

Opening Mission Statement

Intro. The Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's opening statement about his purpose. It is three chapters and one hundred eleven verses long. We hear it in installments for the next six weeks leading us into Lent. At the beginning of his ministry, this sermon lays out the attitudes and behaviors the Lord expects of his followers.

I. The place and setting for this sermon tells us it is important. The Lord went *up* the mountain and sat down. Moses and other prophets went up the mountain to hear God's instructions. The Lord sat down and the disciples and the crowd came to him. This was the classic way a rabbi with authority taught his listeners. It is like the old classroom arrangement of schools: students in desks, the

teacher at her or his desk, often on a raised platform. The Beatitudes weren't new. They have their origin in the Old Testament wisdom books like Proverbs (3:13, 28:14), "Happy are those who find wisdom, and those who get understanding." Psalms (24:3), "Who shall ascend the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place? Those who have clean hands and pure hearts." And the prophets like Isaiah (61:2), "The spirit of the Lord is upon me...to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor...to comfort all who mourn." These teachings did not replace previous laws and rules. They were a *fulfillment* of what the Jewish tradition and teaching already articulated, but had been changed. The Lord turned upside down the usual way of doing things, returning to the way life should be. The Beatitudes were truly good news to people on the outside of society. They

could now envision being part of the kingdom of heaven.

Concl. Many groups and organizations have a statement of purpose or identity. A well-known soft drink company used the line, “The real thing.” You can think of others. Some churches also have a mission statement that identifies it with the ministry of Christ. **[Fill in another.]** Our church’s mission statement is “ Compelled by the Gospel, we the family of Sacred Heart, promote and support Christian Life by serving our parish and community through the celebration of the sacraments, educational programs and other parish ministries.” The statement can always grow as we grow; it is an attempt to keep us focused on **our** mission here in Clay County. The Beatitudes are principles or attitudes that identify people who follow the Lord.

These principles are not easy to practice in our lives. They challenge us to a more full understanding of God’s law. People who exhibit these behaviors are not always welcome. For example, *trouble* makers are not happy to see *peace* makers. In our world, those who are meek or show mercy are often considered weak. It took a while but people eventually realized a small woman in India taking care of the poor (Mother Teresa) was *not* a weak person. The Beatitudes *do not* invite us to be run over by others or be passive. In fact just the opposite. Disciples who follow the Lord have to be strong to challenge the usual way of doing things by reminding the world of the spirit of God’s law: mercy, healing, peace, righteousness, integrity. We are **not** weak, but strong when we try to live out those values.