

Title: THE BEGINNINGS OF CULTURAL CONFLICT, MATTHEW 5:1-12
(Chatham, NJ; 02/02/14, AM) [Pc – Topical, Deductive]

Theme: At some point the ideas espoused by Christianity and those espoused by the world will conflict; the Beatitudes reflect the beginnings of that conflict.

Purpose: To challenge the audience to espouse the Christian ideas and to live out the values of the Beatitudes.

Introduction:

1. One way of thinking among Christians assumes that cultural engagement means seeking the common good together with non-Christians in a positive, non-confrontational, even healing way.
2. Another school of thought suggests that the church should confront culture and seek to overturn its ways.
3. Limitations exist on both sides of either approach.
4. Though the confrontational approach may breed resistance and resentment, I also have concerns with the first approach. It is expressed by Ken Myers (letter copy).
5. The differences in social norms show up early when Jesus paints a cross section of the Christian character in the Beatitudes.

I. God's Wisdom Transcends Man's Wisdom (Premise)

- A. God makes the wisdom of the world look foolish, 1 Cor. 1:18-20
 1. This is the premise of the letter
 2. Paul draws on this throughout the entire letter
 3. Essentially God's wisdom confronts and shames the wisdom of the world
- B. Well-known from the Old Testament as well
 1. Isaiah 29:14, and this follows his indictment that people follow God only with their mouths and not with their hearts
 2. Isaiah 55:8-9, God's ways higher
 3. Job 5:12-13
 4. Jeremiah 8:8-9
 5. Those who knew God, knew this
- C. Let him who boasts, 1 Cor. 1:31
 1. Man keeps trying to elevate himself
 2. 1 John 2:16, pride of possessions is a "way of the world"
 3. Jer. 9:23-24 also quoted in 2 Cor. 10:17
 4. Applied to what we've been given in 1 Cor. 10:17
 5. "Be not wise in your own eyes," Pr. 3:7
- D. At some point the two wisdoms collide (minor premise)
 1. Worldly wisdom threatened by God
 2. In an ironic statement, Paul says that God's foolishness is wiser than man's wisdom

II. Beatitudes Reflect the Godly Character, Matthew 5:1-12

- A. They confront human wisdom (Conclusion to the Premise)
 1. They define characteristics that make a person pleasing and acceptable to God
 2. Building blocks of the Christian character
- B. Reversals of worldly wisdom

1. Poor in spirit – not the “alpha” male, the poor in spirit recognize that they lack spiritual strength; a prerequisite to becoming rich in the Holy Spirit
2. Mourn – James 4:9-10, those who recognize their spiritual poverty
3. Meek – the humble who demonstrate a willingness to submit to God, James 4:6
4. Hunger and thirst for righteousness – Ps. 119:1-8 expresses the desires of those who want God’s righteousness
5. Merciful – those who extend mercy and forgiveness are often seen as weak in the eyes of the world
6. Pure in heart – purity and holiness are diametrically opposed to the desires of the world
7. Peacemakers – those who seek it (Romans 12:18) though it may not be possible; we’d rather have friends than enemies
8. Persecuted – why are people so threatened by the Christian lifestyle (1 Peter 4:3-4)?

C. Conflict show us as persecution (minor premise)

1. Our ways threaten the established order of sin and darkness
2. “What counts before God is simple pity rather than cold knowledge of the Law, purity of heart rather than self-righteous external purity, and unselfish readiness to assist the cause of peace” rather than revenge. (TDNT, IV, 368)

Conclusion:

1. These are blessed.
2. Some say happy or fortunate, but more likely it means a deep inner joy.
3. Blessed in the sense of being a “privileged recipient of divine favor.”
4. It is “Religious joy which accrues to man from his share in the salvation of the Kingdom of God.” (TDNT)
5. In our conflict with the world, we also find the joy of being blessed, accepted, and made righteous before God.
6. Continue to seek his wisdom and his will! Don’t be deterred that the world is different or that they don’t accept you. You are accepted and blessed by God.