**Lesson: Seven Things Jesus Wants Us To Know (6) December 8, 2019**

**From Mike:**

 It’s scary! It’s scary that I’m learning so much and discovering a totally new perspective about the Sermon on the Mount. Why is it scary? There is probably no other section of scripture in the whole Bible that I have studied more, taught more, preached more, and felt I knew more about than Matthew 5, 6, 7. I’m seeing things that are so important to truly understanding what Jesus was saying --- things I just never got before. Why? I think there are two reasons. First, I’ve never studied the Sermon on the Mount from the perspective of the people sitting out there on that hillside. What did they hear Jesus say and how did they understand it? As I’ve mentioned, if you look at the Beatitudes as a set of spiritual pronouncements, it really would have sounded strange to the people who travelled far to hear what Jesus had to say. But, if you see them as encouragement to keep on seeking God and seeking to make God happy (blessed), it makes so much more sense and would be so much more meaningful to those pilgrims who needed direction and uplifting. How did they understand all of his calls to be authentic and not hypocritical like the religious leaders they all knew? Did they catch all his calls to keep their hearts honest and their actions focused? This lesson that Jesus preached all over for his entire ministry was a call to keep drawing closer to God and make wise choices that will support that commitment.

 The second reason why I’m learning more is that I’m seeing the continuity of what Jesus was teaching for the first time. These three classic chapters are probably the most sectionalized and divided scriptures in all of the Bible. It lends itself to such study and use because it is a series of poignant truths and universal analogies that are still powerful when taken from their context. But, you sacrifice the flow of thought that Jesus was presenting to his audience on the hill and to us. Each truth and each analogy or metaphor is building on what came before it and leading to what follows. They are not isolated principles. Everything Jesus is saying is pointing us to an honest and devoted relationship with God. Yes, it’s filled with familiar quotes and quips that are part of our daily language. Many don’t even know they come from this powerful sermon from Jesus who is pointing his listeners to his Father. Ignore all the chapters, verses, and paragraph headings and just read it as one continual lesson. It’s awesome.

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