equate discipleship with those who are actually following Him. That's not a good distinction because first of all, you have all these crowds that are hearing the same words and you have people like Joseph of Arimathea, Mary, Martha, Lazarus. These were His disciples, too. So it's not a matter of following Him "physically", but following Him as "His disciple in life". Were those in faith that were in the crowd? Probably. They would be considered His disciples, not part of the Twelve.
- Now you're ready to read the Beatitudes... Great is your reward in heaven, not great will your reward in heaven be. Great is your reward in heaven... because I'm sitting here in front of you as your God. Don't ever underestimate our desire to get the "checklist". What do I need to do to be "saved"? That's what we always do, even though we know it's wrong. We will leave here today and a year from now you'll read this and say I have to make sure I'm poor in spirit because I want to be "in". I have to

get forgiveness, as if Jesus Christ's death on the cross was not enough to cover you, now we have to "get it". We miss out on what forgiveness daily by Word and Sacrament really is. That's for your benefit, not His. We not up there appeasing the God of the Mountain.

- We're not making enough of our baptism, confession and more importantly, absolution. We have been wimps. We have changed the absolution pronouns from "I" to "You". Jesus Christ, in His mercy forgives you all of your sins. Rather than what God intended it to be which was a shepherd standing in front of you saying I forgive you in His stead and by his command. When you look at confession and absolution for our benefit, for our sake, as knowing what we need rather than us trying to appease Him and get our slate cleaned.
- The question is what if I die before I confess all my sins? You've missed the point! Confession and absolution is for you. We do this with offering. It's not, "I have to give to God so He will bless me back". Like rubbing the belly of the magic genie so he will give us what we want as long as we keep him happy. Appease the God of the mountain...that's how our sinful self wants to operate because it allows us to control it. But giving offering is just recognizing and praising the One who gave us everything. It's not for His benefit, He doesn't even need money. What did he do with sacrifices in the Old Testament? He burned them up. God doesn't need money. Who's that there for? You. Who needs to remind themselves constantly that everything is God's? Anyone else have that problem? So you start to change your perspective on how you look at these things. When we come into this, we have to see ourselves as the Twelve at his feet receiving His blessing just as we did in our baptism. And that's why the disciples had it like this. Jesus says for all those in the future, go baptize in the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and teach. And here you have that. You have the blessing, and the killing and making a new life. Calling a new life, making us His children and the calling to live...the works been done, here's what I have for you! That's the life of discipleship.