



This Sunday was the first in a series going through Matthew 5:1-16. We started thinking of the popularity of dystopian or post-apocalyptic novels and films - each of them expressing something of the fears of our contemporary society about where we might be heading. Why are they popular? They resonate with the reality of the human condition. The Bible says we live in a fallen world; murder, jealousy, anger and self-righteousness have been with us from the beginning. But God has been at work to bring about his kingdom - the place of his blessing, where the ways of heaven will be lived out on Earth. We've seen in Numbers how God was at work to rescue his people from slavery in Egypt in order to bring them to a land where they could know him as King and he could bless them as his children.

But we also saw in Numbers the faithlessness of the wilderness generation - how there were 40 years of wanderings... complaining about food... rebellion after rebellion. We're left asking "Where is the promised life of blessing to be found? Where is God's Kingdom?"

### **1. Jesus is God's King, speaking about God's kingdom, with God's authority. (v1-2)**

We then skipped forward 1000 years to the coming of Jesus, where his people are still waiting for God's kingdom to appear. And Matthew introduces Jesus, the fulfilment of Old Testament promises to Adam and Eve (Gen 3:15), and more. Matthew shows us that Jesus is the one to bring God's kingdom. He is God himself (Matt 1:23, Matt 3:17), God's Saviour (Matt 1:21), and a son of David and Abraham (Matt 1:1) - fulfilling the prophecies to Abraham (Gen 12:1-3) and David (2 Sam 7:12-16). Not only that, but Matthew shows us that Jesus is one of us: in 2:14-15 he is exiled to Egypt, symbolically linking him to God's people in the Exodus. In chapter 3 he is given John's baptism of repentance, though he had no need to repent, showing him identifying with sinful humanity. And in chapter 4 he is led into the desert for 40 years—sorry, 40 days—tempted with food, but proving to be perfectly faithful unlike the Israelites. In other words - here is the perfect Man, God's promised King, who will bring God's promised kingdom.

This is the context for Jesus' arrival on the scene. He starts to preach "repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near". God's kingdom is coming. A crowd gathers, and he sits down to teach them.

## **2. ...but his kingdom is not like we would expect. (v3-16)**

Jesus' sermon might not be quite what we expect from a King about to inaugurate his kingdom. It seems... weak. But this is the Kingdom that will ultimately bring heaven to earth. We looked at three sections:

**A. How to enter the kingdom (v3-6)** It starts with a poverty of spirit - a realisation we cannot save ourselves. It leads to a mourning of sin, and a meek humility in the face of it. But it finishes with a promise that God will fill us with his righteousness.

**B. Life in the kingdom (v7-9)** Those who have been saved (past tense) by God's mercy will be merciful to others (present tense), and so ultimately be shown mercy in the future. Those who God fills with his righteousness will be pure in heart. Those whom God has made peace with will work for peace with others. In other words, the blessings of life in the kingdom flow out of how we enter the kingdom. Works flow out of grace.

**C. The reaction of others to the kingdom (v10-16)** There are two main responses to those who have joined the kingdom - opposition, and conversion. People oppose the kingdom ultimately because they want to be their own kings. But some will see the distinctive living of God's people and be converted and give him the glory.

### **Here are some questions for your group.**

Look at the following verses in pairs, then feed back. How does Matthew show us who Jesus is? Why should we listen to him?

- Genesis 12:1-3, Matthew 1:1
- 2 Sam 7:12-16, Matthew 1:1
- Hosea 11:1, Matthew 2:14-15
- Matthew 3:13-17
- Numbers 32:13, Matthew 4:1-4

When don't we listen to Jesus? Why not?

What do v3-10 show us about life in God's kingdom? What particularly do you find attractive?

The church is to be a foretaste of what God's kingdom will ultimately be like; a distinctive and visible community (v13-16). How are you personally, and we at MRC doing at living that out? Pray for change where needed.

What are you most looking forward to about this coming series (i.e. going through v3-16 more slowly)?