



Surrey Hills

BAPTIST CHURCH

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“The Road to Recovery, Part I”

We are going to look at the sermon that our Lord preached—the greatest preacher who ever preached preaching the greatest sermon ever preached. If you were to go today to somewhere between Tiberius and Capernaum right by the Sea of Galilee, you would see this big mound and a church built a monastery there in memorial to this Sermon on the Mount.

They didn't have PA systems. Jesus was primarily speaking to the disciples, and then those other followers would have been behind them. As the breeze would come in off the sea, it would carry in a nonamplified way everything that Jesus was saying. What we are going to do as the Lord allows us to is take these next eight weeks, and we are going to look at the Beatitudes. I was actually going to take them three at a time, but I got to studying this first one and I couldn't quit. We have a lot to cover here today. We are just going to look at a few short verses concerning the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount.

Matthew 5:1-3: *“When He saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain, and after He sat down.”* It was very common in that day for a teacher to teach while sitting down. This was the appropriate posture. If you look at Aristotle and Plato and Socrates, there is this Socratic method of teaching as you go, but the teacher would quite often sit down. *“His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He began to teach them.”* One translation says, *“He opened His mouth.”* (New King James Version) This is a very significant phrase in that our Lord is saying something, not something that is small, but He is teaching them some serious stuff here. He was totally the opposite of what everyone was hearing in that day from the Scribes and Pharisees. The Scribes and Pharisees would do a lot of double talk, and they were all into tradition. Jesus would say, “See that fig tree over there?” And He would draw life application lessons (we would often call them parables) as He would walk through.

Now notice verse 2, *“And he began to teach them, saying: <sup>3</sup> “Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*

Father, today in Jesus' name would You through Your Holy Spirit teach us Your Word and give us ears to hear and hearts to obey. In Jesus' name, amen.

I believe in my heart of hearts that God is teaching me about this whole idea of recovery. Many of you church members have heard our son's testimony, and you know why recovery is such a huge part in our lives today. What I have come to grips with is that we all need recovery. Wikipedia will tell you that recovery means to “repossess something that has been lost.” Many have lost their dignity. Many have lost their families, their jobs, and they have literally crashed. We have all in one way or sense or fashion have crashed. Therefore, we all need recovery. There are a lot of things that can be recovered. A fumble can be recovered. Data on a computer can be recovered. After you have surgery, you certainly need to recover. What I want to say to us today is that we need a sense of recovery in our lives. Maybe there has been a time that Christ was more real to you than He is today,

and you need to recover. Maybe there was a time in your life when you read the Bible more than you do today. You need to recover. Maybe there was a time in your life that you prayed more, witnessed more. We all in a real sense need recovery.

We are going to look today at “The Road to Recovery.” I think we are going to attempt to find out today that there are some roadblocks, there are some dead-ends, and there are some potholes in our road to recovery.

I like the way Jesus demonstrated life. He helped people who needed recovery. Maybe you need recovery today from over-eating, from over-working, from alcohol or drugs or for over-spending. Maybe you need recovery from grief or from guilt or from anger or from rage or fear or anxiety or divorce or rejection or abuse or sexual addictions or codependency or perfectionism or gambling. It may be in one of these areas that you have lost your way, and you need in a real sense some recovery. Maybe you’ve lost your hope. Maybe you’ve lost your confidence or your direction.

Some of you were alive in 1935. If you were, you might have heard about a guy by the name of Bill Wilson or maybe Dr. Bob Smith. These are the guys that came up with a program that has been unusually helpful for a lot of people—a 12-step program called Alcoholics Anonymous. You might find it interesting that the 12 steps have their root and their basis in the Bible.

I encourage our congregation to understand that SHBC is a safe place, and if we could we should have everyone come up here and stand in front of our church and say, “My name is \_\_\_\_\_, and I am a sinner.” Because we all are sinners, and we all are in desperate need of recovery in our lives.

Sometime later, a guy by the name of Rick Warren (the pastor of a large church in California called the Saddle Back Church) reworked these 12 steps and put together a national ministry known as Celebrate Recovery. We are going to take these 12 steps, and we are going to take what Rick Warren had to say, but most significantly we are going to take what the Bible has to say to us. We are going to see over the next 8 weeks what God has to speak to our church concerning The Road to Recovery.

Does anyone ever read the translation called “The Message?” It is Eugene Peterson. It is really good. I want to read to you what Eugene Peterson has to say about Matthew 5:3, *“You're blessed when you're at the end of your rope. With less of you there is more of God and his rule.”* In some of these verses that we are going to look at in the next several weeks, 9 times the word “blessed” is used. The original Greek word is “makorei” (sp?), and it literally means “happy.” I have resisted this word because we think of happiness being directly related to happenings and circumstance. The root of being blessed or being happy means that we are not tossed by how we feel or the circumstances of the day, but it is something deep. Truly, we live in a very unhappy world. A lot of people really are unhappy. And so what we want to do and have as our strength is the joy of the Lord. So we are going to be talking about exactly what that means.

As there are eight notes in an octave, there are these 8 Beatitudes that bring within us the melody and the harmony of life. As we study this, it is going to bring us to a sense of completeness in that regard.

The Bible says that Jesus sat down, and He opened His mouth. This is a solemn and a grave and a dignified and a weighty utterance. We have one observation today in this first Beatitude, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit.”* The first step as we get on the road to recovery, the first step to recovery is that we must understand that we are spiritually bankrupt. We can do nothing spiritually or morally in ourselves. It is as if our moral bank account is empty—in ourselves.

I understand that before Christ our righteousness is as filthy rags and after Christ we are the righteousness of God

in Christ Jesus, but the truth of the matter is that you have insufficient funds to be able to draw on yourself.

The meaning of “poor in spirit” in verse 3, He is not talking about physical poverty. He is not talking about financial poverty. He is really talking about the fact that without Christ we find ourselves poor in spirit. We find ourselves morally destitute without any ability on our own. You can say, “Wait a minute, Pastor. I’m a pretty good guy.” Well, the truth is that you are not good enough. No one is good enough to come to Christ, and that is why God gave us this ability.

Romans 3:23, the familiar passage of scriptures says, “*For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.*” The Bible teaches us that we by nature and by choice are sinners. We are sinful people. It is in our DNA. We have a predisposition toward sin. Our morally bankruptcy is manifested in our lives.

Let me ask you a few questions. Do you ever stay up late when you know your body needs sleep? Do you ever eat and drink more calories than your body needs? Do you ever feel like your body needs exercise but you don’t do it? Do you ever feel the inclination to look at sexually explicit images on your computer that you know are immoral but you do it anyway? Do you ever take prescription or illegal drugs you know you shouldn’t, but you take them anyway? Have you ever known that you should be unselfish but for some reason you act in a selfish manner? Have you ever tried to control someone or something else and found it to be uncontrollable?

You say, “Wow, Pastor. You’re getting a little negative today.” The truth is that until we understand that on our own in our flesh we are morally bankrupt, we are toast. We can’t do anything on our own. Therefore, we all need recovery. We really do need recovery. I come to you as your pastor and tell you that I am in desperate need of recovery in my life.

God has given us the first note on this octave of life that will allow us to live a harmonious life. The first is that we must understand that as we enter onto the road of recovery there are certain tributaries and offshoots on this road that are going to lead to a dead end.

The first one is secular humanism, which basically says, “I can do it myself.” A secular humanist would say, “Happiness comes from our self-sufficiency.” They might sing this song: “Blessed are the self-sufficient.” I am here to tell you today that self-sufficiency is insufficiency. It is not sufficient enough. It is not a poverty of material possessions. It is not about being shy or sheepishly. It is not about your self-image or your intellect, but it is about our spiritual ineptitude. In our flesh, we can’t do enough.

Another road block or dead end on this road to recovery is that we try to play God. Here is how we do this: We try to do it ourselves. If you were to go to any book store, you are going to see a plethora of books on self-help. The truth is that those things don’t work. Until we understand our own spiritual poverty, we are just really playing God.

And then we try to control other people as well. Parents try to control their children. Children try to manipulate their parents. Husbands try to manipulate their spouses; they push each other’s hot buttons. Then we try to, more than anything, control our own problems instead of laying them at the feet of Jesus. Maybe you say, “I don’t need help. I don’t need counseling. I’m okay—I really am. I can quit anytime I want to.” Really? That’s curious. “I’ll work it out on my own.” The more you try to control your problems alone, the worse off you will be. That is called “playing God.”

There are four potholes on the road to recovery:

**Fear:** Fear really comes when we try to play God. It all started back when Adam sinned in the garden. Listen to what the Bible has to say in Genesis 3:10. Adam said, “*I heard You in the garden and I was afraid because I was*

*naked, so I hid.*” Fear causes us to hide, and thus we mask who we really are. Why am I afraid to tell you who I am? Because I’m afraid you are not going to like me. So I put on this façade, and I try to make everyone think that I’ve got it all together when in reality I am hurting for certain.

**Frustration:** There is another pot hole on the road to recovery, and that is frustration. On the old Ed Sullivan Show, do you remember the guy who was spinning the plates? Then he would get another plate and spin it too. He would get all of these plates going. He would have about 12 spinning, and he would have to run up and down the line to keep the plates spinning before they fell. He was having to keep every plate spinning. Do you ever feel like that in your life? You are just running around trying to placate everyone and keep everybody happy, and it is frustrating. Listen to what the Bible says in Romans 7:20-21, *“Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”*<sup>21</sup> *So I find this law at work: When I want to do good, evil is right there with me.*” We are not going to win this game with the plates, and it leads to frustration. It is a pothole that is going to bang us up on our road to recovery.

**Fatigue:** There is the pot hole of fatigue. Fatigue is going to hinder you, perhaps, from getting to where you need to be. Listen to what King David said in the Bible, *“My strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.<sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity.”* (Psalm 32:4-5) You know how we do? We get another job. We immerse ourselves in our vocation, or maybe it’s the club, or maybe it is your habit or hobby, and you just try to maybe work a hundred hours a week and just try to prove yourself because deep down you don’t feel good about yourself. You’re working so hard, and you are not getting any further along. You’re like the guy who said, *“The harder I worked, the behinder I got.”* That is how it is sometimes. You know what it does? It leads to spiritual exhaustion. Because mankind is a trichotomy—a body and soul and spirit. When one of those legs get a little wobbly, like our physical man, then we begin to teeter a little bit, and that affects our spiritual man and then we’re toast. Fatigue is a pot hole on the road to recovery.

**Failure:** There is a fourth pot hole on the road to recovery, and that is failure. I want you to hear this verse. This is out of the Good News Bible translation. It is very good. Listen to what the Bible says, *“You will never succeed in life if you try to hide your sins. Confess them and give them up; then God will show mercy to you.”* (Proverbs 28:13) The King James says, *“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy.”* If you try to hide your sin, you are not going to have mercy. It very much leads to failure.

It is a pretty negative list when you think of things like fear and frustration and fatigue and failure. We have declared Surrey Hills Baptist Church a safe zone. We have just declared this. You could even come to our church if you think you have no sin. Anyone would be welcome in our place because if anything, we know we need recovery. There is nothing in us that is going to get us there. It is not by working harder. It is not by being smarter. It is not by trying really, really, really hard. It does not matter if your daddy was a preacher. God does not have grandchildren, but only children.

We try to play God. We try this spiritual self-help stuff. Listen to what the Bible says in Romans 7:18, *“For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out.”* You know where we live a lot of times? We live in the realm of denial. We live in denial. We deny that we are really sucked into this thing, and we just keep going through. Tomorrow you are going to start another week, and you are going to push back and say, *“I can do this on my own.”* The Bible says, *“Blessed are the poor in spirit,”* those morally bankrupt people that realize that they can’t do anything on their own. Listen to Jeremiah 17:9, *“The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure.”*

I have shared with you all of the negative stuff. Now, I want to share with you three things because I think God has a good word for us. There are three things that are going to help us get down the road to recovery and avoid

these pot holes and avoid these detours and these dead ends.

1. We must come to the place in our lives when we say, “I cannot change my past.” If you agree with that just keep breathing. We can’t change our past. I talked to a guy yesterday, and he had forgiven everybody but himself. You’ve done it. You can’t change your past. The sooner you come to grips with this concept and this principle of recovery, the sooner you are going to get down the road to recovery. “I can’t change my past.” We can regret. We can have resentment if we want to, but listen to what the Bible says in Isaiah 43:19. God says, “*See, I am doing a new thing!*” Aren’t you kind of pumped about the fact that God wants to do a new work in your life? I’m jazzed about that because I don’t really want to be that old guy. I don’t like that guy.

2. I can’t control other people. Those of you who have some people in your family you don’t like—you can’t control them. Your parents, your children—you can’t control them. We need to come to grips with the fact that we can’t control other people, that we can’t manipulate them with games and gimmicks. It doesn’t work. We are responsible for our own actions, and there comes a time that we have to stop blaming our parents for the way that we were raised, and we’ve got to own it and we’ve got to say, “I am the way I am because I make the choices I make.” You can’t change other people.

3. I can’t cope with my pain alone. It’s good isn’t it? Does it feel good? I kind of feel this Holy Ghost comfort when I say that. We need each other. The Bible says iron sharpens iron—that is why we have the church. I don’t want to pastor a church that is not open to all kinds of people. I don’t want to pastor a church where people come and they feel they get beat up at church. Do you know why? They don’t need that. They can get that at home or at the office. We really need help. We need each other. I wish I had the time to share with you how historically God has worked through community. We talk about our personal Lord and Savior, but the truth of the matter is that God typically, historically works in the context of community. Otherwise, why are we here? Is this nothing more than just some kind of social gathering? We desperately need each other! Have you ever heard this quotation, “God, helps those who help themselves.” You know that’s not in the Bible, don’t you? I think maybe Ben Franklin said that. It is not in the Bible. When people say, “God helps those who help themselves,” they don’t get it. The Bible says that God helps those who understand and admit that they are morally and spiritually bankrupt. God helps those people who say, “I can’t help myself!” Those are the people that God helps, when we come before Almighty God and we say, “Woe is me! I’m undone! I’m a man of unclean lips! I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips! I can’t do it myself! I’m morally bankrupt. I’m poor in spirit. Sir, I need You!” It is that person who gets the heart of God.

I’ll give you Biblical illustration as we wrap up today. The story takes place in Matthew 15. There is an unnamed woman, and she comes to Jesus. She is trying to get Jesus to heal her. She is talking to the disciples, “Can you get me to the Guy?” They are brushing her off. She is a Canaanite woman—this would be the equivalent of a Palestinian today. She is trying to get to Jesus, and Jesus isn’t giving her the time of day. Finally, she cries out, “Lord, help me!” Jesus makes what on the surface seems to be a very harsh and a rash statement. Jesus said, “Should I give food to the dogs?” Wow, that is tough. You know what most of us would do if somebody called us a dog? We would get very angry. This woman showed unbelievable humility. When Jesus said, “Should I give food to the dogs,” she said, “I just came from the lost house of Israel.” The Greek word Jesus used refers to like a lap dog. She responds by using another Greek word which means the mangy, gnarly dogs get and asked if even they didn’t get crumbs from the table. I’m interpreting here, but I’m not sure if Jesus didn’t look at her with a twinkle in His eye. I think He smiled and said, “Your faith is amazing! Your faith is absolutely amazing! Your request has been granted.” Do you know what the Bible says? The Bible says that at that very moment her daughter was healed. Wow! She didn’t strut into the presence. She wasn’t rebuffed when she didn’t get the answer she wanted. She was poor in spirit. Until we come to that place in our lives, when we realize that we are undone and that no amount of trying harder or being smarter or getting with a self-help group is going to

help us, but only when we lay ourselves in humility and in spiritual poverty saying, “God, I need recovery.” It is then that I believe that we are going hear from our Master.

This week, I am going to encourage you to declare bankruptcy. You could file a chapter 11. You could use Hebrews 11:1, “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*” Or Hebrews 11:6, “*But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” You could file any “chapter” of bankruptcy you want. But I am asking you today that you would file spiritual bankruptcy and say, “There is no way I can pay this debt I owe. I need God to do in my life something I can’t do myself.”