

## Matthew 5:1-12 – “The Beatitudes”

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### 1. Introduction – 5:1-2

**5:1-2 - *And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. <sup>2</sup> Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:***

What a joy it must have been to sit on the hillside and hear Jesus, the Son of God begin to lay out what life was to be like in this “Kingdom Way” that He was ushering in. The people took in every word, and it tells us that they were amazed when He was done: *“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, <sup>29</sup> for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28–29).*

- But what was the difference? How did He stand out from the scribes? The Pharisees and scribes all passed teaching on from other authorities, while Jesus spoke a word that was brand new to them and filled with authority.
- Jesus was instituting the Constitution of the Kingdom. These were principles meant to lead the citizens of His kingdom that were radically different than that of the world.

The Sermon on the Mount starts off with the Beatitudes. And Jesus builds a theme here - a theme of being blessed. The word *‘blessed’* comes from the Latin word *beatus*, which means ‘happy’ (same as blessed in Gr. *makarios*). But it’s more than just a feeling of gladness; it was a word that wasn’t even used for humans but one reserved for a state that only the gods could attain to. A state of divine joy and perfect happiness. Yet Jesus says (to the average Joe), ***“Blessed are the...”*** In other words, you will experience this wonderful happiness and joy when you live this kingdom way.

- The happiest people on earth should be Christians. The U.S. Constitution promises life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but there’s no guarantee of that. You can pursue something with all you’ve got and never attain it. And the problem is that the world tells you to pursue things that will never satisfy. The world dangles a superficial happiness that’s based on circumstances. But Jesus’ constitution here is not an empty pursuit of, but the true pathway to happiness.
- The longer I live, the more I see that people are just genuinely less happy the further they get from God. Haven’t you noticed that? We have a world filled with selfish, cranky, unhappy people!

- Living the way you want to live certainly doesn't seem to help. So, Jesus looks to point out a better way. A way that will lead to blessing and happiness. It's the Kingdom Way!

Now keep in mind, the kingdom way was not just about doing the right things. It isn't about following a religion. In fact, some people today apply the Sermon on the Mount as their religion.

Remember, the Pharisees taught that you needed to be righteous to enter the kingdom, but this righteousness was an outward action – obeying rules and regulations. And what's the problem there? You can fake it! This is why Jesus called them hypocrites. They were actors. They were faking it. It wasn't a true reflection of their heart.

- I can tell you how much I love you and how much I care for you. But you don't know what I'm really thinking about you in my heart.
- This religious establishment (Pharisees and Scribes etc.) that Jesus warned people about, simply wanted to put on a show outwardly. This was nothing more than self-righteousness. A feeling that you can be saved or made right with God by what you do. How many think that way? That they'll go to heaven because they're a good person and try to live a good life?

But Jesus is not talking about the way into the kingdom, but rather the kingdom way. The Sermon on the Mount wasn't a way to salvation. But rather it showed us the righteousness of God and our need for it. \*Matt. 5:20 is the key to all this. And so, what Jesus begins to do is teach about the character of the kingdom.

- Now like I said, some people have taken this sermon of the mount and made it their gospel. But others have dismissed it altogether saying it doesn't apply to the believer today; or it's a future way of life.
- “[This] teaching is to be personally applied to us today, as citizens of God's kingdom, though there is a now/not yet reality to our citizenship: we are kingdom citizens now, but we await the full manifestation of that kingdom when Jesus returns.”<sup>1</sup>

So Jesus taught that the character of this kingdom was a matter of the heart. It's an attitude. That why He begins with the **Beatitudes** (be-attitudes), not be-attitudes, or do-attitudes. Rather it's a way that we are to **be**.

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<sup>1</sup> Akin, D. (2019). *Exalting Jesus in the sermon on the mount*. Holman Bible Publishers.

- Jesus is a lot more concerned about **who** we are, than **what** we do. But when we take care of our character, proper conduct will follow. *Right conduct flows from right character.*

In this first section, Jesus teaches that the blessed life, the life that characterizes His Kingdom, is about having the right kind of attitudes.

So in this section today we're going to look at:

The Attitude Toward Self – 5:3-5

The Attitude Toward God – 5:6

The Attitude Toward Others – 5:7-9

The Attitude Toward Trials – 5:10-12

## 2. Attitude Toward Self – 5:3-5

**5:3 - *Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

Have you ever read that and wondered, 'What in the world is being poor in spirit?' Poor in finances I understand. Poor in telling a joke, check. Poor in cooking, right up there. But poor in spirit??'

You see, the Pharisees thought you had to be mighty in spirit, and the way to do that was through an outward display of righteousness or religion. But Jesus rather teaches that the way up is down. It's about walking in humility and recognizing your need spiritually.

- If you were to poll a number of people today and ask if they were a good person or not, I'd say the majority of them would answer positively. It's what many people are hoping will get them to heaven.
- But Jesus flips that around here and says it's the one that sees his spiritual poverty, that they are unable to make themselves good.

When we begin to live with an awareness of our sin and our poor condition, then the more we see our desperate need for Jesus.

- This attitude is seen in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14 – this tax collector beat his breast, saying, 'God be merciful to me a sinner!').
- Like this tax collector, "Do you see yourself as a spiritual cripple who can hope only in Jesus? Rejoice! Be happy in your spiritual plight. Delight in the truth that you are a citizen of the kingdom of heaven now and forever!"<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Akin, D. (2019). *Exalting Jesus in the sermon on the mount*. Holman Bible Publishers.

**5:4 - *Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.***

Now as you discover your sinfulness, the natural progression here is to mourn. You mourn the fact that sin separates you from God. But this time of mourning is not without hope, for you will ***be comforted***. Jesus doesn't condemn you, just as with the woman caught in adultery. Just as the prostitute who fell at Jesus' feet and washed His feet with her tears. These were people that were in mourning over sin, yet comforted by Jesus.

**5:5 - *Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.***

As you come in contact with your sin and mourn over the fact that you are not whole, you really don't have a lot to be prideful in. You've come to the conclusion: Me-Ek! But the Lord loves meek people.

- Now we often think of meekness as weakness. But more accurately, it's strength under control. Used to speak of a horse when it is broken and brought into submission. Power in control.
- Moses was meek. In Jesus' only description He gave of His own character He said, "*I am meek and lowly in heart*" (**Matthew 11:29**).
- Now the world loves to say, if you want to get anywhere in this world you've got to assert yourself, be aggressive. Yet Jesus says, the meek shall inherit the earth. You won't be giving up anything when you walk in submission and gentleness, on the contrary, you will have much to gain.
- I love how Jesus has a way of flipping and reversing the prevalent philosophies of this world. No wonder so many people are feeling like they're in a rat race and getting burned out. They're conducting themselves in a totally contrary way that Jesus lays out for the happy life.

**3. Attitude Toward God - 5:6****5:6 - *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.***

The first three attitudes have really been an emptying of self. So, what's natural when we're empty? We want to fill up! The question is, what are you filling up with? Jesus says, when you hunger after righteousness you will be filled.

What is righteousness? It is the condition acceptable to God.

- The problem is there are people who have never been filled because they have not yet been emptied. They're living for self, content with self, and

have not seen their need for rightness. These are one's that have not experienced the true blessed life - that inner satisfaction, the life of happiness.

- And we need to be careful that we're not filling ourselves with inferior things. If I'm taking my wife out for a nice dinner, and on the way I stop at Tim Horton's for a nice Canadian Maple (or 2) and eat them on the way to the fancy restaurant I'm taking my wife to, it's going to directly hinder my appetite and enjoyment of that meal. My wife is going to be sitting there the only one eating, with me staring at her and asking when she's gonna be done. By me filling up with inferior things I'm missing out on a bigger and better blessing.

The progression of these verses is important, because when you empty yourself of self, you will have that hunger and craving for righteousness, and it is that which will truly fill and satisfy you.

#### 4. Attitude Toward Others - 5:7-9

##### **5:7 - *Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.***

Citizens of the Kingdom of God are not one's that hold grudges, or are looking to get even with those who have wronged them. Rather they are merciful people. Why are they so merciful? Because they realize the incredible measure of mercy that has been shown them.

- **1 Peter 2:9–10**, *"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; <sup>10</sup> who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy."*
- **Proverbs 14:21**, *"He who despises his neighbour sins; but he who has mercy on the poor, happy is he."*

Your attitude to others will greatly change when you realize what Jesus has done for you when you least deserved it.

- "How much mercy you show is almost certainly the result of how much mercy you know!" <sup>3</sup>

##### **5:8 - *Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.***

<sup>3</sup> Akin, D. (2019). *Exalting Jesus in the sermon on the mount*. Holman Bible Publishers.



Those that have a pure heart are the ones that are going to see God clearly. Why? There's nothing getting in the way that's distracting or defiling.

This also goes for the way we handle one another. If we're merciful and forgiving to others, we're not allowing that root of bitterness to grow inside. We're having a pure heart, a pure conscience, and these are the people that will see God. They experience a closeness and intimacy with God because nothing is hindering it.

**5:9 - *Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.***

Peace is a lovely thing isn't it? It can be a hard thing to have when there are a lot of people that seem to prefer conflict. Now many of you know we have a cat at home. My wife loves this cat, and definitely loves this cat more than me. And she asks every night if this cat can sleep in our room. And I have to put my foot down and say no way. So the other night while the cat is sleeping in our room... it's the middle of the night and the cat, who's at the foot of our bed, gets up, walks over to me, and plops himself right on top of me and start kneading his claws into me like I'm a batch of dough he's about to put in the oven.

Now, as I'm laying there, wide awake, I want with every bit of my flesh to wake my wife up and have her deal with the cat. But, blessed are the peacemakers. I can choose conflict or peace.

I don't share this to say I'm so good, I share this to show how you can pray for me. My wife and I are all good, we love each other, but pray for me.

But this is more than just experiencing an environment of peace, this is about enjoying a lasting peace. The only way to do that is through the Prince of Peace!

And we get to be peacemakers on a whole other level. It's not just by bringing the noise down or being peaceable, it's through sharing with others the way to peace. The one that has obtained mercy and has seen God is naturally the one that is going to want to share Him with others. This is how we can be peacemakers. It's not in carrying around big signs with the peace symbol on it, or marching in protest, it's by bringing people into contact with the Prince of Peace. In doing so, we carry out the work our Heavenly Father has called us to do, we show ourselves to be children of God. \*Romans 10:15

## [5. Attitude Toward Trials - 5:10-12](#)

**5:10 - *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.***

You would think that the world would love to see a person with these qualities or characteristics. Poverty of spirit, mourning over sin, meek, seeking rightness, merciful, pure in heart, a person of peace. You would think that person would be voted most popular. Yet Jesus says they're going to be persecuted!

I can just see the disciples perking up at this point saying, 'Did He say pampered? I'm really hoping He said pampered and not persecuted!'

And so, He adds a couple more verses on the subject to be sure they hear this right and understand...

**5:11–12 - *Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. <sup>12</sup> Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.***

Why will the world persecute them? Because these attitudes are so opposed to the world's attitudes. The world system is in direct conflict and contradiction to God. Those that are of God are to be different than the world.

But the key is to be different because of righteousness, not just for the sake of being different. Living a righteous life will be different enough from the world.

Jesus ends the same as He began – with this promise of a great reward: ***Theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*** If there is one thing I would wish for everyone to get a handle on it's this: we're not living for this world. We're citizens of heaven. If we can live with this eternal focus, we will realize that these present problems and pains are only temporal. Paul had a good handle on this:

- **2 Corinthians 4:17**, *"For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,"*

And notice in vs. 11 that this persecution will not come in just physical opposition, it will also come in verbal slander to cut you down.

But be people who rejoice in persecution for you know your reward is great in heaven. When some of the Apostles in Acts 5 were arrested for preaching the gospel they were brought before the Sanhedrin. They were allowed to be released under Gamaliel's advice, but first they were beaten. And it says that they left *'rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name'* (**Acts 5:41**). Amazing!

- Is that an attitude that we can have?
- Follow the ways of the prophets and you will truly profit in heaven!

The Blessed life that Jesus points out was so foreign and contrary to what the world valued. It's even more so today. But Jesus lays out this Kingdom Way to show us the path to the blessed and happy life. Are you feeling blessed today? What areas or attitudes need to be altered in your life to align with His kingdom?