**The Story of the Mountain // Matthew 5 – Background to the Sermon on the Mount**

I have a deep love for mountains.  
That’s why I’m especially grateful that we can live here on the hill and see the ridges surrounding Windhoek.  
I love the wide view it gives me—it helps put things in perspective, especially when life starts to feel overwhelming.

This morning we begin a new series from the Gospel of Matthew—on the well-known Sermon on the Mount from Jesus.  
Let’s read from Matthew 4:23 to 5:2.

Two important things to note for now:  
First, Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of Heaven is near.  
Second, many people begin to follow Him—people from all walks of life and backgrounds.

We must not overlook the place Jesus chooses to deliver this life-changing message—a mountain.  
Later, when His disciples and the crowds would think back on it, this location would also stand out to them.

Let’s take a quick look at how, throughout the Bible, God often meets His people on mountains—and then see what that means for this meeting in Matthew 5.

**The Story of Mountains in the Bible**

From the beginning of God’s relationship with people, we hear about encounters between God and His children on or near mountains.

* When Noah and his family begin a new life, the ark comes to rest on **Mount Ararat**.  
  God makes a covenant with Noah and they offer sacrifices to Him.
* God commands Abraham to take his only son, Isaac, to **Mount Moriah** and offer him there.  
  Abraham’s faith is tested, and he receives his son back as if from the dead when God provides a ram as a substitute.  
  God reveals more of Himself to Abraham and confirms His covenant again.
* Moses meets God on **Mount Horeb** in the burning bush, receiving the command to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.  
  Later, during the Exodus, God leads the people back to the same mountain, surrounded by cloud, fire, and lightning.  
  There, He gives the Ten Commandments—revealing His will and showing that He expects obedience from His people.
* From **Mount Nebo**, God shows Moses the Promised Land—although Moses would not enter it himself.  
  But Moses is taken up into heaven, for his relationship with God led him to a greater, eternal home.
* On **Mount Carmel**, the prophet Elijah defeats the prophets of Baal, proving that there is only one true God.  
  Later, when Elijah doubts his calling, God leads him back to **Mount Horeb** and reveals Himself—not in fire or storm, but in a gentle whisper.

Beloved, there are other mountain encounters in the Old Testament too.  
But one thing is always clear:  
It is **God** who takes the initiative,  
He reveals more of Himself,  
He often brings some form of **rescue**,  
He confirms His promises,  
And He calls for a new way of life.

Many nations around Israel believed that mountains were the place where their so-called gods met the earth.  
But these were false gods—and people lived in fear of their interference.  
God showed Israel a new way:  
He revealed Himself as the **true God**,  
One who wants to meet with His people—  
But also a **righteous Judge** who demands obedience.

**Two Key Scriptures to Help Us Understand This Better**

Let’s read two passages that help us understand how these Old Testament mountain encounters help us interpret Jesus meeting His followers on a mountain in Matthew 5.

**1. Isaiah 2:2–5**

This is a **spiritual** mountain being spoken of.  
God used physical mountains to establish a pattern—to get His people to think deeper.  
Here, the “mountain of the Lord” stands above all others—even the ones where false gods were worshiped.

The **house of the Lord on the mountain** is a **symbol of His Kingdom**.  
This time is still coming, but how will we recognize it?  
**Nations and peoples** will come to this spiritual mountain, longing to learn God’s will so their lives can be changed.

This is the God who truly reveals Himself—there’s a pattern to follow.  
He judges and rules as the **Righteous Judge**.  
He brings a new way of living—not one based on war and survival, but on **peace**.

And then comes the powerful call in verse 5:  
“Come, house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

In other words, **we must live in such a way** that others can see the light and come to God too!

A taste of this from Matthew 5:14,16:  
*“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden...  
Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.”*

So what will Jesus teach His disciples and the people of all nations here on this mountain by the Sea of Galilee?  
You can be sure: **Heaven and earth are about to meet**, as the Son of God teaches people how to live out their faith.

**2. Hebrews 12:18–25**

Here the writer reminds us that **Israel** once stood at a **physical mountain** when they met God.  
There was fire, dark clouds, storm, trumpet blasts, and the voice of God.  
And what was their reaction?  
“Please no more—we can’t handle this.”  
God’s words were too holy, too direct—it exposed their hearts.

But now, since Jesus has come, **we have come to a spiritual mountain**.  
Heaven and earth have met again.  
The heavenly Jerusalem, full of angels and the gathering of God’s people, is a sign that **His Kingdom has come**.

We now stand before this same **righteous God**,  
But we have **Jesus** as the **Mediator** of a new covenant!  
And verse 25 makes it clear:  
**Listen to His words—live by them!**

**Beloved Congregation**

Do you hear it?  
The same God who met His people on mountains in the Old Testament continues the same pattern now.  
Every time, He reveals more of Himself, confirms His promises, and declares His judgments.

When Jesus sees the large crowd—Jews, Romans, Greeks, the rich from Judea, the poor from Jerusalem, widows, children, soldiers, teachers of the law, fishermen, tax collectors—He climbs the mountain and sits down.

What can we expect in the coming weeks as we study the Sermon on the Mount?

* We can expect a true **meeting between heaven and earth**.
* We can expect Jesus to **reveal His holiness**.
* He will make His will clear—so that people know how to live.
* We can expect Him to **speak as Judge**, making declarations that change lives.
* We can expect Him to talk about the **Kingdom of Heaven**.
* We can expect Him to **demand that people listen and obey**.

Another preview:  
*Matthew 5:18 – “Truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter will disappear from the law until everything is accomplished.”*  
*“You have heard that it was said… but I say to you…”*  
*Matthew 6:19 – “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth… but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven…”*  
*Matthew 7:21 – “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father.”*

**What Should We Do with All This?**

Beloved, today we must learn that **this is the same God** who has been walking with His people for thousands of years—  
From mountain to mountain (and many other places too)—  
So they could know Him and His will.

We must learn that He **still confirms His covenant**,  
That He is **still the Judge** over your life and mine.

We must remember that it was never about the mountain or city as the destination—  
But always about the **relationship** with the King and Creator of mountains and cities.

We must not ignore His words—  
But listen deeply and take them seriously.

And we must understand that this is not just heaven and earth meeting—  
The **heavenly has broken into the earthly** through the coming of our Lord Jesus.

We learn that Jesus **hung between heaven and earth on a cross**—  
At a time when no one wanted Him.

And as we journey toward Ascension Day,  
We learn that **He opened the way from earth to heaven**.

So, should we not take seriously this Sermon on the Mount—  
Where He calls nations and peoples, including **you and me**, to listen to His will and learn how to live?

**Closing**

*Psalm 121 – I lift my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.*

**Amen.**