

We reveal a great deal about ourselves by the things we choose to do with our time. Your calendar is a reflection of your character. If a schedule has weekly appointments for kitty pedicures and doggy spa treatments, that would be weird. It would also reveal something about the person who set the schedule, they are extreme pet owners.

What were the main things that Jesus gave his time to in his short ministry on earth? How do they reveal the character of God?

Matthew 4:23 And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

This wasn't an exception to his calendar. The same three activities appear in identical words in Matthew 9:35.

Jesus spent his time teaching, preaching, and healing. What does his calendar reveal about his character?

These activities are the focus of our study for the next three weeks. This week and next week our focus is on teaching in the kingdom.

Jesus' priority for teaching reveals a heart of love that desires for people to know truth. He makes the effort so that we might be informed. His calendar was filled with teaching so that we might learn the truths that transform our lives. He knows the mysteries of eternity and he loves people in a way that compelled him to teach. What a beautiful reflection of God's character. The king of this kingdom is a teacher!

It is our privilege to be students of teacher Jesus. This week and next week we will be reflecting on the Sermon on the Mount.

The Main Point of The Sermon on the Mount

Before giving an overview of the Sermon on the Mount, let me just give you the main point. The subject Jesus taught on was the kingdom of heaven. His lesson was how to live in the kingdom. His main point is this, ***life in the kingdom is inside out.***

Life in the kingdom is inside out in that it is countercultural. If you want to feel something of the countercultural living that the Sermon on the Mount calls us to, wear your entire outfit inside out next time you go out in public. Let your tag stick up, your pockets flop out, and the messy stitches on the inside of your socks be seen by the world. The kingdom of heaven appears inside out from the kingdom of this world.

Life in the kingdom is inside out in that it focuses on the inner person over outward appearance. Inside out is an accurate summary of the teaching. Jesus calls us to focus our attention on developing the inner person instead of polishing the external appearance. He

teaches that what is on the inside eventually makes it to the outside. Life flows from the inside out.

The main point of the Sermon on the Mount and of the next two sermons in this series is that *life in the kingdom is inside out*.

Literary Context of the Sermon on The Mount

Matthew's writing shows that he was excited for his readers to get to the teaching ministry of Jesus. We are just finishing up Matthew 4, with the temptations and the beginning of Jesus' Galilean ministry. Something interesting happens between chapters 4 and 5, that is that nothing happens, but it should have. In the harmony of the Gospels there are 9 events between the last verse of Matthew 4 and the first verse of Matthew 5. Matthew does tell many of these stories but not until chapters 8, 9, and 12.

Matthew is excited to get to the teachings of Jesus and once he gets there, he spends a lot of time there. The Sermon on the Mount is a long teaching. It takes up all of chapters 5, 6, and 7. Matthew loved to include the teachings of Jesus. If you take the teaching discourses out of Matthew it is shorter than any other gospel. The Gospel of Matthew includes 9 discourses and 10 parables that are not found anywhere else. Luke records a small portion of this sermon (Luke 6:20-49). But Matthew's version is more than three times as long.

Matthew's wordiness suggests something special about God's orchestration of the Scriptures. In part, Matthew's wordiness was simply a reflection of his personality and the intent of his writing. Another factor is that Matthew used shorthand. We have some certainty of this because we know that he was a tax collector for Rome and we know that all customs officials of that time were required to learn and use shorthand. In communicating the gospel to us, God inspired just the right people to record the story in just the right way. God used a skill that was taught for Roman government work to give us three times as much detail into his teaching. It is possible that Matthew recorded a word-for-word transcript of Jesus' teaching that day. If he missed a few points, that doesn't lessen the value of the teaching. The point is that we are blessed to have this level of detail.

Matthew 5:1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

It is not clear if he went to the mountainside as a choice venue for teaching the crowds or if it was to get away from the crowds. But it is clear that the crowds were not his primary audience. The students of this teaching were his disciples. This is important. The Sermon on the Mount is not primarily a message to unbelievers about how to get saved. This is a message to believers, about how to live in the kingdom. When Jesus says to "be perfect" as our heavenly father is perfect, this is not a teaching about salvation by works. This is an invitation to kingdom living, not a test for earning grace. Like Paul said in Philippians 2:12, we work "out" our salvation with

fear and trembling. The preposition is important here. We work “out” our salvation we don’t work “for” our salvation. This is a working out of the grace God has already given.

Matthew 5:2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

Remember, Jesus is a teacher. Let’s not overlook the privilege we have, right now, to be his students. Have you ever had a good teacher? Have you had a bad one? It changes everything about the learning experience. God himself teaches us, in the ministry of Christ and now in the ministry of the Holy Spirit. We have the great benefit of wise people and bright minds who have written books for us to read and taught courses for us to take. There is much value in good human teaching. There is incredible value sitting under the teaching of Jesus. And there are a lot of red letters in the next few chapters. So, we are going to let Jesus do the teaching.

There are infinite meaningful ways to dissect teaching from God. There is always a deeper level, another connection, and greater insight or application. For now, we will consider the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount in 7 divisions, each one presenting another way to live inside out.

Blessings (Matthew 5:1-16)

1. Law (Matthew 5:17-48)
2. Spiritual Disciplines (Matthew 6:1-18)
3. Value (Matthew 6:19-34)
4. Judgment (Matthew 7:1-6)
5. Generosity (Matthew 7:7-12)
6. Behavior (Matthew 7:13-27)

Blessings (Matthew 5:1-16)

Here is what Jesus said when he opened his mouth to teach.

Matthew 5:2-11

²And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:

³Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

⁵Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

⁶Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

⁷Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

⁸Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

⁹Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

¹⁰Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

What's on the outside?

On the outside of blessing, we see circumstances. For example, we are blessed when the family is healthy. Notice that the circumstances in the Sermon on the Mount are not great. They include being poor in spirit, mourning, and being treated terribly.

Jesus' idea of blessing is countercultural. If the world were to write a blessing list it would be different, in fact, it would be opposite. It would read, "blessed are the rich in spirit, blessed are the happy...".

Jesus' idea of blessing is counter intuitive, even paradoxical. Each beatitude begins with the Greek word *makarios*. It means happy, blessed, fortunate, to be envied. Jesus is essentially speaking about how to live spiritually rich, but he begins with saying, "blessed are the poor in spirit". It is paradoxical to say, "happy are those who mourn". This kingdom is different.

The kingdom of the world directly associates blessing with external circumstances. But ***life in the kingdom is inside out.***

What's on the inside?

Did you notice that each one has a reward? Verse 12 says, "Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven." Those who mourn are not blessed because they mourn but because they will be comforted. The blessing is not in the circumstance but in the promise attached to it. On the inside of blessing is trust in the promises of God.

Inside Out Principle 1: The inside out life finds blessing in ***promises*** over ***circumstances***!

In the kingdom, blessing is bigger than my current circumstances or my stages of life. They are deeper than my feelings. They don't depend on me. The king is the source of the blessing.

The inside out experience of blessing does not mean that all blessings are in the future. Certainly, some of the promises of God are reserved for the future. But some of the promises bring blessing into the present. The promise of being comforted is for now. The promises of seeing God and being filled with righteousness are partially experienced now. Moving from circumstances to promises does not leave us unblessed in this life. It simply means that we find our blessing in the inner trust of the promises of God, not in the outward appearance of our circumstances.

Flip your view of blessing inside out.

Inside Out Principle 1: The inside out life finds blessing in ***promises*** over ***circumstances***!

Law (Matthew 5:17-48)

Matthew 5:17-20

¹⁷ “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 say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. ¹⁹ Therefore whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. ²⁰ For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus is big on law! The standard of the Kingdom of Heaven is righteous living. This is already a hard teaching. It is impossible. This is when some of the people on that mountainside would have been outraged or just got up and left. The standard is too high. But it is about to get a whole lot harder.

What's on the outside?

Jesus is about to expand the reach of the law. He does this by giving six examples of how the kingdom expands law beyond right action. The examples follow this pattern, “you have heard it said... but I say...”

Each time Jesus says, “you have heard it said...” he follows that by describing an action of obedience to the law. Action is what we find on the outside of law keeping.

The kingdom of the world directly associates keeping the law with obedient action. But ***life in the kingdom is inside out.***

What's on the inside?

Each time Jesus says, “but I say to you...” he follows that by describing an attitude of obedience to the law. On the inside of keeping the law is our attitude.

Inside Out Principle 2: The inside out life prioritizes ***attitude*** over ***action***!

Jesus wasn't teaching that action doesn't matter. He just got done saying that those who are called great in the kingdom are those who do what is commanded and teach others to do it (Matthew 5:19). He is going beyond action. He is saying that action is not good enough.

Don't hear this as a denial of grace. This is not how to get into the kingdom, this is how to live in the kingdom. But let the king call you to a higher standard of kingdom living. It is aimed at the heart. Behavior modification is much easier than heart transformation. The kingdom is not about just doing the right thing but receiving a heart that desires to do the right thing.

No other government enforces the law at the level of attitude. You can hate the IRS and still be a lawful citizen so long as you pay your taxes. No other government has the ability to look at the heart. Sure, they would love good attitudes but all they can measure is action. Not in the kingdom. Obedience without love doesn't please God. It is the obedience that flows from love that pleases him. So, the kingdom is serious about law, but it is not legalistic, it wants hearts that are transformed to love the law.

The priority for attitude over action is seen in the beatitudes as well. There is a high level of overlap in the principles throughout the Sermon on the Mount.

Notice that the beatitudes describe heart conditions, not achievements. One way to remember this truth is by noticing that they are called the "beatitudes", not the "doattitudes". They are the "beatitudes" not the "beactions". It doesn't work in the Greek but in the English it can be helpful. These are about having the character of the Kingdom. They emphasize *being over doing, character over competency, attitude over action*. I love to accomplish things. The beatitudes rebuke me. The way of blessing has nothing to do with what I can produce, but who I am becoming in Christ.

The greatest blessing is not found in the accomplishment of earthly tasks but in the development of Kingdom character.

For more on this Biblical theme listen to the Speak Lord episode Who Goals and Do Goals.

<https://speaklord.buzzsprout.com/2043226/12003282-who-goals-and-do-goals>

Consider the prioritization of attitude over action in the six examples that Jesus gives.

Anger- Matthew 5:21-26

²¹ "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' ²² But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, 'You fool!' will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³ So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵ Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. ²⁶ Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny."

The action is murder. The attitude is anger. ***Life in the kingdom is inside out.*** It doesn't approve of murder, but it stops it at the level of the attitude.

In these first two examples, it's the thought that counts.

How do you need an attitude adjustment around anger?

There are, in these examples, some echoes of the beatitudes. A kingdom alternative to anger is mercy. Blessed is the merciful. What if you replaced anger and insults with mercy. Like the beatitude promises, you would receive mercy as opposed to the strong judgment in this text that follows anger.

Notice how diligently we are called to guard against anger. It says, “So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you leave your gift...” It doesn’t say if you remember that you have something against your brother but if he has something against you. In the kingdom we don’t just care about when we are angry but when others are angry with us. We want to stay as far as we can from anger.

The action might be fixed with self-control but the attitude moves beyond self out of care for others. The action is about resistance. It is successful in simply not doing the wrong thing. The attitude is about persistence. It moves beyond the avoidance of doing wrong with the desire to do right.

As we live in the kingdom Jesus wants to take away that part of us that gets angry, that insults others, that gets so easily worked up about what we see wrong in others.

Inside Out Principle 2: The inside out life prioritizes *attitude* over *action*!

Lust- Matthew 5:27-30

²⁷ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸ But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹ If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. ³⁰ And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.”

The action is adultery. The attitude is lust. ***Life in the kingdom is inside out.*** It doesn’t approve of adultery, but it stops it at the level of the attitude.

Men, do you feel a little bit singled out by Jesus in this one? If we were to make a gender sensitive translation we might say, “everyone who looks at a woman (or man) with lust”. But the truth is that, though women don’t get a free pass on sexual sin, lust is primarily a male issue. So, women, read this text in a way that includes you and addresses sexual purity at an attitude level for you. And men, own this one. Jesus teaches that lust is not something that belongs in his kingdom.

Both of these first two examples follow a similar pattern in that they say, “you have heard it said.. but I say...” Then they call us to do something drastic about it, “leave your gift on the altar” and “cut off your hand”. If anger or lust exists in you, do whatever it takes to get them out of your life. We are to take action against these attitudes.

These examples are distinct from the other four in that they each are a mild form of a greater sin. Anger is embryonic form of murder and lust is an early form of adultery. This teaches us that it is the attitude of sin, not only the action of it, that we must run from. Don't attempt to manage the spirit of Satan in your life so that you stop just short of the big failures. We flee from that spirit because we belong to the kingdom. In the kingdom mindset we see lust in the same camp as adultery. If that attitude of lust is not stopped it will eventually lead to the action of adultery. This can be a powerful deterring factor to sin. When we think of anger in the same camp as the holocaust, it makes us not want to be associated with it. When we recognize that an attitude of sin will either be transformed by Jesus or it will lead to a devastating act of sin, it helps us to take it seriously.

This teaching about lust calls us back to the beatitude that says, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." In the ancient mind, the heart was not the place of emotions (the bowels were). The heart was the seat of our thoughts.

Matthew 15:19 For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false witness, slander.

We are called to purity on a thought level. The connection with the beatitude is also present in the sense of sight. Notice the connection in the phrases "looks at a woman" and "they will see God". The reward of purity of heart is the highest visual stimulation and satisfaction. Trust Jesus. Kingdom blessings are far more gratifying than lustful indulgence.

Inside Out Principle 2: The inside out life prioritizes *attitude* over *action*!

Divorce- Matthew 5:31-32

³¹ "It was also said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.' ³² But I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of sexual immorality, makes her commit adultery, and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery."

Men, again, Jesus is singling us out. But the teaching applies to both genders.

First, let's acknowledge that divorce is a sensitive topic. It almost always involves pain and often carries shame. Let this truth preface any commentary that will follow... God doesn't love divorce but he loves every person who is experiencing divorce.

The action is satisfying the requirements of divorce court. The attitude is satisfying God in the way you navigate divorce. ***Life in the kingdom is inside out.***

It is not about checking all the boxes to make ourselves feel ok about something like a divorce. It is about having a heart for God and others even in devastating situations like divorce.

Inside Out Principle 2: The inside out life prioritizes *attitude* over *action*!

Oaths- Matthew 5:33-37

³³ “Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform to the Lord what you have sworn.’ ³⁴ But I say to you, Do not take an oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵ or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶ And do not take an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷ Let what you say be simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’; anything more than this comes from evil.”

The action is swearing in the approved ways. The attitude is one that feels no need to swear. ***Life in the kingdom is inside out.*** It doesn’t approve of swearing, but it stops it at the level of the attitude.

Jesus is giving a stricter version of the law. Don’t simply do what you say, say it simply. This attitude is shaped by respect for God and an acceptance of our lack of control. To swear is to take more credit for outcomes than we can rightfully claim. Let that give way to an attitude that trusts God and surrenders to his will.

Inside Out Principle 2: The inside out life prioritizes *attitude* over *action*!

Retaliation- Matthew 5:38-42

³⁸ “You have heard that it was said, ‘An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.’ ³⁹ But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. ⁴⁰ And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. ⁴¹ And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. ⁴² Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you.”

The action is retaliation. The attitude is meekness and abundance. ***Life in the kingdom is inside out.*** It doesn’t approve of retaliation, but it stops it at the level of the attitude.

You may have noticed that Jesus has included laws that you won’t find in the Old Testament. They had a whole lot of additional laws that have no place in the kingdom.

This is an expression of the meekness we find in the beatitudes. Meekness goes the extra mile, absorbs injustice, and gives the cloak with the tunic.

Living in the kingdom does not require you to be a spineless pushover. It requires meekness in place of retaliation. Don’t repay evil for evil but good for evil. Don’t just do the minimal in response. Have an abundant attitude.

Inside Out Principle 2: The inside out life prioritizes *attitude* over *action*!

Love Your Enemies- Matthew 5:43-48

⁴³ “You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ ⁴⁴ But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. ⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

The action is to do good to those who do good to you. The attitude is love. ***Life in the kingdom is inside out.***

Again, this was an extra Biblical command. The Bible never says to hate your enemy. Where does that come from? There is a command to love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18). But it never said what to do with neighbors. So, they made an assumption about how to treat enemies. It was not in line with the kingdom.

Here is another echo of the beatitudes. Loving enemies is what a peacemaker does. And just as peacemakers are called sons of God, those who love their enemies are sons of your Father who is in heaven (5:45).

The call to be perfect comes in the context of loving enemies. It is relational perfection. It is the conclusion of this teaching that the law is about the attitude of the heart, not legalistic action.

Life in the kingdom is inside out. Today we got to two of seven principles for living inside out.

Inside Out Principle 1: The inside out life finds blessing in ***promises*** over ***circumstances***!

Inside Out Principle 2: The inside out life prioritizes ***attitude*** over ***action***!

Let Jesus flip your focus as you live in his kingdom.