

CORE Seminar
Spring 2024
Sermon on the Mount
Course 2: The Beatitudes

INTRODUCTION

Hey guys! Welcome back to our CORE Seminar – the Sermon on the Mount. Last week, we spent some time in **Matthew 4** – basically building some foundation for what we are to expect throughout the Sermon. This foundation consists of the Kingdom of God and that Jesus is the ruler of the Kingdom of God – He is the King!

Last week we ended by reading **Matthew 5:1**

Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him.

In **this verse**, we encounter Jesus as He is obviously aware of the gathering crowds. They continue to approach and surround Him. What's truly remarkable about this passage is what it teaches us. It reveals that His primary intention was to teach His disciples. Therefore, He gathered His disciples and commenced His teaching on the mountainside – this ensured that His message could be heard by everyone present. While on the mountain, Scripture shows that He assumed a seated posture – a customary practice among rabbis during teaching sessions. This seated stance communicated the authoritative nature of His teachings, as standing was considered less formal.

Tonight, we're going to be in **Matthew 5:2-12** – better known as the Beatitudes. We're going to make connections from one beatitude to the next that will us define what it is to be a Christian. And, second – we're going to develop an understanding of the Christian life as it is reflected to the world around us. Unfortunately, it seems that many Christians today overlook the significance of the Beatitudes in their lives – this is often evidenced by their public debates on social media [*Christian Twitter/X is the worst!*].

So, we are in the Beatitudes and we've got a lot to cover in just a little bit of time.

Let's pray

PRAYER

INTRO TO THE BEATITUDES

The Beatitudes only cover a portion of the Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, but they are often the portion remembered the most because they all start with "Blessed..." But, if we sat down and really read through the Beatitudes we would discover something. We would discover that the Beatitudes – as Jesus taught them – belong to a different world than the one we live in! I mean think about it, there is nothing "blessed" about being "poor in Spirit," or "mourning," or being "meek," or showing "mercy." These are not words that fit into our typical vocabulary as being "blessed."

The world we live in actually asserts the opposite – "blessed are those who are strong and show no weakness... they will receive the 'spoils of war!'" Our world and our culture operate with other ethics that completely contradict Jesus' teachings and the Kingdom of God. So, in this section of Scripture, Jesus is challenging His disciples [*and us – His future disciples*] to realize that His way is **NOT** the way of the world and His kingdom does not look like any earthly kingdom.

QUESTION: How are the values of the world radically reversed in the Beatitudes?

Is Matthew the only place we find Beatitudes?

No, the book of Psalms [**Psalms 1:1**] opens with a beatitude:

**Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;**

Similarly, **Psalm 2:10-12** ends with a beatitude:

**Now therefore, O kings, be wise;
be warned, O rulers of the earth.
¹¹ Serve the Lord with fear,
and rejoice with trembling.
¹² Kiss the Son,
lest he be angry, and you perish in the way,
for his wrath is quickly kindled.
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.**

So, Jesus' hearers – His disciples and the crowds – would have been very familiar with “beatitudes” because of their familiarity with the Old Testament – *especially the Psalms*. Now if you read the context of Psalms 1 & 2 the Hebrew word used is the same – **esher** and has the meaning of receiving **happiness & blessedness**.

But in **Psalm 2**, the meaning seems to change. Chapter 2 is all about the wicked kings and kingdoms of this world. In addition, this Psalm states that God has set His King on Zion. In a kingdom that is strong and will possess “the ends of the earth.” Basically, the whole chapter contrasts the kingdoms of this world and the Kingdom of God. But, in the end – the last line – uses the word “blessed,” and states those who are blessed “take refuge in Him.” So, this use of **esher** seems to have a meaning of **protection**.

So, from these uses of **esher** we can see that the blessed man is one who DOES NOT “walk in the counsel of the wicked... but delights in the law of the Lord” so much so that he “meditates on the law day and night” [**Psalm 1:1-2**]. Also, the blessed man takes refuge in God and not the kingdoms of this world.

So, the blessings of God and the Beatitudes are not isolated to ten verses in the New Testament. The blessings of God flow through the entirety of the Old Testament as well. By looking at these Old Testament uses, we get a picture of what blessing and happiness look like. This picture would have been in the minds of the crowds that day.

So, when Jesus sits down, and then He opens His mouth to teach we begin to see what true blessing and happiness looks like in a kingdom economy – it looks like a life completely covered by God.

THE BEATITUDES

Matthew 5:3 [ESV]

² **And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying:**

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

One thing we need to address on the front end - “poor in spirit,” is not a financial or a depressive condition. This is not a call for all of you to sell all of your possessions and move into a monastery – this is not a call to live the monk or nun life! There are people who possess nothing and STILL lack an understanding of what Jesus meant here.

So, what is Jesus referring to here?

Jesus describes a person who recognizes their spiritual bondage, acknowledges their sin, and understands their own spiritual poverty before God. This individual can only cry out for mercy and rely on the Lord. This spirit is essential for being a Christian, and all Christians possess it. We see this spirit in the story of the Prodigal Son, who initially left his father with pride and self-assurance. However, facing bankruptcy, he humbled himself – returned home – and shifted his focus away from himself.

This is very similar to the lyrics of the hymn we sing, **Rock of Ages**:

*Nothing in my hand I bring,
Simply to Thy Cross I cling;
Naked, come to Thee for dress;
Helpless, look to Thee for grace;
Foul, I to the mountain fly;
Wash me, Saviour, or I die.*

So, for the first beatitude, if we would be happy and blessed in the Kingdom of God, we must first lose everything – including ourselves and our self-centeredness – and as a result, we will become poor in spirit.

Matthew 5:4 [ESV]

4 “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.

The second beatitude Jesus mentions is “blessed are those who mourn.” What we need to remember here is that Jesus is referring to the Kingdom of God – and just like in our first beatitude – Jesus is referring to our spiritual condition, not our physical condition.

The mourning that Jesus is referring to here involves mourning over our own sinfulness. This is a true mark of a Christian/ Disciple of Jesus Christ – that we do not excuse our sin, or ignore it. We recognize our sin, and repent of our sin. Whenever the Christian is conscious of their own sin – they will be grieved by it. This is because the Holy Spirit will be grieved by our sin [Ephesians 4:30]

This fits directly with our first beatitude because we cannot understand that we should mourn for your sin if we have not first learned that we are “poor in spirit.” So, blessed are those who are poor in spirit and those who mourn... let’s look at verse 5.

Matthew 5:5 [ESV]

⁵ “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.

When we recognize we are poor in spirit and begin to mourn over our sin, then naturally we become humbler and meeker. We do not often speak of meekness. We might be hard pressed even to define it. Meekness is not weakness; it's a measured strength, a control over wrath. It is related to humility. Meekness is a combination of patience, gentleness, and a complete submission to the will of God. Meekness is learning to be self-controlled instead of needing to be in control. Meekness is opening your heart instead of clenching your fist. Meekness is the firm resolve that it is always better to suffer than to sin.¹

When we know what we are before God, and look to Him for grace and salvation, then we become poor in spirit; then we mourn for our sins. And as we experience the gentleness of His grace, we become spiritually meek and gentle with others.

Let's keep moving along... verse 6.

Matthew 5:6 [ESV]

⁶ “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.

Look at what Jesus said. He said, “Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness.” He didn't say, “Blessed are those whose goal is righteousness, for they shall attain their goal.” Nor did He say, “Blessed are those who have a desire for righteousness, for they will get to their heart's desire.” Rather, He spoke in everyday terms regarding intense hunger. We are not simply to seek righteousness or have righteousness as a goal – we are to hunger and thirst after righteousness. Those whose do are truly blessed by God and have a consuming passion for His righteousness!

We're conditioned to define ourselves in terms of our accomplishments rather than in terms of our character. But Jesus pronounced blessing on a character trait: blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. He affirmed that this would not be a fruitless endeavor, for He promised, “They will be satisfied.”

Matthew 5:7 [ESV]

⁷ “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.

¹ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/blessed-are-the-meek/>

I think this one is better understood this way, **“We have been forgiven. Should we not forgive?”** All who have come to faith in Jesus Christ have received mercy from God. And He showed us mercy – even though you and I have sinned against God more than anyone has sinned against any of us. Some of you may try and argue this point BUT it is always the case that we have sinned against God more than anyone has sinned against us. So, knowing this, we need to be able to answer this question, “can we be merciful to others – that have sinned against us – that we might receive mercy from God – who we’ve sinned against A LOT!”

So, Jesus is telling us, be merciful to others. Be quick to forget and forgive. As a result, you will receive mercy. To say it another way, those who have been forgiven much, should love much. Those who know they have received mercy, should show mercy to others. And those who show mercy to others will be blessed because they will receive mercy from God through Jesus Christ!

Matthew 5:8 [ESV]

⁸ “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.

The question we should be asking here is “who are the pure in heart?” I mean, *real quick*, how many of you would classify yourself as “pure in heart?”

Guys the only way we are considered to be “pure in heart” is through Jesus Christ! Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 6:11** that through Christ, we find our true confidence, as His sacrifice has purified and set us apart. Through Christ, we are declared holy, and our ongoing pursuit of personal holiness confirms this status. Ultimately, through Christ, we receive the assurance of seeing God as He is, when we are perfected and free from all sin in glory. As we pursue purity of heart, we will ultimately draw closer to being in the eternal presence of God.

Matthew 5:9 [ESV]

⁹ “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

If someone were to ask for a one-word description of what the gospel brings us when we repent and believe, there is little doubt that most people would answer with the word **salvation**. But there is another answer to the question, and that is the word **peace**. The gospel, when embraced through repentance and belief, not only brings salvation but also peace.

And Paul tells us in **Romans 5:1** that we have “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” So, having peace with God requires a mediator — a person or persons who can represent both sides in the dispute and help effect reconciliation. Jesus – being fully God – serves as the ultimate mediator, revealing God's wrath against His people on the cross and God's love by sending Jesus to die on that cross in our place.

Now, we can't redeem others from sin like Jesus – this is not what He's referring to in this beatitude. What He is referring to is that we can follow God's work of peacemaking in our lives – by imitating and showing true and godly peace among those around us. In doing so, we prove to the world/ culture around us that we are God's children.

Matthew 5:10 [ESV]

¹⁰ “Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” ¹¹ “Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

As we end the beatitudes we start to see more of the reality of our faith – receiving persecution and insults. The promise set in this promise is weighty: ***enduring persecution and insults for righteousness' sake, leads to the ultimate reward of eternity in heaven with God.***

This kind of persecution - referenced by Jesus – is not simply judgment we experience because of our faith or someone's obnoxious behavior towards us because of our faith. The suffering Jesus is talking about is facing opposition while constantly adhering to the will of God. Those persecuted for righteousness' sake embody God's ways in a world that often disrespects, rejects us, marginalizes us, and excludes us. Persecution serves as a testimony to our connection with Jesus Christ. Our connection with Him embraces – not only His glory –His rejection and persecution. ***By having a share in Him, we truly inherit the kingdom of heaven.***

CONCLUSION

We said last week that the Sermon on the Mount merits a verse-by-verse consideration, BUT that we didn't have the time in this semester to do that. Today is a prime example. We kind of flew through the Beatitudes. Next Week is no different. We will be in **Matthew 5:13-32**. Please read ahead and be ready to discuss.

PRAYER