

Matthew 5:1-12

"Be Blessed"

His fame was reaching far & wide. Jesus was going about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, healing all kinds of sickness & all kinds of disease among the people. He was demonstrating authority over creation & the effects of the fall. That there's nothing too hard for God & that regardless of the hurt, the oppression, or the affliction, Jesus is more than enough to meet your need.

Sin brought isolation, separation, pain & suffering. Jesus came to bring restoration, reconciliation, hope, healing & comfort. To let us know that God isn't far off, He's not out there in some never never land in a distant galaxy far, far away. But He's close, the kingdom of heaven is at hand, & salvation isn't accomplished by some complex set of algorithms (a process, or procedure) hoops we have to jump through or something we have to do or accomplish on our own. But God has so loved us that He sent His only Son *to* us, so that if we would just *believe* upon Him, we'd never perish but have everlasting life...

Well as you can imagine w/this message & these miracles, masses & multitudes gathered around Him. People would walk over 100 miles to maybe hear Him or be touched *by* Him. But not unlike today, the tragic reality is that most of those who gathered around Him were mainly interested in His services, not so much His salvation. The gifts more than the Giver, what He could do *for* them rather than what He wanted to do *in* them.

But that's the heart of Jesus. Yes, concerned for you physically, but more so His interest lies in where you're at *eternally*. So His miracles may have drawn them, but more than the miracles it was the *message* that He wanted them to take in, absorb & be changed by. To receive the miracle would change you temporarily, to receive the message would change you eternally... He wanted to teach them the *heart* of God by giving them the *word* of God.

We last left off noticing (Vs 25, Ch 4) great multitudes following Him—from Galilee, from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea & beyond the Jordan... a parameter of more than 100 miles...

Vs 1-2

We have to admit it don't we? We've entered into a pretty exciting section of scripture... We've heard Jesus "preach" just a bit (Repent! For the kingdom of heaven is at hand). But this is the 1st time we get to hear Him *teach*. He's not simply going to *proclaim* some things. He's going to *explain* some things.

Jesus was never One to miss a teachable moment. He has a massive crowd gathering around Him; He had what “rock stars” dream about. But again, He didn’t seize the opportunity to sign scrolls, or to “pump” the people up. He actually sought to settle them down. He went up on a Mt., not to get away *from* them, but rather so that He might speak more effectively *to* them. He’s taking advantage of this opportunity to *teach* them.

He’s going to project loudly, speak clearly; He wants them to understand what it means to have a right relationship with God. Now, it’s not that He speaks here about how to be saved, but more what salvation looks like in the life of one who truly belongs to the Lord. He speaks of what we might call the characteristics of citizens of the Kingdom.

The Pharisees & Sadducees (the religious leaders) had projected *one* thing. Jesus will articulate & demonstrate a very *different* thing...

Now notice 1st of all that Jesus went up on a mountain (don’t think of the Rockies, more like a big hill) but that’s why we refer to this as the... “Sermon on the Mount”.

& When we read that He was “seated” that means He was getting ready to teach. It was the common posture in that day & in that culture for the teacher to sit & the students to stand (I’m not sure how we got away from that but here we are 😊). That’s why we read that those who were following Him gathered around Him as He was seated.

Now what is the main theme of the Sermon on the Mount? Jesus wants us to realize what it is that constitutes or comprises, what counts for true righteousness. The religious leaders had an artificial righteousness based on *externals*, they focused on *conduct*; Jesus will describe true & vital righteousness as rooted in the *internal* (that is, in the heart).

Jesus focused not primarily upon conduct but upon *character*, why? Because conduct flows out of character; in other words what’s in your heart will determine how you behave (not just physically, but it effects your motive & mentality). Or to understand that another way, what we do flows out of who we are & who we are is what’s happening in our heart.

So we have in this 1st section what’s referred to as the “beatitudes”. You might note they’re not called the “do-attitudes”. To keep it simple you can think of them as attitudes that are to be in our lives. It’s a description of what God causes us to *be*, as opposed to something God wants us to *do*. Again, God places the premium upon “being”, because what we do flows out of who we are... The world will tell you that happiness (blessedness) hinges on what you *do*, God says that *true* happiness hinges upon who you *are*.

Now I want to say this as well. Most bibles have red letters in this section so that we can know these are the words of Jesus.

Don't make the mistake of placing special emphasis upon the words of Jesus at the expense of any other portion of your bible. I want you to realize that *all* of God's word is inspired. The words Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit are just as much the word of God as are the recorded words of Jesus. So these words in one sense are no more special than any other section of scripture in your bible.

Yet we can also say that God certainly used the *personality* of Paul, or Peter or James etc. as they wrote their letters. We kind of get a feel for the kind of person they were by the way their letters are written. But with Jesus, what makes *His* words so unique is the fact that we hear the heart of God from the very *Personality* of God. Jesus was God in the flesh. We read in the book of Hebrews, "*God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son...* (of whom we go on to read is) ...*the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person.*"¹ In Colossians we read of Christ, "*For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;*"² So when Jesus speaks it's not God speaking through an inspired personality like Isaiah, or Samuel, but now we get to hear the truth of God through the exact *personality* of God & in *that* it certainly is exciting.

So when Jesus opens His mouth (Vs 2), we open our ears & open our hearts...

Vs 3-12

Something I want to say from the very outset here is that *all* of these character traits are the marks & goals of all believers. These aren't like spiritual gifts (I'm gifted in meekness but not so much in hungering for righteousness), it doesn't work that way. It's our responsibility to have & grow in *all* of these spiritual attributes.

If you meet someone who claims to be a Christian yet none of these things are on display in their life, you could rightly wonder if they're truly saved... Why? Because they have no characteristics of Kingdom citizens... Having said that we realize that the only One to have *mastered* all of these is our Master (J.C.). As for the rest of us we're to be continually growing in Christlikeness as the Holy Spirit works these things into our hearts & lives...

Vs 3

Again this word "Blessed" speaks of happiness, not something based upon circumstance, but an inner satisfaction & sufficiency independent of circumstance. It's not really a human thing, it's a God thing. It's *His* work in *your* heart.

¹ The New King James Version. (1982). (Heb 1:1-3). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

² The New King James Version. (1982). (Col 2:9). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

It doesn't base itself on what's *around* you, but rather what's *w/in* you. & Take note of the face that the blessing (in every case) is in the present tense; it's not "Blessed *shall* be", but "Blessed *are* the..."

One thing we instantly recognize is that these attributes are nothing like what we might expect them to read. If these were based in this world it might read, "Blessed are the always healthy, or the very wealthy, blessed are the aggressive & self confident, those who always have a killer tan & 6pack abs..." or something 😊.

But as we'll come to learn, the rationale of the kingdom is counterintuitive to this world... So when Jesus has everyone's attention, He lifts up His voice & cries, "Blessed are the *poor in spirit*." Wait, what? What does He mean, "poor in spirit"???

Again we can see that He's not speaking externally, He's not saying there's an inherent blessing in material poverty, but He's aiming instantly at the heart, inwardly. Blessed are the poor (not outwardly necessarily) *in spirit*. What does it mean to be poor in spirit?

You know, a lot of people are full of themselves. They're really great & can tell you exactly why 😊. That's the opposite of poor in spirit. He's not saying that we need to think that we have no value, that's not true. Christ died for you, He thinks very highly of you, He loves you... But the poor in spirit is the one who recognizes that in & of themselves they've nothing to offer God that will in anyway (morally or otherwise) commend them to Him in such a way as to make themselves right with Him. This person is completely bankrupt of personal righteousness, this person recognizes that they've sinned & fall short of the glory of God & find themselves humbled & desperate for God.

This is a person who recognizes who God is & in that light they realize who they're not... Think of Isaiah 6. In the yr that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high & lifted up & the train of His robe filled the temple. Seraphim were flying round about, each having 6 wings: w/2 he covered his face, w/2 he covered his feet & w/2 he flew & one cried to another saying, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" "So I said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, The Lord of hosts.'"³ That's the heart of a man recognizing his poverty of spirit. When Daniel saw the Lord he said, "I saw this great vision, and no strength remained in me; for my vigor (splendor) was turned to frailty in me, and I retained no strength."⁴ His self-evaluation got a reality check in view of the Lord & he was bankrupt of spirit before Him...

³ The New King James Version. (1982). [Is 6:5]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

⁴ The New King James Version. (1982). [Da 10:8]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

In Luke's gospel when Peter got a glimpse of who the Lord truly was he fell down at the feet of Jesus & said, "Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord."

Blessed are the poor in spirit... why? Because when you come to truly understand your spiritual inability & that you have to depend upon Jesus exclusively, the door of salvation opens to you immediately... "For theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

It's that paradox of the Christian life, we'll reign as kings when we submit as servants, when we realize we have nothing, we'll be given everything...

Vs 4

Again the blessing isn't in the lament, it's that it puts you in the position to receive the comfort of God. This is the person who sees their sin in truth, the godly sorrow that leads us to repentance. It's building on the poverty of spirit, realizing my emptiness & inability before God I mourn over my sin, I recognize my shame. We don't seek to cover our sin or defend our sin, we're ashamed of our sin & desire to be cleansed of our sin... Leave Matt's gospel & turn quickly to **Luke 18** (Vs 9-14).

This man embodies these 1st 2 beatitudes. Even though he was rich materially (tax collector) he recognized his poverty spiritually, he mourned over his sin & cried out for God's mercy... **Jesus said, that man received the comfort of forgiveness, justification by faith, trusting not in himself, but in the Living God to supply a righteousness he could never fabricate on his own. We might say that grieving over our sin carves a path for God's comfort to come to us.** Write these down & look them up later; Ps 32:1-2 & 51:17, also 2 Cor1:3-5, one can't receive comfort apart from being broken & blessed is the one who receives the comfort of God...

Vs 5

Don't associate meekness w/weakness. Meekness is simply not asserting my own rights but living for the glory of God. We're prone to be self-willed, but we're to live for God's will & conform to God's *word*.

Now we're often taught that you have to fight & claw your way to the top of heap. But Jesus says that the reward isn't for the belligerent & proud. God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble. It's not found in earning, but in humbly inheriting.

This again goes back to our utter dependence upon the Lord. We can only truly lay the push for our own rights aside when we're confident that God watches out *for* us & will ultimately vindicate us. In the natural mind the meek wouldn't receive anything, but Jesus assures us we'll inherit everything. "For they shall inherit the earth."

Oh, not in it's current decrepit/fallen state, but when the Lord comes again & restores all things, we will rule & reign w/Him upon the earth for 1,000 yrs... The meek shall inherit the earth.

Vs 6

Don't miss the progression. We're completely emptied of self, impoverished of spirit, mourning & broken over our sin, no longer are we about our will but we want God's will & being emptied of self we now have a new hunger & new thirst for righteousness.

We're not talking about, "I could use a snack" hunger, but an intense longing & hungering/thirsting after true righteousness. Now a lot of Christians hunger for a lot of things: power, authority, recognition, success, their political party to be at the forefront – but how many are hungering & thirsting for righteousness? **Think about it like this, to hunger for righteousness is to hunger for intimacy w/Christ. In John's gospel Jesus said that like this, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink." Jn 7:37** The "wells" of this world won't satisfy, they leave you thirsting for more, but the one who thirsts for the righteousness that only Christ can supply will be filled, not just to the full, but to the overflow.

Now if in your heart you don't believe you've been filled than I might suggest to you that perhaps you've not truly been emptied... I'm not saying you haven't been saved, but you've got to be emptied of self, of pride, you're not going to hunger for righteousness if you're filled w/your own wants & own ways, some false impression of self importance. You know, you don't really have an appetite for the word, you don't really want to worship God, you don't have a craving for righteousness. Listen, you've got to decrease that He might increase in your life. Ask God to show you what it means to be emptied of self, to crucify the flesh that you might *hunger & thirst* for righteousness.

Vs 7

Now lets remember something w/this. In addressing those who are to show mercy, Jesus is speaking to those who've already *received* mercy. He's not saying God will owe it to *you* to be merciful. He's saying that we owe it to *God* to be merciful having received mercy ourselves. Write it down, look it up, Matt 18:21-35

We're not to be judgmental, critical, cynical or analytical, we're to be merciful. But we see here the law of sowing & reaping. If you want to reap mercy (which I do)... Jesus says, "Than sow mercy liberally."

Here's what James said, *"For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."*⁵

Vs 8

I want you to understand that this doesn't just speak to eternity (though it certainly includes that), but even in the everyday things practically. The natural man sees God in nothing, the pure in heart see God in all kinds of things. When I look at the sun or the moon, when I look at the variety & complexity of the animal kingdom or aquatic life. The complexity of the human anatomy, God's fingerprints are all over those things...

I see God in our church family, I see God in scripture. But if your vision is polluted by sin & self-seeking, covetousness or whatever, you won't see God, you're focused on your own agenda...

Now when it speaks of being pure in heart, it's speaking of a single heart, that is a heart that's not divided between God & the world. So though purity of heart includes the washing of regeneration, which is God's work alone in our lives, this is pointing to an undivided heart. A heart that's for the Lord, not for the world.

Vs 9

The blessing isn't upon those who live in peace (though that's commendable). But upon those who *make* peace. Those who bring about peace by overcoming evil w/good; one way this is accomplished is by spreading the gospel, God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. Sharing the good news that we can have peace w/God through the cross of J.C.

Another way would be to apply Vs 7. When we're the offended party we extend mercy & make a volatile situation & peaceful situation through forgiveness. We might add there's no blessing for the *peace-breaker*. God is a God who seeks peace & reconciliation w/those who otherwise are against Him & have enmity toward Him. The idea here is that if our Father is one who actively pursues peace, we will share His passion for peace as His children & be active in seeking to make peace. Be it between God & man, or those who may be at odds w/one another...

Yet even in that there needs 1st be a purity. The wisdom that is from above is 1st of *pure* (pure in heart), *then* peaceable. We don't simply tolerate sin for the sake of getting along, we desire godly reconciliation.

Vs 10-12

You may share the gospel of peace, but it might get you persecution...

⁵ The New King James Version. (1982). [Jas 2:13]. Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

You would think that one who was emptied of self, considerate of others, desiring God's will, hungering for righteousness, merciful, pure & all about peace would receive the Nobel Peace Prize or something.

That's not how it worked out for Jesus... This kind of person is received w/open arms in the church. But in the world, this person is persecuted. Not just physically, but according to Vs 11 they'll assault you verbally as well.

Why? Because your selflessness exposes their selfishness. Your humility exposes their pride, your mercy exposes their cynicism & criticism, you're being a light but people love darkness because their deeds are evil...

But here's the deal. Persecution (physical &/or verbal) will come to the one whose life displays kingdom characteristics. But make sure if you're persecuted it's for righteousness sake, not for weirdness sake. Believers do some weird things ☺. & When they're persecuted for it they think they'll be blessed for it. You won't be blessed for being weird, but for righteousness sake.

& You won't be blessed if what they're saying about you is true, but if it's false for Jesus' sake.

You meet those criteria & you have reason to rejoice, you will be blessed indeed because you enter good company. For so they persecuted the prophets who were before you, & in joining the company of prophets you will receive great profit, in heaven.

So may the word of God sink deep into your heart & may you be blessed as you relinquish your ways & give God *His* way in your life. Amen? Amen.

Prayer Points:

Lord, we're excited to enter into this section of scripture. Hearing your heart from Your lips... We're asking You to seal these things into our hearts & prove them out through our lives. Your will, Your way in us...individually & as a body.

Listen, the prerequisite for entering the kingdom of heaven is recognition of the fact that you don't have your act together. Recognize your inability, your inadequacy before God who is high & holy & perfect in righteousness. That's why Jesus came, to do for us what we could never do on our own, He shed His blood & laid down His life for you, to pay the price of your sin & mine. & Now if you will believe upon Him, you'll be saved.