

Class Notes/March 4, 2009  
The Sermon on The Mount

Matthew Chapters 5, 6 & 7  
Luke 6:20-49

The Sermon on the Mount, is Jesus' first sermon in the Gospel of Matthew, also known as the Sermon on the Plain in Luke (his second sermon in that gospel). The sermon is a sketch of what life looks like when one turns to God in response to the coming of the kingdom. This is the Good News. The sermon starts with "the Beatitudes" or the blessed sayings. There are nine in Matthew and only 4 in Luke (followed by the woes). Jesus promises a reversal of the current circumstances for the poor, hungry and hated, and for the currently rich and praised—there will be fulfillment for those who believe. Jesus states what will be. He does not promise a reward for being good or for meeting requirements, but God's gracious response to the human condition as it actually is, especially that of the disciples. The reward is in heaven to the faithful who must endure suffering.

The greater part of the sermon is devoted to Jesus' interpretation of the Torah. Obeying Jesus is not easier than obeying Moses. Over all, the sermon begins with the Beatitudes, the various aspects of the Good News by declaring what is the case, none of them is conditional. The Beatitudes are followed by a number of obligations, climaxed by the demand to be perfect, as God is perfect. This combination of God's freely given gifts (kingdom, comfort, righteousness) and obligations is the essential characteristic of the Bible as a whole..."Repent for the Kingdom of heaven has come near" In other words, believing the news about the Kingdom obligated us to forge a ways of life appropriate to God's reign.