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The Divine Conspiracy Teaching Series
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Session 7 Outline: The Beatitudes

The Four Great Questions:

1. What is reality?

God and His Kingdom, and everything under that is real.

2. Who is well off?

Our well-being lies in the Kingdom of God.

- *Those of us in full-time Christian service often spend a lot of time worrying about if we're in the right place. Jacob said, after his dream of the ladder, "God is in this place and I did not know it." It is very important to understand God is where we are.*

"The word is nigh thee. It is even in your mouth. It is the word that we preach." (Romans 10:8)

So I want to encourage you to think that God is where you are, and that where you are is the doorway to heaven. Heaven means the presence of God, the Kingdom of God is here.

- That's the lesson of **The Beatitudes** - You only understand the gospel of the Kingdom of God if there is no limit to whom you can go and say, "Blessed."
- If you were to write some beatitudes with what you know now about the Kingdom of God, what would you write? Remember, they are not blessed because of their condition, they are blessed because the Kingdom is available to them. *Blessed are the ... unemployed, the pregnant too many times; those who can't get pregnant at all, the over-employed, the under-employed, the fat...* You are looking for people who are thought to be unblessable.

If you have trouble going to people who are considered un-blessable and pronouncing their blessing in the Kingdom, then you haven't gotten the message of the Kingdom yet. The message of the Kingdom is precisely that all those that human beings regarded as un-blessable are not un-blessable if they enter into the Kingdom. If they don't, that's another story, because the Beatitudes are all about the kingdom and entering into the Kingdom.

That is a radical message and it will upset most churches if you preach it. That would mean you are breaking down the social barriers, the

pecking orders that most people in our churches assume to be valid. Remember what James says about respecting rich people and “dis”ing poor people. Who are the “nobodies” in our church and how do they get treated? Does Jesus way of treating them meaning treating them all the same? Is that part of our teaching and our faith?

If you have the *The Divine Conspiracy*, read chapter 4 and see what it does for you. The issue of well-being fundamental to human life. We have to know how to relate to God in our world, but may feel shut out from God because we are among the un-blessables. That is where we have to understand the extent and what is contained in the phrase, “*Whosoever will may come.*”

The Sermon on the Mount deals with the two central questions I listed earlier when I talked about the four main questions. Those two central questions are: *Who is well off?* and *Who is a really good person?* The first question is primary because you can't really go on to the second question until you deal with the first one.

3. Who is a really good person?

[11:02]

Matthew 5:20

“Unless your righteousness exceeds the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of the heavens.”

- Think of “righteousness” (diakosune) as your goodness, what makes you a really good person. (Agape love constitutes goodness.)

Remember this is not saying you won't going to heaven when you die. This means entering into an engagement in your life and practice with the *Kingdom of the Heavens*. That's the phrase that comes out of Jewish experience with the Kingdom of God that is standardly used in Matthew. That experience was in the first heaven: God appeared in the atmosphere, which is the first heaven, and that goes all the way to the ground. Entering into the Kingdom of the heavens means to engage with what God is doing in the world around us.

What the verse says is unless you get out of the Scribe and Pharisee mode and come to a different level of goodness, you will not be in interactive relationship with the Kingdom of the Heavens.

Other passages where Jesus talks about entering:

John 3:5 - Unless you are born again you cannot enter.

Matthew 18 - Unless you repent and become like a child you cannot enter

So those are three ways of describing what it means to enter the kingdom of the heavens, and our task now is to try to understand what Jesus is saying in Matthew 5 and following about this.

What is the righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees?

The righteousness or the goodness of the deed - Mostly what one did *not* do. "*Thou shall not...*"

The commands led to a system of righteousness which referred to what you did. To go "beyond the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees" means to locate your righteousness in something other than what you do.

A thief is not just someone who steals; a thief is someone who *would* steal if the situation were right. There is a great difference between the person who *would* steal if the situation were right and the person who *would not* steal no matter what the situation was. There is a difference in the soul of the person. One can have the soul of a thief, murder or adulterer and never do it; perhaps because of the fear of what would happen if they did. It is better not to do it, but Jesus is saying *unless you get beyond just not doing it, you're not going to be in interaction with the Kingdom of God*. If you want to interact with the Kingdom of God, you have to move to a different level - your thoughts, feelings, character, and the habitual way you live in your body and your world.

Matthew 5 Cases

[16:41]

Jesus contrasts the righteousness of Scribes and Pharisees with Kingdom righteousness:

- Murder – Don't kill anyone.
- Adultery – "I didn't come out and commit it."
 - * "*I did not have sex with that woman.*"
 - * "*It depends on what the meaning of 'is' is.*"

That's classic righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. Bill Clinton learned that language, unfortunately, in church. A list of what you will or won't do comes from the Pharisees. This has become stock and trade now for young people dealing with sexual issues.

- Divorce – "I divorced my wife legally, so I'm righteous."

The law of Moses was established to keep divorced women from being killed.
- Keeping Vows – It's not a matter of keeping them but of why you make vows in the first place. Letting your yes be yes and your no be no goes beyond the wording to the heart of why you are saying things to people in the first place. Don't try to manipulate people. Allow others to do what they're going to do.

Why is the leaven of the Pharisees hypocrisy?

[20:19]

Jesus warns us about the leaven of the Pharisees and doing what the Pharisees do.

- **Luke 12:1** - "*Beware of the Leaven of the Pharisees.*"

Leaven (yeast) is a moving, living force.

Today we might say the *spirit* of the Pharisee is hypocrisy. It's what moves and drives everything they do.

- Why the leaven of the Pharisee is hypocrisy:
 - 1) The Pharisee is really concerned about doing the right thing. That's good. Remember that the best followers of Jesus were Pharisees. These were good people. They meant well. They were very serious about *doing* the right thing and *not doing* the wrong thing.
 - 2) If you just try to *do* the right thing or *not do* the wrong thing, you will certainly fail. *You have to go to a deeper level of the self than controlling your action.*

- "*Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks.*" (Matthew 12:34) This means that *what* there's a lot of in your heart comes out of your mouth.

Mike Tyson bit off Holyfield's ear, and his explanation was, "*I blew it.*" That is supposed to let them off the hook. "That wasn't me". But it *was* him. That's why he blew it. It came out of his heart.

- What's in the person comes out. Our actions come from somewhere. And the Pharisee always fails because they do not know that, and they do not practice that. They keep trying to control their actions, rather than change the heart, mind and feelings.

This is the crux of the matter —> The INTENTION has to be applied at the right place. I have to become the kind of person who not only *does* not kill, but who *would* not kill. My intention has to be applied at that level, and that's what Jesus is saying. When you turn to that level, then the Kingdom of the Heavens will interact with you, and you will find that you can change. But if you stay at the *act* level, the Kingdom of the Heavens will not cooperate with you and you will fail.

Grace operates at this deeper level. It is through GRACE that we can become genuinely transformed, our intentions can be fulfilled, to become the kind of person Jesus was and that he has called us to be and given to us.

The Indictments of the Pharisees in Matthew 23

[25:33]

This is one of the passages that really got after me when I was a young minister. I began to suspect, "Maybe all the Pharisees are not dead. Maybe I'm one of them."

The Scribes and the Pharisees professed to teach the law, but they did not do what they taught.

Implications of Matthew 23:

1. You ought to what you say.
2. We can do the things Moses said.

Here's why they fail (**v.5-12**) - *"They do all their deeds to be noticed by men...they love the place of honor ... and being called Rabbi (Professor, Teacher, Doctor). ... But the greatest among you shall be your servant. Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled, and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted."*

- People who do things to be seen of men are seeking to be exalted.
- One of the greatest burdens that will fall off your back is when you learn to not do anything to be seen of men.
- Jesus talked about this in **Matthew 6**. Men will see you and God will disregard you.

Jesus gives some very serious woes (**v. 13-39**)

- You can see why they killed him.
- He finishes with a great lament over Jerusalem. Jerusalem which did not understand what God was doing and put itself crosswise.
- Compare that to the goodness of the kingdom: Loving God with all your heart, your soul, your mind, and your strength, and your neighbor as yourself. The difference is it's internalized.

The righteousness of the Scribes and the Pharisees is in terms of deeds and appearances. That leads to hypocrisy.

What is Kingdom Goodness?

[33:25]

Every aspect of our being is permeated with Agape love.

Don't worry about perfection. That is probably a process which will not be completed in this life, but we can make progress. When you see that bumper sticker, "Christians are perfect just forgiven," remember there's a lot of distance between being perfect and being forgiven. The issue is getting better through internal transformation. So in all aspects of the self, love comes to predominate.

- **Social Relations** - We don't reject people. We don't push them away. That's what the Pharisees did. That's why they were angry with Jesus sitting and eating with people. To love people, you have to seek their good in the context of everyone that is involved.

Once we begin to understand what love is, that Social circle can eliminate attack and rejection as personal matters that involve hatred, contempt and so on. You have to be well advanced in Kingdom living before you can avoid that, but the point is you *can* avoid it and it is a "good" thing for you to do that.

- **The Body** – The body is normally posed to do things that are not loving. But it can be transformed so that instead of being ready to do what is hateful, it's ready to do the thing that is loving and un-hateful.

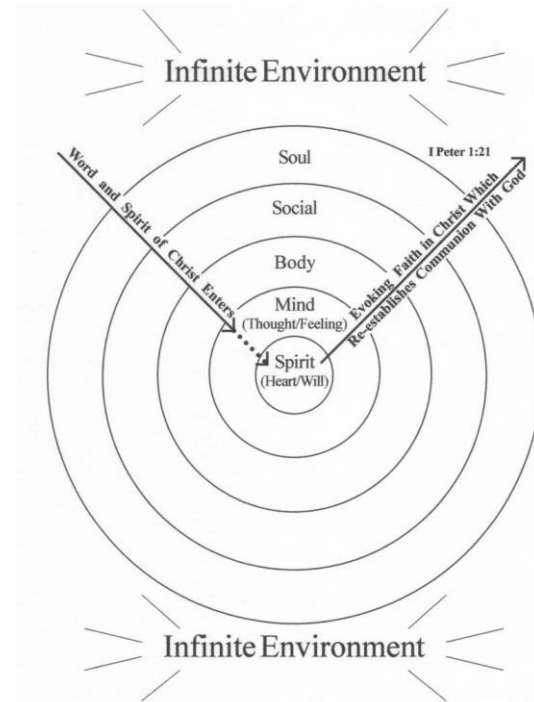
- **The Soul** - The soul is the deepest part of the self, and it has to be retuned. The Law is basic in this, because the soul that works right is a soul that naturally follows the Law of God. (**Psalm 19** - *The law of God is perfect, transforming the soul.*)

As we come back into order with the Law, the soul makes all the other parts come together to form one life. When it is broken, life doesn't come together. So the healing has to go there.

Psalm 23 – *Thou restoreth my soul.* A soul that is restored works in harmony with the Law. If you want your soul restored, one way is to begin to track with the law of God and begin to do the things that the law says.

For most people who are in trouble in life, the first thing they need to do is stop doing things that are wrong. But we have a whole system of explanation that sets that aside. The most important effect of that will be that my soul will begin to track with the Kingdom of God. As it does that, the abundance of the Kingdom of God will increasingly move into my life. Once you begin to track with the law, you begin to draw on the abundance of the Kingdom of God. That is how you **seek the Kingdom of God and His righteousness**, and you begin to benefit from that. This is not a prosperity gospel, but everything you need will be provided. If you don't track with it, it won't be, because you will not be tracking in the abundance of God's provision.

- **The Spirit (or the Heart)** - Surrendered to God, willing to love, not caught up into having its own way.
- **The Mind** - Not obsessed with what I want, what's going to happen to me, what's been done to me. A mind devoted to Christ and God, that keeps Him before the mind. This will bring different feelings of love, joy, peace instead of anxiety, hatred, depression, and so on.



Once you get that kind of transformation, then the actions are different. The actions are a natural expression of what is in these circles. This diagram is intended to show that, with all the aspects of the person, and the Soul around the whole thing. At the center is the Will, and out of the Heart comes the action.

"Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks," needs to be understood partly in terms of how the heart restructures, by grace, all of those other circles. If you're devoted to Christ, the love of God, your neighbors, there are certain things you will not think.

- We have this idea that what you think in your mind is nobody's business. But it is everybody's business, because your actions come out of what's in your mind.
- Pornography is not a private matter. People devote their attention to this and it possesses their mind, and then it comes out. Pornography is a first-level problem for ministers in our country. And internet pornography is even stronger because it creates an aspect of intimacy that makes more powerful the sexual tones that come over. Intimacy is what people are looking for in sex. They push physical buttons because they hope to get intimacy out of it, but it actually makes it more and more distant.
- The saddest thing about our political life is observing what people allow themselves to think about others.
- There is a lot of stuff you should not think about. People of good character have always known that. We say, *"Don't go there."* That often refers to the social situation, but it's actually advice about our minds and our feelings. Don't go there.

As that transform comes about, the actions will be different.

The Pharisee says, *"Sit on the action!"* Kingdom righteousness says, *"Take care of the inside."* If you want to get control of the actions, deal with what is on the inside, what is in the heart."

What really is the innermost part of us is this heart. And the inner tilt to a less extensive course of events is what really constitutes the innermost part of the self.

Transforming the Will

[47:14]

If we pay attention to the will, then everything else can be directed from that.

In the mind - *"Don't be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of the mind"* – your will has to come into play with that. You have to decide, you have to do things. This is where spiritual disciplines come in.

In God's plan, the function of the Will is to trust God. That's the basic issue. That means the surrender of the will to God, *not* to itself. The will is something that has to be surrendered, in the sense that it must not be taken as ultimate or it will be poisonous, it will turn back on the self and try to devote all of the energies of the self to getting one's own way. You will have your kingdom, and God's kingdom will have to go its way.

In Satan's plan, the function of the will is to be absorbed in itself. And the we get this wonderful phrase in Isaiah 53, "*All we like sheep have gone astray.*" How does a sheep go astray? One blade of grass at a time. One nibble at a time. Pretty soon, they don't know where they are.

That's how we go astray if we are governed by our will. We just do the thing we want. If we devote our will to God, and through Him to the good of others, we don't go astray. But each of us has turned to his own way, and that's the way a sheep goes astray. So we have to have the larger view. As we have that larger view, all the segments of the self begin to pull in line and as a result, we have a self that is devoted to God.

Two Forms the Will Takes [49:38]

This is extremely important for our culture today that is absorbed in feeling, an essentially sensual culture absorbed in feeling.

1. "Vital" or "Impulsive Will" - Identifies itself with desire. If I want it, I grab it - like a child. We have to have that because that keeps us alive. But you can't live by that because:
 - a. Your own desires conflict.
 - b. Your desires conflict with the desires of others you are intimately related to.

That's where the "rational" or "moral" will comes in.

2. "Rational" Will - Normative for adults who will look at the larger picture. It will say not, "What I want?" but "What is good?" The person who doesn't grow up is one who doesn't realize the difference between what you desire and what is good. They identify the "desire" with the "good".

Living in the Kingdom of God is the best way to have a larger view of what is good. This comes together with what is basically just a psychological understanding of the "self".

"Character" is Will settled in habitual patterns of action. [51:55]

This is what we're looking for in terms of discipleship. Discipleship is the process through which the character of Christ becomes the settled or habitual patterns of our action. That means where it is largely *outsourced* to our body in our social context.

What we want in the person who is transformed inwardly is, *without thinking*, they are prepared to do what is good and right. Character is, to a

large degree, what we do without thinking. But it also, in some degree, has to do with what you do after you think.

When Peter said, "I will not deny you," he meant it. When Jesus said, "You will deny me three times," he was not questioning Peter's intentions. Jesus knew what was in the rest of Peter, and Peter did not know that. Peter didn't know his character.

His automatic response was different from his intention. This is typical of the person whose character has not been redeemed and healed and brought to wholeness in Christ. It is inconsistent. You can't count on the person who is inconsistent. You can count on the person who is ready to do what needs to be done when it needs to be done. That's the person of good, consistent character. When you can count on the person to do the wrong thing, that's bad character, but it's still character.

So this idea of "outsourcing" is crucial to understanding how character works. Character involves all those aspects of the self. Character is not just a matter of will, it's all of those things. You start here, you are reborn, you're given a relationship to the Kingdom of God and Jesus, and with that you begin to move out. And now you hear commands like **2 Peter 3:18**, "*Grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" That means that as you increasingly allow grace to come in all of these areas, your character changes. And now you can reliably do the things you intend to do. "Self control" is one of the expressions of this – having a self that is in control.

Transformation of the self as a whole is what we look at when we are cultivating and growing the righteousness of the Kingdom.

Scribes and Pharisees also have character, it's just the wrong character. They have a character that is intending to do things that are right mainly for appearance, and they have a hidden dimension of themselves which they don't want people to know. That's why openness and truthfulness become such an important part of growth in Christlikeness. Openness keeps us from having that hidden dimension that is running our lives.

It's a great relief to know that you don't have to have a hidden dimension. That's what confession is about. You stop hiding; you allow people to know who you are. The past is covered by the blood of Jesus, by forgiveness, and you have to count on others to except that also. Now, if it's in the future, that's one reason confession as a discipline is so powerful. It opens up the self and enables it to get help to change. They say confession is good for the soul but bad for the reputation, but that's partly why it is good for the soul - because it's bad for the reputation. We need to come to the place where we are not hiding what we've done anymore. We admit we are sinners. That's hard for our churches often because we are caught up in the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees. You want to be in a position where you are not hiding from the past. If there's something in the

present, you want to have a group of people you are opening up to as you ask for help to get rid of that hidden dimension of the self. We speak about people being “transparent;” that’s what we want.

You can’t be transparent unless you learn to trust God, and unless you have received forgiveness and you are prepared to let Him handle your Public Relations. The only place there is any peace is in transparency. When we accept that, and move into it, that helps clear up all these areas tremendously. It strengthens us as we move on in growth and grace.

How Such Love Would Be in the Whole Person

Love possesses all the dimensions in the circle diagram and poises them toward what is good and what is right.

- The Body is then poised to do what is good without thinking about it.
- Relations to each other are purged of withdrawal and attack.
- The soul is running smoothly in the tracks of the Kingdom and God’s law.