

Body and Soul  
Matthew 5:1–12; Luke 6:17–26  
Sunday, October 5, 2025 (World Communion)

Last week we heard Jesus tell his disciples, “I am the way and the truth and the life,” and we talked about how there’s not a way that we follow to *get* to Jesus; Jesus *is* the way that we follow. And if we are walking the way that is Jesus, then every step we take, everywhere we go, everything we do, we are doing it with him. But what does the way of Jesus *look like*? What does it mean to *live the life* that *is* Jesus? Well, nowhere do we get a clearer picture of that than in the Sermon on the Mount. This is the most extensive teaching that we have from Jesus about what it means to follow him. So we are going to spend the next few weeks looking at the Sermon on the Mount.

But right away, we run into a problem. Because there are *two versions* of this sermon in scripture – one in Matthew’s gospel, and one in Luke’s gospel. They both start off with Jesus proclaiming a series of blessings referred to as the Beatitudes (because when scripture was translated into Latin, the word for *blessing* is *beatus*). We’ve already heard Matthew’s account of the Beatitudes, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for there is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.” With that in mind, I want you to listen to *Luke’s* account of the Beatitudes, from Luke 6:17–26:

<sup>17</sup>Jesus came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. <sup>18</sup>They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.

<sup>19</sup>And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

<sup>20</sup>Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

<sup>21</sup>Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh.

<sup>22</sup>Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. <sup>23</sup>Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

<sup>24</sup>But woe to you who are rich, for you have received your consolation.

<sup>25</sup>Woe to you who are full now, for you will be hungry.

Woe to you who are laughing now, for you will mourn and weep.

<sup>26</sup>Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.

Did you notice the differences? In Matthew, Jesus goes up on a mountain to speak to his disciples. He is *above* the people. In Luke, he comes down with them and stands on a level place. He is *with* the people. In Matthew there are nine blessings. In Luke there are four, but there are also four *woes* that mirror the four blessings. In Matthew Jesus blesses the poor *in spirit* and those who hunger and thirst *for righteousness*. In Luke Jesus blesses *you who are poor* and *you who are hungry now*. So, which is it? Which one is *right*?

Well, that's like asking, "Which kind of *car* is *right*? Should you drive a sedan or a truck or an SUV or a minivan? Which one is *right*?" None of them is *right*. They all exist for a reason. They each have their purpose. It depends on who you are and what you need it for. The Beatitudes are kind of like that. Neither version is "right." They are *both* right. God blesses the poor *and* the poor in spirit. God blesses the hungry *and* those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. They were *both* included in scripture. The people who put the Bible together didn't make a mistake, like they didn't realize that one said *poor* and the other said *poor in spirit*. And they didn't try to smooth them out and make them match. They intentionally included two different versions of Jesus' sermon. It all depends on *who you are* and *what you need*.

I remember times in college when I was poor and hungry and didn't have money to buy food for a week. And there have been times in my life when I was poor in *spirit*, and I hungered and thirsted for God's *righteousness*. There have been times in my life when I needed God to be *above* me, and there have been times when I needed God to be *with* me. No matter where I am in life, Jesus has always spoken to me *exactly* where I am. No matter where *you* are in life, no matter what you need, Jesus has a blessing for

*you*, and he will meet you exactly where you are with exactly what you need. Sometimes the need is physical, material, and God provides exactly what you need. Like when I was out of money and food in college, and my best friend said, “I got you.” Sometimes the need is spiritual, mental, emotional, and God provides exactly what you need. What we are invited to do when we walk the way that is Jesus is *trust* that God provides for our needs and *live* from that place of trust. Not from a place of fear, but from a place where we trust that God is *with* us, and God is able to do something about it.

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So, traditionally, the Beatitudes in Matthew’s gospel have been viewed as speaking to our spiritual needs; not *completely*, but for the most part. And the Beatitudes in Luke’s gospel have been viewed as speaking to our physical, material needs. So often, that is the dichotomy that faith breaks down into. Either faith is about our *spiritual* needs, or it is about our *physical* needs. It is either about *spiritual* salvation, or it is about *physical* salvation. It is either about *this* world or the world *to come*. It’s either about our *bodies* or our *souls*. What do you need to be *saved* from – a *spiritual* problem like sin, or a *physical* problem like poverty or hunger or someone trying to hurt you? Do we need to be saved from *hell* or from hell *on earth*? What does the *world* need to be saved from – a *spiritual* evil, or a *man-made* evil? What is the job of the church – to save *souls* or to save *lives*?

These are the two main camps that faith breaks down into. And *for the most part*, people who are politically, theologically conservative emphasize the *spiritual*, while people who are politically, theologically liberal emphasize the *physical*. Not 100%, across the board, but *for the most part*. Don’t sit there thinking, “Well, *I’m* conservative, and *I* care about people’s physical needs,” or, “*I’m* liberal, and *I* care about people’s spiritual needs!” Of course there are exceptions. But there is an abundance of research, books, surveys, and studies that show that *in general, on average, throughout history*, conservatives emphasize the spiritual, and liberals emphasize the physical.

Why am I talking about this? Because so much of our misunderstandings of each other and our disagreements with each other come from the fact that we are emphasizing different things, but we *think* that the other side should be emphasizing the same things we are. We look at the other side and think, “They don’t care about people’s *souls* or problems like sin,” or, “They don’t care about people’s *needs* or problems like racism or injustice. *They just don’t get it.*” Well, no. *They* get part of it, and *you* get part of it. Imagine what we could do *together*.

Because *both* the spiritual and the physical are in scripture. When the psalmist cries out to God to save them, sometimes it is *physical* salvation from an enemy, and sometimes it is *spiritual* salvation from sin. But they’re both there. Jesus blessed both the spiritual *and* the physical; he healed people’s *bodies* and their *spirits*; he provided for their *physical* needs and their *spiritual* needs. Paul’s letters tend to focus on the *spiritual*, while a letter like James focuses heavily on the dichotomy between the rich and the poor. But they’re *both* in scripture.

We need *both*, and because of that, *we need each other*. People who are liberal *need* people who are conservative, and people who are conservative *need* people who are liberal. Because we each have a piece of the big picture, and when we come together and listen to each other and understand each other and work together, you might see something that you don’t see yet, and we can balance each other out and see the whole. We are not called to focus on one or the other, either the spiritual *or* the physical, the body *or* the soul. Jesus tended to the spiritual *and* the physical, he healed the body *and* the soul. And Jesus wants a church – the world *needs* a church – that provides for both the spiritual *and* the physical needs of the people.

The world needs a church that shares the good news of salvation from sin and life after death, *and* works against unjust, oppressive systems that keep people from living *before* they die.

The world needs a church that gives people hope *and* food.

The world needs a church that talks about the peace that Christ gives *and* works to make that peace a reality in the world.

The world does not need liberal churches *and* conservative churches. The world needs a church that sees the whole picture; a church that shows the world it is possible for us to live life together and love one another in the midst of our differences, because when it really comes down to it, we're all talking about the same thing in different ways.

And so I want you to hear the good news of our faith. God became one of us in Jesus Christ and died for the forgiveness of our sin, and if you place your faith in him – not just *believe* in him, but *live* in ways that *trust* him – then you will live with him forever in heaven. And Christ *also* came to bring good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, and to let the oppressed go free, so that we can live new lives *here* and *now*. Jesus Christ wants to set you free from the sin and guilt and fear that has a hold on you, and he also wants to set you free from injustice and oppression; from the things that kill the body *and* the spirit.

And if we embrace the good news that Christ died to set us free from sin and death, then that should naturally make us want to go out and set *others* free, both spiritually *and* physically. Because *faith* that is not *lived out* and put into *action* to *help others* is empty. And we cannot just sit here and sing, “What a Friend I Have in Jesus,” while the world burns and people suffer around us.

You do not have to *choose* between the physical or the spiritual, the body or the soul. Jesus blesses *both*. And we get to *experience* that blessing at this table. Because at this table, in this meal, the spiritual *becomes* physical. Salvation becomes something we can see and touch and taste. At this table, Jesus feeds our bodies *and* our spirits with *his* very body and *his* very spirit. At this table, liberals and conservatives share in the goodness of God *together*. Where else in the world does that happen right now? So let us prepare our bodies and our souls to celebrate that good news together, and then to share it with the world, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.