

“Start Pursuing”

Matthew 5:1-6 // Jason Gaston

Introduction: Recognize volunteers in our Fam Ministries

Assumptions: We all make them. And we all know what our high school football coaches say about them...but this is church and I can't repeat ¾ of what my high school football coach said....

I heard a story about 8 years ago about a situation that almost took a deadly turn all based off on terribly false assumption:

A few decades ago there was a lady...we'll name her JILLIAN. She had a pet python...we'll name him MONTY.

Story of PYTHON AND THE LADY:

[although it's one of those stories that I am PRETTY sure isn't true...**I think it communicates clearly that FALSE ASSUMPTIONS can be deadly.**]

When Jesus shows up on the scene in Matthew 5 and begins his preaching ministry, there were MANY assumptions that were being made by people about what it meant and what it looked like to follow God; **mainly that RELIGIOUS ACTIVITY and RELIGIOUS CONFORMITY equate to Godliness.**

May I suggest that we've bought into the same idea? We mask our lives really well with our activity and conformity, but internally we're on a crash course with death. PHANTOM FAITH.

And by the way, today's message is just as much for me as it is for you. We slip into this pattern easily in our lives.

Jesus not only flips those assumptions on their head, he does it because he knows that the continual pursuit in the direction they're headed will ultimately lead to their eternal death and separation from God.

Today we are going to be talking about the **“Pursuit of Happiness.”** Jesus will use another word here in the Sermon on the Mount, “BLESSED.”

We all seek blessing, don't we? Some say it is the ultimate form of “happiness.” In fact, many people have looked at this section of scripture in the Sermon on the Mount and have called it “Happy are the _____”

The word for beatitude in Latin literally translated (bay-ah-toos) means **“to receive the favor and approval of God.”**

That's what we're after, the approval and favor of God.” In fact, we all have many different approaches to how we think we are awarded that approval.

- This is why we constantly reiterate the beauty of the gospel here at Summit Church.
- Many people think that they earn favor and approval before God based off their works
 - Many religions are BUILT on this very act of “working to be made right before God.”

Jesus is getting ready to completely debunk that in the first verse of this passage. Not only for your salvation but also for your sanctification throughout your entire life.

There’s an interesting parallel between the Sermon on the Mount (Jesus goes up on a mountain to teach his disciples/Gods people the ways of God) and when Moses went up on Mount Sinai to meet with God where he would receive the 10 commandments, which were to INSTRUCT God’s people in God’s ways.

Just like the 10 Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount and the Beatitudes are to show you that you cannot come before the Lord and say “see, I did this all on my own.”

In the OT, when Moses goes up to the Mt. to meet with God, the people of Israel had been asking for the law, and God called Moses up on the Mt. to receive it from him. It was there; Moses was told by God that there were to be “no other Gods before me.” Remember that? No idols, no greed, no murder, etc...

Well guess what was happening below? The people were down below doing the very things that God was forbidding above on the Mountain!! (exodus 32)

This goes to show that from the very beginning of the history of the people of God, we see this demonstration that the standards of God’s righteousness cannot be achieved by sinful human beings themselves. **Plain and simple.**

So, here is Jesus, on a Mountain, getting ready to unfold the ways of God to his disciples

Read Matthew 5:1-6

“Now when he saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and sat down. His disciples came to him, and he began to teach them saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs 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.”

A few things I want to point out today, so if you have something to take notes...now is the time to grab those:

**1. Our lives are spent in constant pursuit of something.
(Matthew 5:6)**

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled.”

Every one of you under the sound of my voice today are currently in pursuit of *something*. And that’s not a bad thing...that’s a human thing! From chair to chair, those pursuits differ in many ways.

sometimes I think we need to be reminded of simple truths, ground level realities of our lives. **WE ARE IN PURSUIT OF SOMETHING.**

- **Buiding a Family:**
- **Career:**
- **Pursuit of Wisdom:**
- **Healthy Living ...**
- **Pleasure:**
- **Athletic Dominance:**

2. We pursue that which we think gives us VALUE and happiness.

“When a creature is in that state that is most agreeable to the proper perfection of it’s nature, then it is in its most happy state.” – Jonathan Edwards

Let’s ask the question, just for a second on this:

- When is a teacher most happy? When they teach.
- A Runner is most happy when they what?
- Carpenter? When they construct their project to perfection
- When is a pitcher most happy? When they pitch
- When is a hunter most happy? When he HUNTS! ¹

We are most happy when we are doing what we in our very beings, our very nature, long to do and are designed to do.

Ever had a job that you were not skilled in and always felt like you were out of your element? Remember the frustration you felt there? What did you do? You either kept living in frustration (and still are) OR you moved on somewhere else.

Don’t miss this connection here: Jesus KNOWS that the nature of humanity is to pursue something. But he also knows that the jacked up nature of our heart reveals that our pursuits are actually out of alignment from where they were created (if you get some time, go back and read Romans 1...you’ll see it clearly)...and until this pursuit finds it’s resting place, you will constantly live your lives in FRUSTRATION.

¹ Heaven on Earth, Stephen Nichols p.94: Nichols spends much time here running through the ultimate happiness for humanity based off of Revelation 22, when we’re in eternal glory basking in the glory of our God!

The frustration begins when we take good things and make them GOD things.

WE WERE MADE FOR GOD. To have fellowship with him. To enjoy the good things from his good hand. To praise him. To bask in his glory. Jonathan Edwards stated “A creature is most happy when it is according to it’s design. YOU, ME, WE...we were designed for God.

Augustine, an early church father would go on to capitalize on this truth by stating *“God has made us for himself, and we are restless until our souls have found rest in him.”*

“Men are in a restless pursuit after satisfaction in earthly things. They will exhaust themselves in the deceitful delights of sin, and, finding them all to be vanity and emptiness, they will become very perplexed and disappointed. But they will continue their fruitless search. Though wearied, they still stagger forward under the influence of spiritual madness, and though there is no result to be reached except that of everlasting disappointment, yet they press forward. They have no forethought for their eternal state; the present hour absorbs them. They turn to another and another of earth's broken cisterns, hoping to find water where not a drop was ever discovered yet.” - Charles Spurgeon

Sounds like Spurgeon had a good read on what Solomon would say in Ecclesiastes: “All of my pursuits? Meaningless. Like a chasing after the wind.”

Apart from Christ and kingdom pursuits....we are frustrated, troubled, discontent, always searching for the next landing place that we think will give us happiness and joy.

That’s why Jesus says “it’s only pursuit of KINGDOM things, RIGHTEOUSNESS that will satisfy your inner longing.

But where does kingdom pursuit start?

3. Kingdom pursuit beings with proper posture

Matthew 5:3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”

Poor in Spirit: To take the posture of a beggar. It’s posturing your life in such a way that you recognize your great NEED and dependency on God the father for EVERYTHING in life. EVERYTHING!!!

TWO POSTURES: Pride and Humility.

According to Scripture, God deliberately designed the gospel in such a way to strip me of my pride and leave me without any grounds for boasting in myself...at all! NONE! The best part is that is intentional by God..and it’s his grace. Because it’s my pride that got me into this mess to start with, and its my pride that keeps my heart attached to the sinfulness of my flesh. SO...If I am going to be a man or a woman that pursues

the things of God...it MUST start with an all out assault, a round by round battle with my pride.²

Here's the best part!! NOTHING suffocates and destroys our pride more than constantly rehearsing (preaching) the gospel to yourself on a daily basis.

- Ephesians 2:8-9 "For it is by GRACE you have been saved....it's not from yourselves but the GIFT of God so that no man may boast!!!"
- James 4:6 "God you OPPOSE the proud but you give GRACE to the HUMBLE"
- Proverbs 13:10 "Arrogances leads to nothing but strife...but wisdom is gained by those who humbly accept advice"
- 2 Corinthians 12:9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.
- Psalm 73:26 My flesh and my heart may fail...but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

When we posture our lives in such a way, like that of a beggar, GOD FILLS US.

Church, listen to me: **Our walk with Christ begins with the posture of great need, but it also CONTINUES every day with that same posture of great need.** WE ARE A PEOPLE OF GREAT NEED!!!

PROXIMITY TO THE HEART OF GOD BEGINS WITH A POSTURE OF YOUR HEART WHERE GOD CAN WORK.

Luke 15:11-20

Created for the Father...pursued other things...had a "change of mind", came back to the father after empty pursuits left him exactly that...empty....the father lavished him with grace and mercy.

² Gospel Primer, Milton Vincent p.27 "Cultivating Humility"

BULLPEN / QUOTES

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The Father's running made an end of the son's fears, and brought; swift realization of joyful acceptance.

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- ~~•—When is a teacher most happy? When they teach.~~

³ Spurgeon Sermon on Luke 15:11-24

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⁴ Heaven on Earth, Stephen J. Nichols