

The 'Beatitudes' of Jesus

“When Jesus saw the crowds, He went up on the mountain; and after He sat down, His disciples came to Him. He opened His mouth and began to teach them....”

Matthew 5:1,2

After Jesus assembles His team of twelve disciples, He delivers a powerful discourse that Christian leaders have labelled the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ (Matthew 5-7). The Lord starts His teaching by saying ‘Blessed are the’ eight times. These ‘Blessed’ statements have come to be known as the ‘Beatitudes.’ The Latin noun ‘*beatitudo*’ describes a state of being ‘blessed’ and the Greek word for ‘blessed’ is ‘*makarioi*’, meaning ‘happy,’ with the implication of having a quality of life of happiness.

At first glance, it may be possible to acknowledge how simple, beautiful, and ‘religious’ the Beatitudes appear to be. However, when a person attempts to put the principles they set forth into practice, there is one thing that soon becomes a realization – we (the natural man) would struggle enormously in attempting to fulfill them.

At face value, it also might be possible to completely misunderstand the message of the Beatitudes. To some, these proverb type statements might mean: poor people are very rich; sad people are doing great; weak people are actually strong; losers are the real winners.’

To understand them we must understand the mind of the Teacher. To do that, we need to have the ‘mind of Christ,” (*1 Corinthians 2:16*). The Beatitudes are not so much a list of guidelines to follow as they are a description of the kind of person who is living a ‘Christlike’ lifestyle. We are not meant to practice the Beatitudes – we are meant to become them, and that takes a lifetime of spiritual maturity. When we get to the point in our lives that we look at the ‘Beatitudes’ using a lens directed towards God – and not necessarily just toward the people around us, their meaning becomes more focused. In other words, ‘Blessed are the towards God.’

Key points to consider:

- The Beatitudes: emphasis → being not doing
- The Beatitudes: meant to be → Godward not ‘man-ward’
- The Beatitudes: not based on rules → based on a Person
- The Beatitudes: impossible for us → possible with Christ

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God.” Matthew 5:3

In human terms, being poor is the opposite of being prosperous. In this life being poor might mean living in poverty with very little possessions. However, looking Godward, Jesus was instructing that it is fundamental for each of us to remember that we are all ‘poor and destitute’ spiritually compared to a holy God. It is only by His grace that we are saved (*Ephesians 2:8,9*). Pride, stubbornness, false self-confidence, all hinder us from understanding that we (as humans) are very poor spiritually. For those who become ‘poor in spirit’ we will obtain an inheritance based upon the riches of God. We are heirs in the kingdom. (*Romans 8:15-17*)

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Matthew 5:4

The word Jesus selects for mourn describes a grief too deep to be concealed. This Beatitude is not necessarily referring to weeping because of death, tragedy, or calamity, though the Greek word (*pentountes*) used in this passage means ‘to mourn the dead’. Looking Godward, it is when we come to Him genuinely sorry for our sinfulness that we ‘weep’ in repentance and turn back to God. For those who spiritually ‘mourn’ it will be God who comforts them. God blesses the repentant heart (*Psalms 30:4,5*) and His forgiveness is readily available because of the cross of Christ. To repent means to ‘turn around remorsefully’ not just feel sorry for sin. Those who ‘mourn’ over sin are the ones experiencing God’s comfort.

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

First of all, meekness does not mean weakness. Moses, a conquering general and leader of Israel was called meek. Jesus even referred to Himself as ‘meek and lowly of heart,’ (*Matthew 11:29*). In ancient times it was a word ascribed to a wild horse that had been trained. In other words, living a ‘controlled life.’ Impulsiveness, acting rash, being extreme, making quick decisions in anger, all have significant downturns. Looking Godward, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit is having self-control (*Galatians 5:22*). It will be those living a ‘controlled’ (balanced, disciplined, and gentle) lifestyle that will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.” Matthew 5:6

People hunger and strive for riches, power, gold medals, large mansions, and countless other ‘earthly’ rewards. Yet many times they are not satisfied and content when they achieve them. Such things are all temporary. Looking Godward, those who have a hunger (deep desire) and thirst (seeking to be quenched) for righteousness will

be satisfied. Righteousness of God means ‘rightness-with-God’. Those who thirst for the ‘Living Water’ (*John 4:10*) and hunger for the ‘Bread of Life’ (*John 6:35*) will be the ones content and satisfied in life. God will satisfy us because Christ became sin that we may become the righteousness of God (*2 Corinthians 5:21*). God’s satisfaction towards us is limitless and it is eternal. God’s satisfaction ‘list’ will include things like His peace, love, and joy.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” Matthew 5:7

It is human nature to be selfish. We live in a world with the terminal illness of selfishness. Even the word ‘sin’ has “I” in the center of it. The Greek word for merciful – ‘*eleemon*’ is an adjective meaning ‘being actively compassionate.’ Looking Godward, Jesus’ entire ministry was about showing compassion and love (*Matthew 14:14*). He healed continually, fed thousands, and rose the dead because of His compassion. Jesus as our example did not speak mercy, He showed and acted mercy. Jesus is giving instruction here to His followers that we are called to be merciful and compassionate servants, putting the needs of others before our own needs (*Matt 20:28; Ephesians 6:7*).

Showing mercy can be difficult at times, that is why we need to walk in the power of Christ. Being merciful involves forgiving others, helping those in need, performing acts of kindness – living compassion. Mercy sees genuine hurts and mercy gives genuine cures. The promise here is that God will show mercy and compassion to those who live it (in this life and the next).

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” Matthew 5:8

Pure gold (24 karat gold) can only be obtained by purifying it with intense heat. By using fire, the unwanted metal and mineral impurities are burnt up leaving only the gold. The Greek word ‘*pur*’ actually means ‘fire or flame.’ *Hebrews 12:14* reminds us of a sobering reality: without holiness no one will see the Lord. Looking Godward, He sees our contaminated and impure hearts through the lens covered by ‘the blood of Jesus’ so to speak (*1 John 2:1,2*).

By heart, the Bible is referring to the center of our being – our will, mind, emotions, thoughts, and soul. Jesus is mandating that His followers need to live and pursue ‘daily’ holiness. One must be profoundly honest to be pure in heart. In this life it is possible to be ‘purified’ from envy, lust, hatred, and every other form of sin and stand cleansed before God via daily confession and devotion to God (*1 John 1:9*). As we draw near to God, He will draw near to us because striving to be pure in heart involves serving and pleasing God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.” Matthew 5:9

- *“If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men.” Rom 12:18*
- *“Now may the Lord of peace Himself continually grant you peace in every circumstance.” 2 Thessalonians 3:16*
- *“Pursue peace with all men..” Hebrews 12:14*

The world is very deficient and lacking when it comes to peace. From wars to arguments to conflicts peace is absent. However, the directive here by Jesus to His disciples are for us to be peacemakers. Peacemakers end conflicts, they mediate with the love of Christ, and attempt to unify. A peacemaker will have the peace of God and ‘thrown’ into a world of strife. We are called to be God’s ‘go-betweens’ settling quarrels and conflict that tear people apart.

Looking Godward, when we receive Christ into our lives we receive peace with God. *“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (Romans 5:1).* But just having peace with God does not always mean that we will always have the peace of God. Only a person who has peace within his heart can make peace. The result of peacemaking is to be called a ‘son’ of God. Jesus as THE ‘Son of God’ promoted peace but He was rejected by many. Those who promote peace as ‘sons of God’ will face rejection also.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.” Matthew 5:10

In a study of the Greek word used here for persecuted – ‘*dioko*’, Strong’s Concordance and Greek lexicons define the word as: *to drive away; to pursue in a hostile manner; to suffer on account of something; to harass; to trouble; to be mistreated.*

The goal of every follower of Christ is not persecution, but sometimes it is the result. This Beatitude confirms that the kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who suffer for the sake of righteousness; not those who are guilty of wrong-doing. As we mature in Christ and apply the seven previous Beatitudes to our lives, then we can expect persecution. Jesus was misunderstood by His own family; His hometown rejected Him; He was persecuted by the religious leaders; He was betrayed by a disciple; He was condemned by the government; He was falsely accused.

The blessings of God are poured out to those who are persecuted and have suffered for serving Jesus. In this we are to rejoice because the Kingdom of God belongs to them. If you are shamed, ridiculed, or mistreated for standing up for Jesus, Bible doctrine and teachings, or the Christian lifestyle, it will be God who will honor you in the kingdom of Heaven.

